

The people behind The Nugget... *Craig Rullman*

Craig Rullman has a varied curriculum vitae: buckaroo in the Nevada Outback, United States Marine, and law enforcement officer. Through it all, though, he's always been a writer.

As it does for most writers, the proclivity for the written word came early, and it came through a love of reading: "Since I can remember," Rullman says. "Since I remember being mad that they weren't teaching me to read yet in school."

"I was blessed because my parents always encouraged us to read. There were always books around, and no TV. Except for baseball. There was always time for baseball."

After a stint in the deeply rewarding but atrociously low-paying world of the traditional Nevada buckaroo, Rullman served in the U.S. Marine Corps, where he was deployed at sea and in the Middle East (between conflicts in that troubled region). He served on the Santa Barbara Police Department as a patrol officer, detective and SWAT team leader, before retiring from that position and heading north to Sisters, Oregon.

There, he turned his attention to his writing, and made inquiries at *The Nugget*.

"I'd been working on my blog and knocking a lot of rust off, and I thought, well, if you're not writing for an audience, you might as well be keeping a diary."

Rullman started writing a column, *The Bunkhouse Chronicle*, and writing features and some news stories, particularly during the election for Deschutes County Sheriff. He has also been published in *Range Magazine* and earned a third-place award for Best Profile/Interview from the Nevada Press Association.

Rullman says that his favorite feature was one he wrote for *The Nugget* on Western artist, buckaroo and saddlemaker Len Babb, who has held several exhibits in Sisters in the past couple of years. Not content to conduct a phone interview, Rullman went to Babb's studio in Paisley, Oregon, to meet the artist, who immediately knew that Rullman had spent time in the saddle himself. The reporter considered the opportunity a rare privilege and it was the start of an ongoing friendship.

"He was always kind of a legend in my head," Rullman reflected. "For some people it would be like you got invited to Waylon Jennings' house, you know?"

Rullman has also been

moved by his experience writing profiles of several local veterans.

"I really enjoy talking with those guys," he said.

A particular standout was profiling longtime Sisters businessman Bob Grooney for *The Nugget's Sisters Oregon Guide*. Grooney was a 16-year-old Marine on Iwo Jima, where Rullman's grandfather flew as a Marine Corps gunner. Grooney had traveled back to Iwo Jima and returned with a memento that he shared with the writer.

"That guy gave me Iwo Jima beach sand in a bottle," Rullman said. "It's like getting a piece of the true cross. At least for jarheads it is."

Rullman's columns reflect his wide range of interests and experiences — history, ranching, gardening, baseball, horses, and firearms. They are sometimes controversial.

"Craig's work can stir people up," said Editor in Chief Jim Cornelius. "I have had many people tell me that *The Bunkhouse Chronicle* is their favorite thing in the paper and the first thing they turn to in each edition. Other people would rather never see it in print again. I think that reflects a vivid voice, and Craig's outlook is kind of 100 proof. He's also not easy to pin down and put in a box,



PHOTO PROVIDED

Craig Rullman, center, with Cols. Mayfield and Sanikidze in Hohenfels, Germany. Rullman was invited to embed with U.S. Marines on a training operation with Georgian military personnel, which he reported on in his *Bunkhouse Chronicle* column in 2016.

which I think is great."

"I think it's a columnist's job to be provocative," Rullman said.

The columnist is suspicious of political and cultural orthodoxies, and enjoys prod-ding them.

"It's so binary that sometimes you need something that disassociates from party shills and hacks and looks for a third way," he said.

Rullman says that drawing occasional hostile fire for his columns in his hometown doesn't bother him.

"I grew up in a town smaller than Sisters," he said. "If you look at my professional career, it's all been a small town of one kind or another."

There's nothing more "small town" than a Marine Corps infantry platoon or a squad room in a police department, no matter how big the city, Rullman says.

"Those can be intensely pressurized environments that I think more or less kind of armors you to whether somebody likes this column," he said.

And he takes to heart the creators' caution that it is best not to take to heart either

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