

Bob's Corner

This year marked the first Christmas for our newest indoor cat, *Jellirabbit*. In fact, if not for that, we probably would not have had a tree up because of various circumstances which likely will be unburdened here in later weeks. But the primary cat lover in our home wanted the little guy to have the full holiday treatment, so the tree was brought in.

Jellirabbit seemed to have a good time checking the gifts under our tree, but believe it or not, he did not climb the thing as did his cousin, *Charlie*, who now lives in Carlsbad in San Diego County with our daughter, two granddaughters and their dad. He likes it there, by the way, and has become a neighborhood character on their cul-de-sac.

As for our Illinois Valley family, we ate Christmas dinner on Christmas Eve, as we wanted to have an outing on Christmas Day. That was the plan. And it mostly worked.

The Eve beef meal was good; even with *Jellirabbit* and *Flinty* acting as feline sharks under the table. Well, mostly under the table; a couple of leaps had to be stymied. Then on the morning of Dec. 25 we went to our son's home in Cave Junction to see the Yule tree he and our granddaughter had decorated. We took *Jellirabbit* with us to hang out with their feline, *Wildcat*. The latter yowled nearly the whole time we were there. He doesn't like visitors, especially other kitties.

Eventually we got home again, and prepared a picnic lunch. Beef sandwiches (leftover meat from the day before), a Thermos of hot chocolate, and a pitcher of decaf. And off we went. Almost got out of the driveway before Jan remembered that she had left her gloves in the house. I got the gloves and off we drove. Got as far as Sauer's Flat when Mike discovered he didn't have his car keys with him. I turned around. Back home again, he found that he had left them on the front seat of his unlocked car on our driveway.

Off we went again. Actually made it to Prospect and took a hike to Mill Creek. It's a pretty place, and we enjoyed the scenery, the walk and the snow. We decided to have a hot beverage in the car, and discovered that somehow, the hot chocolate had made it. But the decaf was still at home. Everything in Prospect was closed, so:

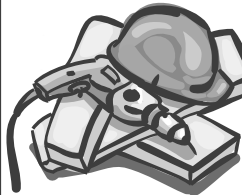
We (one of us especially) decided we should continue our outing by driving on to Union Creek to see what we could see.

What we saw was plenty of snow. The drive on an icy highway was beautiful with the trees on either side of the road covered with "the white stuff," as some weather reporters are fond of calling it. The drive was like being in a postcard.

At Union Creek we discovered that Beckie's Restaurant and the Country Store across the highway were closed. So we parked and ate. After I ate my sandwiches, I was told why there had been some snickers (laughing, not the candy bar) while I was eating. It seems that while my sandwiches were being prepared, *Jellirabbit* had stood on my bread. Didn't bother me; I didn't get sick, and there were no hunks of kitty litter mixed with the mustard, so it was fine.

And that's how we spent Christmas. (Next week: How I survived bronchitis and some weird malady that has kept my nose clogged and my body and mind in more disarray than usual for two weeks.)

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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.

Elder abuse concern

From Linda Schluter Tedder Cave Junction

The story of Tom Green's death and the chilling way in which it happened, complete with pictures, should only help keep us more aware of our seniors and their lives.

People had seen Tom Green all bruised, but they didn't want to ask him what was happening; didn't want to pry. Along with child abuse, senior abuse is on the rise also.

We can go ahead and be nosy; ask questions. What's the worst that could happen? We have seen what happened to Tom Green. A truly kind, selfless soul.

This town isn't exactly Mayberry. But it's still a great little town. We just need to be more aware of what's going on and take care of each other. Mr. Green we hardly knew thee...

Rockydale mining opposed

From Larry Herman Cave Junction

In the Dec. 12 issue of "Illinois Valley News," Wally Aiken wrote an article headed, "Request for ceremonies denied 3-0." Martha Tinsley was denied the right to conduct marriage ceremonies on her property because of a concern for causing traffic hazards.

Josephine County Commission Chairman Jim Raffenburg stated, "Our codes set a very high bar for home occupation in order to ensure residential neighborhoods remain just that."

The same standards should apply to Copeland Sand and Gravel/Barlow Rock on the mining project on Rockydale Road at Little Elm Ranch. There is a full-blown mining operation going on. When it resumes sometime after the first of the year, 45 round-trips will be made per day, with tons of rock and gravel, being carried down to Barlow Rock.

There is a very dangerous blind curve above the entry point on Rockydale, that is a severe traffic hazard, endangering everyone. The county commissioners voted 3-0 to allow this travesty of justice. The bar was not set very high to protect our neighborhood. The bar was set to protect the corporate interest of Barlow Rock and Little Elm Ranch; not in deference to this residential neighborhood.

Do the county commissioners have Alzheimer's? Do they speak with forked tongues? Once again, money talks. An individual was denied her rights, a corporation was given carte

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blanche. Mining and clogging the roads is safer than wedding ceremonies.

