

Bob's Corner

Faithful readers might recall my painful story of several years ago regarding my tremendous lack of mechanical/building/fixing objects talent. But I type well.

I have built a few items in the past. Some of them actually stayed together long enough to stand up before collapsing in a pile of twisted nails, oozing glue and sawdust. Some of us have no aptitude for such matters. Fortunately, my wife and three children all have engineer-type brains, and can figure out stuff. Good thing.

Still, it took me years to let Jan take the lead after we'd buy an item and the box had the dreadful, fateful words (for people like me): "Assembly Required." Yikes. I'd break into a cold sweat and start trembling. Not to worry though, as Jan has the genius to figure out anything. But I used to try first to "show her" how to do it. Perhaps a bit too much machismo? Didn't work. Almost went to divorce court a few times over those "Assembly Required" items.

Anyway, this brings us, strangely enough, to last week when we got some new light fixture shades. I can handle this project, I thought. So much for thinking. But wait -- I was able to get the tall ladder into the bedroom, climb it and figure out how to remove the glass shades to replace them with the fabric ones. It was exciting to be way up near the ceiling and discover that at least two of our four cats had climbed the ladder from the other side and were having some sort of Cat Game called, "Let's Scare Dad by Shaking the Ladder." They also enjoyed, "Try to Trip Him While He's Climbing Down."

It took five separate ladder round-trips, with help from our herd of felines, to remove the old shades and bulbs. Then on my sixth excursion, I discovered that the new shades wouldn't clip over the light bulbs because the bulbs were too large for the clips. Off I went to get new, smaller lights. Jan had me take one of the old lights to be sure I got a proper size.

That was a mistake, as I thought of one dimension, and she was thinking three-dimensionally.

Because although I got smaller bulbs, it wasn't until I made another creaky trip up the ladder, with my cat escorts, that I realized the bases were too small. I had gotten bulbs with Christmas tree bases, when I needed bulbs with regular bases. Arghh. Off I went again for more bulbs.

Could not find bulbs of the right wattage. Phoned Jan, who advised me to wait until the next day and try another store with more variety. That worked.

Meanwhile, we left the ladder in our bedroom overnight. The cats loved it. Played games nearly all night. Next time, I'll have them do the job. I'm sure they could handle it better than I. Did I mention though that I am a really good typist?

P.S. The day after the complicated installation procedure we decided to put back the glass shades. And you don't even want to hear about the problematical situation we encountered. It was because of my replacing the plastic rings for them so far down on the light base the day before that it took extreme dexterity and patience to remove them. But the mission was accomplished. Again with help (she took over) from my wife. Some days life is just full of twists and turns.

(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.

I.V. Lions lauded for gallant gesture From Lew Levison Cave Junction

The spirit that makes the Illinois Valley such a great place to live was demonstrated recently in connection with a near disaster.

A smokejumper reunion was planned for Illinois Valley Airport on June 17. Josephine County, which owns and manages the airport, was notified nearly two years ago of the reunion.

Former smokejumpers from all over the country had made plans to attend. However the Illinois Valley Lions Club, which has its den at the airport, was planning a fundraising crab feed for the same day and had already started advertising.

Somehow the scheduling conflict wasn't recognized until about a week before the event. This had the potential to develop into a major feud, and in many other places would have ended in lawsuits or perhaps genocide. Alerted to the problem, the I.V. Lions showed that they truly are lionhearted, not by roaring loudly, but by voluntarily changing their plans at the last minute, averting disaster.

The smokejumper reunion was a success, and a tribute to those brave firefighters who figure so prominently in the valley's history. I hope that the Lions are strongly supported not only for this gallant gesture, but for all the other great things they do.

Bridge worker wants return of his watch From Danny Doyle Cave Junction

Regarding the June 14 letter by Glenda Graham, "Hazardous debris noted in river at R&R bridge," I am one of the workers on the bridges.

I dropped my watch and my tape measure in the water by accident. I waited until last weekend for the water to drop enough to retrieve them, went down on Sunday, but could not find them.

Now I know why. There are other workers here who would like their tools back as well.

I'll leave my phone number with the editor if Graham would like to return the "missing" goods.

Giving away county property outrageous From Jim Raffenburg, vice chairman, Josephine County Board of Commissioners

On April 27 and again on June 15, the Josephine County Board of Commissioners voted 2-0 to give away capital property owned by Josephine County, valued at more than \$1 million, to Southern Oregon Education Service District (SOESD), based in Jackson County.

The 2-0 votes are significant in that on both occasions, I was either ill or scheduled out for a doctor's appointment. I could not and did not participate in any discussion or vote on this issue.

The April 27 vote, to the best of my knowledge, and based upon the official record, occurred with little to no discussion of this subject by the board.

The decision to give this property away raises serious concerns.

