Commentary... Memories of Indian Ford Meadow

By Maret Pajutee

Founding Member Deschutes Land Trust

My memories of Indian Ford Meadow live in many snapshots.

In the early 1960s my father Harry Pajutee was awarded a contract to put in a water system at a new development in Indian Ford called "The Hill." His lawver Rockne Gill invited us to visit his sister Donna Gill's Indian Ford Guest Ranch nearby. As an eight-year-old from the city and a first generation Estonian American I had never seen a place like this. There were cowboys, fiddle players, a pool, cabins, dining room dinners with fried chicken and corn on the cob, and horseback rides. The formidable Donna Gill presided over it all in cowgirl boots, jeans, and a long thick braid down her back.

My nature-loving parents fell in love with Sisters, where the trees and lakes reminded them of the pine forests of Estonia. My father quickly bought a lot in the new development, and built a summer cabin in 1963. Ours was the only house off the main road for many years.

My mother and the kids spent our summers here and came up nearly every weekend during the school year, a three-hour drive from Portland. In summer, my dad flew into the small Sisters Airport on weekends buzzing our house in his small plane to let us know he was there and needed a ride.

We explored everywhere, looking for arrowheads on the rocky sage steppe and wandering Indian Ford Meadow, which was grazed. Occasionally managers would remove the willows along the creek, which in those days were thought to "steal water." The disturbance would stimulate huge blooms of lupine and my wildflower-loving mother, Leida, and I would wander picking bouquets. We picked boletus mushrooms in the aspen groves and jumped across the boards on creek crossings. Harry was proud of the development's foresight and its Meadow Covenant, which he told me protected the meadow forever.

As the years passed, I often walked in the meadow — first with family, then college friends who came up for a weekend in the cabin. Sunsets were always magical: the warm golden light through pines, mountains glowing.

Both my parents died young and I moved up to the cabin full time, finding work at the Forest Service as the lookout on Black Butte and later as a the first botanist/ecologist for the Sisters Ranger District in 1990. Growth in Central Oregon had began to skyrocket. It seemed like every day, there was a new house on a piece of forest or sage flat. One day I saw signs indicating development of the meadow edge was planned.

As one of the early Forest Service biologists in the midst of the change from a timber-producing culture to ecosystem management, I was used to writing reports and fighting. They called us "Combat Biologists." I became a land-use activist. I read county plans and policies and started to torment the county planners and landowner with appeals at all levels, including objections to proposed updates for riparian ordinances.



Deschutes Land Trust founders on the 10th Anniversary at Indian Ford Meadow Preserve.





- Large organic produce selection
 Huge organic & natural selection
- natural selection storewide • Meat cut &
- ground fresh dailyHuge bulk-foods
 - department All your favorite local brands & items



A young Maret Pajutee among the lupine on Indian Ford Meadow.

We hired the best landuse lawyers we could find and many neighbors joined in providing help and financial support. We made a fuss in the local papers. It was tough on the landowners and the county planners and we were finally asked if we were open to mediation.

I had run into trouble at work as well with my combat tactics and my supervisor recommended I work on my attitude. I attended conflict resolution training and read "Getting to Yes" and suddenly I had a sea change in how I looked at the world. When the suggestion of a land trust was introduced by Catherine Morrow, County Planner, I was ready. The landowner was kind and generous and made it happen. The experience changed my life. I started working with the idea of collaboration and eventually even teaching other Forest Service specialists across the country the power of working together to go farther. I served on the first land-trust board and have watched proudly as the organization has grown over the past 25 years.

So many wonderful people of passion and foresight. The original gang is getting smaller by the year.

I now often teach yoga and meditation for the Land Trust on warm summer nights in a pine grove overlooking the meadow. It's still magical. I am grateful for everyone who made this miracle of a place possible.

Bloom Studio Check nit my work on Instagram caseygardnerbloom CUT • COLOR • HIGHLIGHTS 541-306-1120 I10 S. ELM ST., SISTERS





Located in the Cascade Village Shopping Center, Bend Open every day, 7 a.m. to 9 p.m. Isolated shopping hour: 6 to 7 a.m.

- Only 20 minutes from Sisters
- Proud to be 100% locally owned & operated



E

NCUA

- Full-Service Branch
- New Accounts/Free Checking
- Auto/RV/Home Loans
- Business Lending & Services
- Drive-Up with ATM
- Mid Oregon Wealth Management



650 N. Arrowleaf Trail, Sisters next to McDonald's

541-382-1795 midoregon.com

Credit Union good friends. great service.

MidOregon



17

18

24

from Donna Schuurman of The Dougy Center. Zoom meeting at https://zoom.us/j/93786970017 or phone 1-253-215-8782. Paulina Springs Books Virtual Event Books In Common

Loss 6 p.m. Learn information and skills to help cope with grief

Regional Literary Event Series with Jess Walter 6:30 p.m. For more information call 541-549-0866 or go to BooksinCommonNW.com.

Paulina Springs Books Virtual Event Books In Common Regional Literary Event Series with Cassandra Tate & Jane Kirkpatrick 6:30 p.m. For more information call 541-549-0866 or go to BooksinCommonNW.com.

Paulina Springs Books Virtual Event Books In Common Regional Literary Event Series with Pam Houston & Amy Irvine 6:30 p.m. For more information call 541-549-0866 or go to BooksinCommonNW.com.

Paulina Springs Books Virtual Event Books In Common Regional Literary Event Series with David Joy 6:30 p.m. For more information call 541-549-0866 or go to BooksinCommonNW.com.

Events Calendar listings are free to advertisers. Submit items by 5 p.m. Fridays to lisa@nuggetnews.com

