

Before plunging into 2015, reflect on last year

Being the news junkie that I am, at the beginning of every January, I can't help but wonder what the biggest news stories of the upcoming year will be.

Unfortunately, most all of the national and international stories topping the list at year's end are bad news: natural disasters, wars, serial murders, plane crashes and celebrities gone awry.

Even in our own region, the top stories in Cannon Beach and Seaside were bad news.

In Cannon Beach, taking top spot was the murder of a 2-year-old girl and the attempted murder of her 13-year-old sister, allegedly by their mother.

Two forest fires in Arch Cape; sea star wasting disease at Haystack Rock; the pursuit and denial of a charter for the Cannon Beach Academy; and the deaths of some well-known residents, including Cannon Beach Book Co. owner Val Ryan, also were among those stories on the list.

In Seaside, the recent death of another 2-year-old girl and an accident last spring when a family nearly drowned after their car went off a boat ramp and into the Necanicum River headed the "top story" list.

Other stories include an effort to recall Gearhart Mayor Dianne Widdop, a controversial adolescent sexuality conference and the inundation of anchovies onto the banks of the Necanicum River.

But there were happier stories, too.

The South County Community Food Bank successfully found a new location; a celebration and open house will occur soon. This was a story about the cooperation between the Seaside School District, which gave away two portable buildings from the former Cannon Beach Elementary School; the city of Cannon Beach; and the Seaside pantry officials to create a permanent lo-

cation for the pantry.

A few months later, the Cannon Beach Food Pantry found itself in the same position: It had to move from its present location. Once again, the school district and Cannon Beach officials helped out, and the Cannon Beach pantry is busy remodeling another portable building at the former school site and will move in soon.

While the retirement and departure of former Seaside Police Chief Bob Gross was a sad occasion for many, the city made an easy transition by promoting Seaside police Lt. Dave Ham, who has been with the department since 1995.

The city of Seaside is anticipating other changes in the future, with a 20-year "visioning" campaign completed and the purchase of a former church building that could become another event space.

Cannon Beach's Sandcastle Contest celebrated its 50th anniversary. Or was it the 50th? There may be more to this story in 2015....

But there are stories that resonate personally with me that wouldn't necessarily make the Top 10 list or any list for that matter:

The invasion of elk in Gearhart and Seaside. Photos emailed to me by business owner Jeff Ter Har; nature photographer Neal Maine; and, especially, Gearhart administrative assistant and treasurer Gail Como generated more than 30,000 hits from all over the world on the



Cash, the would-be K-9 officer.

IMPRESSIONS

By
NANCY
McCARTHY



We reflect on the past year, take a deep breath and plunge into the next year, ready to explore what comes next

Seaside Signal Facebook page.

Cash, the would-be K-9 officer in Cannon Beach, got fired. It was a small story that captured the interest and imagination of news outlets across the country.

The tussle over ownership of the south half of the Cannon Beach Elementary School property. The school district owns it, and the Cannon Beach City Council wants to buy it, but not for the \$1.2 million the district is requesting. There was a flurry of words from the school district chairman and the Cannon Beach mayor, then (apparent) silence.

It wouldn't make anyone's list of top news stories, but when Cannon Beach reporter Erick Bengel decided to accompany City Planner Mark Barnes on a bicycle ride from Seaside to Cannon Beach, I also had to take the trip — by car — to take photos. I didn't know whether to laugh at Erick's attempts to climb the Cannon Beach hill or worry that the 25-pound backpack he was carrying would finish him off.

Then there are experiences that aren't stories but are pretty memorable for me, anyway:

My first visit to the Seaside Jazz Festival allowed me to listen to wonderful music and watch dancers get into the "beat."

I appreciated the sense of peace and true connection felt



JEFF TER HAR PHOTO

Looking to make a goal, an elk herd spends time munching the grass near the goal post at Seaside High School Jan. 31.



CONTRIBUTED BY DIEDRE FEINAUER

Seaside High School's spring musical, "Grease," drew a standing room only crowd. Members of the cast are pictured.

throughout the room during the "Welcome Home Salmon" celebration in Cannon Beach.

There was the thrill when the Seaside Signal staff was awarded the Seaside Chamber of Commerce's "Business of the Year" award.

I very much enjoyed the enthusiastic performance of "Grease" put on by Seaside High School students last spring. There are truly talented youth — and instructors — on the North Coast.

It was fun to be part of the camaraderie among friends at the Seaside Downtown Development Association and Seaside Chamber of Commerce morning breakfasts throughout the year. If you want to know what's going on in the South County, that's where to go.

Every day we are on the lookout for news, seeking stories that intrigue, entertain, inform and inspire. Then there are the stories that take us by surprise, that overwhelm us, disappoint, alarm and bring us to despair.

Sometimes we become so inundated with the news and with deadlines that we don't have time to pause and take a look back. I guess that's what the turn of the calendar page on Dec. 31 enables us to do.

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Nancy McCarthy covers South County for The Daily Astorian and is the editor of the Cannon Beach Gazette and the Seaside Signal.

Side Rail

JON RAHL

A look back and into the future of Seaside tourism

When my wife asked me what I was going to write about this month, she almost answered the question as fast as it came out of her mouth. "A look back, and a look ahead," she said. She was right!

The first column of the year has become a tradition for me in this space, being that it will be my fourth "look back and look ahead."

The new year always gives pause to reflect on the past and look forward to the future, so without further ado, let's do just that with Seaside tourism. Happy New Year, Seaside!

Recapping 2014

Seaside Naturally: Early in 2014, Seaside Visitors Bureau took over the phenomenal asset that former Seaside Chamber of Commerce Director Al Smiles helped to create in 2009.

