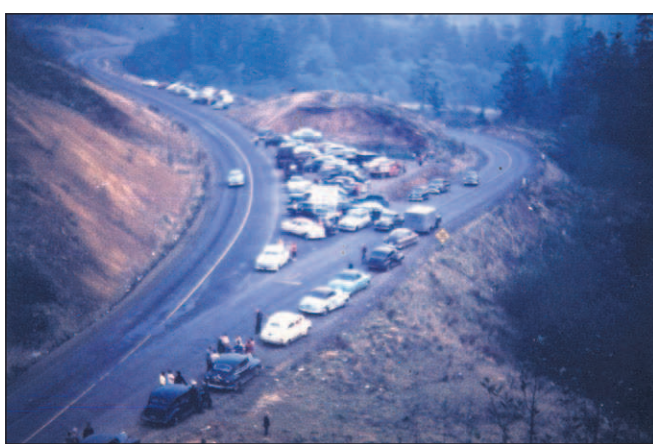


Looking back on the Tsunami of 1964

I was playing poker over at Frank Hammond's house. There were six of us. The phone rang and one of the men got up and answered the phone. 'They said there's a tidal wave coming,' he said. We all ignored it, because we heard that every winter, that there were some big waves coming. It wasn't unusual to hear that. Then he got another phone call, and there was a big bet on the table ... about \$15. He hung up the phone real fast, put on his coat, and headed for the door. We said, 'Where are you going?' He says, 'The last wave broke over, you know that tree in my driveway ... the last wave broke over the top of that tree.'"



COURTESY CANNON BEACH HISTORY CENTER AND MUSEUM

Evacuation in Cannon Beach in 1964.

REFLECTIONS

ELAINE TRUCKE



they called it then, might hit Washington and California," Haskell said. "They didn't mention Oregon, so I didn't pay a whole lot of attention until I looked out the window and saw a wave breaking over the bulkhead. ... It splashed up over the edge and I thought that was awfully high tide with no storm."

Margaret Sroufe and her husband had an up close and personal view of the tidal wave as it flushed up Ecola Creek. Her house was on the west side of Elm Street in the north end of town.

"I was the civil defense person for the north side of the creek," Sroufe said. "If there was a problem, I was supposed to notify the residents of the area."

She called the Seaside police when she heard about the wave on the news, but was told that until the Coast Guard recommended what needed to be done, no alerts for evacuation would be given, in case of panic. Hearing this news, Sroufe and her husband began to get ready for bed.

"I went to turn the television volume down, and I looked out the window and I saw all these green and blue flashing lights. It was when the bridge went out and broke the power lines," she said. "And here came this water, just up, not in like a wave, just raising up. We went out on the porch and watched the water come up."

Standing on her porch, Sroufe had a unique view of the main damage that would be done to Cannon Beach during the tsunami.

"There was a house down on the creek and there was a little duplex, and the duplex started to move ... It hit the telephone pole, and went around the telephone pole, and it ended way back up in the pasture. And the bridge lifted up and moved on back into the pasture. It came right up to the edge of our driveway. We just stood there with our arms around each other on the porch watching the water come up," Sroufe said. "There was a little girl who lived across the street who had been babysitting who had just walked home across the bridge. She was the last one who crossed."

Steidel was the first to discover that the bridge was out the hard way, when trying to cross it, coming home from the poker game.

"The bridge was gone," he said. "My family was on the other side, and I had to get over there. There was water all around me, and then a house went by. The house went over into the meadow and settled down, looked like someone had built it there. Hardly disturbed anything in the house. Somebody said all it moved was a coffee pot about a foot on the counter."

Steidel then thought about using an old logging route to get home, but as he was on his way to the alternate route,

he intercepted several cars on their way to the bridge. He stopped his vehicle and blocked their path.

"Get out of my way!" one man said to me. 'Well, I'll get out of your way,' I said, 'but you're not going that way because the bridge is gone.' 'Gone?' the man said. 'Yes! Gone!' I told him."

In addition to the bridge being swept away, many homes on the north side of Ecola were besieged with water.

"The north side of the creek was devastated," Sroufe said. "There was a campground where the Les Shirley park is today. There was one trailer there. There was one woman in that little trailer, and she got out, but the trailer was washed out, and all the houses that were close to the creek were just inundated."

When Steidel reached home after taking the alternate logging road, he found his wife and son in a house filled with logs and foam.

Aside from the bridge and the homes on the north side of Ecola, not much else had been affected. Of course, a fair amount of debris was scattered about town and water still sat in the streets.

"There were logs and all kinds of things right down Hemlock," Haskell said.

What saved the rest of the town, Sroufe said, was the wave's path up Ecola Creek.

"There really wasn't much damage in the town. The water came up all around what was Les Ordway's service station, which is that parking area today (across from Whale Park), but it didn't go down through the rest of the town because it came right up the creek," Sroufe said. "It wasn't a wave that came up over the town like tidal waves do, it just followed the easiest way it could go, up the creek."

Although there was little damage and no casualties related to the 1964 in Cannon Beach, in Newport, the McKenzie family lost three of their children to the brutal force of the wave.

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LETTERS

County made the wrong choice on lawsuit

Last month, Seaside and Gearhart's county commissioner Sarah Nebeker cast the deciding vote against Clatsop County participating in a class action lawsuit. The lawsuit claims that the State of Oregon did not live up to its contractual obligation to generate required revenue from our forestland that was given them to manage by Clatsop County. Clatsop County might have received \$262 million from the state under this suit.

Over time the State, under pressure from those throughout the state who prefer our forested lands remain unharvested, has cut back the original contractually required plans to generate revenue. This revenue is needed to help operate Clatsop County schools and local government.

The County Commission

by a 3-to-2 vote said that the state is doing a good enough job. Our county commissioner evidently wants the forest to be a state park with a lesser need for our schools and roads. In July, commissioner Nebeker was enthusiastic about the county's plan for improving the Lewis and Clark mainline road to provide a disaster evacuation route behind Gearhart and Seaside. There is no funding plan for this \$15 million project; just 5 percent of the potential judgment would meet the funding needs for this life and death project.

Our area needs these types of projects so it can survive and continue to flourish in the event of a disaster. The County Commission needs to enforce our contract. If they don't like the contract then renegotiate it to get the state to provide the revenue from another source.

John Dunzer
Seaside

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