

Power grid is at mercy of Mother Nature, balloons

Last Sunday, we saw the first of the elk entering our property. The lead elk was like a scout, poking through the brush near the Neacoxie Creek. You could hear the “whoosh” of the herd long before you could really see them, conjuring up visions of the prehistoric world. Would mastodons be next?

Enticed by the large, grassy neighboring lot, the herd emerged from the narrow path and woods by the creek and began stalking their positions. At first they stood assembled in a lineup, one after the other taking some kind of preordained position in various corners of the lot. The smaller animals came first out of the woods, and the rows filled out. In a corner of the group, two young bulls frolicked and playfully butted heads. Then from the woods emerged the majestic elders, with mottled skin and huge racks, proud creatures flanked by their harem and offspring.

“What’s that one doing?” my wife, the Jersey girl, asked.

Street side, a circle of elk were crowding around the wooden utility pole. The pole was held upright by metal wires, covered with a protective yellow covering. The elk began chewing on the protective shell. They began pulling at the wires. They gnawed at the wood pole. They scraped and pulled and burrowed.

“Should I call the power company?” she asked.

“N-no,” I said, mesmerized, standing at the window. “I think it’s only a guide wire.”

Still, the animals kept working, until others in the group folded their legs and settled down like an audience at symphony hall.

Short-circuit

The day before I’d heard Pacific Power’s Sheila Holden at the Seaside Downtown Development Association breakfast at the Pig ’N Pancake.

SEEN FROM SEASIDE

R.J. MARX

“What can we do at Pacific Power to be a better partner with the community?” Holden asked. “What are some of the things that are important to the people, the businesses in the community? We want to not only make the community better, but the businesses better.”

A hand shot up. “Has there been something done to the substation to cover the top so we don’t have another Fourth of July?” Jeff Ter Har asked.

He was referring to July 4, 2015, when Seaside’s Independence Day celebration was brought to a sudden halt after an outage.

Seaside, Gearhart and parts of Warrenton were without power from about 4:40 to 10:20 p.m. as Pacific Power crews replaced damaged equipment. A balloon, officials later announced, caused a main substation transformer to short-circuit near Seaside Factory Outlet Center.

“Balloons may seem like small things,” Pacific Power Safety Manager Gene Morris said at the time. “But when escaped balloons touch power lines or substations, even the smallest amount of metal content material can conduct electricity.”

When a balloon “gets in there in the wrong spot, it just basically short circuits the transmitting of the electricity,” Pacific Power spokesman Tom Gauntt added.

“I knew that would come up,” Holden said, six months later. “Mylargate. No, we don’t cover the tops of our substations.”

Pacific Power even holds events with balloons, Holden confessed. “But they are not Mylar.”



R.J. MARX PHOTO/SEASIDE SIGNAL

Regional business managers Alisa Dunlap and Sheila Holden of Pacific Power.

Of mice and mylar

These seemingly harmless, festive party items cause, according to SafeElectricity.org, “hundreds of thousands” of power outages, including the one in Seaside.

In California, under the “Balloon Law,” Mylar balloons have been prohibited since 1990. Even with the ban, foil-lined party balloons cause 100 to 150 outages a year, according to Pacific Gas & Electric. In 2008, a California legislator introduced a bill to ban those too. Florists and party planners objected, and successfully lobbied for its defeat.

Even kites have been known to bring down power systems.

A Times opinion writer in 2013 chronicled outages caused by animals after reading about a squirrel that electrocuted itself on a power line in Tampa, Fla., cutting electricity to 700 customers. He came up with 50 power outages caused by squirrels in 24 states.

In March, an animal about the size of a raccoon got into a substation in southeast Bend and caused fuses to blow knocking out power to more than 8,600 customers and blacking out homes, stores and traffic lights for three hours.

Twenty-one buildings in Tulsa, Oklahoma, — including the Okla-



R.J. MARX PHOTO/SEASIDE SIGNAL

Suspension lines in Lewis & Clark carry power to the Coast.

Fourth of July just around the corner

Larry Kriegshauser was back in Seaside in mid-January to begin preparations for this year’s Fourth of July holiday fireworks display, the largest in coastal Oregon and Washington. Sparklers and Roman candles OK — Mylar, no no. Kriegshauser sold fireworks as a child and returned to them when he was put in charge of entertainment as a board member of the Marion County Fair. There, he met people who showed him how to handle fireworks and create a show. In Seaside, Kriegshauser, with state and federal licenses, has, for 14 years, supervised a fireworks crew that arranges the pyrotechnics to shoot off according to a musical score, which he also helps to arrange. For more information, contact the Seaside Chamber of Commerce.

homa State University Medical Center — were affected by a rodent-caused power outage in October, after a rat or mouse crawled into a transformer’s switch gear.

Less than a month ago, a squirrel knocked out power to 1,800 customers in Sunnyside, Washington.

Seeing the elk working so diligently at the wire in our backyard reminded me of the random qualities of nature. A bitter northeast wind. Animals on a ridge path. A children’s balloon.

How powerful we are. Yet how powerless as well.

