

UFO ♦ Sea Snippets ♦ Tidal Turkey ♦ Junk Beach Dog & Log Tags ♦ WWII Mops ♦ Where's Wilson?

UFO At Balandra

by Curtis C. Ebbesmeyer

Friday morning, June 7, 1974, a quarter-mile off Trinidad's northeast coast near Balandra Bay, a fisherman spotted it. Orange and round, it resembled a flying saucer. Local villagers pictured an *Unidentified Flying Object (UFO)*. Police feared smugglers had employed it to import arms and ammunition.

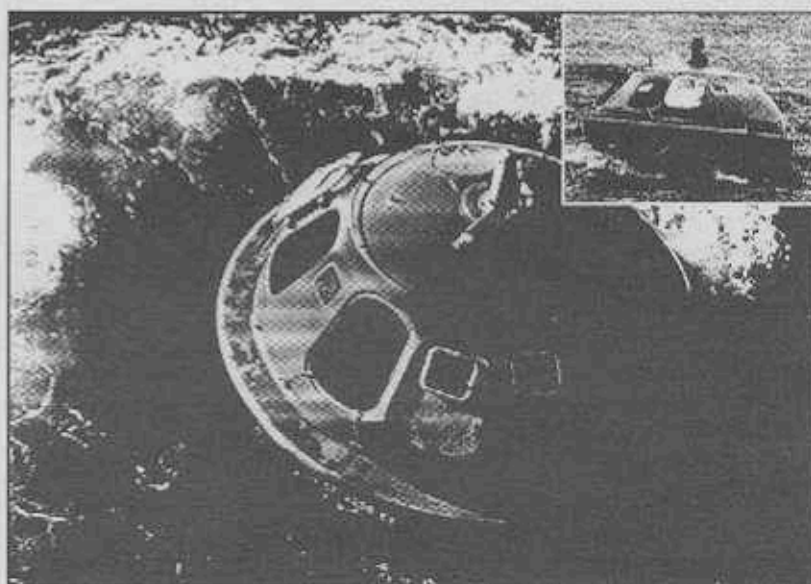
"Many people rushed to the scene while others ran away," reported Phillip Fraser. "It was rumored that twenty-four little men — one of them with a radio on his back, had emerged from the strange vehicle and walked inland."

Police soon ascertained that it was a 13.5-foot diameter, 12-foot tall spherical *Brucker Survival Capsule* capable of holding 28 personnel, a model not manufactured since 1982. According to its identification plate, the *Advance Structure Division of the Whittaker Corporation, LaMesa, California*, manufactured the fiberglass capsule five years earlier (August 1, 1969).

A quarter-century later, I heard of the incident at the 2001 *Offshore Technology Conference (OTC)*, the premier gathering for the offshore oil industry held annually for the past thirty years in Houston, Texas. Some 100,000 people worldwide attended that year's *OTC*.

At an exhibit of rescue capsules used for emergency escapes from sinking ships and offshore oil platforms, I inquired if any had accidentally fallen overboard and drifted across the ocean. A large cargo vessel might carry three and an offshore drilling rig as many as eight each costing approximately a quarter-million dollars. They're enclosed life boats outfitted with food, water and a diesel engine.

"Have you heard of the one that landed in Trinidad?," a



Example of the offshore survival capsule that washed ashore at Balandra, Trinidad (Photo courtesy Mike Brignac, Survival Systems International)

showroom rep responded. "Go lookup **Mike Brignac** over at *Survival Systems International (SSI)*. He'll know." At *SSI's* booth, Mike kindly obliged, later sending a news clipping.

Mike and colleagues "suspect that it was lowered to the water, became released from the hook mechanism and drifted inland." Investigators sent the ID plate to Interpol without result. With this sighting, *UFO* takes on the added meaning of *Unidentified Floating Object*.

Information from the *Trinidad Guardian* (Port of Spain), Saturday, June 8, 1974. Clipping courtesy Mike Brignac, *Survival Systems International*, Kenner, Louisiana. ■

Tidal Turkey

by Curtis C. Ebbesmeyer

*Turkey in the straw,
Turkey in the fridge,
Turkey in the oven,
Turkey in the dunes. OCE*

"You know," e-mailed Pamela Winn from Melbourne Beach, Florida. "I've been an Alert subscriber for a couple of years, live on the ocean and always read the stories with such wonder. Like, why can't I find something different. Then, like a sack of potatoes, it hits me."

"In December, 1999, I worked at home and lived on the third story of a condominium facing the ocean. The weather was beautiful. At about 2 p.m., I noticed something very large and white laying on the sand at low tide. I looked at it with my marine spotter and saw it was a frozen turkey. It was sitting upright as if ready for the oven."

