

SignalViewpoints

Selling nature means selling safety, too



SEEN FROM SEASIDE
R.J. MARX

Nothing can match the Oregon Coast for its natural majesty: especially the king tides that send water crashing to the shore and can move logs like toothpicks.

I had the opportunity to watch January's tide show from the second floor of the Lanai Hotel on Sunset Boulevard.

Even from a safe perch, I couldn't help but feel a sense of concern every time a wave swept over rocks and met the hotel's concrete berm a floor below.

The view was exciting and the adrenaline was real.

Yet we all saw how this majesty could turn to the inconsolable tragedy felt by one Portland family on Jan. 11, when one child perished and another was swept to sea.

Their story is a call for caution and compassion. As the final round of the winter season's king tides is set for this week, Saturday, Feb. 8, through Monday, Feb. 10, please heed the warnings, and warnings of the past.

A history of storms

January's coastal flooding scenario "was a duplicate of 1967: highest tide of the year coupled with big waves the size of which that we can only infer from the surges in the bay and damage down the coast."

So advised geologist Tom Horning, a six-decades-long Seaside resident in the days before the event.

Horning's words sent me scrambling to the archives, to the storm of December 1967, when high tides, winds, storms, low barometric pressure and changes in ocean currents, delivered a wallop to the North Coast, bringing 10-foot-plus tides to Seaside and Gearhart.

On Dec. 2, 1967, the Signal reported, as the tide went down and the wind began to let up, onlookers came to Seaside to watch.

"The Turnaround and the Cove were major places for spectators, some of them from Willamette Valley cities, to watch the waves," the Signal wrote at the time. "Large numbers of men, women and children climbed onto the logs to watch others being washed in."

Other storm-watchers went to the north end of Franklin as water poured over the sand spit near the estuary.

Flooding at an underground sewage station at Lewis and Clark Way and Downing Street short-circuited controls. Planks and two-by-fours floated along Avenue S, Edgewood south of Avenue G, and water filled crawl spaces of area homes.

In Cannon Beach, pounding waves tossed logs over the seawall and into the Surfand Hotel, and through the window of a home on Elk Creek.

A tragedy in 1939

A storm in early January 1939 shared much of the anticipation of this year's king tides.

The accident happened when hundreds went to the Cove to watch the raging seas — many of them on the future site of Seltzer Park, where people gather still when the waves are high.

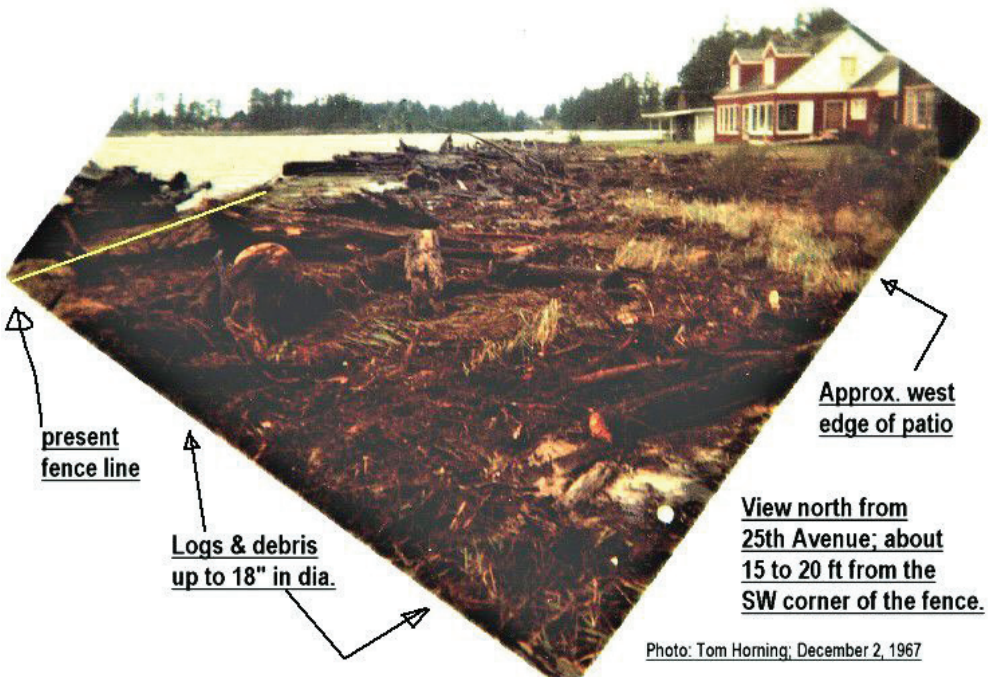
Martha McCulley, 77, of Puyallup, Washington stood on the high ground, eager to get a glimpse of the king tides.

The seas were relatively calm, the Signal reported on Jan. 12, 1939, when a sud-



BE SAFE
Oregon King Tides Photo Project reminds tide-watchers to be safe for 'Round 3.' Take extra precautions when you walk on slippery areas or near big waves, and always be aware of your surroundings and the weather conditions.

Tiffany Boothe of the Seaside Aquarium took this shot of people scrambling from the king tide on Saturday, Jan. 11, in the Cove. Tiffany Boothe/Seaside Aquarium



Driftwood thrown over the bank and onto dry land at 25th Avenue and the bay, 1967. Photo: Tom Horning, December 2, 1967



December 1967, parking lot section of North Edgewood at the height of the storm. Seaside Signal



Water crosses the roadway in the Cove. "Could have been bigger, but maybe we are lucky that we dodged a bullet," geologist Tom Horning said. Tom Horning

den tide brought a wave up over the rocks and onto the area where people were standing across the road.

