

Community Service Provides Learning Opportunities

by Bobby Brandt

Community service gives me the opportunity to have a good time, to learn things, and help others to learn at the same time. The following are several ways I've been able to help my community.

On May 5, I worked with Lisa Brown, LeiLani Rilatatos, Kelly Strickler, and Ronell Welch to assist youth in touring the Siletz Volunteer Fire Department. Siletz is the only fire department in the county with 100 percent volunteers.

We met B.J Wawrak, who showed the kids all of the fire equipment and the fire engines. He explained how all the equipment worked and what to do in case a fire breaks out in your home. Most importantly, he told us what to do if you are on fire, and the importance of having a smoke detector in your home.

After touring the fire hall, we went to the Siletz Indian Housing Authority office. The kids made posters about fire safety, and the winner in a nationwide contest will get to go to Alaska along with his or her family.

I helped the kids draw their posters and shared ideas on what to draw. The Housing Authority bought pizza, and then the kids played at the playground. I believe everyone had a great time. I enjoyed helping the kids better understand fire safety. I really enjoy art, so helping them with a poster contest was right up my alley.

On May 11, I attended the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Conference at Chinook Winds Casino in Lincoln City. I helped videotape the silent auction to raise money for the Siletz Tribe's annual Run to the Rogue.

I also sat in on a conference session on pesticides that are sprayed on vegetation. I learned that the pesticides are leaking into the rivers and infecting wildlife, particularly fish. This is causing fish to be abnormal. In some cases, it's changing the sex of the fish or causing them to have an abnormal amount of glands.

Many scientists and wildlife experts traveled to this conference from places as far away as Maine. They all have conducted studies on this phenomenon, but it's still too early to see the long-term effects of these chemicals on the wildlife population. The workshop was interesting, but it was still complicated for me to understand everything the presenters had to say.

I am grateful to our alternative school teacher, Mr. Burroughs, and Lisa Brown, SICA prevention coordinator. They helped me develop a description of what I would learn so I could earn credits for the work I did. This helped me to be able to graduate this year. The things I learned will help me to understand and share with others.

Walt's Words of Wit and Wisdom

There has been quite a bit in the paper lately about cougars possibly attacking people and maybe other animals. This kind of brought back some memories of a day or two ago.

Have you ever heard a cougar scream? I have. It's the most bloodcurdling racket I've ever heard. It made the hair on the back of my neck stand straight out and my skin was nothing but goose bumps all over.

When a cat was in the area, getting the cows home to milk was no big deal. They would not leave the barn.

Nash Mountain was kind of a haven for the cats. The Nashes ran a herd of cattle and the cats kind of favored them. Every once in a while, they would find that a cat had killed a young calf. Domestic animals seemed easier to catch than deer, I guess. They were seen often at night.

Usually whenever a cat was in the area, a call would go out to the government trapper, Leonard Grant in Harlan. Usually he had his hands full over there with cats and coyotes, and would not be able to respond in a reasonable time.

There was a young fella in Logsdan though, Henry Kentta, who had "cat hounds." He always responded quickly after being contacted. He would set his hounds on the trail and would get a cat. Whether it was the same cat, I don't know, but he would get one.

Anytime a cat was sighted or someone saw a track, Henry would be called and the hunt would begin. He didn't always get the cat; don't know why, but sometimes the dogs would get lost. I remember a time or two when a dog or two would come to our place. My uncle would contact Henry that the dogs were there. Guess that they were so interested in what they were doing, they couldn't find their way home. By golly, I can relate to that.

One time Henry was called about a cat in Logsdan. Well, the dogs picked up the scent right quick and the race was on. That cat went over the hills back country. There were no roads to speak of, maybe some horse trails where people like grandpa would gather shake bolts of fence posts. Anyway, this cat went over hill and over dale, and came to the vicinity of the Bill Weinert saw mill on Sams Creek.

I don't know if someone hunting with Henry was a ways behind or what. The dogs bayed and there was no hurry now because the cat was in a tree and would stay there. When Henry arrived, the dogs were at the base of the tree, but there was no cat in the tree. That cat had decided that there were other places much more interesting than where he was. He apparently had gone from treetop to treetop to get out of the predicament that he was in. Henry took it all in good stride, said that it must have been a very wise old cat and that he was glad it got away.

I've heard other stories about some of his hunts, but don't remember the details at this time. Henry used to get a bounty on the cats, I think \$50 for males and \$75 for females. I think coyotes were either \$15 or \$25 bounty.

One time my aunt was either picking fern or peeling chittum, and on her way to the canyon she saw these cat tracks. Well, she was not particularly afraid of the animals but would give them plenty of room. I believe she was headed for Streetmatter Canyon and decided to go to Potwater Canyon.

While sitting under a big log, she heard a noise coming. She figured that she would be a big surprise for a deer. Over the log came a big cougar. It was not nearly as surprised as she was. Anyway, it kind of ruined her whole day.

Another incident happened next door to where I was raised, at old man Bemrose's place. His daughter, Bertha Lane, was visiting with her girls. Pauline, brother and cousins, and I think Dorothy Bright, were playing by the chicken house. Clifford Bemrose saw something go under the chicken house. When he went out and looked under the house, here was a big cat. He went and got the rifle, then had second thoughts that it may be someone's pet and couldn't shoot it. Probably just as well because the way it turned out, it was a 22 long rifle, one cartridge in the house and half of the time the gun misfired.

Old man Bemrose came in from woodcutting, and Clifford told him what had happened. Now, the old man was not afraid of anything, man or beast. He took that rifle and crawled under the chicken house with that cat. I hear tell the cat was not the friendliest in the country.

Old man Bemrose put that rifle point blank and the rifle did fire. He got it. They say that cat was a young one and very hungry, like it had been weaned recently even though he was nine feet from head to end of tail. That hide was on the back of the shed for many years. In fact, my grandparents bought that place when I was in the Army. When I came home in 1953, that hide was still there.

I don't recall one ever attacking a person. Grandpa said that one attacked his dog, but he beat the cat off with his hat. I do know I was and still am willing to give them all the space they want and then some.

More cats are around now. All the bounty hunting on them almost annihilated them. I've heard of some cougar kills on some of the cattle ranches in the local area recently. I haven't seen any evidence around my place in Logsdan. The cats more than likely will be around Green Mountain or maybe Granit. I won't bother them and hope they don't bother me.