

## Bob's Corner

It was a "vacation" not meant to be. I didn't even get to unpack. So here goes, trying to make a long story short.

Jan was in Carlsbad in San Diego County with our daughter, Vicki Kaplan, and two grandgirls, while her husband, Matt, was in Eugene for his employer for two weeks. At the start of the second week, Jan had an appointment in Santa Ana in Orange County on Monday, Oct. 22. So the plan was for me to fly to LAX, and she and the girls would pick me up. Then we'd drive to Carlsbad, and I'd get like four days of visiting and taking in some Southland sights and sites before Jan and I had to fly back on Saturday. (The News never stops.)

Didn't work out that way. When my plane landed at 6 p.m. I phoned Vicki's cell phone, and brightly asked, "Hey, where are you guys?" Said Vicki, "We're in Carlsbad; you'll need to rent a car and come down here." What had happened is that they left Carlsbad on I-5 for Santa Ana. But after it took them nearly 90 minutes to go 20 miles, they turned back.

Those devastating wildfires in San Diego and Los Angeles area counties had caused super-major traffic flows that were not flowing. So I rented a photographer's car (a Focus) and headed south. Managed to navigate L.A. without getting lost! Listened to KFI Radio all the way down, and learned quickly that many San Diego County residents were in hot water, so to speak. I smelled smoke most of the way. Wildfires were raging in several locations, blown by Santa Ana winds. Hot weather, dry vegetation, and low humidity were among the major factors. It became exceedingly obvious that San Diego County was amid an unprecedented disaster.

Some 500,000 residents in that county were ordered to evacuate because of the extreme fire hazard. Although figures still are being tallied, it looks as though property damage there will exceed a billion dollars. Some 1,600 homes were destroyed in seven California counties, some 80 percent of them in San Diego County, where 320 homes were damaged; 720 outbuildings were damaged and 25 destroyed along with two businesses. I mean, it's a disaster big time. At one point, there were 10,000 fire refugees at Qualcomm San Diego Stadium.

The half-million figure for evacuees does not include many more, such as our family, who left their homes without being told. Hotel and motels were jammed in the county; some even went farther south for accommodations. And there was our family: Vicki, Jan, Natalia, Ella, cats *Charlie* and *Jellirabbit*, and me. We headed out in Vicki's Escape, appropriately enough. We had slept with smoke in our noses all Monday night; and when we arose Tuesday, the air quality was bad, plus there was a layer of ash all over everything outside.

The decision was made. We had to get our fam out because of the bad air, which gave us all problems. And we had to leave because of the potential for the fire reaching Vicki and Matt's neighborhood. Oh, about that smoke, I had a sore throat for three days after we left Carlsbad. And Jan had smoke-related problems for several days. Not fun.

We had to bring the cats because, well, we couldn't leave them there. *Charlie*, of course, lives in Carlsbad now, and *Jellirabbit* had flown down with Jan. He's still so small, and our three other inside cats are so big, that she was afraid to leave him at home in Cave Junction. So at this point, the little guy has flown to San Diego, and been driven back. He's well-traveled. Charlie has made a one-way and a round-trip by car involving CJ and Carlsbad, traveling some 1,350 miles.

Fortunately, Jan has some herbs that work great to calm the critters. Otherwise we'd have to keep them in their carriers all the time. But with the herbs, they can roam freely, sort of, in the car while we're traveling. It's interesting.

Anyway, between Carlsbad and Santa Nella, where we spent Tuesday night the 23rd, we saw untold numbers of emergency vehicles headed toward the fires. At one location we saw a convoy of some 25 CHP units with lights flashing, roaring south for traffic and crowd control, I'm sure. And we saw numerous fire engines, pumpers, bulldozers on flatbed trailers, crew crummies and command units from many agencies -- all headed south. It was awesome (to use an overused word).

There are close to 8,500 firefighters working to contain and control the blazes in San Diego County alone. Ninety-three firefighters had been injured as of Sunday the 28th, and 23 civilians. Plus seven civilians have died because of the fires. Of close to 500,000 acres (remember our 2002 Biscuit Fire) affected, nearly 347,000 are in San Diego County.

I-5 at Camp Pendleton was closed for several hours one day in both directions. We had already passed by, thank goodness. As for my "vacation," I have no complaints. My heart goes out to all those affected by the fires; many literally lost everything they owned. I'm thankful that Vicki and Matt's house was spared; in fact, the fires did not come near their neighborhood, although they were in a Possible Evacuation Zone.

Think I'll go home now and unpack.

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Little refugees visit Jubilee Park with 'Bingo' the IVN shop dog.

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

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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.

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**'Obsolete, bad laws are root of the problem'**  
From Robert H. Ziller O'Brien

There comes a time in county government when fundamental changes need to be made.

An example of this need is the current dilemma that we are experiencing with the O&C Act, the Bureau of Land (mis)Management's ill-conceived Western Oregon Plan Revision (WOPR) and inadequate funding for public safety, libraries and schools. Obsolete laws such as the O&C Act, various Oregon state laws on taxation, and certain Josephine County Charter issues, stand in the way of fair taxation for public safety, schools and libraries.

Home owners are already being taxed to the breaking point. This taxation inequity has caused recent property tax levies to go down in flames at the ballot box. Unless funding for these services is revised so that everyone shares the burden equitably, the problems will continue to worsen.

I applaud Josephine County Commissioner Dave Toler for his recent public forums on funding options to replace the loss of O&C subsidies. Most in attendance agreed that the solution is for everyone to contribute fairly and equitably to fund these services.