"Neighbors walked by it, but no one got close. In the late-afternoon, I noticed a turkey buzzard pecking at it, but then it left. Awhile later, dozens of buzzards pecked at the frozen bird. As the tide came in, they dragged it toward the dunes."

"When the sun went down, they'd pulled in beyond the reach of the waves and returned the next morning to pick it clean. This was a week or so before Christmas. I remember watching a big cabin cruiser go by. I can just imagine they had set this bird outside to thaw and it slipped in the water. It was a huge thing, maybe 22-25 lbs."

"That's my story and I'm sticking to it."

As I edited Pamela's story, I wondered how to test if a frozen turkey floats. "Floating turkeys?" responded Pamela. "I bet they do, but upright? That's what got me. Gosh, had you asked me at Thanksgiving time, I would've done a turkey float test." ■

Sea Snippets

by Curtis C. Ebbesmeyer

The odd flotsam beachcombers report

Where's Wilson? Remember in the movie *Cast Away* Tom Hanks' friend Wilson the volleyball? While marooned four years on a tiny South Pacific island, Hanks talked incessantly to Wilson. Finally, Hanks escaped on a log raft with Wilson ensconced on the bow. Far out to sea, a storm dislodges Wilson and Hanks is unable to retrieve him. A containership rescues Hanks, but we are left to wonder as to Wilson's fate.

With most exposed to the wind above the water line, a volleyball scoots right along. But how fast? High windage

objects like the yellow plastic duckies lost in 1992 drifted at twice surface water speed. Here's some ball data.

While beachcombing Grand Turk Island January 28, 1975, **Grethe Seim** discovered a soccer ball similar to a volleyball. It would've remained enigmatic had not 7-year old **John-Philipp Wolf's** father written the English first-division teams for 1972-73 as well as "If lost please send to . . ." Turned out, the Wolf family lost the ball from their swimming pool at Bermuda during November 1974. After drifting some 2,000 miles about the North Atlantic for a hundred days, it fetched up at Grand Turk. The volleyball

sped along at some 20 miles per day or two to four times the rate of nearly-submerged drifters.

What of Wilson? In the months after his rescue, while Hanks reentered society, Wilson drifted thousands of miles about the South Pacific Ocean. Just some faded paint on a weathered volleyball. Only a diligent beachcomber would've determined the paint was human blood. By then, the DNA would have degraded rendering it untraceable to Hanks.

(North Atlantic soccer ball drift story by **Nigel Sadler**, director, *Turks & Caicos National Museum* in: *Message In A Bottle, Astrolabe*, Fall 2000)



Transatlantic Sign. "Hi Curt," writes Nick Darke from Cornwall, England. "Do you have a Dept of WST in the States? We picked up a sign the other day (mid-December 2000) which says 'This bridge not maintained by Dept of WST, use at own risk.' We don't have a Dept of WST over here and wonder if you have one over there?" After examining Nick's photo, **Rick Woodford**, Minister, Newfoundland Works, Services & Transportation, replied. "We feel there is a good possibility that this Department of Works, Services & Transportation sign came from the Notre Dame Bay area on the Northeast Newfoundland coast. Exports Island had an abandoned bridge with a sign like this on it. We are, however, unable to identify a time frame." Life preserver buoys like that shown beside the WST sign have washed ashore in Holland (**Wim Kruiswijk**), Washington (**Tim Rogers**), and Florida (**Pete Zies**). *Mary Neale photo.*

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Superdrifter. A superconducting material transmits an electrical charge with zero resistance. A charge theoretically circles in a superconducting ring till the end of time. Rings of currents forming the seas' major gyres could theoretically carry a message in a bottle for eons. Like superconductivity, very long drifts around gyres are rarely observed. Consider a bottle adrift for 21 years.

At 1 p.m. on September 2, 1979, aboard the ferry to Hyannis, Massachusetts, 13-year-old **Amy Turano** and **Valerie Wozniak** launched a bottled message into Nantucket Sound. Twenty-one years later, the teenagers, now 34-years old, received a reply from

Michael Wall. In March 2000, he'd found their bottle at Derrymore, Ireland, while walking his golden retriever Sam. At first sight, Michael walked by it thinking it just another kelp- and shell-covered bottle. On the second passing, he noticed the letter inside and carried it home to his four children.

On average, in 14 months Gulf Stream currents convey a bottle between Nantucket and Derrymore. Twenty-one years, however, suggests they carried the green wine bottle round the North Atlantic before delivering it to Ireland. The usual circuit around the subtropical vortex, circulating in the North Atlantic like the hands of a clock between the latitudes of Florida and Britain, requires three years.

