

Bob's Corner

What can I say? I left the valley for a few days, and once again, I didn't want to return. OK, I admit: It's lovely to be away from the office visiting family. And away from The Work. Oh, I still enjoy the grind (mostly).

But after writing stories and taking photos as a career since around 1963, heck, I'm ready to stop facing deadlines. I've been dealing with deadlines in Illinois Valley alone since February 1986. I'd like to be able to visit The Fam in San Diego County for more than four days, without watching the calendar and checking flight schedules to be sure we get back in time for the next edition.

The way we did it last week was we worked Saturday and Sunday (sorry about that last) so that I could leave Monday morning. It's a matter of doing what needs to be done earlier than usual. Oh, and I might have worked a few more hours than usual earlier in the week.

After packing, completing last-minute home details and being anxious, I got to bed around 11 p.m.; slept restlessly, arose at 4 and drove to MFR for a 7 a.m. flight to LAX. Rented a tiny, cheap car and drove to Carlsbad; and had a pleasant, expensive lunch with Jan. We sat outdoors in warm San Diego weather. She'd gone south some days earlier to house- and cat-sit, so it was neat to see her again.

Feeling tired, went to bed fairly early that night; and our daughter, son-in-law and two grandgirls arrived from their trip shortly before noon the next day. They'd been on a week-long trip to the East. We had a fine time with everyone. Didn't do a lot of sight-seeing; it simply felt good to relax and be with family. Ate too much; watched too much TV; grew nostalgic again about our native San Diego.

I'm leaving out a lot of details. Probably discourse on them next issue. I'm still recovering from the trip. But back to the grind, I think I'm not as sharp as I used to be.

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.

Snow aid for U.S. mail From Lori Colbert Cave Junction

During recent snowfall, my vehicle went into a ditch as I was delivering mail on Westside Road. Mr. Blair helped me out of the ditch, and his help was appreciated.

'Smoke problem' cleared From Dennis Strayer Cave Junction

I would like to respond to the letter written by a friend, Steve Lyons, that basically blamed another friend, Roger Brandt, and Illinois Valley Community Development Organization (IVCDO) for the problems of the valley.

It is very sad to see this sort of thing happening in a community where diverse opinions are valued, appreciated and respected, as it should be among friends. I am writing as a private citizen and not as a representative of any of the three community groups I serve as a volunteer. I am addressing two items of which I have direct personal knowledge. First is the Illinois Valley Visitor Center (IVVC), where I served as the last manager from February 1996 to March 2006.

IVVC was one of the first in our nation to establish a "partnership" comprised of the USDA Forest Service (USFS)/Siskiyou National Forest, National Park Service (NPS)/Oregon Caves National Monument, I.V. Chamber of Commerce, Josephine County, and city of Cave Junction. The Bureau of Land Management/Medford District Office joined after the building was completed in July 1990.

Rough & Ready Lumber Co. donated the majority of the lumber used to construct this welcoming community facility. The forest service administered all the construction contracts including electrical and plumbing.

Don McLennan, then assistant recreation staff officer at the Siskiyou National Forest, was instrumental in organizing meetings and was a driving force to ensure that this building would happen. He and others worked to obtain funding from the Oregon Lottery as well as a Regional Forester (UFS) Challenge Cost-Share Grant which required that each "partner" contribute dollars or services to help ensure the building would be completed, staffed and maintained.

To ensure that each "partner" understood its respective responsibilities, a Memorandum of Understanding and Operating Plan were written and signed off by each agency and organization head. These plans were reviewed every few years by the IVVC Board, and changes were made when needed.

My salary as IVVC manager came from USFS, NPS and BLM, which each paid a third of it. USFS was responsible for providing the telephone and computer systems and supervision of my position, as I was a USFS employee. I was required to alternately wear uniforms of all three federal partners, and I enjoyed helping 350,000 visitors.

I also enjoyed working with several volunteers, and the late Melva McDonald Nichols and Dulcie Moore, who served and continue to serve the I.V. Chamber. The chamber still pays the electri-

cal utility bill each month that literally keeps the lights on.

