

Views from the Rock

Viewing the world upside down

# Seaside's latest innovation goes topsy-turvy



KEITH BAKER/FOR CANNON BEACH GAZETTE

The editor takes a ride at the Inverted Experience.

If the world seems to be a little upside down, you're not alone. Keith Baker first imagined a topsy-turvy outlook as a kid watching TV shows upside down while lying on the living-room couch. During the long months as a commercial fisherman in Alaska, he would let his imagination run as he gazed over the horizon.

Back in Seaside, Baker has turned his longtime vision into a reality at the Inverted Experience, appropriately located at the former location of the Ferris wheel on Broadway.

Today, the room is decorated like a Fred Astaire-Ginger Rogers Hollywood stage set, with fixtures on the ceiling and upside down on the walls. Barstools are upside down at the "inverted saloon" and on a side wall, a 1950s kitchen scene hangs from above.

Reactions are "unbelievable," Baker said. "It's steamrolling."

He developed the concept about 10 years ago, during those long moments on a fishing boat in the Bering Sea. "When you are isolated on a boat you have a lot of time to think," Baker said. "You don't have a lot of influences, TV or internet."

The Inverted Experience is the product of Baker's imagination and his love for Seaside.

A \$6 admission fee gains entry; a family pass is \$20 for four. Visitors

## CANNON SHOTS

R.J. MARX



pass their phones to an attendant, who snaps and rotates the shots so people appear to be hanging, floating, running or scrambling upside down.

The surreal images hang like a Salvador Dali in cyberspace. The emporium's Facebook page is filled with children "diving" into a toilet bowl, families blown in the wind clinging to bicycle handlebars or holding onto a lamppost in midair.

## New technology

Baker, who lives in Gearhart, is a fifth-generation North Coast resident. His grandfather was stationed at Camp Rilea Armed Forces Training Center, and family members remain.

He recalled the memorable upside-down Astaire dance scenes and the 1980s Lionel Richie video, "Dancing on the Ceiling."

A Google search revealed a house in Orlando, Florida, made to look like a mansion uprooted by a tornado. Other than those, he said, he hadn't seen anything like this before.

"It's only come to light in the last four or five years," Baker said. "Everybody has a camera. You just invert



COLIN MURPHEY/EO MEDIA GROUP

Roscoe Baker, left, takes photos of Reed and Cooper Helvey of St. Louis, Mo., at the Inverted Experience in Seaside. The attraction, owned by Keith Baker, features sets that are upside down.

that on your phone. That is the nature of the experience."

Baker designed the room at 111 Broadway himself, and called on friends to help install props.

Images include the Prom, a sidewalk, the "inverted saloon" and a vintage kitchen.

Baker plans on changing it up this winter and adding a mural. Decor will be changed at Halloween and Christmastime to reflect holiday themes. He hopes to make it a family-friendly destination suitable for birthday parties, receptions and reunions. Next door, the Pacific Pearl Coffee Co. sells T-shirts reading "The Inverted Experience" and "Inverted Lives Matter."

## September bustles with activity at the library

Happy end-of-summer to locals and visitors alike! It's been maybe a little cooler and foggier than most of our summers, but it's still been a good one.

To kick off September, we will enjoy our first membership meeting and brunch of the autumn at 10 a.m. Wednesday, Sept. 6. Our speaker will be Charles Dice, who will talk about estate planning. Our hostesses will organize a delicious brunch. Let's gather together for good food, an informative talk, and most importantly — renewal of our fellowships.

For September, there will be no Northwest Author Series. We have been talking about a new format for the author series. According to series organizer Jean Furchner sometime this autumn we might be having a speaker on the Mount St. Helens eruption, but she is also looking at May which marks the 37th anniversary of the eruption. More information will

## AT THE LIBRARY

CARLA O'REILLY



follow; we're in the planning stages right now.

Cannon Beach Reads meets at 7 p.m. Wednesday, Sept. 20. This month, members have been reading "Wise Blood," by Flannery O'Connor. O'Connor was an American writer and essayist. She was an important voice in American literature who often wrote in a southern Gothic style. "Wise Blood" was her first novel and is about a recently discharged World War II veteran who finds his family home abandoned. The book follows him as he struggles with issues of faith. This month, Linda Schaeffer will be the discussion leader. Newcomers are always encouraged.

