

A TRIP TO 'TERRIBLE TILLY'

By Brenna Visser
Seaside Signal

Scott Rekate remembers a lot about visiting the Tillamook Rock Lighthouse. It was dark. Even a little spooky.

But perhaps what was most memorable was the smell.

"It's a popular rest place for birds. The guano there ... the ammonia there would gag you," he said. "To start out to the top you'd have to take a deep breath and then run up the stairs."

In the late 1970s, Rekate was one of the many dory fishermen circling the famous lighthouse in search of a good Chinook salmon run. He was one of a handful who made it into "Terrible Tilly" after it was decommissioned and before it became a columbarium in 1980.

Other than a few photos, the experience mostly fell out of his memory until a few weeks ago, when he read a story about a man who discovered copies of the original schematics for the lighthouse in his Warrenton home.

Rekate, a retired Cannon Beach contractor, now plans to offer his photos to the Cannon Beach History Center and Museum to help piece together the lighthouse's history.

"When I read that article, I thought, 'Hey, maybe they could use these, too,'" he said.

Local lore

Lots of local lore exists about fishermen taking trips into the lighthouse, but photos documenting the interior or taken from the perspective of being on the lighthouse are uncommon, according to the history center.

While the abandoned lighthouse was always in the background, it wasn't especially common for fishermen to get onto the sea stack, Rekate recalled. There is no good way to dock a boat, and the area is known for its tumultuous conditions.

But one day, when fishing was unusually slow and the water was strangely placid, Rekate and a few other fishermen decided to take a look inside.

Getting there, however, was still a challenge. Rekate and his partners took turns jumping onto the island while the others would putter around.

"Even though it was calm, there was still a swell, so you'd have to time it," he said. "You'd move in with the swell and the person going would jump, then you'd have to hit reverse and back out."

When he first arrived at the lighthouse, the front door was flung open and the insides were in disarray.

The building was incredibly dark, Rekate remembered, illuminated only by the light from the front



Scott Rekate/The Daily Astorian

Rare photos of the Tillamook Rock Lighthouse have recently been released by a fisherman who visited the site before it was closed off.

door and from the lighthouse above. Some chairs and a table remained — even a 1950s newspaper from Tampa, Florida. Inside where the Fresnel lens used to live, little holes from small rocks carried by large waves punctured the glass.

What impressed him the most, however, was the staircase.

"The catwalks were very unique," Rekate said. "Light from the lighthouse

would hit down on diamond-shaped Fresnel pieces on the staircase and illuminate the whole staircase without any lights. I thought that was pretty cool."

Still curious
Rekate remains curious



Scott Rekate/The Daily Astorian

Scott Rekate at the Tillamook Rock Lighthouse.

about the state of the lighthouse almost 40 years later, and of the other fishermen who made the journey.

"If there was any kind of major swell, you'd bash into the rocks," he said. "So I can't imagine it happened a lot."

Many who remember Terrible Tilly have "likely been blown apart across the country by now," he said.

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Seaside Signal

The Barnyard and Company 4-H Club in Seaside is looking for new members. There focus will be on teaching youth how to care for and feed their animal; how to meet industry standards; animal products for retail, nutritional value, breeds identification, and more. Education will be primarily for animals in the swine and sheep species.

This club is for members ages 9 to 19. For more information or to sign up, call Jennifer Biamont at 503-440-2730 or Sandra Carlson at Clatsop County Extension at 503-325-8573.

Dear TUMOR

I'm so glad I found you - and that the folks at Providence knew how to get you gone. These days, the view from here is lovely.

Darn lucky and blessed,
Penny

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