

# Remembering a 'salty local' at his favorite hangout

I wish I had known Mike Knop. Horse racing, brewing beer, cooking great meals, baseball, hockey and fly-fishing were Mike's favorite pastimes.

"Mike believed in living life to the fullest, chasing dreams, placing bets, cherishing and cultivating relationships, enjoying hobbies, learning something new every day, and reading," read his obituary. "It was important for Mike to live in paradise, catch and release and spend quality time with friends especially at Cheri's."

## CANNON SHOTS

R.J. MARX



Cheri's of course is the quintessential Cannon Beach hangout — locals hold sway here, but well-behaved visitors are always welcome. Former bodybuilder-turned-restaurateur Cheri Lerma presides over the establishment, where you check your ego at the door and settle in for the news of the day.

"One of the reviews said there were a bunch of 'salty locals' in here," author Peter Lindsey said.

Mike died suddenly at their place near the Metolius River, suffering a heart attack while driving and drove into a tree. He was 59.

When Mike wasn't fly-fishing, working on his cabin or betting on the horses, he made his living as a house painter, his longtime friend Rex Amos said.

"He must have painted most of Cannon Beach," Amos said. "He was also a great cook. His scalloped potatoes were front and center on Cheri's food table. Everyone loved Mike, especially Cheri."

It was appropriate then, that I cajoled Rex to put in a good word for me with Barb Knop to gather a few friends together at Cheri's for some informal memories. Amos and his wife Diane were joined by Lindsey, Marilyn and Cleve Rooper, along with Barb and of course Cheri, who was doing double duty on a busy Friday afternoon taking orders and sharing stories.

## 'A Ph.D. in life'

Mike was a large man who embraced life with abandon, Amos said.

"Expert fly fisherman, prize-winning beer brewer, avid horse racing fan who packed Cheri's whenever the races were on TV," he wrote in a remembrance. "He'd run the numbers and study the horses then take up a collection and place the bets. Sometimes the gang got a few bucks, but for me it was just a way to have one hell of a good time losing a few bucks. Mike was one of Cheri's favorite customers. As she said, 'and he was the youngest of the group.'"

Mike came to Cheri's every night. "Since he's not here, it's weird," Lerma said. "We all interact together. Most of them are old locals who live here — I mean old in the sense they've lived here quite a while. We just had a good time with each other as a group, from work to play."

"I could look out the window and still expect to see him with his baseball cap like he would do it every night," Lindsey said.

Topics of conversation ran from the gamut: horse racing, fishing, cigar connoisseur and the merits of beers. Mike was gifted at everything he pursued, brewing the best home brew Lindsey had ever tasted. He recalled a fussy friend who swore he would only drink Budweiser. Mike's beer changed his mind, Lindsey said. "He said, 'This is the first beer I really like besides Budweiser.'"

As a fisherman, Knop could effortlessly cast, either from the Ecola Creek, Metolius River or along the surf in Cannon Beach.

"It's a bit of a cliché, but Mike could read the water," Amos said.

He was "strictly catch and release," Lindsey recalled. "We told him, 'That's like shooting an elk then taking it to the veterinarian to get treated.'"

"He wasn't pretentious," Amos said. "With his fly-fishing, he didn't worry about getting thousands of dollars worth of gear. He'd just go out there and fish. He didn't do all this false casting or bring out all the gear in the world. Mike would just go out and cast out and there would be the fish."



Mike Knop

SUBMITTED PHOTO



Rex Amos, Cheri Lerma, Marilyn Rooper (back) Peter Lindsey, Cleve Rooper and Barb Knop, front, in Mike Knop's bar chair.

R.J. MARX/CANNON BEACH GAZETTE

"I always thought he had a Ph.D. in life, because he knew about everything," Barb Knop said. "He was an expert at everything he did."

## Humor was his forte

Knop, described as "Mike the Wheel" in his obituary, was born in Detroit, Michigan, on May 3, 1958. After high school he started his journey to the West Coast with stops in Denver, Colorado, and Kennewick, Washington. Knop met his future wife in Denver in the summer of 1982 when Barb was on vacation and needed a golf partner.

The couple married on the beach in Cannon Beach on June 1984.

"We came here for the summer and we never left," Barb said.

The only thing Mike never took to, Barb said, was serving in local government.

Though he served briefly on the Public Works board when he first arrived in Cannon Beach, he spurned the public spotlight.

"His definition of 'communist activities' were all the volunteer things that I was involved with," Barb said with a smile.

After working as a bartender, Mike launched a painting business. He soon became "the" painter in Cannon Beach.

Though he had the opportunity, he didn't want to become a big business. That would've interfered with his hobbies, Barb said.

He had something in common with everybody, Amos said, and humor was Mike's forte.

"He always had something funny to say," Lerma said.

Cleve Rooper remembers Mike playing practical jokes, swapping habaneros for martini olives and creating ice cream "sundaes" of bear droppings.

The season Terry Porter starred for the Portland Trail Blazers, Mike immortalized him by brewing a dark beer called "Terry Porter," Rooper said.



