Tsunami barge is a sign of things to come across Pacific

A state-sponsored action team has been inspecting the derelict barge driven from tsunami-wrecked northeast Japan to the Pacific coast north of the Hoh River mouth.

The team found that no invasive species survived the trip across the Pacific, nor did any radiation that might have been on the barge.

An interesting website has been set up to keep the public updated on the barge situation at marine.debris.wa.gov/incidents/ForksDock.html, and this week Olympic National Park and the Olympic Coast Marine Sanctuary agreed to work together to remove the barge from the wilderness coast.

Later this year a greater number of tsunami debris landings are expected to dot both the Pacific coast and the coastline along the Strait of Juan de Fuca on the West End. This debris could become a major hazard and trash clean-up problem requiring a major expenditure of state and federal funds, or maybe the situation won’t be as bad as expected, time will tell.

There is a chance that searching for tsunami debris and cleaning up the debris will become a West End attraction that will bring visitors out to our shores.

Forks resident John Anderson, perhaps better known locally as Forks’ plumber, is an avid beachcomber as witnessed by the float tower located in his front yard in Andersonville north of town. Johnson’s expertise gained over the years incollecting rare and common glass floats and a long list of other interesting finds along the West End coastline has made him a go-to guy for the growing statewide, national and international media outlets. Watch for an also increasing number of documentaries and news segments on the tsunami debris as 2013 moves along.

Watch the Forks Forum for updates on the tsunami debris situation, and for photos of interesting finds. Readers are welcome to submit their photos of interesting tsunami debris they may spot. It is advisable to be careful in picking up the debris if you find bottles with unknown contents and other potentially hazardous materials. It is doubtful if the tsunami debris will glow in the dark from radiation as some have joked, but there are still hazards to be aware of.

By Chris Cook
Forks Forum Editor/Publisher

By Billy Frank Jr., Chairman
Northwest Indian Fisheries Commission

OPINION – I’ve met a lot of people in my life, but no one like Sen. Daniel Inouye. A soft-spoken grandson of Japanese immigrants, he rose to become a war hero and represented Hawaii in Congress from the time it became a state. But I always believed he was an Indian at heart.

My good friend for more than 30 years, he died Dec. 17 at 96. He served in the Senate for 50 years, the second longest term in U.S. history, and became one of the greatest champions for Indian people that we have ever seen.

Danny understood us and our issues in a way that many Americans can’t. I think it’s because he knew what it was like to be different, to be someone who came from a people set apart.

As a 17-year-old, he rushed to enlist after Japanese bombs fell on Pearl Harbor in 1941. At a time when most Japanese Americans were rounded up and forced into internment camps around the United States, Inouye was fighting in Europe. In Italy he lost his right arm, and nearly his life, in actions that were later recognized by a Medal of Honor, our country’s highest military award.

It is my pleasure to greet the Forks community and introduce myself as the director of the Olympic Natural Resource Center. I am a professor in the School of Environmental and Forest Sciences with research interests in the growth of tree species of this region and a long-standing interest in the communities and forests of the Olympic Peninsula.

I maintain my office and teach classes on the U.W. Seattle campus but frequently come to ONRC.

Since ONRC first opened an important part of its mission has been to work closely with the community. This has largely been achieved through individual contacts between citizens and members of the ONRC staff. The range of topics and the numbers of people interested in ONRC have grown in many ways, from its research program to the ONRC trial system.

To encourage this growth and strengthens ties between the community and ONRC we would like to collaborate with Friends of ONRC.

Many might question why a Japanese American like Inouye would fight so hard for a country that treated his people so poorly. That same question could be asked of Indians. African Americans and many others. As a tribal member and a veteran, I can tell you what we did it for: the right of every person to feel good of everyone in the hope that things would get better.

For Danny and for many of us, it took awhile for things to get better. On his way home from Italy recuperating from his war wounds, he made a stopover in San Francisco. Wanting to see the city, he was told they didn’t eat "Jap" hair.

Despite the injuries he suffered and the racism he experienced, he was never bitter. He became a quiet giant in the Senate, always with an eye toward helping those in need of social justice. He would lend his voice and leadership to support the sovereignty of Indian tribes across the country, and equally as hard to gain that same recognition for native Hawaiians.


Before retiring in the Army, he was planning to be a doctor— a surgeon—who could help people. In the end, that’s just what he did, but he helped many, many more people while serving in the Senate than he ever could as a doctor.

I will miss him deeply and so will all of Indian Country. One of the things I’ll miss most might surprise you, Danny was one heck of a piano player.

We will not forget this man who understood and helped Indian people like few in this country ever have, a man who worked so hard and endured so much to make our country a better place for everyone.

GREETINGS FROM NEW ONRC HEAD

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