

# Local author loves the outdoors

By Erin Borla  
Correspondent

Roger Blain has lived his life in love with nature and all that it has to offer. After years working for the National Park Service as a park ranger and any other job he could find that would keep him outside and teaching others about nature and wildlife — he has written a children's book, "Why Salmon Cry."

"Why Salmon Cry" was self-released this past month. It is a story told from the perspective of a Native American boy hearing the legend of the salmon migration as told by his grandfather.

"I used to guide interpretive tours and fishing expeditions up near Olympic National Park and I remember always being curious about the journey of the fish," Roger said. "I would catch a salmon in the river and wonder what their life was like before we harvested them."

Blain has a lifetime of observing nature, which further inspired his decision to write his book. His love affair with the outdoors began at an early age.

"I failed first grade," he recalled. "All I wanted to do was be in nature — I spent days in the creek behind the school catching minnows and crawdads instead of the classroom."

"The future is with the children," he said. "There is so much controversy over wild salmon; so many runs are endangered. I hope with this book to inspire children to care about wild salmon — so maybe there is hope for them in the future."

In November of 2014, while living outside Olympic National Park in Washington, Roger was diagnosed with ALS, commonly called Lou Gehrig's Disease. Close family friends Jennifer and Hal Boley, whom they met when working at Sequoia National Park, had recently moved to Sisters and invited Roger and his wife Leslie down to share Thanksgiving with them after

Roger's diagnosis. The couple decided to move to Sisters after that brief visit.

Roger and Leslie met on a blind date in Virginia at the drive-in in 1966. The two were married in 1968. Blain did a brief stint in the U.S. Army, where he served in Korea. It was the only time the two were apart. The couple spent time hiking and bicycling through Europe and North Africa including Algeria and Tunisia in the early 1970s — then a variety of odd jobs around the mid-Atlantic coast before Roger's perfect job happened upon him.

It was when Roger was working in an Outdoor Store in Fairfax, Virginia, that his dreams finally came true. He had wanted to be a National Park ranger as long as he could remember, but he could never get in the door to get a job.

One day a park ranger came in to purchase climbing equipment, and then was back in the store a few days later.

"I just asked him — how do you get to be a park ranger? I've never been able to get in the door," he recounted.

The ranger was a superintendent at Great Falls National Park. He quickly got Roger an application and then a seasonal position at the park. Not long after, Leslie also got a position at the park. The seasonal position became permanent and Roger transitioned to Chesapeake & Ohio Canal (C&O) National Park, a 185-mile ribbon park along the Potomac River.

Roger's story is certainly one of persistence and never giving up. Soon after he transitioned to C&O, the National Parks Service announced 38 jobs nationally for supervisory rangers. He applied, but didn't get an interview.

"After I didn't get an interview, I called Washington, D.C. I wasn't whining, I just wanted to know what I could do to improve," he said.

A clerical error had not listed him as a permanent employee; once the error

was corrected he received an interview. Over 4,000 people applied for the 38 jobs offered, 400 were interviewed.

"After my interview, I found out I didn't get the job," he said. "I was so depressed. I called Washington D.C. again, just to find out how I could improve. I was put on hold and then asked 'would you like Yosemite or Sequoia?' I was so happy, I was walking on clouds. It's true, never give up on your dreams."

“ I would catch a salmon in the river and wonder what their life was like before we harvested them. — Roger Blain

Blain and his wife spent two years at Sequoia National Park where the United States Christmas Tree stands in Grant's Grove — not in Washington D.C. as many people would believe. The Blains then moved to Everglades National Park, where Roger oversaw over one million acres; then to Acadia National Park in Maine, where they opened the Raptor Rehab Center and Roger mastered the art of falconry.

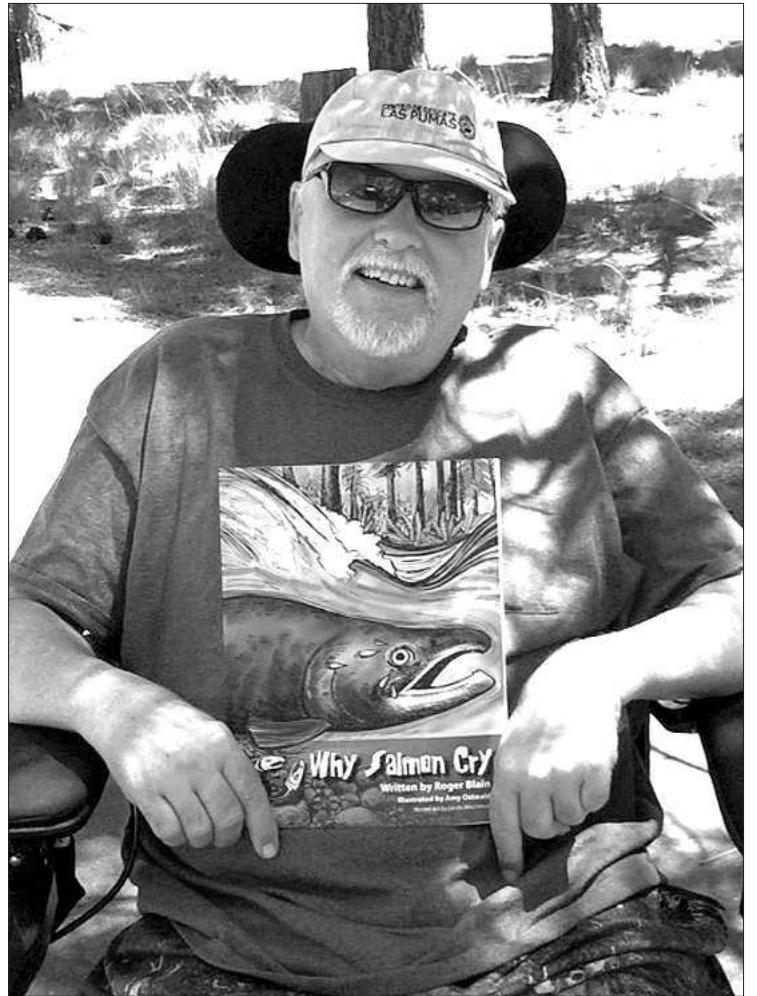


PHOTO BY ERIN BORLA

After a National Parks career, Roger Blain has become an author.

In 1993 the Blains transitioned back to Sequoia followed by their final move for the National Park Service to Olympic National Park. Throughout his career Roger served as a naturalist, law enforcement officer, emergency medical tech, search and rescue team member, and firefighter — all with the same job title.

After Roger's diagnosis and their Thanksgiving trip to Sisters the couple decided to make another move.

"I got back to Olympic and knew what I wanted to

do," said Roger. "I wanted to move to Sisters."

"Everyone has been so great here," said Leslie. "We love going out and experiencing the beauty; we've been to the head of the Metolius several times, became members at the High Desert Museum, and are looking forward to more adventures in nature."

"Why Salmon Cry" is available directly through Roger and Leslie for \$16.95 by emailing crittermom48@yahoo.com. Wholesale opportunities are also available.

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