

The Fleet of Flowers

The Fleet of Flowers was established in 1945. The event came to be to honor the memories of two fishermen, Roy Bower and John Chambers, who died at sea in an attempt to aid another fisherman. It has since evolved to honor all seafarers and those lost at sea, and has many people in attendance every year.

The City has long supported this community event behind-the-scenes by providing services such as use of the Community Hall for wreath-making (including providing materials and supplies, and hauling away wreath-making debris), supplying the event stage, supplying electricity and water, assistance with setting up the sound system, and providing traffic control in the harbor parking lot on the day of the event.



The original event that inspired the Fleet of Flowers was reported in The Yaquina Bay News on October 8, 1936:

Late Sunday evening Depoe Bay was the scene of sea tragedy which took the lives of two brave rescuers when the troller Cara Lou was wrecked in the fog and darkness and the 2-man crew perished.

During the afternoon Eugene McWilliams, his 14 year old son and another lad G McLaughlin all of Salem, went out fishing in a small trolling boat the Norwester, despite the dense fog that enveloped sea and land. After they had been out for six hours, fears were felt for their safety. Roy Bower and Jack Chambers with their 30-foot troller Cara Lou put to sea to try and find the Norwester and help her to port.

They picked up the missing boat near the whistling buoy, by this time the fog and darkness was practically impenetrable but the two boats headed for the bay entrance, the Cara Lou leading. Unable to get any bearing for direction they ran too far north, the Cara Lou going over the north reef was struck by a heavy sea which wrecked her. The Norwester close astern saw the accident but was unable to render aid ran out to the whistler and tied up to it until Monday morning they the fog cleared away and

they came in safely.

When the Norwester was first missing the coast guard here was notified and men and equipment were dispatched to the scene and patrolled the shore line. Citizens of Depoe Bay watched the shore line in vain.

About ten o'clock it is said that calls for help were heard but aid was impossible. Other men would have willingly gone out but owing to the low tide no boat could go to sea.

Early Monday morning the fog having cleared the troller Robert II (?), Percy Austin, master, with seven other men went to sea and after searching a few hours found the Cara Lou almost entirely submerged. Entangled in the rigging was found the body of Bower while floating nearby with a life belt on the body of Chambers was picked up.

Mr. Chambers 21, was a resident of Gladstone where his parents, a brother and sister reside, and where the funeral was held.

Mr. Bower 40, resided at Depoe Bay and is survived by his widow and one daughter. The second child was expected Monday.

The body was shipped to Los Angeles Tuesday.