

COUGARS RECRUIT PACIFIC COUNTY STANDOUT BUT GARDNER HAS ONE HIGH LEAP TO MAKE FIRST



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LUKE WHITTAKER

Earl Soule poses for a portrait next to the *Tondeleyo* inside a covered building at the Ilwaco boatyard. "It just takes time. That's the thing people don't seem to understand. You either take care of them or they die," Soule said regarding the necessary care for old wood boats. "Some of these boats around here are more than 100 years old."

Earl Soule: Boat fire can't keep a good man down

LUKE WHITTAKER
Chinook Observer

LWACO — Earl Soule sipped a root beer and reminisced about the way boats were once built.

Soule, 76, has been working on wood boats since he was 15, and witnessed a world of change over the course of his career.

"I've worked on this boat many times over the years," Soule said as he looked over the *Tondeleyo*, a vessel owned by long-time friend Guy Glenn, Sr.

"I went to school with him. I've known him since we were kids. We've been buddies for a long time," Soule said, adding that he was working to install new wood on the deck and refurbish the cabin over the past three weeks at the Ilwaco boatyard.

"This boat was built when I was in high school, so it was in the 60s. I think it finished in 1964-1965."

The *Tondeleyo* was one of several in the yard and in local marinas that have intertwined throughout Soule's career, either as an owner or as his next job.

The vessel has always been a recreational craft with East Coast roots, Soule said, adding that he installed a new bridge approximately seven years ago.

"This boat was built off of lobster boat lines. The way lobster boats are built, they've changed a little but not much. It's an East Coast design instead of West Coast. They pick up and travel faster and easier in the water. They have a good flare and cut water on the bow."

See Soule, Page A7

Camp closure tied to plunge in youth crime

Agency head sees no path forward for NYC

By JEFF CLEMENS
For the Observer

NASELLE — Employees of the Naselle Youth Camp and the American Federation of State, City, and Municipal Employees union, which represents them, held a protest on Wednesday, March 18, outside the camp.

They were hoping a last-ditch effort would put enough pressure on Gov. Jay Inslee to save the doomed camp, but the head of the responsible state agency says that ship has sailed.

Closure long coming

The camp's closure has been on the table for nearly two decades.

Only Inslee himself now has the power to veto the entire budget, which is highly unlikely. He could also choose to veto the specific section outlining the closure language, which is also equally highly unlikely, according to the Washington State Department of Child, Youth, and Families, which oversees the camp.

"Regardless of how much of a long shot it is to keep Naselle open, the workers want their voices to be heard. They have advocated for the youth there for decades in many cases and know the negative impact Naselle's closure would have on them," Patrick Surgue, communications specialist for AFSCME, said.

See Camp, Page A9

School bond supporters, opponents make their pitch

By BRANDON CLINE
Chinook Observer

LONG BEACH PENINSULA — With just more than two weeks until ballots arrive for the April 26 special election, supporters and opponents of the Ocean Beach School District's proposed bond have officially made their pitch to voters.

The two groups have submitted their formal "For/Against" statements to the Pacific County Auditor's Office, which will appear in the voters' guide that, like ballots, gets mailed out ahead of the election. Ballots are expected to be mailed out April 8.

As required by state law, the six citizens comprising the two groups were appointed last month by the OBSD school board, which had advertised for the volunteer positions in the weeks prior.

See Bond, Page A8



July 4 fireworks show returning to Long Beach

Professional show returns after three-year hiatus

By BRANDON CLINE
Chinook Observer

LONG BEACH — After a three-year hiatus, the fireworks show is returning to Long Beach this Fourth of July.

At its March 21 meeting, the Long

Beach City Council gave the OK to Mayor Jerry Phillips to sign an agreement for \$20,000 with a pyrotechnic company to put on the city's longstanding fireworks show, which was axed in 2020 and 2021

See Fireworks, Page A9

A week of fireworks marked Independence Day 2018. After a hiatus, Long Beach's professional show is set to resume this July 4.