If the bottle stayed adrift for 21 years the trajectory represents seven circuits round the North Atlantic. (Thanks **Karen Bacigalupo** of Milton, MA, and **Kevin Tubbs** of Eugene, OR, for news clippings from *The Boston Globe*, Friday 12 May 2000, and the *Register-Guard*, Sunday 14 May 2000, respectively.)

Floating Container Stops Solo Sailor. In these days of extreme sports, competitive round-the-world solo sailing is one of the most grueling events. The *Vendée Globe* race starting November 9, 2000, attracted 23 racers. Within a day of winning, **Ellen MacArthur**, 24, aboard her 60-foot sloop *Kingfisher* struck a floating cargo container. Though Ellen finished after 94 days, smashing the 105-day record, she came in second becoming the second fastest solo sailor to circumnavigate the world.

Ellen struck one of an estimated 10,000 containers

lost overboard out of some 100 million annually shipped overseas. Containers, logs and other large flotsam pose hazards to small craft mariners. Recall the solo transpacific kayaker who disappeared after colliding with a log. (Information adapted from *National Geographic Traveler* (May-June, 2001, p. 34) clipping courtesy **Billi F. Wagner**, Vero Beach, Florida.)

Warning From NIMA. "81 containers adrift," aired the radio broadcast from NIMA's (National Imagery & Mapping Agency), Maritime Safety Information Center, Navigation Safety Radio Broadcast Desk, "vicinity 47-07.7 N 038 - 24.8W at 0600 Z 01 March." **Keith Dominic**, Senior Watch Officer relayed **Captain David Bill** of the *Tabor Academy*.

Round the clock, from round the world, NIMA receives information concerning hazards to navigation. When eight or more containers fall overboard, NIMA warns mariners for three weeks till the message is cancelled — March 23, 2001 in this case — after the containers presumably sank and no longer threat-



The Ocean Is Having A Ball. The sea literally spins yarn, in this case balls of flotsam. **John Anderson** of Forks (left; C. Ebbesmeyer photo). WA showed me one spun from strands of magenta plastic. "Here's a picture of a softball," writes **Vardon Tremain** of Oregon (right; August 2001; V. Tremain photo). "They are found in the wrack line just below Yaquina Head, Oregon. It's an agglomeration of bits of dried grass, seaweed, pine needles and whatever. Some are larger. This one weighed about 1.5-2 ounces. I don't know if this is particular to this beach or not. Must be the right combination of materials and wind direction — parallel to the beach wrack line. It's on display at Sada's Sushi Bar on the Newport waterfront." A few weeks later, Vardon added "PS. Surfers say the balls show up after big winter storms on many Oregon beaches, including Cannon Beach."

ened mariners.

The Panamanian 787-foot (236-meter) containership *M/V Choyang Park* lost the containers at mid-Atlantic in transit from LaHavre, France, to Jersey City, USA. A major winter storm packing 50-knot winds and 30-foot seas pounded the *Choyang*. As they rumbled overboard, the containers each weighing up to 40 tons, damaged and flattened 50 others left on board. Fortunately, no one was injured and the ship sustained no serious damage.

After the *Choyang* docked on March 12th, U.S. Coast Guard inspectors found blue jeans, light bulbs and car tires on deck. Debris left afloat will drift generally northeast, arriving this fall and winter along northern Europe and the western coasts of Scotland, Ireland and England.

(Information courtesy of NIMA, *Professional Mariner Magazine* and *The Cargo Letter* by **Michael S. McDaniel**)

Lost Souls. In Coral Bay, U.S. Virgin Islands, not far from the historic Moravian church, there's a popular open-air hangout in a grove of banana trees by the name of *Skinny Legs*. In the bar hangs a mobile of sandals, driftwood and shells titled "Lost Souls."

So far, beachcombers have reported four other footwear memorials, including: fences of sandals in the Netherlands (**Wim Kruiswijk**) and Galveston, Texas (**Tally**)

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Calvert); a tree clutching shoes abandoned beside a highway outside Reno, Nevada (Jim Ingraham); and a shoe festooned tree outside the Delta Chi fraternity house near the University of Washington, Seattle, Washington (editor). (Clipping from Associated Press in *The Seattle Times*, Travel Section, Sunday January 23, 2000, courtesy of **Susie Ebbesmeyer**)

Real-life Castaways?