The mining operation should be denied 3-0 because it's unsafe and unscrupulous. The county commissioners should be denied re-election 100 percent for total lack of judgment. The voters got what they deserved -- very bad government and lack of integrity.

We need creative, honest, local government that innovates. Government that doesn't revert to past practices of destroying ancient forests. The county needs fresh minds with creative financing experience. Until then, there will be a dead zone called Josephine County.

WOPR comments deadline

From Patty Dalegowski O'Brien

I am a longtime resident of Illinois Valley concerned about the Western Oregon Plan Revisions (WOPR) so well explained last week in Dorothea Hover-Kramer's letter to the editor.

What many people may not realize is that this is going to happen right here in Illinois Valley and the rest of western and southern Oregon. It is going to happen right in our back yard.

If BLM gets its way they will clear-cut currently protected old-growth forests. BLM will cut back riparian zones, protected areas next to streams and rivers, to virtually nothing. This will cause massive erosion, silting and muddying of our streams and rivers. The off-highway vehicle (OHV) areas to be set aside include areas next to homes, streams and rivers and will cause lots of noise and erosion.

BLM says that it will "manage" these areas. I don't think so. Our valley is a special place. We have clean air and water, peace and quiet, beautiful forests, streams and rivers. If BLM's preferred alternative is allowed to be implemented we can say good-bye to all that.

Concerned citizens can contact their elected representatives, Sens. Ron Wyden and Gordon Smith, Reps. Greg Walden and Peter De Fazio, our county commissioners and Gov. Kulongoski. The Jan. 11 deadline for comments is fast approaching.

Keep backyards peaceful

Andrea King-Brockman Selma

Wally Aiken's report of a county commission meeting, printed on page 14 of *Illinois Valley News* on Dec. 12, prompted the writing of a letter to the board.

In it, I pointed out that during their Dec. 5 meeting they disallowed an activity that would disturb a residential neighborhood. I asked if I could assume then, that they also disapprove of the Bureau

of Land Management's (BLM) Western Oregon Plan Revisions (WOPR) proposed Off Highway Vehicle (OHV) Emphasis Areas that abut residential lands in Josephine County.

I am particularly concerned that the Deer Creek Watershed, the community of Selma, is sandwiched north and south by the Elliot Creek and Illinois Valley OHV Emphasis Areas. These proposed Emphasis Areas are interspersed with privately owned land where many residents treasure the quiet.

Will the county board charge BLM to uphold Executive Order 11644, Section 3 (3) "... to ensure the compatibility of such uses (off-road vehicles) with existing conditions in populated areas, taking into account noise and other factors."

Will they call on their constituents' other elected officials, Sen. Jason Atkinson and Rep. Ron Maurer at the state level, and Sens. Ron Wyden and Gordon Smith and Rep. Peter DeFazio on the national level, to remind the BLM Medford District of its own Rural Interface Area directive in its Resource Management Plan, page 88, to "Consider the interests of adjacent and nearby rural residential land owners ... to avoid/minimize impacts to health, life, property and quality of life?"

Perhaps the county board has considered how it would respond if a government agency encouraged OHV users to ride through their backyard. I appreciate the county board efforts to protect that valuable and fast-disappearing commodity, the peaceful neighborhood.

'Unintended consequences'

From Robert Thomas Grants Pass

In the Oct. 31 *Illinois Valley News*, persons representing STRIVE (Save The Rural Illinois Valley Environment) penned a political attack on Barlow/Copeland Sand & Gravel to stop their request for mining expansion

of aggregate resource near the Illinois River in the Holland Loop area.

STRIVE posted two questions, "What does this mean to you?" and "What will happen to the value of any property you own in this area?" STRIVE backers should consider some intended, and unintended, consequences of their proposal on the people and economy and growth of Illinois Valley should they prevail in this effort.

I would guess that STRIVE activists live in homes which required sand and gravel in their development, not mud huts or straw bale structures. I also presume that they travel on private and public roads, and bridges, which utilized aggregate they did not mine to allow more direct, faster and dustless access to their homes and other destinations than wagon trails.

Had STRIVE leaders, who suggested that proposed expansion and mining of additional aggregate would lead to 150 truck trips per day (30,000 trips per year), asked Barlow/Copeland's General Manager Bill Peterson how long the additional aggregate would last and if that resource would last 10 years, they would have found out several things.

If this suggested mining and processing schedule could be implemented, all the aggregate would be mined in one year. This could happen only if all the potential future state and county highway repair and improvement contracts were won by Barlow/Copeland at the same time. And given the unlikely chance that government priority and budget schedules for all projects in Illinois Valley would be granted at the same time, yes, this is a possibility, but historically not probable.

One wonders if Barlow/Copeland would not be subject to existing pollution regulation and controls in the area or at Cave Junction's water treatment plant several miles down stream. Studies of Illinois River floodplain channel changes during the

(Continued on page 3)

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