

# When clam diggers stepped in to save the Necanicum Estuary



NEAL MAINE/FOR SEASIDE SIGNAL

Rocks hauled in during the 1960s remain littering the estuary.

Seaside's Neal Maine still remembers the battle over development in Sunset Cove in Seaside. He sees the results of it every day. A sand berm built by developers is finally breaking down. Rocks and debris dumped in the estuary almost a half-century ago continue to litter the shoreline.

"We're still living with the rock that was put there in 1976," Maine said. "We're still living with it and it's basically contaminating the estuary for the rest of time."

The 17-acre site was purchased from the city in 1965, and by 1968, faced the review process. It called for 175 homes with streets, sewers and underground wiring on a sand spit above the Necanicum Estuary over Gearhart. Lots ranged from a minimum of 5,000 to 7,000 square feet.

The project had some influential proponents, including Rep. William Holmstrom of Gearhart, President of the Sunset Cove Corporation and a member of the Oregon House of Representatives.

Despite objections from neighbors, environmentalists and the Army Corps of Engineers, a Clatsop County Circuit Court judge OKed a mining permit to move sand from the estuary and replace it with rock.

There was a different mind-set back then, Maine said. "If it makes another buck, then do it."

Construction crews went to work bringing in rock and fill as Sunset Cove excavated the channel and built a rock retaining wall along a sand spit at the mouth of the Necanicum River. An island of rock and sand was created between November 1967 and January 1968.

"They got a mining permit to scrape the sand off the beach, to keep filling, filling, filling," Maine said. "People were outraged by it. It was totally bogus."

"Then they started armoring the rock," he added. "They brought in enough rock to raise a wall 25-feet deep."

Ultimately, the developers piled up 370,000 cubic yards of sand on the 17-acre site to build it up from the beach.

When a storm washed some of that away, the builders put riprap on the ocean side to prevent further erosion.

"Within really just months it started wiping out the entire bank of Gearhart," Maine said.

A group of clam diggers was able to accomplish what opponents weren't: stop the 'dozers in their tracks. With interven-

SEEN FROM SEASIDE  
R.J. MARX



tion from the Army Corps of Engineers, Oregon Attorney General Robert Thorn-ton charged seven heavy equipment operators and the project superintendent with "wanton waste of razor clams."

"Some old codger remembered somewhere in the fish and game laws that it was against the law to drive on clam beds," Maine said. "The fish and game wardens wrote the driver up."

Neighbors and clam diggers demanded that the fill be removed and the firm forced to pay a penalty of \$500,000 for "wanton damage to the clam beds."

In 1975, a district court demanded the removal of the construction rock; however, a federal appeals judge modified the decision to "require the removal of as much of the riprap as will permit nature ... to take its course."

By 1978, nature had already taken its course. Eight property owners in north Seaside faced losing their homes after the estuary's diverted waters began eating away at their homes. The homeowners were required to add additional rock retaining walls to protect their properties.

Despite the rulings and damage to the nearby homes, the developer returned to the planning table, this time with an 80-home plan for the estuary.

The Army Corps of Engineers was joined by 1,000 Friends of Oregon, the Necanicum River Protective Association and members of the Seaside Planning Commission, all of whom opposed the developer's plan to build homes on an active foredune in violation of state land use guidelines. Maine, in opposing the project at the time, told Clatsop County planning commissioners in 1977 the proposal was still "basically bad."

By that time, land use rules were in effect and there was greater ecological awareness. Maine and others recognized the value of the estuaries to man and wildlife, and natural beauty of the land.

Sunset Cove Inc. brought their case to the U.S. Court of Appeals, which demanded an after-the-fact permit from the builders for unauthorized fill.

The next spring, the appeals court affirmed that the Sunset Cove area was pro-

tected as "navigable waters" and the project stalled after the U.S. Supreme Court failed to hear the developers' appeal.

## Lessons learned?

As a berm created by fill from the '60s crumbles in the estuary's waters, we are watching "the last little pieces of this history," Maine said.

"I'm not interested in reliving it," Maine said this month. "I think the story is how important the decision-making process is because there are legacies that are unforeseen. You have to have a process."

Yet he mourns the ineradicable changes to the inlet, where rock will remain and channels were changed forever. "This covered over tidelands, which are the most pro-

## Can rock be turned to profit?

**While nature will break up the island of fill in the estuary, thousands of pounds of rock dropped as fill in the 1960s remains.**

**"Rock put there in the '60s and '70s — we're still living with it and it's basically contaminating the estuary for the rest of time," Neal Maine said. "We did talk to some folks about recovery, because the value of rock is high enough."**

**Bulldozers and dump trucks could remove the rock, he suggested. "You could just sell it, and that would get it out of there."**

ductive in the world," Maine said.

If the developers had never started the process, Maine said, "It would have been the estuary that it has been for the past 10,000 years. It would have just done its thing every year. The fish would have come in and gone out.

"The estuary is one of only 17 on the Oregon Coast," he continued. "It's a gateway to hundreds of thousands acres of watershed."

Maine makes a connection between then and now, and issues a call to action.

"I hear the natural gas discussion in Warrenton, but I don't really hear the Warrenton people talking about a review process," he said. "You have to guarantee to the next two or three generations that these resources are going to be there. There has to be an identifiable review process, so 30 years later we don't say, 'My God what did we do?'"