"Help," began the bottled message dated July 1, 2001. "We think we have been stranded on Frederick Island . . . Please rescue us. You are our last chance. Paula and Helena." Nearly four weeks later on Saturday, July 28th, **Dann Braman** found the floating distress signal not far from Frederick Island near Masset in the Queen Charlotte Islands. Three hours after Dann handed the note to the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, a Coast Guard search and rescue craft set off. The searches, as well as missing persons' reports, lack of debris and hiking plans failed to unearth any clues. Is the note for real? Dann thinks so, but the authorities aren't sure. (Clipping courtesy **Guthrie Schweers** from **Suvi Mahonen** article in the *Queen Charlotte Islands Observer*.)

WW II Mops. "In 1960, we saw a travel program on TV which featured something so interesting that we never forgot it," e-mailed **Bill and Barbara Bosch**. "On the coast of Baja California mop handles stamped USN were still washing ashore from WW III! I wonder if there is a collection somewhere? For how many years did the mops continue to wash up? What currents brought them to that location? (It's fun to picture a disgusted sailor pitching his mop overboard.) Have you ever heard about this?" Beachcombers?

Rocket Fuel. June 2001. A five-gallon bucket of hydrazine hydrate used for rocket fuel and the making of insecticides washed up at Grayland, WA. Apparently, it went overboard and drifted ashore. Immediately after a call to 911, state troopers cordoned off the container. Within an hour and a half, an expert in handling hazardous materials from the WA Department of Ecology removed the container for later incineration. (Clipping courtesy **Doris Hannigen** from **Barb Aue** article in the June 14, 2001, *South Beach Bulletin*)

Hawaii's Junk Beach

The ocean's a tidy place. With her currents she collects flotsam into nooks and crannies behind reefs, heads of small bays and near headlands. South Point, for instance, on Hawaii's Big Island, the southernmost point in the United States. Only a quarter mile long, Junk Beach accumulates incredible amounts of flotsam.

Two veteran beachcombers report. Volunteers firefighters **Ron and Noni Sanford** often visit Junk Beach to collect materials for the Trash Art Show. "It focuses on making something funny, useful, and/or beautiful out of something that otherwise is just trash," Noni wrote. "Toothbrushes attracted me because of the ultimate icky-ness that they represent."

"While vacationing on the Big Island of Hawaii over Christmas, my boyfriend and I decided to hike into Green-Sand Beach at South Point," wrote **Katherine Pearson**. "Perhaps a quarter-mile from the parking lot, there are several small stretches of rocky beach virtually covered with plastic debris. At each site, the debris covers an area approximately one to two meters wide by 30 to 40 meters long, in addition to the items scattered across the lava rocks adjacent to the beach."

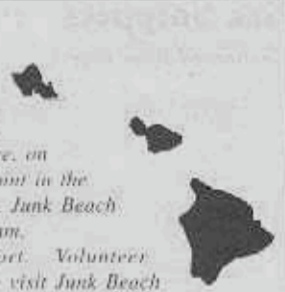
"Unfortunately, we did not have the time to investigate further, since we arrived with only one hour of daylight remaining in which to hike the four to five miles round trip. We were able to see a few items as we hurried along, including fishing nets, buoys, and large blue rectangular plastic baskets. Most of the debris appeared to be smaller in size than the few items we were able to see. By the time we got back to the car it was pitch black, so we were unable to get a closer look. If anyone is headed out that way, it's definitely worth investigating. Just be sure you make it all the way out to Green-Sand Beach. It's beautiful!" (Katherine Pearson may be reached at NOAA-NMFS-REFM, 7600 Sandpoint Way NE, Building 4, Room 1115, Seattle, WA 98115)

If you go, remember that the rough road to Junk Beach requires a 4-wheel vehicle. But it's worth the effort. Ron and Noni once found a 15-year-old message in a bottle from Japan.

Bottle From Caribbean To Lofoten. "My friend is a brother of my sister's husband and they all live on the Lofoten Islands off the coast of Norway (my sister married a Norwegian)," writes **Gretchen Ek** of Battle Ground, Washington state. "About two years ago, her brother-in-law and his wife and children were walking on the beach and found a capped bottle on the rocks. Unfortunately, it had leaked a little, but inside he found an American dollar bill and a phone number and address of some folks in the northeast U.S. He called them and it turned out they had been on a Caribbean cruise about three years earlier and had thrown the bottle into the ocean then. They were thrilled to hear from him. I thought it was fascinating to note how the bottle followed the path of the Gulf Stream so exactly."