Letters to the Editor

First, why was there such a rush to decide to give away a potential multimillion property without allowing for adequate discussion by all three commissioners?

Second, why give the property away at all when SOESD had already notified the Josephine County Board of Commissioners, in writing, that it would be satisfied with a long-term lease?

Third, and perhaps most importantly, is my concern that the board of commissioners does not have the authority under County Charter Section 15.5 to give this (or any other capital) property away. I believe the charter means exactly what it says, and what Charter Section 15.5 says is that this type of action requires a positive vote of the people. This section is short on words, but broad in scope.

In 1994 the board of commissioners put Measures 17-2 through 17-12 on the ballot in an effort to clarify the scope of Section 15.5. Measure 17-4 addressed the sale, trade or transfer of county land and was specific in listing types of actions this measure included. It was short on words and very narrow in scope.

It asked voters to pre-approve specific blanket approval for certain listed types of property actions. Giving property away was not a listed action for blanket voter approval.

County legal counsel has interpreted Measure 17-4 as being broader than the actual language it contains. The other measures that shared that same ballot were likewise narrow in scope and very specific. The commissioners at that time had every opportunity to say exactly what they meant.

To reinterpret what Measure 17-4 actually says, so as "to find" new authority, after voters approved the specifically worded and limited authority, is to me, at the very least, a betrayal of the voters' decision.

At worst, to officially act on this reinterpretation of the measure is a direct violation of the limited authority held by a Josephine County commissioner.

I want it to be very clear to everyone that I have had no part in these two decisions and have worked behind the scenes to stop this give-away.

The property in question is located at 1017 and 1021 Highland Ave., Grants Pass.

This property is owned free and clear by Josephine County, meaning it is paid for and free from all the financial strings that usually are attached to special-purpose funding.

The fact of the matter is that this building could have been sold and the revenue placed into the general fund. If the properties were only sold for \$1,000,000 (they are worth more), that money would have fully funded five more deputy sheriff positions for two to three years.

Josephine County is in a financial crisis. To give this property away so needlessly is simply outrageous.

Earlier this year, as part of my comments in opposition to the 2-1 vote by the board that settled an employees strike, I said that the county has not done everything it could to reduce its operating costs and to reassure citizens that the county was a good steward of the money it already receives.

This is just one more example of why I said what I did. This decision delivers another serious blow to the county's credibility with citizens regarding the sincerity of those cost-control efforts.

The loss of nearly \$15,000,000 in federal money next year will only accelerate the current cries for more taxes from the various special interests groups that make up modern society. The needs will be quite real in some cases, most obviously regarding public safety, but in other cases the need will only be real to those special interests.

In general, but especially during the next two years, I urge the people of Josephine County to be very discriminating with any "yes" votes they decide to cast in any election where they are asked for more money.

They should do their best to look past the emotional appeals that are sure to come. Always ask questions and demand the facts behind any assertions of need.

Lots of I-5 work set for summer From Matt Garrett, director, Oregon Dept. of Transportation Salem

This summer, your Dept. of Transportation is ramping up bridge and highway construction on Interstate 5. You've probably already noticed the work zones in the

Salem area, near Eugene, and throughout Southwestern Oregon.

Many of these projects are being funded by the Oregon Transportation Investment Act (OTIA). The intent of the OTIA program is to make improvements that will keep people, goods and services moving safely and effectively by modernizing our most important transportation corridors.

As part of OTIA, we are repairing and replacing bridges, widening lanes and performing essential maintenance throughout the state.

The I-5 corridor is Oregon's central transportation artery. Serving commerce, commuters, tourists and our economy, a smooth functioning I-5 is critical to our collective quality of life. Since it was built in the 1950s, I-5's freight volume has increased, the dimensions and weights of roads have grown, and an overall greater volume of traffic puts more pressure on the system every day. Our work will strengthen this vital roadway and help maintain unrestricted routes for trucks, tourists and travelers.

Simply put, making improvements to I-5 is not only an investment in Oregon's transportation infrastructure, it is an investment in the economic health of Oregon and the Pacific Northwest.

ODOT's mobility engineers have created unique approaches to help keep traffic moving during these upgrades. By estimating possible delays in work zones and coordinating timelines for multiple projects, we are working to keep delays to a minimum. Whenever possible, construction will be scheduled for off-peak or night hours to further maintain traffic flow.

The help of everyone is needed to make these efforts truly successful. Major road construction, even with state-of-the-art traffic planning, can cause delays. We are asking folks to be prepared for intermittent disruptions.

Most important, we urge slowing down in work zones and to be patient. Our motto is, "Better roads are ahead!"

To help plan trips and avoid delays, ODOT maintains two sources of up-to-date information: Trip-Check.com and 5-1-1. Trip-Check.com provides detailed information on construction

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(Classified ads & uncomplicated display ads can be accepted until Noon, Friday with an additional charge.)

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