Library reading program helps to fight world hunger

The Friends of the Seaside Public Library group has been an incredible supporter of the Seaside Public Library since the 1980s when the group first formed in the library at the old Roosevelt Avenue location. The main mission of the Friends of the Library is to support the programs of the Library and they do this through their bookstore in the library where they sell used books and other items, as well as through their annual membership drive, donations, and occasional book sales. This month, the Friends of the Seaside Library not only donated a brand new custom book drop to the Library, they have also supported the library’s third annual winter reading program. This winter the goal for elemen-

BETWEEN THE COVERS

ESTHER MOBERG

tary age children was to read 500 hours. If all of the children who signed up read that many hours total, then the Friends of the Library group had pledged to give a goat through Heifer International to a family in need in a third world country. Heifer International’s mission, according to their website, is “to work with communities to end world hunger and poverty and to care for the Earth.” Their goal is to teach people self-sufficiency, through animals which they can raise. That will feed them in turn and

give them opportunities for business. Many families in Heifer International’s program receive new opportunities for income or enough to eat which allows the children to attend school, often for the first time.

During the two months of the winter reading program which started in November and finished in January, not only did the winter reading program children read 500 hours, they blew that goal out of the water. The final count of total hours was 1,572. The Friends of the Seaside Library will reward this incredible extra effort with an additional beehive and flock of chicks purchased through Heifer International and donated to a family in need in a third world country.

Over 250 children signed up



SUBMITTED PHOTO/SEASIDE SIGNAL

Past winter program reading goals were to provide a llama and a water buffalo. Both reading goals were successfully met and the Friends of the Library donated these animals through Heifer International.

for winter reading program and both classes at Seaside Heights Elementary and Gearhart Elementary schools participated.

Revelations about Seaside in this pithy little book

On the first Sunday of the New Year, a very big man came to our church. He seemed halfway to heaven. I’m sure everyone noticed his size but I had to call attention to it. “Someone should put a book on your head,” I told him. “You’re so large! How tall are you?” “I’m six foot six inches,” he said. “The same size as Michael Jordan!” He was a wonderful sight.

So many of our friends and schoolmates have died during the last couple of years, it’s scary. The latest to me is Dick Fague. Dick was the same age as my son Gary — born the same year and in high school at the same time. He worked in the lab at the Seaside Clinic briefly while I was there and his parents, Bill and Dorothy, were friends from the American Legion.

My word for the New Year is “hope.” I can use it for all of you to hope for good times, good health and good endings to all your dreams.

SCENE & HEARD

CLAIRE LOVELL

Could you believe that one day there would be two pages of advertising for pot in The Daily Astorian? When I first looked at the article, I thought they were selling some kind of herbal tea and wondered why they weren’t in bags. Eventually, when I understood, I felt really stupid. I’m disappointed that we have such a simple society so absorbed with “feelings” and sensations.

The mailman brought me a really nice surprise last week. My granddaughter Andra in Seattle sent me a book written by a friend and old-time Seaside Dorothy Otto, now deceased. At first I thought it might be from her son Roger with whom I started school and continued for six years at Central. Later, I discov-

ered Andra’s note in the bottom of the envelope and she explained the mystery. It’s a story similar to my book, but takes us to all the homes she lived in in her life and is entitled, “15 Homes for Dorothy.” Of course there’s a lot in it about old Seaside. Dorothy’s father was Frank Godfrey of Godfrey Bros. Hardware, which was situated on the alley north of the Alex Gilbert block on N. Holladay. Later the Safeway with Sally the Salmon was built on the spot.

There are several revelations in this pithy little book with many people and situations I knew or knew of and I learned definitively how the fire of 1912 began and where. Godfrey’s store at that time was where Harrison’s Bakery later located. West of it was a tavern which became, when I was a kid, Haley’s Meat Market. At that time, someone was cooking crab on a gasoline stove. The container tipped over and as the saying goes, the rest is history. I imagine the crab was

overcooked. They did lose their dog that had been taken out of the burning building but went back in — probably to a favorite spot. I had always heard that the conflagration began across the street that “it was a dark and stormy night” and something flammable blew over. Dorothy Godfrey Otto was there so I’ll take her word for it. In her account of Otto’s Grocery on the Westside (later owned by Dave Fix) she mentioned Edward Sawrey as helping out sometimes. Ed was my cousin. His dad, my mother’s brother Uncle Morris, had a secondhand store somewhere on the eastside of Broadway. Eventually they moved to Marshfield.

Laugh Line

Teacher: “Billy, what is the chemical formula for water?”

Billy: “H I J K L M N O.”

Teacher: “Where did you come up with that?”

Billy: “Yesterday you said it was H to O.”

PUBLIC MEETINGS

Monday, Jan. 25

Seaside City Council, 7 p.m., City Hall, 989 Broadway.

Tuesday, Jan. 26

Seaside Airport Advisory Committee, 6 p.m., City Hall, 989 Broadway.

Thursday, Jan. 28

Sunset Empire Transportation District Board, 9 a.m., Astoria Transit Center, 900 Marine Drive.

Tuesday, Feb. 2

Seaside Planning Commission, 7 p.m., City Hall, 989 Broadway.

Wednesday, Feb. 3

Seaside Improvement Commission, 7 p.m., City Hall, 989 Broadway.

Thursday, Feb. 4

Seaside Parks Advisory Committee, 7 p.m., City Hall, 989 Broadway.

Monday, Feb. 8

Seaside City Council, 7 p.m., City Hall, 989 Broadway.

Friday, Feb. 12

Seaside Convention Center meeting, 5 p.m., Convention Center, 415 First Ave.