"If you need help, go north," read the anonymous, single-sentence bottled message. "At the time," said **Mary Raikes** of the old, plastic pop bottle lying on the shore in January 2001 near her home in Harrington, Maine, "I probably felt like I needed help. I figure not many people get these, so I decided I should follow it. Alaska was

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north, so I went." Through the internet, Mary, 21, who studies human ecology and natural history at the College of the Atlantic in Bar Harbor, Maine, found a summer ranger position in Ketchikan with *Alaska State Parks*. Like the saying goes for books, does the person find the bottle or does the bottle find the person? (Clipping courtesy **Scott Walker** from the *Ketchikan Daily News*, July 11, 2001)

"E-mail has reduced traditional letters to snail mail" — so where does that leave a message in a bottle?," queries the February 2001 *Comishman* in a clipping from **Stella Turk** of Reskadinnick, Cornwall. Or, in this case, a message in a film canister adrift four years round the North Atlantic Ocean between Quebec, Canada, and Sennen Beach, Cornwall.

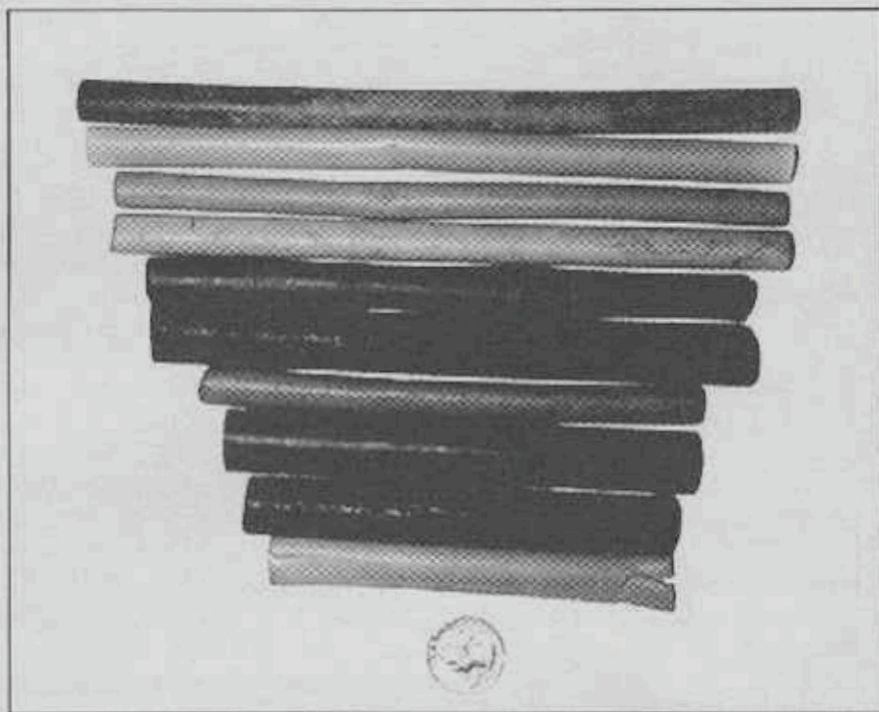
"We are children of the second year . . . we would like to participate in friendship with children all over the world because friendship is most important," read the message as translated from French. Under the direction of head teacher **Rod Bosanko**, Sennen School pupils are endeavoring to contact the Quebec chil-

dren. A four year-drift allows enough time for the canister to circle once round the North Atlantic gyre from Quebec to Europe, then south to the Canary Islands, west to Florida, then re-cross the Atlantic to Cornwall. Amazing how well those little film canisters seal out the sea.

Dog Tag. The winds of war blow for decades after the battles cease, forsaking flotsam remembrances to every shore. In July 2001, naturalist **Dave Evans** beachcombed a battered Army dog tag near Fort Abercrombie on Kodiak Island, Alaska. Phone calls soon traced the owner, **Austin "Tom" Masterson** who arrived at

Kodiak as a 20-year-old in 1941 to serve in Battery B Coast Artillery responsible for Kodiak's harbor defense system. "An accidental encounter with a bit of metal on the beach," Dave wrote, led back six decades to Tom Masterson now living in Phoenix, Arizona. In 1944, Tom was reassigned to the 99th Infantry Division in Europe. Somehow his dog tag stayed behind in Kodiak, probably lost while he helped construct roads from the beach to higher ground.