"I don't think this would happen today, but other things could," he added. "Now, Oregon has a very specific guidelines for estuaries. The land use planning process was just getting started then. But here we are getting involved with the Columbia River estuary with LNG."

# Scholarship set up in memory of Wendy Richardson

Student who demonstrates excellent community service will be awarded

By Katherine Lacaze  
Seaside Signal

Seaside Scholarships Inc. is managing a new scholarship, created in memory of local resident Wendy Richardson, who died in December.

The Wendy Richardson Memorial Scholarship is the brainchild of several women who knew Richardson and whose sons participated in sports with Richardson's son, Nick, now 19. The Seaside Scholarships board agreed to manage the memorial scholarship.



JEFF TER HAR/FOR CANNON BEACH GAZETTE

Wendy Richardson

The scholarship will be awarded to a student based on the criterion of excellent community service, a characteristic associated with Richardson, according to board member Sally LaCoste.

"That is how everyone thinks of Wendy: how involved she was in the community," LaCoste said.

The monetary amount awarded for the scholarship is unknown at this time, she said. It will depend on the how much is contributed by the community for the scholarship.

Seaside Scholarships is a nonprofit organization that raises money used for its own achievement scholarships and also manages numerous memorial and other scholarships for local businesses and individuals. The objective is to make it easy for Seaside High School seniors to submit a single application that will be considered for all qualifying scholarships.

The Wendy Richardson Memorial Scholarship will be awarded starting with the high school's class of 2016.

To make a tax deductible donation, send a check or money order to Seaside Scholarships Inc., P.O. Box 332, Seaside, OR 97138, or visit the organization's website at [www.seasidescholarships.com/donate/](http://www.seasidescholarships.com/donate/).

## PUBLIC MEETINGS

**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.

**Monday, Feb. 16**  
**Seaside School District**, 6 p.m., 1801 S. Franklin St.

**Monday, Feb. 22**  
**Seaside City Council**, 7 p.m., City Hall, 989 Broadway.

**Tuesday, March 1**  
**Seaside Planning Commission**, 7 p.m., City Hall, 989 Broadway.

**Monday, March 14**  
**Seaside City Council**, 7 p.m., City Hall, 989 Broadway.

## DEATHS

**Jan. 21, 2016**  
WESTERHOLM, Gerald Ray, 75, of Gearhart, died in Seaside. Hughes-Ransom Mortuary in Seaside is in charge of the arrangements.

**Jan. 24, 2016**  
BADER, William Logan, 87, of Seaside, died in Hammond. Hughes-Ransom Mortuary is in charge of the arrangements.

# Saying farewell to an old friend at the Elks Lodge

On Jan. 9, I attended the funeral service for John Beneke at the Seaside Elks Lodge. It was almost standing room only. Having been out of circulation for a while, there were perhaps a couple dozen present of those I actually knew. I had a conversation with Russ Earl, always a friend, a few words with Ky (Weed) Jennings, my publisher, and fleeting contact with John Morris, Joan Beneke and some others. I'm so glad I went. Jerry Lounsbery, Exalted Ruler, led the Elks ritual of the first part of the service. This was followed by treasurer and past Exalted Ruler Jan Jackson with her revelatory and affectionate eulogy of John. It was quite long but was done so smoothly and with such attention to detail

SCENE & HEARD  
CLAIRE LOVELL



that I was sorry I didn't know John better as an adult. He evidently had a great sense of humor, always a plus. A toast given by John's son-in-law Simon Petridge followed Jan's encouragement of recollections. His remarks were also lengthy, full of humor and fondness for his wife's father. One could easily tell he enjoyed being part of the family.

Last Saturday, the big news was for excessive snowfall in the east and south. After a walk, I was pret-

ty much worn out when someone knocked at the door. By the time I made it to answer, he was already gone. I had seen him approach the porch and had tried to hurry. Outside, I noticed a business card on the bench. It was an old calling card for Bill Hoffhines, a late Methodist minister at Seaside Methodist Community Church in the 60s. I wondered if it might have been Eddie, Bill's second son. I'm so sorry I missed him. His mother Darlene and I worked together for a while.

There were at least two cats and a Deere on Holladay, between 6th and 2nd Avenues, when I took my walk. They had dug big holes in the street, set in huge round and square containers and with the back up noise of the equipment, there

were a confusion of activity. The aqua pipes were almost too pretty to bury, ha.

If your neighbor told you he was going to "hone in" on something, to correct him would be rude. However, if two newspapers let the expression go by repeatedly, it's time for a vocabulary lesson! To hone is to sharpen. When one centers on some particular thing, he "homes" in on it — as a homing pigeon does, delivering his notes. Now, we all know better — and certainly I feel better. I hope this doesn't become another "Broadway Street" episode.

Spring comes early at the seashore. For the first time, I walked on the east sidewalk south of Safeway. Where the earlier gardens were planted, many of the plants

are being encroached by blackberry growth. I should think someone could begin to cut them out of the flowering red and blue hedge plants before they take over everything. Many camellias are in bloom about town, as well.

## Laugh Lines:

A couple called George and Mary were sitting on their front porch and saw a man and woman come out of the house across the street. As they watched, the man turned and gave the woman a resounding kiss.

"Oh, George," said Mary wistfully to her husband. "Why don't you do that?"

"Why, honey," replied George, "I don't even know that lady!"