JANE WINCLER WEBB PHOTO

GORDY AND THE SLOTH — A STORY FOR THE AGES

Giant fossil named for Ilwaco graduate who found it

Giant fossil named for Ilwaco grad who found it

By PATRICK WEBB
For the Observer

SEATTLE — Gordon "Gordy" Simmons has achieved an honor few can match.

The Skamokawa resident has had a fossil named for him.

"Gordy" is the name bestowed

IF YOU GO

The Burke Museum

at the University of Washington
4300 15th Ave N.E., Seattle

Open 10 a.m. to 5 p.m., Tuesday through Sunday.

First Thursday open until 8 p.m.
206-543-7907

www.burkemuseum.org

by the Burke Museum in Seattle on the skeleton of an extinct giant ground sloth.

Simmons discovered the remains of the beast in 1961 while working on expansion of the Seat-

tle-Tacoma International Airport.

And 60 years later, he never tires of telling the story.

He and his crew were trying to cement in a fourth light tower on the new runway when they encountered an obstruction. "We couldn't get the tower in and out popped a bone," he said. "I thought at first it was a cow bone, but it would have had to be a pretty big cow!"

He knew immediately it was unusual. "Better call the university — we've got a dinosaur down here!" he told his crew. "The guys were mad at me because we lost three days' work! We thought it was a bison, then saw the claw."

See Fossil, Page A6



PHOTO COURTESY SIMMONS FAMILY

Gordon "Gordy" Simmons of Skamokawa is pictured at the Burke Museum in Seattle with the fossil of the giant sloth. The 1954 Ilwaco High School graduate moved to the greater Seattle area and was involved in construction of the roads, bridges and other landmarks that created Seattle's distinctive urban skyline. His crew was working on an expansion of the Seattle-Tacoma International Airport when he found the bones of a giant ground sloth.



Bond

Continued from Page A1

Members of the group in support of the bond include Madeline Matson, executive director of the Columbia-Pacific Heritage Museum; David Glasson, Long Beach city administrator; and Mavis Shucka, former vice president and branch manager at Bank of the Pacific. Members opposed to the bond include Bonnie Lou Cozby, president of the Ocean Park Area Chamber of Commerce and co-chair of the Village Club; Tom Downer, of Jack's Country Store; and Diane Gruber, a retired lawyer in Oysterville.

In order for the \$96.2 million bond to pass next month, it must receive 60% of the vote, a supermajority. According to OBSD estimates, the bond would raise the tax rate by approximately 86 cents per \$1,000 of assessed value — or \$21.50 a month for a home worth \$300,000.

The most costly project covered by the bond is the \$44 million for the construction of a new, tsunami-safe K-5 elementary school in Ilwaco that would consolidate Long Beach Elementary and Ocean Park Elementary. Its construction would effectively create a unified campus in Ilwaco to house all of the district's K-12 students. The other large project is earthquake retrofitting and upgrades to Ilwaco High School's operational systems, which comes in at \$29 million and does not include \$5 million in grant funds from the state that the district expects to receive if the bond passes.

Supporters make case

In their opening statement explaining why district voters should approve the bond next month, the supporters highlighted a handful of reasons.

The first is that current low-interest rates make now the right time "to move on this large-scale infrastructure project for our schools and kids," even during what they said is a financially trying time for many in the community. "After years of deferred maintenance, community discussions, and a global pandemic, the importance of in person instruction is evident."

The group also touted the benefits of a single K-12 campus, rather than having the district's four main schools spread out between Ilwaco, Long Beach and Ocean Park. Along with facilities maintenance savings estimated at \$500,000 annually, they wrote that a single campus "would allow for enhanced school safety and effective management of emergencies."

