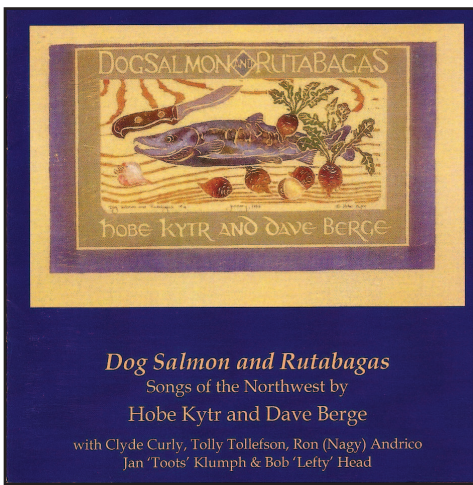


Dog Salmon and Rutabagas Regional Stories Live on in Music

By Scott Laird

Recently a long-time Vernonia resident handed me a music CD. All he said was, "I think you should listen to this." So I did. And I'm sure glad, because what he handed me was a real treasure.



Dog Salmon and Rutabagas is a CD of music that features songs about the Vernonia region.

The CD was titled *Dog Salmon and Rutabagas, Songs of the Northwest* by Hobe Kytr and Dave Berge. Originally recorded in 1984 and re-released in 2008, the music, and especially the liner notes that accompany it, proved to be a jewel-- a time capsule of Vernonia and regional history, local characters and personalities, and stories about the 1970's and the heydays of Keasey, outside of Vernonia.

The music is a mix of folk and old-time music, with banjo, mandolin, fiddle, autoharp and guitar added to vocal harmonies. The songs and lyrics tell

stories about life in Vernonia and the surrounding area-- songs about logging camps, fishing on the Columbia, the Oregon-American mill, the Tillamook Burn, and growing up in the region. It is fascinating listening and amazing reading, especially for someone who has heard about some of the names mentioned in the notes, but wasn't here for those good old days.

According to the CD liner notes, Hobe Kytr and Dave Berge were first introduced at the 1975 Vernonia Friendship Jamboree by local music legend John Cunnick. Cunnick and his wife Kimberly lived in an old timber-camp bunkhouse at the old Keasey Camp about nine miles outside of Vernonia. Cunnick was to have a profound impact on Kytr.

I had the pleasure of speaking with Hobe Kytr, who now lives in Astoria, and talked with him about his music and those now long-gone days of life out at Keasey.

Kytr, a native Oregonian, went to college in the sixties in Ohio, but didn't like it and came right back to Oregon. He was living in Gearhart as a, in his words, "self-underemployed" artisan and musician. "There was a group of us that survived through what we called the 'traveling potluck'-- whoever had food was the host that night," said Kytr. "One gentleman who knew of us said it looked like we were taking our retirement early," said Kytr, with a chuckle.

It was during this time that Kytr became interested in "collecting stories,"

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The Oregon Way Still Has Life Stimulus Funds May Still Find Their Way to Vernonia

The Oregon Way Advisory Group convened on December 14, 2009 in Portland to discuss Oregon projects, including the "Rebuild Vernonia" project, targeted to receive federal funds as part of the economic stimulus package known as the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA).

The Oregon Way, initiated by Oregon Governor Ted Kulongoski by executive order in February, 2009, committed the state to focusing on renewable energy, sustainable development and clean technologies in its use of ARRA funds. He went on to appoint the Advisory Group to assist state agencies and other partners seeking federal competitive grants.

The Advisory Group, made up of public and private sector leaders with sustainability expertise, has been charged with identifying signature projects across the state that will showcase Oregon's green leadership to the nation, helping to bring long-term job growth to the state.

"Rebuild Vernonia," centered on moving Vernonia Schools to a safe

location, was initially placed on the short list of projects the Governor intended to assist through *The Oregon Way*, and remains on the list of priority projects.

The Oregon Way has been seen as an opportunity for Oregon to create



At a meeting of the Oregon Way Board State Senator Betsy Johnson, Columbia County Commissioner Tony Hyde and Vernonia School Superintendent Ken Cox spoke on behalf of the Vernonia School Project.

a unified approach to seeking stimulus funds and build upon Oregon's national and international leadership in renewable energy development and sustainability to create jobs and restore prosperity.

At the meeting in December, the Advisory Group heard updates from seven projects they have identified as target projects to assist in receiving federal stimulus funds. A delegation representing Vernonia, that included State Senator Betsy Johnson, Columbia

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WOEC Moving Forward With New Facility

The Board of Directors of West Oregon Electric Cooperative (WOEC) have decided to move forward with construction of a new headquarters facility that will be outside the flood plain.

According to General Manager Marc Farmer, WOEC has reached an agreement to purchase property at the south end of Vernonia at the corner of Highway 47 and Maple Avenue, previously the site where FEMA trailers were situated.

"We think this will be a moral booster for Vernonia-- to see something new being built," said Farmer.

WOEC has put out a Request For Proposal (RFP) for a construction contractor, and expects to choose that contractor at their January Board meeting.

"This is on a fast track," said Farmer. "If everything goes perfectly, we hope to occupy that building by December of next year. We're being very aggressive. That may be unrealistic, but we're going to push for it."

In November of 2009, the WOEC Board was notified that they would be required to relocate outside the floodplain to be in compliance with a City of Vernonia Ordinance and FEMA and Oregon Emergency Management requirements. They were also told they would not be given the option of flood preventive measures because they are considered an essential service, thus precipitating the need to move.

Farmer stated clearly that WOEC intends to hire local builders and use local products and services as much as possible for the project. "I'm not worried about jobs in Portland, I'm worried about jobs here," said Farmer. "We're going to do everything we can to stimulate the local economy with this project."

WOEC considered three properties for the site of their new facility, and, according to Farmer, the selected site was by far the best option. Based on surveying information WOEC has completed, the new site sits at least eight feet above the high

water mark from 2007.

WOEC received initial cost estimates for construction of the new facility for \$4.6 million, but due to current construction market trends, have now received estimates of around 2.8 million.

According to Farmer, WOEC expects to be offered \$1.078 million through a flood mitigation grant to assist with the relocation.

Farmer says he expects to finance the balance of the construction costs, hopefully over fifteen years, and to use a rate increase to WOEC customers of around three dollars per month, per meter, to pay for that financing.

There are still a few hurdles that need to be overcome that could slow down the aggressive timeline Farmer is hoping to achieve. Environmental quality studies may be needed for the proposed property; and questions about access to the development from Highway 47 need to be worked out with ODOT.

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