

Bob's Corner

Buckle up. There's no telling where this is going because I've got a lot to spout. It all started when Jan went to Carlsbad in San Diego County for three weeks to help our daughter, Vicki, with Natalie, 3, and Ella, 9 months, while Matt, Vicki's husband, was in Belgium for his company.

That left me as the Lone Wrangler. But not liking being apart, and preying on the pity, generosity and just all-around goodness of the "Noose" crew, I was able to take a 7 a.m. flight from Medford a week ago from last Monday to spend the last week with fam. In an unusual departure, so to speak, I flew direct to Los Angeles, rather than Medford to Portland, and Portland to San Diego.

The idea, you see, was to allow me to take Amtrak from L.A. to Oceanside, next to Carlsbad, where the fam could pick me up. It worked great. I wouldn't have thought of taking that route, but Jan and Vicki know how much I like trains, and so encouraged me in that direction, so to speak. It was terrific. First, trains have dining cars or snack bars; so you can get some real food instead of a sack of nuts or chips.

Second, you can see so much from the upper deck of a passenger car. To tell the truth, this is not going where I thought it would. Because I have a sheaf of notes I wrote, beginning with a 21-degree Medford morning; not to mention that my wake-up call at the motel in Medford went to the wrong room. But I always wake up early when preparing for a flight, so that worked out OK. Why a motel? Easy. I didn't have to arise at 4 a.m. I got a ride directly to the airport doors. And I left my car at the motel so I didn't have to pay for airport parking.

Now, where was I? Oh, yeah. The train ride, I think is where I was going, so to speak. Union Station in L.A., across from historic Olvera Street, is a lovely edifice with great architecture and furnishings. I dug it, and even recalled being there a couple of times as a kid. I managed to find "my train" before the announcement by listening for engine noises and going up the right tunnel; then had to wait a while before boarding.

By the way, I hadn't been to LAX since the early '70s and the place hasn't changed a bit. Weird.

The Amtrak senior discount fare from L.A. to Oceanside was \$15.30, which I think is a great bargain, so to speak. Heck, the shared shuttle from LAX to Union Station cost 15 bucks. Go figure.

Anyway, munching a tuna sandwich and sucking on a bottle of cranberry juice while looking down at the world rolling by from a train cannot be beat. There is no feeling like gliding on the rails with the gentle swaying of the cars. Wow: I was pumped.

We left Union Station on the dot, and stopped at Fullerton, Anaheim, Santa Ana, Irvine, and San Juan Capistrano before reaching Oceanside only 10 minutes late. I was impressed. But then, I took my first ride on a train, with a steam engine heading it up, when I was but 9 months old. The old clackety-clack is in my blood, so to speak.

OK, it's time to end, but there's so much more I want to say. Ah well, next week will have to suffice while I gather my thoughts and recover from having almost a full week away from the office. Of course, I'm paying for it, in more ways than one, but it's well worth it. So to speak.



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Letters to the Editor

(Editor's Note: Views and commentary, including statements made as fact, are strictly those of the letter-writers.)

Typed, double-spaced letters written solely to this newspaper are considered for publication. Hand-written letters that are double-spaced and legible also can be considered.

'Thank you' submissions are not accepted as letters.

Whose study, research ya' gonna believe? From Lynne Vanderlinden Cave Junction

Here we go again. Their scientists vs. our scientists.

Greg Walter "I.V. News," 2/15) is evidently anti-salvage logging; therefore he terms the Donato study "impeccable" (def. 1 faultless, 2. not capable of being wrong.)

Naturally, those who question it are slippery, unprofessional buffoons whose credentials and research are worthless. Walter even stated that "they" had not taken time to read Donato's findings. After all the hoopla surrounding this article, I doubt that.

Without taking the time here to go into the merits of either side of the argument, I found a good Website of before-and-after photos of Mt. St. Helens, where Weyerhaeuser started salvage logging and replanting its land as soon as the mountain cooled down enough. Even though these pictures are 10 years old, what was accomplished in 20 years is nothing short of amazing.

At present these trees are 70-75 feet tall and are sustainably logged on a regular basis, providing timber, jobs and donated lumber for Habitat for Humanity homes across the nation. Our public land (BLM) was left to regenerate on its own, and looks like the face of the moon. But hey, beauty is in the eye of the beholder.

Visit weyerhaeuser.com/citizenship/publicoutreach/sthelens/photogallery. Sometimes pictures are worth more than a thousand words. Better yet, disbelieve any study by anyone until you actually go see it for yourself.

Tree-Planting Day fun set Saturday, March 4 From Suzanne Vautier Cave Junction

It is that time of year again; the community is gearing up for the annual Forestry Action Committee (FAC) Volunteer Tree-Planting Day set for Saturday, March 4.