(Adapted from "Dog tag anchored in history," by David Evans, *Kodiak Daily Mirror*, Friday, July 20, 2001. Clipping courtesy **Laszlo Hanko** of Kodiak)



Tube talk. Lying inert on the shore, the simple plastic pipes hint little of a stormy past. **Steve McLeod** collected these specimens near Cannon Beach, Oregon (Jim White photo). Their origin remained a mystery till science writer **Jan TenBruggencate** ran articles in the *Honolulu Advertiser* (October 30 & 31, 2001). Readers responded with myriad explanations, but **Mark Heckman** of Waikiki Aquarium found the Kansai website that ID'd them (black, gray, blue and green polyethylene cylinders measuring 1-10 inches long by 3/8 to 1/2 inch in diameter). Turns out, they're spacers between scallop shells suspended on wires from bamboo rafts. Oyster larvae drift with the water, then settle on the shells where they grow to maturity in Japan's extensive near-shore oyster fisheries. Typhoons pulverize numerous rafts setting free countless tubes. After the fisheries switched from PVC plastic which sinks, to polyethylene which floats, thousands washed ashore around the North Pacific including Japan, Oregon, Washington and the Hawaiian Islands. "It's interesting to note," writes Jan, "that Japan's beaches seem to get all sizes of tubes, down to an inch or so in length, judging from the photo on the Kansai website. But we tend to get primarily the longer ones. Unsure what's at work here." Since albatrosses are known to ingest them, perhaps marine life eats the smaller ones while they drift across the North Pacific leaving the longer ones to wash up in Hawaii and North America. (Thanks to **Steve McLeod** and **Rodney W.K. Wong** for alerting me to the tubes. For a fascinating website showing the tubes and other flotsam, see: www.page.sannet.ne.jp/m_teruikakimap_e.html. Jan TenBruggencate may be reached at: juni@honoluluadvertiser.com)

Flare. "Attached is a photo of a flare I found August 1, 2001, at 55°12'01"N, 131°10'15"W", writes **Scott Walker**. "The coast guard has an office next to ours and I asked them to look at it. It is a Mark 24 Marine Marker. They use them to mark wrecks. They are supposed to sink. Once the powder dries it is dangerous. They got all excited and the Navy sent down a crew from Anchorage (700 miles away) to destroy it. My friends next door said 'don't bring them back to town anymore.'"

Fugitive Log IDs. Each year, storms rock and roll thousands of logs from transport vessels. Unfortunately,

it's rare that beachcombers can trace log brands to owners. Here's the story behind 32 codes identifying thousands.

At 2:30 p.m., Tuesday, November 14, 2001, under 60-mile-per-hour winds 25 nautical miles off central Oregon's Cape Foulweather, a rogue wave struck the barge astern the ocean-going tug *Sea Commander* setting adrift 400 bundles of 20-30 Douglas fir logs. For perspective on spills in general, the volume of spilled logs equals some 2-3 million gallons (roughly 10,000 cubic meters), tenfold larger

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than Washington State's largest oil spill. Next day, airborne Coast Guardsmen spotted the logs drifting northward 40 miles a day. In a few days they came ashore from the Columbia River mouth north to Washington's Willapa Bay.

The 1-2-foot diameter logs pose hazards not only to vessels at sea and beachcombers in the surf, but also to fisheries. Many fugitive logs washed to Willapa Bay where they may crush rafts of cultured oysters. **Felecia** and **Eric Faffard** and **Chris Brumitt** recovered 18 logs on the Long Beach Peninsula and **George Hill** posted others near Ocean Park.

Property of the *Harwood Products Corporation*, the 8,000–12,000 logs once fetched \$1 million. Though common practice to cut driftwood on the beach — **Barry Tweed** built his Oregon home from driftwood — these export-quality logs are branded as private property. A

Ballots At Bay. Every human activity, I'm fond of saying, casts something afloat. Even freedom by voting. During November 2001, a year when California electric rates soared

from inept state governance and corporate greed, the city of San Francisco held elections to reorganize power utilities. So closely contested were some issues that the outcomes teetered by just a few hundred votes. Shortly after the ballots were supposedly counted, the Coast Guard, patrolling for possible terrorism as a result of the September 11th attack on the Pentagon and World Trade Center, found the lids of eight ballot boxes adrift on San Francisco Bay near the Golden Gate Bridge.

"This is absurd," said city Supervisor **Tom Ammiano**. "For all I know, public power is sitting at the bottom of the Bay." Elections chief **Tammy Haygood** retorted that her staff had simply been washing the red plastic lids to remove precinct markings and left them to dry on Pier 29 when a big storm blew them into the Bay. Apparently, in case of a terrorist attack, 20,000 absentee and provisional ballots had been covertly diverted for processing at the Bill Graham Civic Auditorium and Pier 29. "Washing the boxes? Leaving them on the dock?"

contractor has begun salvaging them.

"These are the brands that could appear on various logs," writes **Art Harwood**, president of Harwood Corp. "The F brand is on the vast majority of the logs (the F has a circle around it)." MS-01-31; TIS-10-01-31; TIS-10-01-32; XTIS-19-01-3; EW6036; EW6050; FA4008; NB PYT; TSQ02A; C23; F; 4c.7; AA545; C23; EBWUA; EHZVJ; EKGR; EC2042; NBHZE; UQ8008; EB1080; EB1083; EC2084; NBWGM; W0027D; W0015F; FFH; C35; EBIUW; EAAXL; EBXVW; L26.