NPS was responsible for maintaining the landscape and exterior of the building and initially, until funding was cut, hiring a summer seasonal park ranger to assist me with helping visitors.

The city of Cave Junction provided sewer and water service (basic rate). Josephine County initially was responsible for building repairs, but it left as a partner in or around 2000 so NPS took over its responsibilities.

In spring 2004, USFS Ranger Pam Bode met with the IVVC directors to inform them that my position, as a USFS employee and IVVC manager, was being abolished. This was because the funding for my job, and approximately 100 others, was not in the USFS budget. I recall that either Roger Brandt, then chief of interpretation at Oregon Caves National Monument; or his boss, Craig Ackerman, superintendent at the monument, was at this same meeting. The city rep (Jim Polk or former Mayor Ed Faircloth) also attended the meeting. The chamber was represented by Leonard Frick, who has done so much for this community that he deserves our thanks.

I don't recall if the BLM rep, Jeanne Klein was there. I was there to hear the bad news that I would be out of a job and to help offer suggestions on the future operation of the visitor center.

Immediate concerns were raised as to who would operate the center. The NPS-approved concessionaire, IVCDO, was suggested by NPS, as it already was operating the Oregon Caves Chateau, under a 10-year contract, and two USFS campgrounds (Grayback and Cave Creek).

One issue was that the center building was built with primary funding and contract administration by USFS, which retained the building on its inventory. NPS could not obtain maintenance funding for the building because it was not on its inventory, but the building did, and still does, sit on NPS land.

During that meeting, it was agreed that the IVVC Board would consider all options: The bottom line was that the visitor center serves the community and to keep it open to assist visitors was the primary concern and objective of all partners. Like other boards, the majority vote determines the final outcome.

In 2005, there was sufficient funding to keep me around for one more year as manager, and the board continued to meet quarterly and discuss its limited options.

A draft proposal was written for the entire IVVC board to review, that called for IVCDO to take over operation of the visitor center, as part of its NPS concessionaire contract, in addition to continuing to operate the Oregon Caves Chateau and the two campgrounds.

Concerns were expressed by the chamber board representative that the chamber secretary should remain "in as visible a location as possible." I volunteered to develop several "floor plan" options to help the IVVC Board determine the best location for the chamber and other remaining "partners."

The building is quite small (approximately 2,000 square feet) which includes two restrooms, a large visitor lobby, two small office areas, a brochure storage room; and the meeting room where the chamber has had its office and is now relocated back into this same location and not "shoved into a back corner" as some have claimed.

The building had outgrown its limited size, and I

had the late architect, David DeWitz, who originally designed the visitor center, develop a proposed building expansion design. But he died, and there was no funding to expand. So, we had to live with what we had.

During winter 2005-2006, I was reassigned to I.V. Ranger District as the acting business manager. I was directed by Bode to work with our USFS Regional Office Lands staff to transfer the visitor center building from USFS to NPS. While this may sound like a fairly easy process, in reality the government regulations called for a transfer of money, based on the current real estate value of the building, from NPS to USFS.

Having once worked in real estate development, I kept working through "the government system" and was finally able to convince enough people that neither agency had any money to give to the other. The transfer was completed shortly after I left for a job in Alaska.

In April 2006, funding became available and I was assigned to a four-month work assignment as the acting director of the Southeast Alaska Discovery Center in Ketchikan. I was kept informed by Bode, through emails, of the progress of the IVVC Board to bring in IVCDO to again keep the visitor center open and operating (staffed).

One week before my return, Bode phoned and said that my job had to be officially abolished before I returned home to Illinois Valley. At that point, I saw the "writing on the wall" and took early retirement to help remain serving our great and diverse community.

The other issue that concerns me about Lyon's letter is the claim that IVCDO is a Clinton administration program "that won't go away."

The I.V. Community Response Team (IVCRT) evolved from the 2010 Committee that was formed in the early 1990s by a group of concerned community members on valley issues such as low employment, limited health/medical services, and other important matters. IVCRT, as a community-based nonprofit organization, was one of 23 nationwide federal Enterprise Zones (EZ), designated by the Clinton administration in 1994 to help small rural communities that were hard hit by the decline of timber jobs.