Calling all crafters and bakers! The annual Fall Festival is on Saturday, Sept. 30, and is an important fundraiser for the library. Donated crafts to be sold are appreciated. And if you're a baker, we are in need of items for the bake sale. Stop in at the office soon to sign up to work at the festival or contribute baked goods or craft items. Sign-up sheets are next to Buddie's desk.

Library Board member Pam DeVisser is in the process of collecting interesting local gift certificates for our September Gift Certificate Drawing and Hotel Stay Silent Auction. The tickets are \$1 each, six for \$5 or 25 for \$20. Winners will be announced at 3 p.m. on the day of the Fall Festival. Tickets will be on sale at the library beginning Sept. 1, so stop in and take a look at our drawing and silent auction items and purchase your tickets. You do not have to be present to win.

So that's what our September looks like so far, library-lovers. Come join us!

## Finding family where, when you least expect it

Small-town connections prove powerful when tracking kin

There's something special about small-town living. That something special is a phenomenon I found myself defending when I made the decision to move to the Oregon Coast. I was halfway through my last quarter of college in Bellingham, Washington, when I took the job with the newspaper more than six months ago, and the announcement was usually met with either some jealous statement about an opportunity to live on the beach, or some form of this question:

"Why there? It's so small. Do you have connections down there?"

They meant connections in a vague sense — professional, personal, familial or otherwise. Six months ago, my answer was "no."

Deep down, I was nervous to leave all my friends and family for somewhere unknown. But then I would line up my defenses. I grew up in a small town, so I know what to expect. You connect with people stronger and more quickly, I would argue.

So what if most of the bars and restaurants close by 10 p.m.? I had faith in having that small-town, family-like culture carry me through.

Turns out I was wrong. I did have a connection to the North Coast. It took me physically moving here to discover I had a whole branch of extended family I never knew existed. And I found my family through a series of conversations and connections that only a small town could provide.

For those of you reading and wondering: yes, I am related to longtime North Coast residents Dan and Sharon Visser, and their kids Jennifer, Julie and Lori Visser.

I was first tipped off to their existence when sources would ask me if I went to Seaside High School, or if my name was Jennifer. Apparently we look similar. They would ask if I was one of the "local Vissers" in town, and each time I would answer that I wasn't sure. After this happened five or six times, I decided to figure out who these "local Vissers" were to be able to answer these inquiries.

When I asked my parents about being related to someone named Jennifer, the answer was more or less "plausible." The description sounded like the daughter of my dad's cousin, but he wasn't sure.

If at this point you are wondering how I could not be aware of an entire branch of my family, it may be worthy to note, I haven't met a large portion of Vissers related to me because my grandfather's generation had 10 siblings. Many live all over the country, and when each of those siblings have babies, and those babies have babies, the number of Vissers to keep track of starts to become quite the task.

## Sorting it out

To sort the local connections out, I found one of my colleagues was a mutual friend with Jennifer Visser. I sent her message saying I thought there was a chance we were related.

Around this same, an article about my arrival ran in The Daily Astorian, which listed the fact I grew up in Wenatchee, Washington, where a sizable portion of the "Visser clan" still live. Between Sharon reading the article and the timing of the Facebook message, dots were connected and before I knew it I had received an invitation to Easter dinner from my new-found family.

I showed up the next day with a bottle of wine and a lot of questions. We had 22 years to make up for, anyway. Over the course of dinner, we found that Dan was my dad's cousin, and our grandfathers were twins. I left Easter with fewer questions and five new lovely people to call family.

Looking back, it's uncanny to think of all the intersecting, moving parts that lead to this culmination of events. I often wonder if this situation had unfolded in a place like Los Angeles or New York would I have ever met this family.

One of my greatest fears moving here was the possibility of feeling lonely. But by moving here I not only was able to connect with biological family, but also with the tight-knit North Coast community that allowed me to find them in the first place. There is a lot of power in knowing your neighbor, and in small towns like this, a lot of impact.

And taking the energy to know your neighbor is what makes small-town living so special.

## LIFE AT THE BEACH

BRENNA VISSER



## Uncommonly common



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An unbroken common murre egg found at Chapman Point by Diane Amos.

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