

In case of tsunami, enter the pod



R.J. MARX/SEASIDE SIGNAL

Pete Riedel brought two RescuePods to Seaside. Could they hold the answer for tsunami survival?



R.J. MARX/SEASIDE SIGNAL

Traveling with tsunami pods in tow outside the Seaside Civic and Convention Center.



SUBMITTED PHOTO

Yes, Pete Riedel is in this tsunami pod as it goes over Husum Falls in Klickitat, Washington.

You can run but you can't hide. But maybe you can float your way away.

By some strange synchronicity, this is the year of the tsunami pod.

A basic two-person 300-pound spherical pod built by former Boeing engineer Julian Sharpe, similar to the size and interior of the Gemini space capsule, costs \$13,500; the four-person model sells for \$17,500. The Survival Capsule can be tethered via a 100-foot steel cable connected to a concrete plug in the ground, essentially turning passengers inside into a buoy.

On the same day the local and national news profiled the Survival Capsule, Pete Riedel of Reliable Emergency Shelters LLC came to Seaside with his two-seat RescuePod in tow to see "who's interested and who's not."

Like Sharpe, Riedel said he hopes to provide a way out for residents and visitors of coastal communities threatened by the quake and subsequent tsunami expected in the Cascadia Subduction Zone. "I'm sticking my toe in the water seeing who could be our strategic partners, who wants us in town and who doesn't."

The RescuePod sells for half of what you'll pay for a Survival Pod, listing at \$6,500. It can fit two adults weighing up to 300 pounds each.

"In a pinch you could put small children or animals in there, too," he added.

RescuePod Inventor Randy Harper of Camas, Washington, was inspired by a request from a Seattle billionaire with a Pacific Island home, Riedel said, to develop the best apparatus to survive a tsunami.

The pod is not airtight. Rather, it has closable vents on the top and a ballast at the bottom so the vents are always up and the hatch toward the sky. "It will act like a weeble-wobble," Riedel said. "It will always land upright."

With 10 cubic feet of flotation foam and high-density polyethylene, the RescuePod can fill up entirely with water and won't sink. The pod, in Day-Glo orange, has Lexan windows with holes in them. Spin the glass and the vents open; spin them again and they close airtight.

Riedel, a former officer with the Oregon National Guard, has a handshake that could crush limestone. He told me of his test ride as a passenger cascading off Husum Falls in Klickitat County, Washington, which drops 12 feet along the Salmon River.

"It was pretty scary, but it wasn't that bad," he said. "You're in a five-point harness racing seat. You don't feel the shock as hard. The round base on the bottom absorbs quite a bit of the shock."

The pod, Riedel said, is intended for homeowners or people in the tsunami zone. I asked him if he could envision selling it on a larger scale, to cities or municipalities in the tsunami zone. After all, for example, if the Seaside School District had bought tsunami pods at \$6,500 for each of their 1,000 or so students, they could have provided safety for \$6.5 million rather than the \$99.7 million required to move

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schools out of the tsunami zone.

Jon Rahl, the assistant general manager of Seaside's visitors bureau, said this week there are about 1,350 hotel rooms in Seaside. If every hotel came with a pod to match the number of rooms, the lives of many visitors could be saved for about \$9 million.

That's a lot less than estimates for bridge replacement, which run to \$35 million or more for the city's most vulnerable crossings.

"Once we get more economies of scale, we offer discounts for people who want two of them," Riedel said. "I would love to see it come down another \$2,000 if that's doable."

Is the pod worthy of serious consideration?

"Why not?" geologist and Seaside City Councilor Tom Horning said. "Work the numbers and see."

Those seeking shelter could ride out the wave, which, Horning said, would subside in between two to four hours near the epicenter.

But, he added: "I'd rather see a bridge. The thing is, you're trusting luck with these things. You give up all control when you get in it. If we had an east wind down, it would blow you out to sea, and then ..."

His voice drifted.

Nevertheless Horning invited Riedel to come back to Seaside for a public demonstration. "Let the seller test it. Have him throw it in the Cove and see what happens. I'd be open to the idea."

So is Riedel. I told him of Horning's interest and he's willing to make a go of it.

"I figured we would get someone with a jet ski and tow us out the channel to the south and out to the break, have it go through the big waves and end on the rocks on shore and have it worked a bit on the rocks from the waves," Riedel said this week. "I will need to put together a safety crew, someone willing to help tow us out into the surf and have the proper conditions."

So if you see something bright orange floating along the Cove, it's not the latest exotic marine mammal swept up from the tropics. Maybe it's something we'll all be buying one day. Just in case.

Broadway, Broadway and Broadway!

