

Commentary... Conflict on our commons

By Robert Collins
Guest Columnist

In the early years of our country, there was a plot of ground in Boston set aside for the “common use” of all citizens — now a lovely park called the Boston Commons. Citizens brought cows and sheep to graze; others planted crops. But in time a conflict arose as the land became oversubscribed. Who gets to use it? Who makes the rules? What are the common values and mechanisms for governing our commons?

There are two large commons in Sisters — our sky and our forests. There are competing interests for the use of each. Local businesses need to advertise to survive and thus keep lights on at night to attract customers. An overabundance of light can impede the observance of stars and planets at night — a decrement in the quality of the night sky for everyone.

There are competing interests for the use of our forests — hiking, riding, camping, and fishing. These activities are appropriately regulated by the National Forest Service to preserve and maintain nature as a

commons available to all. Gun-lovers also wish to use our forest as a place for target practice (Jim Cornelius: “Shooting is a major forest recreation activity,” *The Nugget*, February 12).

An overabundance of gunfire — particularly rapid-fire weapons — disrupts the peaceful tranquility most citizens cherish in our forest. As USFS does not seem to accept responsibility for shooting guns on their forest lands, concerns of safety, noise pollution, and lead toxicity remain unaddressed. Washington state has a nonprofit group (Trash No Lands) that at least takes responsibility for cleaning up shooting sites. Bend and Redmond have indoor shooting ranges.

The “tragedy of the commons” has been a focus of concern in American history. Often it is stated as a conflict of private interest versus public good. The use of night lights — is it a right of businesses or an infringement on the public commons of the sky? Target-shooting in the forest — is it a right of gun owners or an infringement on the public commons of nature? Who decides?

Local actors perform in one-act plays

Playwrights, directors and actors from Sisters and beyond will entertain audiences again this spring during the fifth annual “Now You’re Talking...” One Acts 2020 presented by Silent Echo Theater Company (SETC) March 12-15 at The Belfry.

Producer Marla Manning says this year’s event will feature international plays for the first time, featuring two by Australian playwright Adam Szudrich, as well as Oregon and California playwrights.

“The evening will be filled with eight funny and heartwarming plays ranging from 10 to 20 minutes long,” says Manning. All eight one acts are Oregon premieres. Part of SETC’s mission is to provide an opportunity for playwrights to showcase their work. Manning, also SETC artistic director and president, invites local playwrights to submit their creations for future theater events.

“Slow Dating,” by Australian playwright Szudrich stars Jess Walton James, a longtime Sisters resident who has played Jill Abbott on the “The Young

and The Restless” for over 30 years.

“The Lottery,” written by Pat Kruis (Redmond) is the third NYT production directed by Sisters resident Rhonda Townsend Schantz. Rhonda has been involved with SETC since its inception and currently serves as vice president.

Central Oregon residents provide all the creative talent in “I Know Who You Are.” Written by Beverly Allen and directed by Randy James, both from Bend, the cast includes Persephone Vandegrift (Bend), Doug Kaufman (Sisters) and Katie Cavanaugh (Sisters).

Patricia Del Ruth, longtime Bend resident now residing in La Quinta, California, wrote “Ice, Ice, Baby.” This one-act has

been extended into a full-length production that will premiere soon in Southern California.

Performances are March 12-14 at 7:30 p.m. Matinees will start at 2 p.m. on Saturday, March 14, and Sunday March 15. All performances will be at The Belfry, 302 E. Main Ave. in Sisters. Tickets are available at bendticket.com (\$18 for adults and \$15 for seniors [65+] and students) or at the door for cash only (\$20 for adults and \$17 for seniors [65+] and students). Doors open 30 minutes prior to each show.

For more information email silentechotheatercompany@gmail.com or call 541-719-8819. Visit the SETC website at www.silentechotheatercompany.org.

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