The move aligned with the outdoor adventure we were already promoting, and current chamber Executive Susan Huntington agreed with the move. What that means for the community and Seaside visitors is a refreshed website and an enhanced Facebook presence focused entirely on Seaside's great outdoors. Learn more at SeasideNaturally.com.

Quarterly industry newsletter creation: The staff at the visitors bureau is committed to creating awareness about Seaside while constantly striving to stay on top of travel trends and information that will help us do our job more effectively.

With that in mind, we created an industry newsletter for hospitality businesses to gain from those same insights. The quarter-



JON RAHL

ly news looks at lodging tax information, gives tips on staffing and often includes great factoids perfect for interacting with visitors.

We've also included an at-a-glance calendar of upcoming Seaside events and training opportunities for hospitality workers. Learn more at bit.ly/SSIndustry.

Video production for Oregon's North Coast: After

two plus years of working to collectively promote Oregon's North Coast, the cooperative effort between the Astoria/Warrenton Area Chamber of Commerce, Seaside Visitors Bureau and Cannon Beach Chamber of Commerce created incredible video assets in 2014.

A three-day video shoot involved 60 locations across Clatsop County, which yielded three inspiring new videos. Those videos were condensed this past fall and are being used to advertise our area to Portland, Seattle and Vancouver, B.C. Check them out at bit.ly/ONC-Play.

Looking ahead

Oregon Tourism Commission meeting: Travel Oregon leads the state's tourism and marketing initiatives with an annual budget of close to \$14 million.

It does amazing things every day to help draw national and international awareness to the great state we get to call home.

You can learn a little bit more about these efforts when the commission holds its first quarter meeting in Seaside at 9 a.m. Feb. 10 in the Seaside Civic & Convention Center. Learn more about Travel Oregon at industry.traveloregon.com.

Convention Center expansion

In the late 1960s and early 1970s, Seaside leaders made a controversial decision to build a convention center in town. It wasn't always the most popular idea, but can we imagine our community without it today, 45 years later? Sometime this year, city leaders will decide if an expansion of the 22,000-square-foot

facility makes sense for future generations.

Growth in tourism infrastructure: The convention center is not the only thing that could be changing in Seaside. Local leaders are working on the development of a natural history park, which will expand and create greater awareness about Seaside's green space, and many hotels are considering or already updating their properties. These are just a few things that will help Seaside prepare for future visitors.

Jon Rahl is the director of the Seaside Visitors Bureau and assistant general manager of the Seaside Civic & Convention Center. Have a thought or question about tourism in Seaside, or maybe an idea for a future column? Drop him an email at jon@seasideor.com

Scene and Heard

CLAIRE LOVELL

Holidays filled with meals, performances and blessings

On one of our Wednesday women's meetings, Walter Trumbull, whose portrayal of Abraham Lincoln was a stunning success, became the angel Gabriel telling the virgin Mary that she would become the mother of Jesus.

Walter is always dressed appropriately, and this time he presented in a loose white, gold-belted garment covered with a red robe. He was most convincing — a natural thespian.

Senior dinner

The senior gathering at the convention center for our annual Thanksgiving turkey dinner was lots of fun on a cold day. It was a wonderful meal. I thought, though personally, I didn't like their string beans.

There are so many ways to prepare them that I prefer them out of a can. But that's only me. We had plenty to take home, and I enjoyed the turkey sandwich for supper.

Master of ceremonies for the event was Chief Executive Mike Blauer, of Providence Seaside Hospital. It's hard to eat without giving thanks for food, and he did that so we were off to a good start. Mike also told of hearing the carol, "I Heard the Bells on Christmas Day" in church, so, of course, that song was chasing around my mind all day.

The rope jumpers who entertained us were a smaller group than before but very capable and entertaining. We never jumped like that when I was a kid.



CLAIRE LOVELL

Santa visited every table, although it didn't help because three people where I sat (including yours truly) came within one number of winning a cash prize.

Hebrew blessing

On Dec. 17, I received a phone call from Jerusalem.

A rabbi, I think, gave me a blessing in Hebrew, then translated it into English because I give recovery to survivors of the Holocaust from the former Soviet Union; often they are cold and hungry and can't afford their medications. I still find it amazing that such a conversation could be so easy and sound so close.

Shut the door

The old expression, "Were you born in a barn?" has an insulting connotation, but at Christmas time we remember who was born in a barn and it becomes something to appreciate. If it means, "Shut that door behind you," then the baby will be free of drafts and cozy in the arms of his mother.

Christmas celebration

On Dec. 21, "The Christmas Story" was performed by the choir at the Methodist church, Alvis Porter directing and Tevan Goldberg, our former pianist, accompanying. There were solos by Walt Trumbull and Su Coddington. There was a duet by Debbie Vail and Randy Brainerd, and it ended in another Halleluia chorus as a piano duet by Suzanne Zimmerman and Laurel Adelman. Just hearing the traditional music is a thrill. The service was well attended, the sanctuary was full, and more than two of us wished that all churches could look like that every Sunday.

Holidays are often special times for coming together. After Christmas, I

was invited to the home of Jim and Angela Waddell for dinner. I met new family; Tanya, Joshua and Brittany and the Waddells gave me some lovely gifts as well. I'm a lucky person.

Laugh line

A church was beginning to look tacky so the congregation voted to give it a coat of paint. Paint was expensive. Wanting to save a little money, the workmen added some thinner to make it go farther. Unfortunately, when it rained, the colors ran and it looked worse than before. "What shall we do?" asked the workers of the pastor and he answered, "Repaint, repaint and thin no more." This is one of John Raniero's jokes but he could tell it much better than I.