SUBMITTED PHOTO

Barb and Mike Knop

"When some hops fell off a truck, Mike made beer out of it. He called it 'Roadkill Ale.'"

Mike loved parties: The Super Bowl, Kentucky Derby, Christmas and anything with his fishing group.

"He lived to celebrate every day he was alive," Barb said. "If it involved a party that was OK. There weren't too many occasions that we missed."

## An empty chair

At Cheri's, it's not only the barstool with his name on it that will serve to remember Mike Knop.

"I always looked at him like a growly bear that was a little bit cuddly," Lerma said. "He was soft — crunchy on the outside and chewy on the inside."

"We miss him," Marilyn Rooper said.

"It's not the same without him," Amos said.

"I'm thinking of closing early," Lerma said mournfully as the late-lunch crowd settled down.

"I will make a rare appearance and sit in his chair," Barb said, moving to the wooden chair with "Mr. Knop" painted on the back.

A community event in his memory is planned for November, she said. "I think if he were looking down, he would say, 'Just make sure every day you tell the people you love that you love them.'"



R.J. MARX/CANNON BEACH GAZETTE

What more alluring tourist destination than "The Rock"?

# A tourist in Cannon Beach

While my companion took a meeting at Cheri's Café, I decided to take a two-hour vacation from my normal life to roam downtown Cannon Beach. My goal was to behave in a touristy manner, i.e. shop, walk around, eat and drink something, take in the sights. Since it was a super sunny day, I thought it a good chance to soak up some Vitamin D. Doctors are always telling me I need more Vitamin D.

My first stop was to Ocean Spa to replenish my supply of Epionce Ultra Shield Lotion, SPF 50. A few years ago I learned the hard way that any brand I found in the drug store made me itchy and bumpy. I only get 50 percent UV coverage because I like a bit of tan.

For better or worse, I still associate tanned skin with travel and health and wealth, even though every dermatologist in the world will tell you tanning is verboten. To me, this ban on taking in natural sun is the reason we need Vitamin D supplements.

On my way over to the beach, I dropped into the boutique Purple Moon to eyeball cute handbags and luxe undies. If you've got a hankering for lingerie, this is the place. Purple Moon also has a selection of attractive bags fashioned of leather strips leather and repurposed feed bags; they have a chest full of lovely scarves ideal for dressing up any outfit and camouflaging throat wattle. This is where the sunscreen comes in. I use it to prevent more throat wattle.

I dropped into the Cannon Beach Book Company because it's such a special shop. A voracious reader, I try to get my books these days from the library, but it's tempting to step into a bookstore to see what's new and hot. I ended up buying greeting cards. The store has the loveliest selection. The cards are so beautiful you may want to keep them, not send them.

Winding my way over to the beach, I couldn't help noticing cute dogs. There were so many, all of them leashed, and all of them, as far as I could see, well-mannered. I saw a crew of Corgis and then a pair of dogs I call "powder puffs" who were probably Shih Tzus or a hybrid of Shih Tzu, Lhasa apso, Yorkshire terrier and bichon frisé. Whatever they were, they were precious. Next came a giant Cane Corso. I remarked to its owner its brindle color. A blue-eyed collie mix so evenly split black and white it resembled a four-legged Oreo cookie, strained at its leash, eager to get to the water. A very young golden retriever pup (its human said it was only 6 months old) made as though it might want to sniff my crotch. That's a big puppy for you.

Clusters of visitors strolled past, conversing in what I imagine was Japanese, although since I know not a word of Japanese, I can't be sure about that. Many had in hand lunch-to-go from Crêpe Neptune. My go-to thing to order there is the ham-and-cheese crepe they call the Manzanita. Others were eating ice cream.

By the trash bins at the entrance to the beach, a teenager covered in sand and dressed entirely in black was lying on the ground in a fetal position. Her face was covered but her hand in the classic posture of anguish. To my surprise, a dozen or more people walked straight past. After a few minutes I walked over and quietly asked if she was all right. "I'm OK," she mumbled without moving. I stood nearby for a few minutes until she got up and left.

There was a beautiful messenger-style bag in Cannon Beach Leather I seriously coveted. I must go back soon before some lucky tourist nabs it.

## LETTERS

### A plea for a Seaside bypass

Dear City of Seaside. You have a heart problem. Your arteries are clogged and you need a bypass.

I know this issue has come up in the past and the consensus was that if Seaside had a bypass that people may not stop to shop. Well... people are stopped for sure. In fact, they are dead stopped on 101 going both directions most days and certainly on weekends. They are able to pick up an order of Grizzly Tuna or a coffee from Numan Bean or shop at Hike Outlet that is how slow the traffic moves.

There are more travelers on the road than in previous years and it is only going to get worse, not just here but everywhere.

The local businesses are the losers because local residents stay home to avoid the traffic and it is becoming increasingly difficult just to go to the grocery store.

Those vehicles that are waiting to move through Seaside are not going to veer off and lose their place in line and most are wondering if there has been an accident as there is no signage that tells them why traffic is congested. Travel

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