There is a buzz in the air as everyone gets ready for the big day. And it is exciting to see all the folks coming out to pull this event together.

People with donations of food for the tree-planters can leave it in the Butler Bldg. at the U.S. Forest Service's lower compound in Cave Junction by 11 a.m. We especially need main dishes; but anything that will help feed the hungry tree-planters will be gratefully appreciated.

Volunteer tree-planters are encouraged to bring tools if they have them, and to be at the compound at 9 a.m. for sign-up, where we will have doughnuts, coffee, tea and hot chocolate. Then it is off on an adventure in tree-planting along riparian areas at locations within the Illinois River Watershed.

When the trees have been planted it is time for a nice lunch provided by the community. Lunch will be in the Butler Bldg., where everyone can share their stories of the day's adventure. It is a fun event for everyone; for families, youth groups and adults.

We hope that many will come join the fun and community spirit of the Tree-Planting Day.

Cutting trees at former base seen quite harmful From Roger Brandt Cave Junction

I was recently told that the Josephine County Board of Commissioners has ordered tree-cutting at the Siskiyou Smokejumper Base within the area nominated for placement on the National Register of Historic Places.

Tree-cutting needs to be stopped for two reasons:

Public Trust: I understand that the tree-cutting is being done to implement the conditions of an FAA grant for expanding the airport. This grant was apparently awarded without following guidelines required by law. Implementing the conditions of this grant under these circumstances violates the trust of the constituency.

Economic Values: The county has taken no apparent steps to understand the economic consequences that may happen if tree-cutting takes place within the historic Siskiyou Smokejumper Base. Without this information, the county commissioners may be setting the county on a course that will result in a serious reduction of our economic stability, economic adaptability, and economic resiliency.

I have included the following to help clarify this concern.

A panel of experts appointed by Oregon's governor recently acknowledged that the Siskiyou Smokejumper Base is a significant story in U.S. history and approved placing it on the prestigious National Register of Historic Places. This represents a significant economic development opportunity in the heritage tourism market.

No other county on the West Coast has this story, so the marketing opportunities that can make us competitive in the lucrative heritage tourism sector are significant. Without giving this careful consideration, we risk losing this advantage.

I shouldn't have to explain the importance of this while the trees are falling. The cutting needs to stop so a plan can be formulated to assure that we retain our advantages and implement solid economic development strategies for the county's future.

Heritage tourism is one of the strongest sectors in the travel market. Josephine County's smokejumper story represents a unique and pow-

erful heritage tourism story. This is one of Oregon's greatest adventure stories and gives us the opportunity to develop a marketing image that no other community on the West Coast can claim.

It is important that we retain this advantage to make our community competitive in the national and global tourism market.

Travelers on Hwy. 199 carry more than 40 million tourism dollars through Josephine County every year. The Siskiyou Smokejumper Base can play a role in capturing that money for our economy.

Tourism traffic on the Hwy. 199 travel corridor is likely to increase with promotional efforts of the Wild River Coast Cooperative. National interest in Southern Oregon is likely to increase, with Crater Lake now being printed on quarters as the icon of Oregon.

Josephine County is in the cross-fire of tourist traffic between two internationally significant national parks. There is no other coast-mountain highway on the West Coast that has the same concentration of natural and cultural resources as Josephine-Del Norte Counties' Hwy. 199.

The future of tourism along this corridor is strong, and it would be prudent to give serious consideration and planning for how we are going to take advantage of this now and in the future. Tree-cutting on the historic base needs to stop until our options have been thoroughly investigated to assure we do not take actions that will permanently reduce or impair our advantages in the tourism market.

The Siskiyou Smokejumper Base may not look like much when you first see it, but this is exactly the point that makes the story compelling. Smokejumping was an innovative idea that was implemented on a shoestring budget and in an environment of high risk.

Despite these factors, the crews were able to make the program work through grit, inventiveness and adaptability. The result of this was a program that successfully reduced catastrophic fires in Oregon and California for 38 years.

They saved millions of dollars every year in fire suppression expenses, not to mention what was saved in personal property and forest products. There was drama and adventure at every turn, and that story is contained within the historic base.

This represents a proud aspect of Josephine County history, and it is important that we carefully investigate the advantages it can give to our economy. We must also consider our responsibilities to assure that this nationally significant story is retained in the highest state of integrity for the enjoyment of the nation.

BLM decisions affecting community questioned From Alessis Lombardo O'Brien

I've noticed interest building in more than 28,000 acres of public land included in Illinois Valley land management projects under the Bureau of Land Management's Medford District.

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(Continued on page 3)

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