A story went by on the radio when I was otherwise involved but realized too late that it was interesting. Some of the true details escaped me. Essentially, it was about a couple in their nineties who had recently celebrated a wedding anniversary of about 75 years. Soon afterward the husband died and in a matter of a few hours, his wife followed. This often happens when people have been married a long time. They become halves of the same where — as God intended and when one dies, it's like an amputation that won't walk. If the remaining spouse doesn't follow quickly, he or she may become rudderless and inconsolable. The pain of loss is so exquisite that continuing is impossible. I imagine divorce after a long marriage could cause the same reaction.

The year is still new and though I often falter over resolutions for self-improvement, I have resolved to make two lists. Things I want and things I have for which to be thankful. Actually, there are few wants anymore. Time is short and health is paramount. But when I awaken at night with a dry mouth and throat from medications to keep me alive, I give thanks for cold, clear water to drink. Just a sip of clean, cold water is a wonderful thing, which many people don't have. Thank you; thank you.

During the inauguration, I was somewhat anxious over all the steps the women had to navigate in high heels. A stumble would be so easy and there were no handrails anywhere. P.S.: They all did marvelously.

Something new for me in the military contingent was the way the Navy did their white hats. They looked sort of like lemon or orange fruit juicers and of course I prefer the old style.

My son is often home on a Tuesday and when he is, we lunch at Dooger's. Not only did we have lunch on the last day of January, he washed the outside of my windows, did a little pruning and drove me to my weekly shopping venue. It was a productive overnight stay. He also brought me a new little phonograph and I heard — after a long dry spell, several dusty records — Billy Vaughn, Waylon Jennings, Charlie Rich, Gordon Lightfoot, The Village Stompers — even some bird songs.

Last week I watched a Nick and Nora show with Elissa Landi as one of the actors. Elissa Landi is so 20th century, but it was nice to remember her. It was akin to suddenly remembering the lyrics to a 1928 recording by Paul Whiteman called "Pickin' Cotton."

They've done it again — at least twice again, actually. When will the print media understand that there is no main drag in Seaside called Broadway Street. It's Broadway, Broadway and Broadway. We who are old time residents do not appreciate newcomers changing names of established places; whatever is, is!

We've had some uproarious blasts from the wind lately. My trees were bending and flailing with branches going in all directions. Don't put away your long johns yet. "Who has seen the wind? Neither I nor you, but when the trees bow down their heads, the wind is passing through." Thanks to Dale McDowell for our functioning light at 3rd and Holladay. To be really nitpicky, it is crooked and one's impulse is to give it a whack.

Short sermon

Success is never permanent. Failure is never final.

LETTERS

Who's 'stuck on stupid'?

As an affliction, it affects more people world-wide than any pandemic since procreation began. For its survivors, recovery takes years, if not decades.

I call this planet-wide plague "youth," with "stuck-on-stupid" its predominant symptom. Because our kids don't know to look, they stupidly don't peer around corners. And because our stupid kids can't calculate consequences correctly, they fail to factor in the "forever" costs.

In truth, with all its cluelessness, anxiety and angst — youth is the age not just of scholarships and proms. Youth, at its cell level, is the age of stuck-on-stupid — a natural phenomenon that occurs of its own accord. This means stuck-on-stupid is inherent, i.e. a preordained phase kids can't outrun, but can outgrow over time.

What isn't preordained is the way in which our stuck-on-stupid kids are shackled for life with felonies imposed by dispassionate police, prosecutors and judges. Courtesy of Arizona's law enforcement community, consider the following case in point:

All the common markers of youth were at their apex when the boy in this example, a gentle giant and pacifist, pedaled past a crime scene crawling with police.

For months, the kid had been grappling with the illogical, i.e. arbitrary nature of life. A sports injury had cost him his college scholarships, together with his shot at playing pro-ball. He had been grieving bitterly. The abrupt loss of a dazzling bright future had been the "last straw," and the dispirited boy was heartbroken.

Teenage angst was oozing from his pores. And, as only a stuck-on-stupid kid can get, the boy had become so "fed up;" he was "ready to blow."

When Arizona police accosted him for no apparent reason, the kid who was characteristically "classy" got

See Letters, Page 5A

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Signal

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Seaside Signal

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The Seaside Signal welcomes letters to the editor. The deadline is noon Monday prior to publication. Letters must be 400 words or less and must be signed by the author and include a phone number for verification. We also request that submissions be limited to one letter per month. Send to 1555 N. Roosevelt Drive, Seaside, OR 97138, drop them off at 1555 N. Roosevelt Drive or fax to 503-738-9285. Or email rmarx@seasidesignal.com

SUBSCRIPTIONS

Annually: \$40.50 in county • \$58.00 in and out of county • e-Edition: only \$30.00

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