

You May Say I'm A Dreamer...

By Charlie Alnut

Recent and continuing rainy spells provide a reminder of the symmetry in the world. Our ducks are happy with the water level in their pond back up to the spillway. It makes getting in and around the cattail stems much easier. I'm always amazed to witness how an inconvenience for some can be realized as pure joy by others. It seems as well to be a reflection of the end of the election season at every level of the political landscape. Just like the birds finding shelter during each heavy downpour, the unsuccessful candidates will find somewhere to roost. After all, they, too, "Do it for a living." Politicians who won their races have little time to celebrate. Those of us in the peanut gallery hope for a refreshing change in politics from the pre-election accusations and recriminations to the sorely needed compromises and solutions to the calamities in progress.

Energy needs versus climate change is the singular area for them to reconcile with the biggest potential to continue making catastrophic mistakes. None of our other problems have such a dismal potential answer to the question of, "What will it matter in 500 years?" Nobody can go back in time to alter actions that decided our conditions today and contribute to the future. Instead, they need to improve the way lessons of history are used to make the right choices, or at least avoid the wrong choices. One lesson is to deny arguments based on emotions or political loyalties, instead of universal needs and the real consequences of each separate decision.

Short of mandatory conservation (that is, Big Brother rationing or turning off the supply), it is a fact that we will reach the current capacity to generate electricity and also eventually run out of domestic hydrocarbon fuel. Instead of getting sidetracked by arguing over when, what will happen to prices and other distractions, policies and choices need to acknowledge those certain facts while coincidentally taking the opportunity to make environmentally-smart decisions now.

The arguments about LNG (Liquefied Natural Gas) in our immediate neighborhood are pressing issues that demonstrate a spectrum of emotions and viewpoints that really need to be reduced to facts and physical consequences. On one side, the NIMBY (Not In My Back Yard) group, is led by Governor Kulongoski, and many of us seem to sympathize with their perspective. However, the pro-LNG faction seems to be evolving responsibly. Just before Election Day, State Representative Brad Witt was quoted in the Astoria paper as restating his support for LNG, "...as a means of reducing our carbon footprint and meeting our energy gap." I think Mr. Witt has some valid points, in addition to an interest in promoting projects to find employment opportunities for his constituents. This is particularly true when he also states that if an LNG terminal is to be built in Oregon, he wants to make sure that it is sustainable and mitigates the environmental impacts.

Contrary to preconceptions before LNG became an issue for local examination, we now know that the natural gas from fields east of the Rocky Mountains doesn't have a direct pipeline to the Northwest. We also know that the demand for domestic natural gas from the East Coast and Midwest will drive the market above reasonable prices (considering transportation charges and environmental consequences of that transportation) for Northwest markets in the near future. Even though our electrical generation and transmission/distribution infrastructure may be in better shape from both a current and projected near-term demand and environmental consequences than the rest of the US right now, future improvements to maintain that edge are a given necessity.

If you have read my past columns, you know that I am not a shill for maintaining the status quo concerning our energy future. I advocate close examination of the potential for emerging technologies, particularly "fuel-less" such as solar, wind and geothermal. That said, I realize that there isn't a magic lamp to enable an instantaneous conversion to less polluting ways of satisfying our energy needs. I firmly believe that DG (Distributed Generation – smaller, individual generation facilities closer to the points of energy demand) instead of gigantic generation factories are the way for our future. Consequently, it seems to me that advocating LNG support with concurrent development of smaller scale, readily available, highly efficient and lower polluting, DG gas-turbine generation is the logical interim step to satisfy our region's increasing energy needs. Relatively inexpensive, proven, in-use technology and much greener compared to other carbon-based generation methods, they are a logical interim source of power pending true "perfection" of emerging renewable technologies. The location, design and construction of such facilities could include that their eventual conversion to fuel-less be kept in mind. Meanwhile, the use of LNG converted fuel during their ten- to twenty-year service life could be planned for as a reasonable constraint on the location of LNG pipelines as they traverse our part of their route.

In the meantime, I propose that we should all be thankful for the Kulongoskis and Witts of our state, as well as those who took the initiative to oppose them recently or will in the future. The demands of honestly serving the responsibilities of their offices stagger my imagination. Let's give them a chance to do the jobs we elected them to do – but never allow them to forget that we are closely, carefully and constantly watching and listening-- not only when there's an election.

You can reach me at charliealnut@gmail.com. I'm interested in your ideas, as well. Until the next time ... (cue John Lennon's *Imagine*)

What to Give the Person Who Has Everything

By Heather Lewis

What a fabulous fall we have been having! It has been a difficult year for many in our community, but our spirit of pioneer resilience is strong and we will soon put this year to rest. With the Thanksgiving holiday behind us and Christmas right around the corner, it is a time of year that lends to reflecting upon what we can be thankful for, what we have been blessed with and what we can share with others. The Christmas parade and the tree lighting ceremony kick off our community's celebration of the season. It also sends many of us scrambling to find those last minute gifts and remembrances. We are all aware of the Holiday Bucks Program and how important it is to support our local merchants, but after shopping and diligently searching for just the right present many of us are left with the dilemma of what to get the person who seemingly has everything. Well I think we have the perfect solution for you. A gift you will not have to wrap... A gift that benefits the giver, the receiver AND others all at the same time... A gift that does not go unused... A gift that does not leave a carbon footprint... and best of all, a gift that you just might be able to write off on your taxes!

This year why not make a donation in the name of a loved one to a local charity? You send them a card, informing them that a donation was made in their name, and have the benefit of supporting local community programs such as Vernonia Cares Food Bank, Hands on Art, Meals on Wheels, Vernonia Band Boosters, Columbia County HEAT, Vernonia Rural Fire Department, or the VPD, to name but a few. Or, if you are the one who is difficult to shop for, let your loved ones know this is the best gift to give to you.

However you choose to "spend" this season, may it be a safe, healthy, very merry time for you and your loved ones.

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The Oregon Community Foundation offers scholarships for students entering a trade/vocational school, 2 or 4 year college, or graduate school.

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Questions concerning this program can be directed to: Belle Cantor, Scholarship Administrative Officer.

The Oregon Community Foundation, 1221 SW Yamhill Street, Suite 100, Portland, OR 97205, 503.227.6846, bellec@ocf1.org.

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