

Applegater

Photo by Marilyn Terry

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Celebrating
~24~
Years

Heroes in the Applegate

BY SHELLEY MANNING

On August 14, 2017, a series of lightning storms moved through the Applegate region. Lightning strikes ignited 25 wildfires, 20 of which became known as the Miller Complex Fire, which burned almost 40,000 acres. As of November 9, the Miller Complex Fire was at last 100 percent contained.

To support fire suppression efforts, a fire camp sprang up, seemingly overnight. Across from Cantrall Buckley Park in a field on Hamilton Road, a bunch of heroes suddenly arrived to save us from the fires. (Fire camp is a co-ed experience—women currently make up seven percent of firefighters according to the national average.) Nine incident commanders directed this fire camp over the months. Three were from Oregon; others came from California, South Dakota, Washington, and Montana.

At the height of the Miller Complex Fire, the Incident Base housed over 1,000 individuals—firefighters, camp crew, information officers, management, and service providers—who came from all over the country, including Alaska and the East Coast. Approximately 10 to 15 percent were from southwest Oregon and Northern California. As the fires roared on, for more than two months, these folks



Morning briefings at the fire camp were held at 5:30 am. (Photo, above: Rogue River-Siskiyou National Forest.)

Located across from Cantrall Buckley Park, the fire camp provided everything necessary to house firefighters and support personnel for the duration of the Miller Complex Fires. (Photo, right: Shelley Manning.)

lived in tents under basic conditions. Firefighters began their day with a daily briefing at 5:30 am and fought fires until about 9 pm. At the end of the day, little energy was left for anything more than food and sleep.

Fire camp in action is fascinating. Public Information Officer Meg Cicciarella gave me a tour, starting with the supply area. Outside was everything needed to fight fires, from pumps to hoses. A large supply tent housed other items like the Nomex fire-retardant clothes firefighters wear. Supplies were supervised and organized by a nine-person crew, who told me they were Apaches from Arizona.



Signs directed us to the different areas and services of the camp. One important service was a mobile laundromat, cleverly set up in a semitruck trailer. Contracted by the US Forest Service, Granny's Alliance Holdings cleans 10,000 pounds of laundry a day. They service other types of disasters, too, like Hurricane Harvey.

Keeping everyone and everything clean is of utmost importance for health and safety. Camp crews are responsible for keeping the camp clean and organized, and

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The Applegater at the Literary Arts Festival

Applegater board members Chris Bratt and Diana Coogle represented the Applegater at the Ashland Literary Arts Festival at the Hannon Library on the Southern Oregon University campus on October 28.

Chris Bratt was featured in Maureen Battistella's presentation of Stories of Southern Oregon, and Diana Coogle served on a panel titled "Literary Citizenship: Building Literary Community at the Local Level," moderated by Phil Busse, publisher and editor of the Rogue Valley Messenger.

Chris Bratt's segment was titled, as is his column in the Applegater, "Behind the Green Door," subtitled for this presentation, "Pioneering Environmentalist with a Carpenter's Union Card." He talked about the history of environmental activism in the Applegate and sang, "When I'm on my journey/Don't you weep after me." He passed out copies of the Applegater, which were received with praise for the quality of the publication, its educational capacity, and its wide distribution.

Diana Coogle talked about From the Heart of the Applegate, the anthology of Applegate writers published by the Applegater, as representative of so many of the very good writers in the area, both professional writers and "citizen writers." She also explained that the Applegater was a vehicle of expression for all voices in the Applegate, publishing all points of view. One member of the audience, Kim Neiswanger, a teacher at Ruch School, corroborated that point by talking about the columns in the Applegater dedicated to students' school activities and voices.



Drowsy Chaperone by Jenny Graham was produced by the Oregon Cabaret Theatre.

The Applegate is rich in nearby theatrical opportunities

BY DIANA COOGLE

Whether you want to be on stage or in the audience, whether your theatrical taste runs to musicals or drama, whether you enjoy

an intimate theatrical experience or the excitement of a large crowd, whether you prefer community actors to out-of-town professionals, Rogue Valley theaters offer Applegaters great theatrical experiences. And that's not counting the Oregon Shakespeare Festival.

Theaters range from Medford's Craterian, founded in 1924 and bringing in nationally known artists, to Signpost Theatre, founded in 2016 to "present plays that are less familiar to audiences and more challenging for actors to prepare and present," as founder D. Eugene Bahn explains. Rogue Music Theatre (founded in the 1980s) specializes in

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