

Walt's Words of Wit and Wisdom

by Walt Klamath

Hey hey, by golly how time does fly when you're having fun. Seems just a day ago I was doing this very same thing, wondering what to say.

Seems there's something going on with the thought of being employed by the tribe and on council. Sounds to me like there's not really a foundation for it. Reminds me of a story I once heard.

A little girl was helping her mother cook a meal. The mom had purchased a nice roast and was seasoning it all, then she cut off the end of the roast. Gave it to the dog, who of course seemed all in favor of the situation.

The little girl asked, "Why did you cut the end off?" "Because we always have," the mother replied. This didn't satisfy the little girl, so she asked again. "Well, I don't know," said the mother. "Ask your aunt."

So the little girl went to her aunt and said, "Why do we cut the end off the roast?" The aunt said because we've always done it that way. Again the little girl was not satisfied and asked why. "Well, ask your grandmother," said the aunt.

So the little girl went to grandmother and asked her. The grandmother replied, "Well, honey, one time I bought a roast and it was too big for the pan. I had to cut part of it off for it to fit in the roaster."

This is how traditions start and continue to evolve. At some point, we don't know why we do things. We do them because that's the way it's always been done. This seems to me what the dilemma is with an employee being on council.

Well, people have been talking and sending me e-mails from different parts of the country talking about old times. Like, do you remember ...

In many cases, I do remember. In the early '40s during WWII, everything was rationed. I wasn't too old then, but I remember some of what we went through.

For instance, in order to buy meat of any kind, you needed red stamps. I don't remember how much meat was allowed (on the farm we raised our own). Butter was rationed; had stamps too.

In order to get shoes, we needed stamps; I think two pairs a year, so often the shoes had holes in them. It wasn't unusual to see pants with big patches all over, sometimes of a different color.

Sugar was rationed. It was used to make alcohol for torpedoes. That's where the term drinking torpedo juice came from. My uncle used to talk about drinking torpedo juice up in the Aleutian Islands.

Not many candy bars or chewing gum were available. There was a gum called Orbit, then a candy bar called Dumbo Bar that tasted a lot like cowfeed smelled. Others were available occasionally that were pretty good.

For gasoline, there were three cards that I know of - A, B, and C. The A card was a general card for about four gallons a week. The B card (don't remember how many gallons) was for those who had to drive to work, which really included most everybody.

The C card, though, was coveted because it was the farm card that was almost unlimited. There had to be a log of how the gasoline was used and what it was used in. I think it made many people not tell the truth all the time.

At the gas station, the gas had to be pumped into the tank to go to the car. Gas was less than 15 cents a gallon. The speed limit was 35 mph. Tires also were rationed and weren't what they are today. They were cotton cord and a new tire would break before you got home because all the roads in the Siletz/Toledo/Logsdon area were gravel with big potholes.

All the tires had boots, a piece of heavy corded-like patch glued to the tire. Sometimes boots would be all the way around a tire. Some people would put a tire inside a tire inside a tire, which wasn't a comfortable ride and didn't last long. I don't think that there was such a thing as a balanced tire.

Logging was done the hard way. Trees were felled by a crosscut saw, called a falling saw, which was a fairly thin one. The bucking saw was referred to sometimes as a Chinook saw because of the arch of the cutting side.

The donkeys were steam-powered. Many outfits limited employees on the day's pay. At the Bill Wienert sawmill on Sam's Creek, the fallers and buckers were allowed to make \$20 a day.

We knew all the neighbors for miles around. When someone was in trouble, all of us would gather to help. If a barn needed building, we'd have a barn-raising party. Neighbors would bring food for a potluck.



Kids take off at the Easter egg hunt at the Siletz Tribal Community Center.



Van Peters; Joe Bailey, grounds maintenance, and Wade Newbegin gather around the tractor/mower that Wade donated to Siletz Valley School.

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It wasn't all work though. We'd have races and games like horseshoes, kick the can, and rifle shooting. Fourth of July was a big event; same thing as a barn- or house-raising where the whole neighborhood would gather.

The women cooked, the men worked and the kids would be gofers. No one drank booze at the events, most were Pentecostal people. The preacher was at most functions; the one I remember was Roy Downey.

The schools all had a war stamp program. We'd buy war stamps and parents were encouraged to buy war bonds. We'd bring scrap iron to school for the war effort. Every day we would sing *Remember Pearl Harbor* after the Pledge of Allegiance. Anytime there was a complaint, the response would be, "There's a war going on."

We talk about the "good ol' days," but I don't know if they were so good or not. We had fellowship, trust, and honor. People were safe; boys and girls could go anywhere and be safe.

Anytime you went visiting, you were expected to eat. The first words after their hellos would be, "Are you hungry? Better have some spuds." If you didn't eat, it was an insult. It didn't matter if you'd just come from a neighbor's home, you'd better eat.

City people liked to go to the farm because plenty of rationed food was always available. That is, meat (mostly venison). Ammunition was very scarce.

Our readers can add many things to this. After all, this was more than 60 years ago.

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