"The accident happened when hundreds of persons were gathered at the Cove about noon on Thursday, to watch the raging seas as they swung into the cross currents which help to make the scene so spectacular," the Signal wrote. "For some time previous to the accident the seas were not unusually

high, but the one which caused it gathered enough force to carry the wave up over the rocks and onto the area where people were standing and across the road. The injured women were standing on or near the log as it was caught by the sea and hurled backwards, throwing the aged victim beneath it and knocking the others down."

While the others recovered from their injuries, McCulley died the next day.

KING TIDES
King tides, also known as perigean spring tides, are the highest-predicted tides of the year. They occur as the orbital alignment of the earth, sun and moon pushes tides higher than usual.

Selling nature

For years the Oregon Coast has sold its beaches and its natural beauty to visitors. We are all participants here: the Coast's King Tides Photography Exhibit belies an invitation to sharpen our lens and head to the shore.

The Oregon Coast Visitors Association promises "exciting storm watching and timeless attractions" in Seaside.

Portland Magazine offers Cannon Beach as one of "Five Dramatic Destinations for Storm Watching on the Oregon Coast."

Our coastline is ruggedly beautiful any time of the year, writes the travel website "Best of the Northwest," but "especially magical in the winter, when a storm blows off the Pacific, creating a raw and captivating spectacle with howling winds and waves crashing against the driftwood-filled shorelines."

True that, but only half the story.

While notable, the force of January's storm ultimately proved far less than the 40-foot or higher waves that could have struck; wave heights peaked at 28 feet in Seaside. Imagine if those numbers had been higher.

Tourists and locals alike may be lulled into thinking, as Joanne Rideout wrote in The Astorian: "It just didn't look that bad out there."

Or imagine a more potent scenario, when the tsunami does hit.

"When the next large-scale Cascadia earthquake and tsunami strike the Pacific Northwest, Oregon will face the greatest challenge of our lifetimes," Gov. Kate Brown said in January, before the anniversary of the last Cascadia Subduction Zone quake Jan. 26, 1700. "I urge everyone to start conversations this week with their families, friends, and loved ones about how to be safe and as ready as possible."

Cutting the cord, kind of, if you don't count Netflix



VIEW FROM THE PORCH
EVE MARX

Since forsaking cable we watch a lot less TV. In fact, when we turn it on, it's only watch to Netflix. I don't think I'm missing much as I listen to breaking news throughout the day thanks to Tune-In, a free streaming service.

Last week CNN live streamed the Senate impeachment hearing over the Internet. Cable TV, at least right now, seems irrelevant.

Netflix, by the way, is a great source of diversion and entertainment. The first few weeks we were off TV I watched a police procedural series called "Unbelievable" starring Toni Collette, an Aussie actress. The show is based on a true crime story and won lots of awards. Since I like Collette so much, I also watched her in a series called "Wanderlust" where she plays the wife half

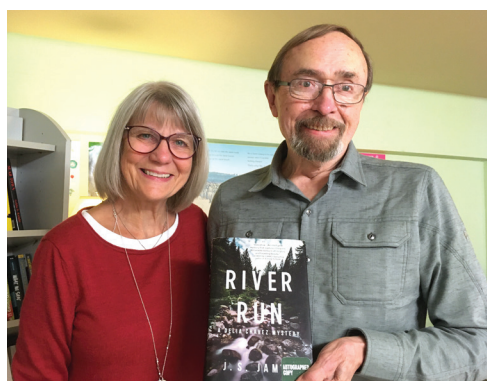
a couple experimenting with open marriage.

After that I watched all three seasons of "Atypical," starring another favorite actress of mine, Jennifer Jason Leigh, who plays the mom of a young man with autism. My husband tricked me into watching an awful movie called "Below Her Mouth," which if you ask me was soft porn. He fell asleep halfway through it, which was really annoying.

I took a break from Netflix to attend a Lunch in the Loft event at Beach Books last Thursday. The featured author was J.S. James, who prefers to be called Joe who is the author of "River Run," a novel set in the Willamette Valley. Penguin Random House, who published it, calls it an explosive debut mystery about a newly minted deputy thrust into the cutthroat world of hunting.

James read a thrilling section of his book to an enchanted audience. Over a delicious chicken and veg soup served with a lentil salad catered by Dough Dough Bakery, he relayed to a attentive audience how most of his writing happens in coffee shops.

"My tendency is to start each story with a big bang," he said. "Fueled by high-oc-



Eve Marx Karen Emmerling, proprietor of Beach Books with J.S. James, author of "River Run."

tane caffeine."

Back at home, we're currently fixated on a Netflix series called "Love," a romantic comedy created by Judd Apatow. It's about millennials in Los Angeles, which already should tell you a lot. A pretty 30-year-old woman is a producer of a call-in radio advice show whose star is a husky teenage girl with potty mouth. Her boyfriend, and by season three he is her official boyfriend,

is an aspiring screenwriter. His day job is on the set of a TV show called Wichita, which is about teen witches. He's a teacher whose job is forcing algebra and American history on to the teen cast members when they're not on set. The star of Wichita is Apatow's younger daughter, Iris, now 17, who steals the show and is much more interesting than any other character.

"Love" is challenging. The 30-something characters have a way of rubbing OK Boomers like me all wrong way. They talk too much and have to process everything. They're always checking in with their feelings. They also call each other "dude."

I can't wait to finish the series so I can return to books.

On Feb. 20 at 6:30 p.m., Beach Books is doing a signing and reading with David Robinson, author of "Cloud Devotion," a book of thought-provoking questions providing a year full of soul-nourishing morsels. I'm not entirely sure what that means but Robinson is the pastor of the Cannon Beach Community Church and a Cannon Beach resident. The event is free and open to the public. Come one, come all.

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