Supporters also said that consolidating LBE and OPE into one campus in Ilwaco would: Decrease bus routes; allow for siblings attending different schools to be dropped off and picked up at the same location; allow for better and easier collaboration between teachers from different schools; and utilize auxiliary services like cafeterias, libraries and nurses more efficiently and economically.

As a tourist destination with one of the highest rates of second-home ownership in the state, bond supporters also say that only 45% of the bond's assessed value is residentially zoned and owned locally. "The majority of the district is second-home owners and commercially owned, meaning second-home owners and commercial property owners will pay the majority."

Finally, the group wrote that the approval of this bond would set the Long Beach Peninsula community up for future success.

"Consolidating to one campus makes fiscal and educational sense," they wrote. "Investing in these projects now will set our school system up for our next generation's success."

Opponents demand different plan

The group opposing the bond explained in their

opening statement that their main opposition to the bond revolved around three key areas.

The first is that the bond's approval would mean the closure of LBE and OPE as schools, "our two remaining community-based elementary schools" — although all of the district's students, regardless of where they live in the district, presently attend LBE from grades K-2 and attend OPE from grades 3-5.

As one of many small-school districts in the state with an enrollment below 2,000 students, the group wrote that community-based schools "are central to these districts" and claimed they provide higher quality education than centralized schools.

"Our district should return to a grade K-5 community school model. This bond permanently eliminates that option," the opponents wrote, adding that the district does not qualify to receive matching funds for the new K-5 elementary school because not enough time has elapsed since the schools it is replacing — LBE and OPE — underwent a significant remodel.

The second area of disagreement is the cost of replacing the athletic field and stadium, which the group said is "disproportionate" to the district's size.

The bond includes \$10 million to replace the existing 43-year-old stadium that has an estimated lifespan of 2-4 more years and is at serious risk of collapsing from a minor seismic event, as well as resurface the track, replace the grass field with more conditions-friendly artificial turf, and install new drainage. The new stadium, as presently designed, would reduce seating capacity from current figures.

"Quality athletic facilities are important for our student-athletes, and can be accomplished at far less expense," the group wrote.

Finally, bond opponents said that taxpayers deserve relief after paying on the current \$23 million bond that was passed in 2003.

"Vote no on this bond. Demand a different plan that meets the actual needs of the students while protecting community-based elementary schools and taxpayer money already spent," they wrote. "We call upon OBSD to give voters something we can support."

Rebuttals

Each of the sides were allowed a short rebuttal against their counterparts' opening statement.

In their rebuttal, the supporters of the bond wrote that separate elementary schools "are no longer an effective way to educate our children."

"Maintaining and staffing community schools has become unaffordable. One campus and one elementary school is the best option for the kids," they said.

They also argued that athletic facility improvements are needed, and said that any parent would attest that there aren't adequate spaces to accommodate school sports.

Finally, they said that relief for taxpayers from a school bond would be great, but "our world does not stand still. Kids need safe and modern schools."

In their rebuttal, opponents of the bond said that OBSD is urging \$96.2 million to build and renovate facilities rather than maintaining what was built or renovated fewer than 20 years ago. "Consolidation" means our community-based elementary schools will close, and we will discard the \$23 million investment that's almost paid for," they wrote.

The group also took aim at the estimated \$500,000 that the district would save annually under the single campus plan, arguing that spending \$96.2 million to save \$500,000 annually is not a good return on investment.

"Vote no," they concluded. "We all deserve better. Try again with a bond we can all support."

Fossil

Continued from Page A1

Not a cat

As is common on construction sites, when bones are found work stops in case there is a need to investigate human foul play or figure out any archaeological significance.

It was the latter that had staff at the Burke Museum in Seattle celebrating.

They still are — six decades later.

Simmons had discovered the skeleton of what turned out to be an extinct giant ground sloth. The creature, *Megalonyx jeffersonii*, likely roamed the area 12,000 years before the first Starbucks. It gets its name from Thomas Jefferson, who wrote a scientific paper in 1797 about a similar find in a western Virginia cave, erroneously thinking it a tiger-like cat. In fact, the sloths were herbivores which evolved from creatures in South America.