Please report the brands. In coming years we will alert distant beachcombers as the logs drift north to Alaska and west to Hawaii. Professional foresters previously traced brands on a few logs beached on Oahu to the Pacific Northwest.

(This story was made possible courtesy of **Doris Hannigen**, **Nancy Butterfield** of the *Chinook Observer* — see November 21st edition — *Seattle Times*, November 19th, and the U.S. Coast Guard website 15&17 November 2001 <http://www.uscg.mil/news/cgnews.shm>) ■

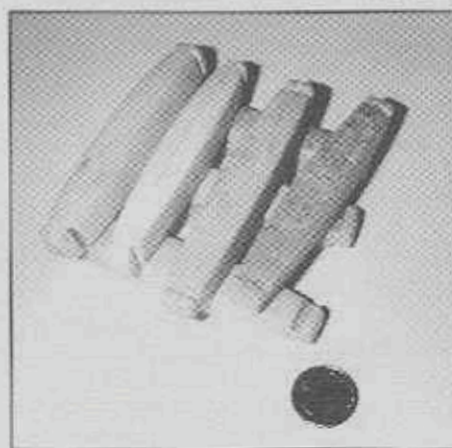
Ammiano said. "People had said whitewashing, but this is ridiculous." The floating ballot box lid incident fueled calls for a recount. And the sea, too, will count. Perhaps a few lids escaped San Francisco Bay to drift round the North Pacific?

(Adapted from *Box lids in Bay cast new doubt on S.F. vote* by **Renee Koury** in *San Jose Mercury News*, November 27, 2001. Courtesy **Judith Selby**) ■



The box lid was recovered by **Judith Selby**, December 16, 2001, as part of ongoing efforts to clean up Kehoe Beach in the Point Reyes National Seashore and turning the resulting scavenging into artwork. The piece was photographed and imaged by **Richard Lang** (Judith's partner in the cleanup effort) the poster was printed at Trillium Fine Art Press, Brisbane, CA <http://www.trilliumprints.com/>. The poster can be viewed at Trillium's website.

Pass the Alert to a Friend!



Mystery Floats. Finger-sized fishing floats are washing ashore around the North Pacific, including Japan (*Tadashi Ishii & Kansai Clean-up Office*), Hawaii (*Jan TenBruggencate*), Oregon (*Steve McLeod*), Washington (*Barb Aue*), *Gene Woodwick*, and Canada's *Queen Charlotte Islands (Guthrie Schweers)*. Usually pink fading

to white, they measure approximately 4.5 inches long, tapering from a 0.6-inch cross section at the center, to 0.4-inch square cross sections at both ends. Grooves around the ends probably affixed them to nets. Identifications, according to **Michio Shima**, include Taiwanese characters, "Sunny Brand" and "Boat Brand" embossed in English, and trademarks of an oriental sailing vessel and a sun setting over waves. **David Lai** confirmed the characters to be Taiwanese and found they repeated the English words in addition to "Guaranteed Durable" and "drifting with the current." Floats lost in the waters surrounding Taiwan would ride the Kuroshio Current northward to Japan, then eastward on the Japanese Warm Current across the North Pacific to North America and westward on the California Current to Hawaii.

Get My Drift

by Curtis C. Ebbesmeyer

There's been a change at *Alert* headquarters. Since the last issue, Genevieve Ebbesmeyer suffered a stroke. Unfortunately, she's no longer able to fully participate in *Alert* activities. She's an enthusiastic fan of the *Beachcombers' Alert* and enjoyed performing many of the tasks associated with producing the newsletter, including editing, mailings, accounting and correspondence.

Unfortunately, costs for producing the *Alert* have significantly risen necessitating an increase in dues. It's like having a book delivered. At the urging of *Alert* staff because I've previously absorbed many cost increases, I've reluctantly agreed to raise dues to \$15 US annually.

I realize this is a hardship for many *Alert* subscribers, particularly those in Canada and overseas because of monetary exchange rates. Unfortunately, international-bound *Alerts* must be sealed in envelopes franked with near triple postage.

I'd like to personally thank each subscriber. Since we began six years ago, I've discovered that the *Alert* fills a niche that no other publication fills. It's like bird watching, I often say. Once you know the species, the forest comes alive. So it is with the shore. Once you know the stories behind a few dozen types of flotsam — glass balls, drift net floats, radiosondes, log tags, sea beans, messages in bottles — you begin to realize that the ocean speaks personally to each of us. The *Alert* is devoted to understanding the story of each thing afloat. Please continue with me our quest to decipher what the sea writes on the shore. ■

Thanks to beachcombers who reported more than 15 Tommy Pickles Rugrat dolls heads.