To accomplish this, my recommendations to address these problems are to restructure taxation for public safety services, schools and libraries, as follows:

Restructure all property taxes (including the various forest land assessments) so that, in total, property taxes pay for a third of the funding needed for these services. This would reduce the disproportionate burden on home owner property taxes and impose a fair and just levy on forest land and business holdings.

Amend Oregon law to allow a modest increase in state income tax to pay for a third of the funding needed for these services.

Allow a small (1/4 percent, or so) business tax on

gross sales of all business operating in Josephine County. I prefer this rather than a sales tax for several reasons: It can be a much lower rate because it also requires companies to pay a fair share, even if all their sales are outside the county.

It also avoids the point-of-sale stigma of a retail sales tax, and would be easier for businesses to calculate and pay. The rate for this small transparent tax should be set so that it pays for a third of the funding needed for these services.

Scrap the O & C Act as it is no longer relevant. BLM's WOPR is a shortsighted last-ditch Bush administration effort to decimate our few remaining legacy forests. It is an unconscionable "snow job" that would cause devastating economic and permanent environmental damage to Southern Oregon.

**Measure 49 first step to strip property rights**  
From Ken Stepp O'Brien

When I look at this measure I am amazed at the dedication it takes to put it together and to be able to present it as something to help property owners.

It was crafted by the Democratic majority in our state Legislature without a single Republican vote. Special care was taken to eliminate any outside influence and to be sure that the ballot title and description was not subjected to any review, such as everyone else has to go through to put anything on the ballot.

The measure took a lot of time, energy, and legal

counsel to craft in the pitfalls and loopholes that will allow it to have the opposite effect to what is promised. Why did they go to such lengths?

In my opinion the primary reason is that Measure 37 made a move toward something that they do not want to gain legitimate recognition. It is the first positive step for property ownership rights that I can remember. The government has worked hard to, one bit at a time, strip away all control of the land from the "owners" and shift it to government control for the betterment of mankind.

This leads us toward the "United Socialist States of America." Socialism may have failed miserably in the rest of the world, but some

are sure that they can make it work here.

To make it work they must gain total control of the land in ways that do not lead to an armed rebellion. Measure 49 removes our first glimpse of property rights returning. It comes at the same time that there is another step toward socialization with Measure 50.

This mandates a socialized medical program guaranteed by a constitutional amendment to fund it. No matter how poorly it performs. Oops. Sorry about that. I have several soap boxes and sometimes, when they both lean the same direction, I have to put one foot on the next box to keep my balance.

The one beyond that is  
(Continued on page 3)

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### Attention, Citizens of Cave Junction and Illinois Valley:

Barlow Sand & Gravel LLC, owned by the parent company, Copeland Sand & Gravel, is trying to reclassify an old farm located on Holland Loop Road, two miles outside Cave Junction, from traditional agriculture use into a "Significant Aggregate Resource" site as defined by Josephine County.

Special-interest investors purchased this farm, now called the 'Illinois Valley Ranch' and currently seek to drastically change the historical use of the property. The Fulk family owned and farmed this parcel for more than a hundred years. The Barlow/Copeland Associates now claim that it isn't fit for agricultural use, and want this old farm to be reclassified and added to the county's "Significant Aggregate Resources" list, so that they can **mine a half million cubic yards of material during the next 10 years!**

What does this mean to you personally?

Mining equipment will be used to dig up the Illinois Valley Ranch site. Please drive by and see the effects that occurred when the Barlow/Copeland Associates initially attempted, and were temporarily granted, approval to mine the site. The Barlow/Copeland Associates, led by former Grants Pass City Manager Bill Peterson, initially tried to get 'grandfathered' into mining on the Illinois Valley Ranch site. They did this by changing the property ID that the JoCo Planning Office said was grandfathered in for mining. The Barlow Sand & Gravel pit on Holland Loop Road was switched to the Illinois Valley Ranch site on Barlow's Dept. of Geology and Mineral Industries (DOGAMI) permit application. To date, no penalties have been assessed due to this questionable activity, and in fact, the Josephine County Board of Commissioners, along with the JoCo Planning Dept., is now determining whether to grant this same outfit an outright use to mine the Illinois Valley Ranch by allowing the site to be reclassified and turned into a major mining operation.

Your family, including your children, could be subject to **150 trips per day**, one every three minutes on average, from the Illinois Valley Ranch site located at 2612 Holland Loop Road, to Caves Highway, to the intersection of Caves Highway and Highway 199, south to Rockydale Road, and up to the gravel processing plant owned by the Barlow/Copeland Associates. That's more than 30,000 trips per year -- for the next 10 years!

This **underwater** mining operation will be occurring two miles upstream from the intake to the City of Cave Junction's water treatment plant. This is your drinking water.

What will happen to the value of any property you own in this area? Will you be monetarily compensated for any reduction in value due to this drastic change? After all, who wants to live next to a large mining operation?

**Together, we can stand united in opposing this awful plan that will destroy traditional agricultural use of the land adjacent to historic Fort Briggs. Please plan on attending the hearing to be held Monday, November 5<sup>th</sup> at 7:00 p.m. in the Anne Basker Auditorium Annex of the County Courthouse, 604 N.W. Sixth St., Grants Pass, and let your voice be heard!**

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Email: newsroom1@frontiernet.net or newsdesk@illinois-valley-news.com

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Staff: Michelle Binker, Zina Booth, Jennifer Newsted  
Josiah Dean, Millie Watkins, and Tina Grow  
Member: Oregon Newspaper Publishers Association

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