

VETERAN'S CORNER

At ease, veterans!

BY VICTOR CORTEZ

After extensive negotiation (about three minutes) the new *Applegater* newspaper has agreed that the need for Applegate veterans to have a voice will be facilitated and fulfilled by the *Applegater* newspaper in its bimonthly release. I would personally like to thank the management for understanding and fulfilling this need.

With that said, here is the agenda for this "Corner." We hope to bring attention to events, laws, VA benefits, personal stories, strife, familial observations, business opportunities, veteran's accomplishments, needs and opportunities to volunteer to our local veteran population. Due to space, we will refer to other publications as source reading. We will be seeking submissions of any personal veteran's stories including family views of veteran's issues. All subject matters will be welcome.

Our hope is that with your help the veteran's in the Applegate corridor will come to recognize each other and themselves as an operating unit that will improve the lives of each veteran, help in familial and community understanding, and become a positive accomplishing force in the Applegate community.

I hope we can keep your interest. Below is our first article on VPC-ITO.

Victor Cortez

VPC-ITO

In a quiet room on the top of a hill, six men gathered furtively around a table. Some knew each other, others did not. They gathered together, for what, they were not quite sure. But they had one thing in common, they were all military service veterans living in the Applegate Corridor. It was enough.

Born out of personal need for services and the healing power of serving others, VPC-ITO was initiated.

VPC-ITO "Veterans, Parenting, Community, - In That Order" is the name and the mantra. Utilization of our camaraderie, our empathy, our abilities and our honor to move forward on these fronts is our goal.

The beginning was auspicious enough: a miner, a pauper, a poet, a retiree, a church devotee and me.

We were graced by the Applegate Community Church with a nonsectarian space to utilize with the understanding that we would work on veteran and community goals and have faith that God would pull those he chose from our ranks into the chapel as he saw fit.

I bring this up because we as a group do not sermonize, but being a man of faith, it will enter into my experiences and conversations, even if obscurely. Each man and woman to their own beliefs is what I fought for. The right to discuss and disagree with each other, while still embracing, is a true aspiration.

Whilst not accomplishing anything to its final point, let me list what has been initiated, supported by and/or of benefit to VPC-ITO and local veterans.

Contact and meetings were held with a VA Outreach liaison from White City. Bureaucratic movement has been initiated to bring a permanently located travel van to the Applegate to assist corridor veterans in making their medical appointments.

VPC-ITO has also initiated bureaucratic movement in an effort to ultimately bring a medical van and personnel to Applegate Community Church to provide routine medical treatments. Because we have faith that two options are better than one, we also have placed ads asking for psychologists, doctors, nurses, dentists, lawyers and legal aides (veteran or not) who would be willing to work on a sliding scale and/or pro bono for veterans in the corridor—weekly, monthly, annually, whatever is willingly offered.

At the time of this writing, Veterans Exchange has just sponsored its first Wednesday 2-8 pm Farmers Market and Flea Market at the Applegate Store and Café. With community participation, it is hoped and planned that opportunities to supplement VPC-ITO medical goals can be achieved.

Currently veterans are finding opportunities to supplement income and raise funds at the New Murphy Public Market (flea, craft, art, farm and more) with ample space for future gatherings.

Down the line, VPC-ITO, will be working on legislating an Oregon Veterans Wilding license for nature crafting, cone collecting, mushrooming, etc. (all the things we Applegaters do), and an Oregon Veterans Peddlers license to market such. Something Reagan did for California veterans in '83. I know. I had one.

There are other goals yet to be set. Community efforts, individual needs to be met. But mostly it's the reintroduction to each other. Good, Bad and Ugly, we cared and relied on each other at one time or another. None of us wants to rehash. We are not about that. But helping each other is helping ourselves, our families and our community. We are Military Service Veterans and that is what we were all about.

We are not an organization, so there is nothing to join. There is no newsletter and no phone number at this time. There is only an occasional flyer posted on all the corridor bulletin boards and especially here in the *Applegater's* new "Veterans Corner." If you happen to see a flyer with VPC-ITO, check it out... and pass it on.

I, Victor Cortez, can be reached at the Applegate Store parking lot, in a beige van, Wednesdays, Fridays, Saturdays and Sundays, if you care to participate or gather more information.