Location	Date/2000	Finder	Number
Cannon Beach, OR	18 January	Steve McLeod	2
Warrenton, OR	18 January	Chuck Williamson	2
Ocean Shores, WA	2/27/01	Shriner family	1
Queen Charlotte Is.	15 & 16 March	Rodney Schatz	3
Lincoln City, OR	21 March	Connie Dermach	1
Carmah Lightstation, Vancouver Is.	25 March	Janet Etzkorn	1
Kalisch north	March-April	Fred Koontz	>1
5 miles south of Salsiw River (-44°N)	April 28	Peggy Durham	1
Shi Shi Beach, WA	May	Gret Johnston	1
Aristazabal Is., B.C.	July	Rick and Jean Beaver	1
Cape Scott, Vancouver Is.	August 25	John Williamson	1

President and editor, Dr. Curtis C. Ebbesmeyer; drift simulations, W. James Ingraham, Jr.; webmaster and newsletter layout, Jim White; production, Brent Johnston; treasurer, David McCroskey; associate editor, Genevieve Ebbesmeyer; correspondents: Doris Hannigen (Washington State), Steve McLeod (Oregon); Laszlo Hanko, Scott Walker (Alaska); Wim Kruiswijk (Netherlands); Neil and Betty Carey, Rodney Schatz, Guthrie Schweers (Queen Charlotte Islands); John Bye, Alan Pearce (Australia); Nick Darke (Cornwall). Circulation: over 600.

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— Paul J. Ebbesmeyer

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Washington State's beachcomber fairs. On Saturday and Sunday March 2 – 3, 2002, Ocean Shores hosts the *15th annual Beachcombers' Fun Fair* (write Irene Thornton c/o Ocean Shores Chamber of Commerce, P.O. Box 382, Ocean Shores, WA 98569). While you're there, visit the *Ocean Shores Interpretive Center*. Fine exhibits hosted by Director Gene Woodwick and many dedicated volunteers attracted 9,680 visitors in 2001.

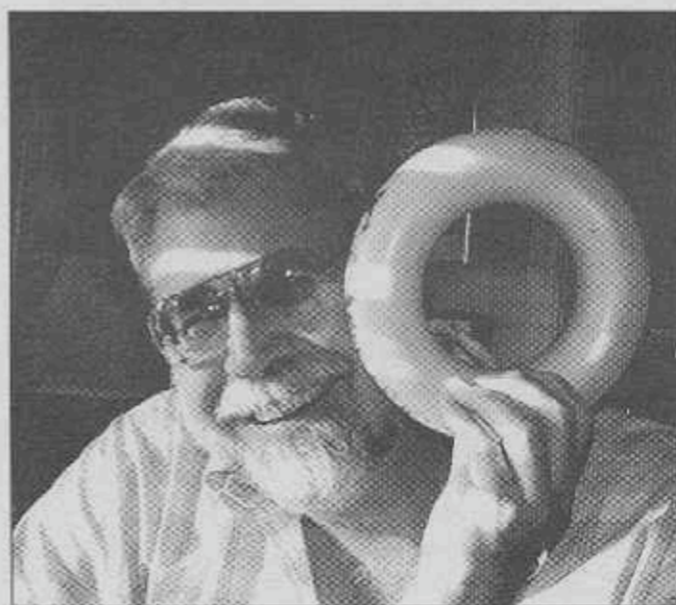
A fortnight later, on Saturday and Sunday, March 16 – 17, there's Grayland's *40th annual Beachcombers Driftwood Show* (write Kathie Wahl c/o Cranberry Coast Chamber of Commerce, P.O. Box 305, Grayland, WA 98547). Each show features fascinating displays and draws upwards of 500 beachcombers.

Other great beachcomber fairs include: *Shark tooth festival* (FL), *Sea Bean Symposium* (Cocoa Beach, FL; October 17 – 20, 2002), *Driftwood Sculpture* (Bothell, WA), *Trash Art Show* (HI). Please write with details of these events. ■

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Atlantic Mystery. A pink plastic doughnut beachcombed at Cocoa Beach, Florida, during the 5th Sea Bean Symposium (4-6 October 2001). Its diameters measure 7.5" (outer), 3.9" (inner) and 1.8" (toroid). Embossed characters read: "MØREPLAST, SJOHOLT, NORWAY A RT.NR. I.A. 8X2". Per Heggelund recalls it's used in bottom gill net fishing. Could it have gotten loose and floated from Norway?