



THE SEA AND THE

The newest branch experiment station is by the Pacific Ocean

Lavern Weber wears two hats these days. One as director of the OSU Hatfield Marine Science Center in Newport. The other as head of the newest branch of the OSU Agricultural Experiment Station.

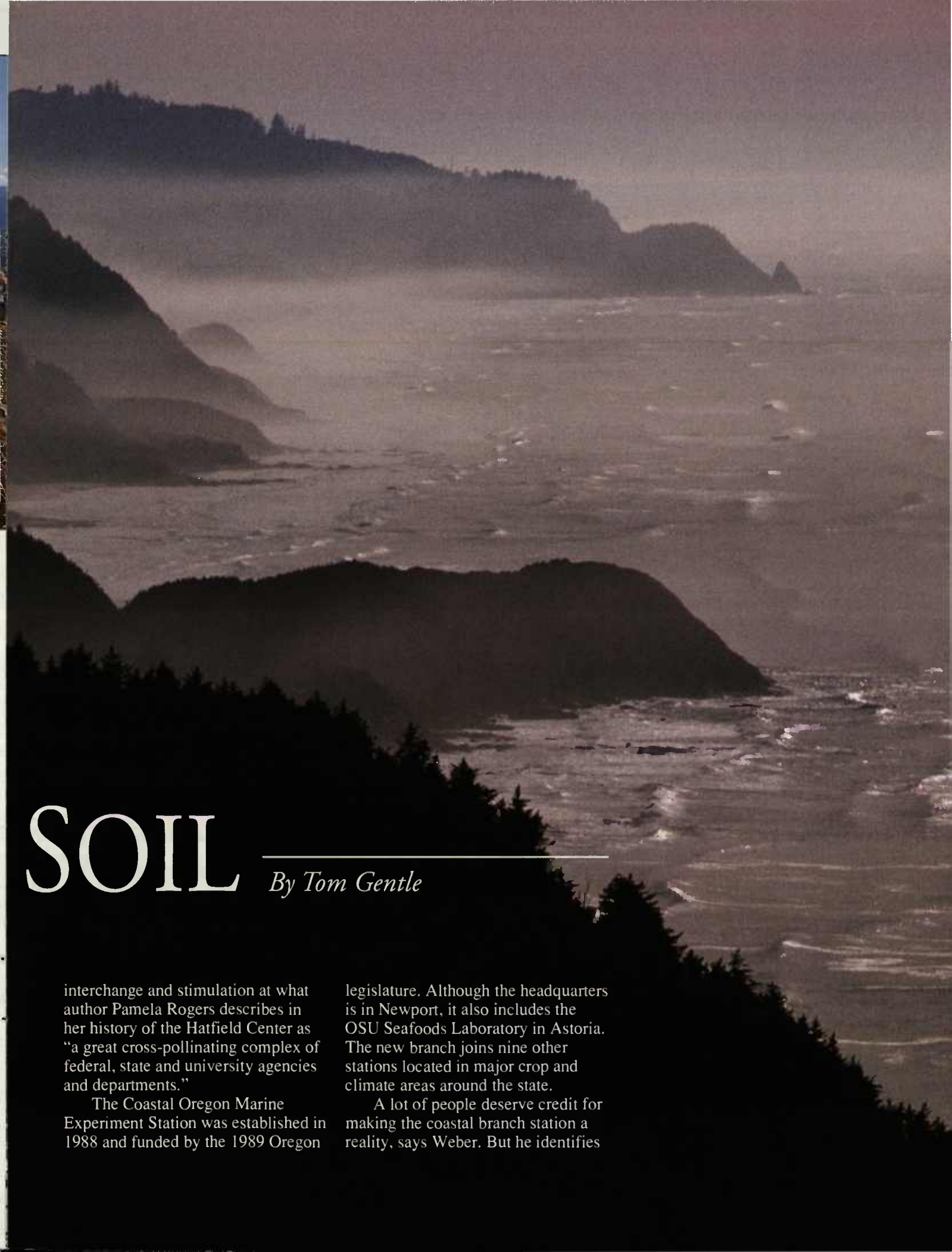
But that doesn't mean he divides his time between the sea and the soil.

Rather, he's in charge of a group of researchers who focus their efforts on commercial fishing and seafood processing.

"Experiment Station research seeks to increase the quantity, quality, safety, and marketability of food. On the coast that means fish, just as in

eastern Oregon it primarily means cattle and wheat," Weber said.

So don't expect exotic recipes for beef bouillabaisse or experimental crops along the banks of Yaquina Bay. The new station fits right in with the existing marine research activities at the Hatfield Center. And it contributes significantly to the scientific



SOIL

By Tom Gentle

interchange and stimulation at what author Pamela Rogers describes in her history of the Hatfield Center as "a great cross-pollinating complex of federal, state and university agencies and departments."

The Coastal Oregon Marine Experiment Station was established in 1988 and funded by the 1989 Oregon

legislature. Although the headquarters is in Newport, it also includes the OSU Seafoods Laboratory in Astoria. The new branch joins nine other stations located in major crop and climate areas around the state.

A lot of people deserve credit for making the coastal branch station a reality, says Weber. But he identifies

two in particular. Leaders in the commercial fishing industry led a grass roots effort in support of the station. And coastal Senator John Brenneman was instrumental in getting the idea approved by the state legislature.

