

Bob's Corner

Some out there will not believe this, but I'm actually going to write about something I've not touched on before. That's right, this is a never-before-told story. Ready? Here goes.

Once upon a time in a far distant galaxy ... No, that's not it. How about, I was born in a log cabin and had to chop wood when I was only 3 ... Nah, that's been done.

All right, here's the real tale: It was a brisk morning with a bright sun, and the mountain air was clear and crisp. It was a fine time for a walk, so off I went from a bed-and-breakfast inn located in a Northern California small town.

There's nothing like striding vigorously to keep the ol' ticker in shape, and to see the sights you've not seen before. Besides, being in a strange town (strange in that it's all new to you) can be an eye-opener. And such locales often offer many good opportunities for photography.

Sunlight filtering through the pines, firs and occasional oaks in the vicinity gave me a good feeling. It's a quiet settlement with a "downtown" consisting of approximately six blocks on two streets containing a mix of commercial and residential uses. Some newer structures stand amid the more venerable buildings, a few looking as though they date to the 1800s. Either that or I've seen too many black-and-white movies.

There's also a completely residential neighborhood, so I had plenty of walkin' room.

At any rate, there I was, meandering at a good pace and feeling like a happy tourist, when I encountered a fellow walker. He was older than I by several years, but he was a fast walker and a good talker. We fell into step together at a corner, said "Hello" and "Good morning," and exchanged names. His name was Walter, and he had lived in the town for many years.

As we walked he pointed out various buildings: a former church, where he and his late wife were wed, but she died a few years ago after 52 years of marriage; he noted a large structure he said was originally a bakery that became a breakfast hut that became a pizza parlor, and now the place is closed. Windows are broken, and the porch is falling down.

Our walk continued, sometimes on the sides of asphalt streets with weeds coming up through the cracks, and sometimes on concrete sidewalks with sparkly stuff. Walter noted the city hall, a tiny building open three days a week; a couple of new motels; two greasy spoon cafes; a sort-of ritzy restaurant that offers steak and pizza; and several rustic barn-like buildings. In fact, a couple of them actually are used as barns, although Walter said it's not like it used to be when horses and carriages were in the majority.

Eventually we neared one end of town with a knoll which had a white-painted split-level structure as its principal feature. Walter said it housed the town medical clinic, and that it once served as the medical facility for all the loggers who used to work in the area. He was going to have his blood pressure checked, and to see if some heart medication had come in.

We shook hands, and split company as comrade marchers. I hope Walter is doing well; he struck me as a man of honor with a head for history.

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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 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.

Dangerous crosswalk From Lloyd Franklin Cave Junction

I live at Hopeful Rancho on Takilma Road, and I have a complaint for the Cave Junction City Council or whoever, before something drastic happens.

I do volunteer work at the Illinois Valley Senior Center Thrift Shop in Downtown CJ three days a week. Many times I use the crosswalk, where you would think people would stop, but they don't. I have nearly been hit several times, along with the workers who help me.

I would like to see a caution light or stop light put in the drainage by the crosswalk by Taylor's Country Store and the thrift shop.

The reason I am complaining is I would like very much to see something done before someone gets killed.

Susan Chapp Forestry Action Committee (FAC) Cave Junction

FAC's volunteer weed group is making plans to start the obnoxious weed pull collective for the spring.

As you might know, there are several invasive plants running wild through our valley, and you may have heard that some folks are doing something about it.

The star thistle was our main target last year. We will be monitoring the four sites we cleared, hunting up new ones and continuing our policy of educating land holders to keep this particularly invasive plant from spreading.

During this season when the ground is damp, we urge land owners to pull some of the broom plants that seem to be everywhere. They pull up so easily when they are young. Medium ones can be lifted with the dig of a shovel. For the bigger ones, a weed wrench can be borrowed from FAC. The damp ground makes it possible to get the roots.

Broom, an evergreen, is the green of fir. It has tiny leaves, but mostly all stems. It grows to 5 feet and more. People used to make brooms out of it and a bunch of it all together looks like a witch's broom. In the spring it has pretty yellow or orange pea flowers. The pods look like pea pods, but are thinner and turn brown in the fall.

It has a lot of volatile oil so as brush it burns quick and hot and can be a fire danger. Left undisturbed it spreads and becomes very thick, tak-

ing over. This time of year and into early spring, when the ground is wet, is a good time to pull this plant.

