



The Bunkhouse Chronicle

Craig Rullman
Columnist

In praise of Sisters

Sometimes even refugees get lucky. We thought we'd move to Montana. But in the end it was Sisters, Montana in miniature, you might say. We still get the winters — we've seen -30 on our back porch — but we have the rivers too, and wilderness, great hunting, skiing, I can ride my horse out the back gate into the piney woods, and when I go to town people smile at each other and say hello.

If you've lived long enough in places where that simply doesn't happen anymore, you might appreciate how important it actually is.

Call it manners. Or dignity. Call it old-timey largesse, or even a notion of community. I call it miraculous, this sense I keep getting that we are into something together, and I'm grateful for that. I hope you are, too.

Last Friday serves up a fine example. In the morning I met with a group of men from VAST church at The Cottonwood Café who were meeting over breakfast and heartfelt prayers to send an aging friend into a life transition.

Then I walked across the street to meet with my tax guy, Lance Brandt, at Capstone. I was early for our appointment, by a lot. He let me in anyway. We talked about taxes, sure, but mostly we talked about horses, and sheep, and donkeys, and the curious subject of bloat.

After, I met with my friend Brett Miller, and we drove out to Gene Baldwin's place to pick up my new handmade hat.

Brett was already wearing his. Flaunting it, even, as we skirted Whychus Canyon Preserve and he gave me a short course in local history. And my new hat was perfect. It's likely that I will beat the snot out of my new lid — flat brim, telescope crease, no taco shall ever adorn my grape — in the coming years, but it will always be perfect, in the way that only a handmade thing can be.

Then I came home and worked on the corrals, wearing my new hat in the teasing spring sunlight, brushing the fence rails with linseed oil against the inevitable drying and twisting, and pestered by a curious colt, too big for his britches, whose precise skill is getting in the way, and staying there.

In the evening we saddled up and left early for Cork Cellars, where Jim Cornelius and Mike Biggers were making big music in a small space.

We weren't early enough, because the place was already jammed, wall-to-wall with smiles and laughter when we walked in the door.

Oh, I had too much fun. I always do. But what is a good-timing man, still madly in love with a good-hearted woman, to do in such an inviting atmosphere, surrounded by people who still know their neighbors, and care about them, where the wine is flowing, the company sings loudly along with the band, and the food is perfect?

I've written elsewhere that I don't dance. I don't. I still don't. I will always say that I don't. But last Friday I might have, and since I'm being honest I will say it was a privilege to cut a rug with Annie Marland. I've seen her before, Miss Marland, setting the floor on fire as only an Irish woman from Burns can pull it off, and so I knew the trouble I was getting into. But even if she was three steps ahead of my stumbling and tired routine, it would be hard to say anything but thank you, Annie, for dancing with this old buckaroo.

The larger world never goes away, of course, and outside, the air was full of airport bombings and rampage killings and the curious image of our president chumming it up with a murderous dictator, but I've resolved to turn the volume down on that noise. It takes discipline, that, but it's a growing necessity because it hurts my ears and bruises my heart. Some day, maybe, I'll turn it off altogether.

And anyway, after the music and the dancing, we came home, where there is another noise to fill the air these days — the frogs down in Indian Ford Meadow. They are back at it, those hoppers, thousands upon thousands of them, making a nightly music that rolls up out of the meadow and through the trees until it reaches us, the softest of symphonies, all of that croaking blending together into something somehow timeless.

I don't know what they are so happy about, precisely. But they are. And that's enough. And so, as we lay down to sleep last Friday night, I kept thinking about the poet James Wright, and something he wrote for all of us, once. And it just fits:

Today I was so happy, so I made this poem — by James Wright:

As the plump squirrel scampers

Across the roof of the corner crib,

The moon suddenly stands up in the darkness,

And I see that it is impossible to die.

Each moment of time is a mountain.

An eagle rejoices in the oak trees of heaven,

Crying
This is what I wanted.



PHOTO PROVIDED

Cloverdale's board received tools and equipment.

Fire district receives \$11,000 in equipment

Cloverdale Volunteer Fire Fighter Association President Kyle Wattenburg and Vice-president Spencer Cashwell presented the Cloverdale Rural Fire Protection District Board of Directors with \$11,000 in tools and equipment at their regular March 16 meeting.

The volunteers raised approximately \$12,000 during raffle fundraisers last year geared toward equipment purchases.

The tools presented consisted of two portable scene lights, two rotary cutoff saws for rescue work, and two ventilation fans to remove toxic smoke and gases from buildings during and after fires. These tools will replace currently used outdated, disparate, or non-existent equipment.

This brings the total to over \$40,000 that the volunteers have raised over the past five years specifically to purchase equipment for the district.

Association President Kyle Wattenburg says that he speaks for all of the volunteers when he gives a big thank-you to the citizens of

Sisters Country who have supported our organization over the years.

He said, "Our volunteers turn this money right around and use it to directly help the people that so graciously donated to us. We are very grateful to be able to live in and help our community that cares so much about others."

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