It is among prized exhibits at the museum, which adjoins the campus of the University of Washington in northeast Seattle. The fossil has been on display since 1977, but it was only recently that museum staff decided to officially name it.

"Gordy" was the inevitable choice.

'Amazing'

Greg Wilson Mantilla, curator of vertebrate paleontology at the Burke, conceded that it is not common to name exhibits. "But there are some fossils that are either so complete or important that they are beloved and you find yourself wanting to identify them more intimately," he said.

"Really this fossil is one of my favorite fossils in the museum. It captures so many interesting stories about our region."

He noted that its modern discovery and the link with Jefferson — even though the vice president's conclusions were erroneous — make it a memorable artifact.

"And it is very, very complete for a fossil. Usually we only get a few bones here and there, but this thing is 90-some percent complete, only missing the skull that was destroyed in the discovery."

"When I have guests, or do a tour, I always stop there and connect people to this amazing prehistory and recent history."

'Tidbits'

Simmons attended Ilwaco High School, where he had four years' success in football and excelled in track, earning kudos for long jump and sprints. He married his high school sweetheart, Irene, and they had five children who all still live in Washington, plus nine grandchildren and four great grandchildren.

For their first date, she invited him to a dance. "I don't know how to dance, I don't have a car and I don't have a suit," he lamented. But family and neighbors made sure he had no excuses. "They said, 'You're going!' Two other ladies taught me to dance. I have the whole block working for me, and even had a corsage for \$5."

After he graduated with the Class of 1954, he spent a year studying at Grays Harbor while Irene completed her senior year, and then they were married. His career took him to the greater Seattle area, which boomed with the Century 21 Exposition of 1962 and construction of landmarks including roads and bridges that shaped today's city. He recalls watching construction of the Space Needle, although that was not one of his projects.

Now 87 and retired in Skamokawa, he treasures memories of his Ilwaco days, growing up in a



ANDREA GODINEZ/BURKE MUSEUM

The extinct giant ground sloth skeleton found by former Ilwaco resident Gordon "Gordy" Simmons has been on exhibit at the Burke Museum in Seattle since 1977, but just now was named. Museum staff called it "Gordy" after the man who discovered it when doing construction work at the Seattle-Tacoma International Airport in 1961.



SEATTLE TIMES PHOTO

Ilwaco High School graduate Gordon "Gordy" Simmons is pictured at far right, part of the construction crew at the Seattle-Tacoma International Airport when the bones of the 12,000-year-old sloth were discovered in 1961. The pelvis of the creature measured 45 inches across.

All about the older 'Gordy'

Greg Wilson Mantilla, curator of vertebrate paleontology at the Burke Museum, is passionate about his job, and his role in preserving history.

For those seeking a slightly deeper dive into the scientific details, here is his short essay on the 1961 find.

"Really this fossil is one of my favorite fossils in the museum. It captures so many interesting stories about our region."

"As a relatively recent fossil (~12,700 years ago), it shows us how different life in this area was only tens of thousands of years ago not just millions."

"Massive creatures roamed this area, harkening back to ice age times, when Seattle was covered by up to 3,000 feet of ice! Also, as a sloth it represents this amazing evolution of mammals that took place on South America during its splendid isolation during most of the Cenozoic Era (66 million years to the present)."

"Sloths, armadillos, and other creatures that look like they were created by committee evolved only on that continent. And then only with the formation of island chains and the Panama isthmus that connected South America with North America did some of those bizarre creatures make their way up to North America."

"Our sloth is among the farthest north occurrences of a ground sloth. And it is very very complete for a fossil. Usually we only get a few bones here and there, but this thing is 90-some percent complete, only missing the skull that was destroyed in the discovery. Last but not least, the history of this discovery is fascinating in itself. ..."