Knapweed is all browned stems and seeds now standing 2 to 3 feet tall. The new green leaves are close to the ground. Digging them now is easier than when they get big. Getting a few out on a nice day when the gardening bug has bitten you helps keep them in check. They can become a terrible problem if you don't stop them.

We aren't experts at all this. We are interested in anyone who wants to share what they are doing in this field. We will be planning and organizing to start pulling again and need people to help.

It's not hard work and it's very healthy. We go out one morning a week when the weather is fair and work together a few hours pulling invasive plants. For more information phone 592-4098.

Airport lease resolved From Jack McCornack Cave Junction

I hope I didn't sound like a smart aleck last week when I said, "I may just send them a check for the full amount they demanded." It's not as though refusing to pay our rent at the airport is an option.

The option was, the county commissioners had offered to credit my company (McSquared Design) with the money we'd spent on the building to date, but it was only 600 bucks or so total. "A dollar here and 20-cents there," to quote Airports Manager Alex Grossi. Our reduced rent was contingent on the county's satisfaction, and my only contention (well, other than why had it taken Josephine County 15 months to discover it was unsatisfied) was: If I use a dollar's worth of caulk to stop a \$100 leak, how satisfied is the county?

The answer is, a dollar's worth, which was a bit of a surprise to me.

I knew when I signed the lease that Josephine County could set the "satisfaction" bar where it saw fit, and I knew Grossi finds me unsatisfying in many respects, and I feel my retroactive rent of \$1,786 is going to a good home (the Josephine County coffers). Also, I'm confident that the county will spend it wisely. The \$80 a month rent increase is a bargain, now that we're released from the obligation to do the building maintenance. It was costing McSquared more than that in materials and labor, anyway.

Also, I understand the county's quandary: how does one value volunteer labor? Should McSquared be credited for work accomplished by a crew whose only reward was lunch and the satisfaction of a job well done? When we spend a hundred bucks on hamburgers, should that count toward our maintenance budget? Well, apparently not, but that in no way diminishes our appreciation for the many people who volunteered, or worked for a

reduced rate, to help us keep this historic building on its feet.

I agree with the county legal counsel, Steve Rich, who observed that, "There's been woefully little done to restore that building." But I think it reflects the previous 18 years of county neglect (and we were paying full price for rent during the last five of those let-it-rot years) more than the latest 22 months. And though we're returning the building to the county in better shape than we found it, it still needs a lot of help.

On the bright side, since our lease issue was settled (yes, we paid the money and our check cleared), the commissioners have approved an offer from the National Smokejumpers Association to send a crew this summer to give the building a major renovation. They will donate their time, and will be working with donated materials, and though the retroactive rent thing took a big bite out of the money McSquared had committed to them, we'll be doing what we can. I hope everyone who supports the preservation of our airport and its history will help welcome the smokejumpers back to the valley, and will appreciate how they're choosing to spend their summer vacation.

As for Grossi, I have no hard feelings regarding the retroactive rent raise. We have our differences (mostly about safety issues, a few about maintenance) but I recognize that he's the boss out here, and if I'd wanted him to go easier on me personally, I could have quit telling him how to do his job (and occasionally doing it for him) years ago. He has quite a lot to deal with, managing two county airports (here and Merlin) and the many airport tenants and users who disagree with him about this or that, and managing the millions of dollars available from FAA grants. I wouldn't do his

job for triple what his predecessor at I.V. Airport was paid.

Wants recognition From Debbie Wilson, NT & IDNT Licensed Nail Technician Cave Junction

It is a shame that our local newspaper does not seem to have the time to at least mention all of the volunteers who contributed their profession, time and money to the great kids during Career Day at Lorna Byrne Middle School.

This is the second year I have been asked to present my profession as a possible career, and the second time that our local paper has decided it not important to mention. I had such a wonderful time with the enthusiastic bunch. I took half of my work day off and presented a career in nail technology open to men and women.

Pedicures and manicures. A profession necessary in our society for health, hygiene and appearance. A profession necessary to earn a license for. I told about licensed schools, curriculum, scholarships, grants and student loans. I presented a viewing of procedures, literature and magazines and creative arts and possibilities.

I also had raffles for free manicures to enable encouragement of caring for ones self and looking good. I also handed out 20 percent off cards for services to those who participated in hopes to again encourage doing something helpful for themselves. I answered many questions from the students.

My profession and skills are based on helping others and is important. I wish our local newspaper would see it that way as well by at least a mention.

I appreciate Lorna Byrne for believing that my profession is important and for letting me work with some really great kids.

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