

A NEW YEAR'S TRADITION

Pacific Plunge is steeped in a sense of community

Plunge from Page 1A

"I've been a photographer for almost 50 years," said Lapp Murray, who operated her own studio in Portland and taught photographic technique around the world.

Every year since, save for one, Lapp Murray photographed — and joined — the wet, shivering and smiling revelers. As the pictures piled up she began thinking the subject was ripe for a book.

But rather than a personal or vanity project, Lapp Murray set out to assemble a record. The photos in "The History of The Arch Cape New Year Pacific Plunge" are only half Lapp Murray's — the rest came from the community.

Lapp Murray put out the call in 2010, asking friends and neighbors for photos, newspaper clippings, stories — anything they had germane to the plunge. The community obliged.

"I got these family albums and I would try not to hurt them as I scanned the photos," said Lapp Murray. "Very seldom did anyone have a negative, so I had to scan miserable prints. I spent a lot of time in Photoshop."

As she sought to accurately chronicle the event, Lapp Murray painstakingly deduced the dates of all the photos that arrived unmarked against those that were, comparing bathing suits, haircuts and so on.

She also received news clippings, including a few from journalists who participated in taking the plunge. Amongst them are excerpts from this very paper, one dating back to 1977.

The New Year's Day tradition began somewhat officially in 1967, as Betty Bridget Snow and Floyd "Scotty" Scott joined hands and jumped in,

though the book traces its roots even further back.

In the 1910s an English-born bachelor and Arch Cape resident Marmaduke Maxwell was known to take winter plunges. Maxwell also owned two cows, which he took with him down to the beach. In the book, one of bovines is pictured, laying in the sand.

Another early swimmer was Barbara Forbes Shaw, who started making icy dives as a teenager in the 1940s. Forbes, who became known as one of the "queens" of the New Year's event, made her final plunge in 2015 at age 90. She died later that year.

Shaw wasn't the only participant to continue well into her twilight. Bridget Snow kept soldiering into that near-freezing water well into her 80s. Noanie Morrison, another matriarchal pillar of the dive, retired from the swim only after turning 90 last August.

"I finished the book this year because Barbara Shaw died and Noanie Morrison decided to retire," said Lapp Murray. "They're gone now, so it seemed like the time to do it."

Despite the absence of Shaw and Morrison, their spirits persist at the event, and the progeny of both women continue plunging in their stead.

Lapp Murray's own family now has three generations of plungers — which, the book points out, prefer to be known as "fur seals" rather than "polar bears."

"My grandchildren have gone in since they were babies," said Lapp Murray. "It's just part of what you do."

Over the decades, nothing the winter weather has dished out has deterred the group.

"One year we had a horrible, horrible swim," said Lapp Murray. "It was dangerous. We probably shouldn't have gone in. There was no sand. You were in the rocks, and the rocks would pull you down."

While looking back on the many plunges,



The Polar Plunge was the topic of this early Gazette article.

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