This federal EZ designation made IVCRT eligible to apply for, and receive, federal grants to assist in completing various community projects for the benefit of all the people who live here.

As one of the volunteer IVCRT Board members and chairman of the CRT Tourism Committee from 1999 to 2001, I wonder just how much people here really know about the history of such organizations and how much they have contributed to this community. I, along with other former IVCRT Board members, came from a wide variety of backgrounds.

We had several farmers, ranchers, loggers, environmental folks, a representative of the medical community, a Native American, a chamber representative and several "advisory members" that included Rita Dyer, of USFS.

One of our "missions" was to continually review our "IVCRT Strategic Plan" that contained a long list of short- and long-term community goals, that were developed by the 2010 Committee and community members before IVCRT was established. These items included improving local employment by developing a business incubator at I.V. Airport (this was not supported by the county and died after many hours of work to make it happen). Another goal among others was to help fund and build a new Siskiyou Community Health Center on Caves Hwy. This created jobs and improved the quality of health care in the valley.

Funds could only be given to nonprofit groups, as provided by federal guidelines, so a lot of the valley's infrastructure was improved, including the city of Cave Junction's water and sewer systems which, at that time, did not meet the minimum State Standards for Safe Drinking Water. If you don't have safe drinking water and adequate sewage disposal why would anyone want to move here?

Shortly before I left IVCRT in late 2001 due to health issues, the CRT Board chairman at that time, George Fence, reminded board members that they had to start thinking about the future of the organization, as the federal funding was ending. Had he not done that and started the board on a new path, there would not have been the 40 to 50 new jobs that were created by IVCDO when it took over the NPS concessionaire operation of the Oregon Caves Chateau in 2000. This promotes tourism and creates a vital local economy.

Additionally, the Chateau's gift shop sells art work and crafts made by local artists and craftspeople that further stimulates the local economy. Oh, and all local wines and some of the food items cooked and eaten in both the coffee shop and restaurant, by locals and visitors alike, are purchased by local companies. The money stays in this valley instead of going to some giant corporation in another part of the country, that could care less about our high unemployment, etc.

Operating the Chateau is not a real money-maker, but IVCDO is committed to ensuring that local people have jobs. This was a carry-over from the original IVCRT, which ended when the federal designation ended.

Finally, IVCDO is not, nor has it ever been, involved in the Smokejumper Base Project that Brandt and others have worked hard to promote. Brandt has spent a lot of his personal time interviewing the remaining members of the former Siskiyou Smokejumper Base, obtaining historic

(Continued on page 3)

Open House & Chamber Mixer

Friday, February 22, 5:30 - 7 p.m.

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Weather Watch

Cave Junction

Wednesday, Feb. 20

Cloudy High--51 Low--31



Thursday, Feb. 21

Rain High--52 Low--30



Friday, Feb. 22

Rain and snow High--49 Low--31



Saturday, Feb. 23

Windy, rain and snow High--45 Low--35



Sunday, Feb. 24

Windy, rain and snow High--45 Low--27



Monday, Feb. 25

Rain and snow High--45 Low--35



Tuesday, Feb. 26

Mix of snow and rain High--46 Low--30



Following are the high-and-low temperatures, and rainfall, recorded in O'Brien by Cheryl & Harry Johnson.

*Fri.,	Feb. 8	54	30	.00
*Sat.,	Feb. 9	51	30	.00
*Sun.,	Feb. 10	54	31	.00
*Mon.,	Feb. 11	52	36	.00
*Tue.,	Feb. 12	58	33	.00
*Wed.,	Feb. 13	47	33	.00
*Thurs.,	Feb. 14	52	30	.00

Following are the high-and-low temperatures, and rainfall, recorded in Cave Junction at Illinois River Farm.

*Fri.,	Feb. 8	54	29	.01
*Sat.,	Feb. 9	53	30	.00
*Sun.,	Feb. 10	53	31	.01
*Mon.,	Feb. 11	55	34	.00
*Tue.,	Feb. 12	61	32	.00
*Wed.,	Feb. 13	50	31	.00
*Thurs.,	Feb. 14	52	27	.00

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5 P.M. THURSDAYS

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

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