"When the formidable claws of these types of animals were first discovered in Virginia, they were passed to then Vice President Thomas Jefferson, who was a natural historian. He bragged to Georges Cuvier in Paris that North America not Europe had the largest predators to roam the earth. It turns out Jefferson was wrong, sloths are not carnivores but herbivores."

"Nevertheless, an interesting story. Even more local of course is the story that involves Gordon Simmons and his fellow workers, as they made the discovery while readying the Sea-Tac Airport's second runway. So this is all to say, that when I have guests or do a tour, I always stop there and connect people to this amazing prehistory and recent

house near the city ball field, and later the tale of his dramatic fossil find.

Daughter Dianna Johnson, who lives in Kirkland, remembers growing up with the family legend. "He has talked about this several times over the course of my life," she said. "He is great at telling stories and there are so many wonderful tidbits about this." Having the fossil named for him had significance. "That was one of his dreams," she said. "It meant so much to him."

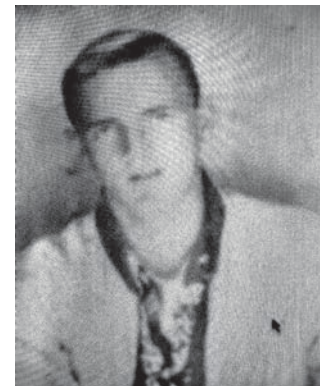
'Claws'

A carefully researched article by David B. Williams published in 2010 on the Seattle-based history website www.historylink.org highlighted how Simmons, then working for the Sel-

len Construction Co., spotted the bones sticking out of a recently excavated 14-foot-deep hole dug for an anchor for a lighting tower.

Museum experts dug and discovered a significant portion of the skeleton — but no intact head. A plaster skull was added to the real bones to give the museum display more visual impact. The pelvis, which was recovered, was reported to be 45 inches wide, but scientists have not established its gender.

Williams quoted a *Seattle Times* story in which Howard A. Coombs, chairman of the University of Washington geology department, commented about its condition. "You can even see the tiny scars left by muscles," Coombs told the newspaper. "All we have to do to clean



'THE GUYS WERE MAD AT ME BECAUSE WE LOST THREE DAYS' WORK.'

Gordy Simmons
1961 fossil finder

them is to put them under the faucet. Usually you have to chip old bones out of hardened soil."

Williams' article highlighted how the creatures lived in a period that followed the last ice age. "A post-glacial habitat of forests, lakes and bogs provided a diverse food supply for large herbivores such as giant ground sloths," he wrote. "They chewed twigs and leaves with short and stout grinding teeth. They could have used their large claws for hooking branches or possibly for defense."

The museum has 73,000 fossils in its collection, gathered from all seven continents, including mammals, birds, dinosaurs, reptiles, amphibians and fish. Its staff posted about the sloth on its Facebook page on Valentine's Day, the anniversary of the find in 1961.

'Wonderful'

Simmons recalled it was a while before he saw the exhibit displaying his fossil at its full height. Originally, it wasn't displayed as an 11-foot tall beast. "When I did get to see it I thought, 'Gee, what a deal!' It looks like a big deer, except it has a claw." His conversations with staff, when he revealed he believed he was the only surviving member of the crew that found the bones, led to close links with the museum and eventually the naming decision.

"It's going to be there forever," Simmons said. "But that's not my greatest achievement in this world. Marrying my wife was. We have been married 66 years. What a wonderful time we have had all these years."

Crisis Support Network

If you or anyone you know is in an unsafe relationship, or if you have any questions regarding domestic violence or sexual assault, please call **Crisis Support Network**. All calls are confidential.

1-800-HELP CSN
(1-800-435-7276)

Pacific County or
1-800-562-6025
Washington State Domestic Violence Hotline

24 hours a day - 7 days a week
Remember, YOU can make a difference