Victor Cortez



Tall Tales from the Editor

**Life cycles
or
I smell bunny gravy**

I recently attended fellow Utah outlaw and sidekick Al "El Supremo" McLeod's three-score-and-ten-year birthday party. The big bash took place at his adobe hideout in southeast Utah.

I can't believe "El Supremo" has lasted so long. After all, we had been roommates in years past and some of his habits, well, the rumors or legends—depending on who tells the tale—are things movies are made from. Here's an example: He's known for running rapids on the Colorado River under a full moon, which isn't too bad until you add into the equation an unexpected cloud-cover electrical storm with a mighty headwind. Oh, yes, and a flashlight with dead batteries. Events such as this served as training grounds for El Supremo's future career as an elected politician, now retired.

As the wine flowed and the Roman banquet was devoured, I wondered if I had looked upon El Supremo as a grandfatherly mentor teaching me how to party correctly. I asked Ricky Lee Costanza, who I had accompanied to the party, about my "grandfatherly" assessment. Ricky Lee pointed out that El Supremo wasn't a grandfather back then, but he was and is a carrier of that mental disease called debauchery, and it possesses us, too. Debauchery is a life cycle from which we can't escape. Isn't it great? No known cure.

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Sadly, Ricky Lee and I couldn't really participate in the birthday roast due to the numerous innocent grandchildren and women in attendance. We didn't wish to offend or alter their illusion of the great one. Ricky Lee did say, "I don't remember which after-hours joint, or was it a lock-up, where I first met El Supremo, but if you kids want the untold story about the wise one, come talk to me in a few years."

I was informed by the head of security (after all, El Supremo is a retired elected official) at the party, "Rogers, don't you say a word." I replied, "Of course, I always do what an authority figure instructs me to. Usually, though, that instruction is turn around and spread 'em."

Ricky Lee had gotten me thinking about cycles—not motor, but life cycles. As I looked around the party, I was

amazed at which folks had gone from the "sand-head" cycle to the "pillars-of-the-community" cycle. Considering the photo collection I have of some of these now pillars, it is truly amazing. Why, even Ricky Lee is a pillar. Well, maybe.

It just goes to show that anything is possible in America. You gotta love it! Who would have thought that the guy who packed a pellet gun in with his golf clubs so that he could bunny hunt while golfing might become a pillar instead of a prisoner? I often wonder what Ricky Lee's caddy thought when Ricky Lee would ask for the nine iron and then say, "On second thought, hand me the pellet gun. I smell bunny gravy!"

I'm always hearing how bad things are here in the land of red, white and blue, but as Ricky Lee says, "Everything runs in cycles." Granted this present cycle hasn't been my favorite one, what with gas prices, subprime mortgages, Fanny Mae and Freddie Mac, the war, airline prices, food prices, medical costs, interest rates on savings accounts, illegal immigration invasion, West Nile, heartworm, avian flu, collapsing infrastructure, fallen arches, hurricanes, tornados, epic flooding, forest fires, ticks, deer flies, no-see-ums, chemtrails, the congress, the senate, the president, white-collar criminals, welfare—corporate or otherwise, insanity, evolution, intelligent design, deep-fried Twinkies, homeland security, orange alert. The sky is falling, the sky is falling!

I know some who think life is pretty hunky-dory. Both of our border collies, Tuesday and Utah, are as happy as the latest winner of the million-dollar Publisher's Clearing House contest. Their bellies are full, no fleas, shiny coats, chickens and turkeys to herd, comfy beds, and they haven't gotten into any trouble in a long while. Good doggies. A "good-doggie" cycle.

Is there really anything going on with our country at this point in time that we can't fix? I don't think so! The question is, are we willing to roll up our sleeves, put a lot of backbone and sweat into resolving our numerous problems as a community and as a nation, or will we just tune out, turn on the boob tube and enter the "drooling" cycle? We have got to remember that anything is possible in America. On the other hand, if we were in, say, North Korea, Zimbabwe, Cuba, or Saudi Arabia, that would be a different cycle indeed.



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"The Federal Trade Commission has ruled that oil companies are not gouging customers. They say, technically, they're screwing customers."

—David Letterman

"President Bush said to help with gas prices, he will temporarily ease environmental regulations. Great. Not only will you not be able to drive, you won't be able to breathe either."

—Jay Leno