

Glimpses of Sisters: Optimism

By Karen Keady
Columnist

I began writing Glimpses of Sisters when an out of town friend emailed and asked me, “So, how are things in Mayberry?” She was treated to the long answer. Today during this time fraught with angst, I want to write about optimism, which is sometimes difficult to foster, even during “normal” times.

I have a “Business For Sale” sign planted in front of a business that is closed by executive order 20-12. I find that somewhat amusing and maybe a great sign of optimism — or that I am too busy painting my kitchen and doing yard work to take it down.

The other day I witnessed five tiny ants on a butcher block table attempting to haul away a chunk of cornbread 10 times their size. They kept dropping it, or, one of the ants did. I imagined the ant conversation, “Jeez, Herb, can’t you hold up your end for crying out loud!” Herb says, “Sorry Al, I hurt one of my legs and Heckle and Jekyll over there are pretty wimpy too!” I allowed the ants to carry on because I have read too many great articles by Jim Anderson to kill anything.

Everything pretty much survives around here.

A couple of weeks ago, in a store parking lot, I witnessed another sign of

optimism. A customer pushing out a cart out with three packages of toilet paper aboard was stopped by another customer walking into the store. As I watched from a distance the body language needed no conversation. Head shaking, shoulder shrugging, open hands, led me to understand what was being said. The customer with the three packages of T.P. reached into her cart and handed the other customer one of her coveted purchases. The best part of this exchange was when the receiver of the T.P. began to extract money to pay the giver, the lady shook her head. No. No payment required. The receiver put her hands in prayer position as her thank you.

When I was at the service station to fill up my little car the other day, the attendant told a story of an invention of some sort he has created and has a patent attorney working with him on it. Perhaps we will see him on TV on that show that features new and creative ideas. From service station attendant to entrepreneur! He seemed optimistic about it. His story was refreshing, especially in this negative political climate. I do not want to hear his opinion about politics, nor does he want to hear mine, since I was a captive audience as he filled my gas tank.

Small kindnesses, small town life, observations and life in Mayberry.

McKenzie Highway is not open

By Jim Cornelius
Editor in Chief

While ODOT has finished its plowing operations on the east side of McKenzie Pass, the road is not open — to anyone — and won’t be until mid-June.

The status of the roadway from the eastern snow gate to the summit has been a point of confusion and contention for several years.

ODOT plows a single lane through the snow on the road during the spring, and then lets snowmelt do the rest. Once the snow is melted off, work crews sweep the roadway to clear debris, dirt and gravel, and patch potholes created over the winter. Opening of the highway used to be arbitrary — the gate was opened whenever the work was done. For the past several years, the agency has determined upon a consistent third-Monday-in-June opening.

During the plowing and maintenance period, the roadway is closed to traffic. However, cyclists and walkers go around the gate to use the roadway and public perception has grown that the road is open for cyclists

— car-free. That perception has been promoted extensively in the past and again recently in local media — and ODOT Region 4 Director Gary Farnsworth really wants it corrected.

“It’s *not* open,” he told *The Nugget*. “The sign says ‘Road Closed.’”

Farnsworth noted in an email communication to a couple of Sisters residents last weekend, “as of last week or so we have removed the ‘authorized personnel only’ sign, because we have not been conducting any operations, which was the exact purpose of the sign. If and when we need to conduct additional operations, we will post the signing again.”

The main issue is safety; the road is not maintained for cyclists. And with COVID-19 restrictions in place, Farnsworth feels an even greater sense of urgency that the roadway not be used.

“For everyone’s safety ODOT does not want folks wandering up past the gate while they’re working there, especially if they have a sign posted ‘authorized personnel only,’” he said. “And for everyone’s wellness in

potential use of the route, ODOT is concerned about the ability for folks to practice social distancing in general.”

In his e-mail and a subsequent conversation with *The Nugget*, Farnsworth acknowledged that there will inevitably be use of the road, regardless of closure gates and signage.

“At the same time, and while the gates are closed into mid-June, we recognize that many people will continue to make their own choices traveling by other than car or truck or RV, and are able to get around or over the gates to use the section of highway beyond those gates,” he said. “We (ODOT Region 4) do not conduct enforcement of the closure other than the gating, and we do not expect other organizations (such as USFS or law enforcement) to conduct enforcement. Therefore, such users of the roadway are entering at their own risk.”

Farnsworth told *The Nugget* that he plans to continue to press for a wider understanding that the road is *not* open to cycling prior to the mid-June opening.

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