Don't expect... beef bouillabaise.

Many people are puzzled when they first hear about the coastal branch station. "What," they ask, "is an agricultural research unit doing at a place devoted to studying the ocean?" It's a question Weber hears often. His reply, accompanied with a wry smile, is another question. "Isn't it strange it didn't happen sooner?"

The Hatfield Marine Science Center celebrates its 25th anniversary this summer. Comparing that to the relatively brief life of the new branch station lends support to the notion that the coastal station has been a long time coming.

Why wasn't it established years ago? There isn't a simple explanation. Various agriculture groups in Oregon have a long history of banding together to promote their common interests. The fishing industry, in comparison, began to organize relatively recently. For example, only three of Oregon's 26 agricultural commodity commissions deal with fishing. Many of the traditional commodity groups date back to the 1940s and 1950s. With the exception of the Oregon Trawl Commission, founded in 1963, the fishery commodity groups, dating from the late 1970s, are new kids on the block.

Weber thinks it simply took the various players—the fishing industry, state government, and the university—a long time to sort out their goals.

Not that OSU has neglected fisheries and seafood research until now. But it has been scattered among a number of departments and colleges on the OSU campus in Corvallis. The new branch station, says Weber, has brought these research activities together. As a result, he expects the research will be better coordinated and more responsive to industry problems.

Having the branch station researchers physically housed on the coast is a key advantage, he maintains, and will enhance cooperation and coordination between OSU and the seafood industry.



TOM GENTLE



TOM GENTLE



TOM GENTLE

Top: Commercial fishing boats at Newport. Left: Hauling in a halibut. Above: Tidepool creatures.

"Living and working on the coast will give the researchers direct contact with coastal people and issues. And I think their research will be more relevant because they don't have to look to an academic department 55 miles away in Corvallis for guidance or assignments," Weber said.

Initial plans call for ten research positions, three food scientists at the OSU Seafoods Laboratory in Astoria and the remainder in Newport. The positions at the Hatfield Marine Science Center include a marine economist, a microbiologist, five fisheries and wildlife scientists and a marine mammalogist.

Some of the positions are new and will be filled by people hired from outside the university. Others are existing positions at OSU that have been reassigned to the Coastal Oregon Marine Experiment Station from various academic departments.

Gil Sylvia occupies one of the new positions. A marine economist and marketing expert, Sylvia was the first new person assigned to the branch station. His research will look at such issues as the economic efficiency of different segments of the fishing industry, consumer seafood preferences, and potential new markets for fish.

Chris Langdon, a shellfish aquaculture expert, conducted research through the OSU Department of Fisheries and Wildlife before joining the new branch station. He's already trying to develop a commercially acceptable pelleted feed that will lower the cost of algae feed. He's also investigating the suminoe oyster as a new aquaculture species.

Bill McNeil, another longtime OSU faculty member and internationally

acclaimed pioneer in salmon aquaculture, is investigating the development of polyculture systems—that is, growing other crops, such as seaweed, along with salmon.

Viruses, bacteria and parasites in fish get the attention of Bob Olson. Jim Lannan will continue to devote attention to problems connected with fish culture and genetics. And Dave Sampson, a marine fisheries expert, will conduct research on fish populations.

Three researchers recently began working through the coastal branch station: Michael Morrissey, a food

scientist, and Lewis Richardson, a chemist, both at the OSU Seafoods Laboratory; and Paul Reno, a microbiologist, in Newport.

The fishing industry... began to organize relatively recently.

Chief among the many amenities available to the staff of the coastal branch station is the Hatfield Center's new 21,000 square foot library, which was dedicated in July. With a collection of 25,000 volumes and 310 research journal subscriptions, it is the leading marine station library in the United States.

A nine-member advisory council provides guidance on research needs and priorities and helps marshal political support for needed programs. The group includes three fishing industry representatives, three seafood processors, two community representatives, and one environmental representative.

The membership list of the advisory council reads like a Who's Who of the Oregon fishing industry. Barry Fisher, Newport fisherman and president of New Wave Fisheries, is the council's chair. Other members include Don Barth, vice president and district manager of U.S. Bank's Yaquina Bay Branch; Joe Easley, director of the Oregon Trawl Commission in Astoria; Jon Englund, owner of Englund Marine in Astoria; Mike Graybill, director of the South Slough Estuarine Sanctuary in Charleston; Sam Hayes, Tillamook oyster grower; Merl Johnson of Pacific Seafoods in Charleston; Tom Libby, Point Adams Packing Co. in Hammond; and Dick Severson, manager of Or Aqua in Springfield.

As with any new undertaking, it has taken a while for all the elements to fall into place. Now the staff positions are filled, research is underway, and new proposals are being considered. Perhaps it's fitting that the new coastal branch station stands poised to begin its work as the Hatfield Marine Science Center celebrates 25 years of accomplishment.



Lavern Weber

JIM LARISON



OSU's Hatfield Marine Science Center at Newport is the headquarters for the Coastal Oregon Marine Experiment Station. The OSU Seafoods Laboratory in Astoria also is part of the station.

Tom Gentle is a communications specialist in OSU's Department of Agricultural Communications.