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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## Harbormasters share a 30-year anniversary

(NEWPORT, OR) It's been three decades since Kent Gibson and Chris Urbach were hired by the Port of Newport – one as a security guard and one as a maintenance worker – but today they share more than a 30-year history on the job. They also share the title of harbormaster although they work in two very different areas.

Gibson is the North Commercial Marina harbormaster, managing the bustling docks that serve the bulk of Newport's commercial fishing trade. It's a natural fit for him, since it was 31 years ago that he needed to find a new career after a serious accident permanently ended his work as a commercial fisherman.

"We were transferring 40 tons of fish and the transfer cable that went from the mother ship to our 40 tons of fish was thrown over the side and got caught on the trawl door," he explained. That was the first in a series of events that ended with Gibson "about 12 feet up in the air in probably 30 foot seas." Laid up with a broken back, his time as an Alaskan fisherman was over. After years of serving in a variety of different roles at the Port, it was just three years ago that harbormaster became his title.

Across Yaquina Bay, Urbach is the harbormaster at the Port's Recreational Marina in South Beach and his beginning was distinctly different. He was an apprentice plumber when he left that position to take a job at the Port. His wife, he recalls, was eight months pregnant when he took the job and one month later, he had already received two new titles: maintenance supervisor and Dad.

"It was probably within two weeks that Bud Shoemake made me the maintenance supervisor," he recalled, staying in that role for the first dozen or so years. After that, he made the move to South Beach and had multiple titles before Don Mann made him harbormaster 10 years ago.

For a sense of how different these two men are, one need only look at their hobbies. Gibson is a fossil hunter who has a passion for beachcombing and rock hunting. He's skilled at it, too, with seven skulls on permanent loan to the Smithsonian Institution in Washington D.C. to prove it.

"I accidentally found the first one," he recalled. "I kept trying to throw it away but my dog kept bringing it back. Then I realized that it was actually a small porpoise skull and that's in the Smithsonian now."

While Gibson's finds aren't on public display, they are warehoused with all kinds of treasures that the fossil-lover has had a chance to tour on two occasions.

Urbach finds his treasures somewhere else – in his garden. Blessed with the desirable weather found between Toledo and Siletz, he's taken up his new pastime in the last year or two. "I like to spend time with my family and I like to hunt and fish, but more and more, you can find me in my garden. I'm really enjoying my tomatoes," he explains.

Both men were hired by Port General Manager John Mohr and Urbach believes that their longevity relates back to growing up in the area.

"Our options as local kids were limited," he explains. "You fished, logged or worked at a mill and this was as pretty decent job for the local area."

Both recall some noteworthy milestones from their years at the Port thus far. For Gibson, it was the removal of the USS Pasley, a sunken World War II vessel that was part of the foundation of the International Terminal.

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“It was a nasty old thing and leaking and just getting rid of it was a real highlight,” he recalls.

For Urbach, seeing the old fern plant torn down was memorable. “They tore it down when the city redeveloped for the board walk. It was an old building with fire damage on the inside and it was time for it to go.”

Like so many locals, both men have witnessed distinct changes in the working waterfront on both sides of the Yaquina Bay Bridge.

While the Port of Newport celebrates 30 years with the two harbormasters, neither is going anywhere just yet, which is a relief to General Manager Paula Miranda.

“Both of these men bring a wealth of knowledge and history to the Port’s operations and, as a new manager, that’s something I really value,” she commented. “We are happy to gain as much of their insight and knowledge as we can before they look to retirement.”

The two harbormasters also received high praise from Aaron Bretz, Director of Operations, particularly over the past two years as the organization’s leadership was in transition.

“I have relied heavily upon both Chris and Kent to determine the best way ahead. They’ve added context and perspective to every decision that has been made and I’m personally thankful for their advice and foresight,” Bretz remarked.

That valuable insight will be available at the Recreational Marina for three more years, according to Urbach, before it’s time to retire and time to travel. Asked if he had a bucket list of destinations, he responds simply, “Ask my wife.”

Gibson is taking a “wait and see” attitude and doesn’t have a set retirement date in mind. Whenever it happens, he notes, he hopes he’s first able to get the Port Dock 5 renovation project done. “I’d love to see that to fruition and hopefully we’ll get the grants to get that started soon.”

In the meantime, Urbach will continue to manage the 522-slip marina in South Beach and Gibson will fend off the sea lions (he’s been charged three times in the past year) at the commercial marina.

“I look forward to continued success with them both,” Miranda shared.

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