

History of the Hippies of Takilma: by Kindi Fahrnkopf

Part 17 – Cleanup Challenges

The challenges of inter-personal conflicts and differences might have taken some on an unexpected detour, and divorce may have broken up some alliances, but friendships and connections have rarely been broken. The dedication of the hippies to their little corner of the earth has been strong. Over the years, the difficult tasks of making improvements to old homes and buildings, and the daily struggle to survive and pay the bills were very hard, but the extremes of weather made things even worse. I suppose it was before most of the hippies arrived, but the flood of 1964, was supposed to have made the East Fork of the Illinois jump its banks and there was 40ft of water on Sauer’s Flat. Two big freezes below zero degrees were in 1972 and 1989. Everyone remembers the year 1989 as the one where everybody’s plumbing had to be repaired in the dead of winter.

After the Fire of ’87, there was an appeal of the Environmental Assessment for the Longwood Salvage Timber sale, with the TCA as one of the plaintiffs. The Forest Service as part of its settlement to the community of Takilma, constructed the Bike Path. There was a great deal of concern for the safety of people and their pets on the road with the logging and fire trucks. A Forest Service crew worked with community people who were hired to do much of the labor. The foreman of the crew was former Takilmanite John J. The Forest Service also got permission for easements and applied a layer of crushed granite to the surface of the path. In the end the Takilma Bike Path stretched from 4 Corners to Hogue’s Meadow and provided a safe and enjoyable alternative to motorized travel throughout Takilma. Romain, a forest biologist from the Meadows said, “The Bike Path ended where the East Fork Illinois River Trail begins. The East Fork Illinois River Trail stretches all the way to Young’s Valley in the Siskiyou Wilderness. So a hiker could start at 4 Corners and walk deep into the Wilderness and come out on the Klamath River.”

It is quite strange to remember

that some neighbors did not always get along with Michael G. of the Treesort and went out of their way to make life difficult for him. One neighbor, who I will call Wilbur, got quite greedy on growing weed and decided to challenge the easement on his property line with Michael. He did not like the fact that Michael’s horseback riders would cut through his land on their way back to Hope Mountain. His vengeance had led him to cover the trail with slash, rocks, and broken glass. He cut down all his big trees to pay for the lawyer, and lost. Then he was a subject of a counter-suit when his big dogs attacked and bit Michael. He needed to escape, so he sold his land and told everyone with astonishing arrogance that he was moving to Alaska to hunt bears.

It was due to this strange chain of events that Betsey N’s family moved to Takilma, and bought Wilbur’s land. Betsey said, “We wanted to get the community back on track again, because we knew what a traumatic experience it had been for everybody. So we just decided we were going to be the peace keepers. So the first thing we did was we went up there and cleaned the community trail out completely from what was blocking it until there was one tree left. So we sent down for Michael to come with his chain saw, and we had him cut the last tree out. Just trying to make things right again! TA was on the other end, and he opened up the other end and it was wonderful to just get that trail opened up again!” Betsey’s family has welcomed a more peaceful atmosphere since then. With the advice of Romain, they were able to restore the natural meadow that used to grace their yard and to allow non-motorized travelers to use the community trail once again.

Many times hippies helped to clean up the earth when there was a need. Beginning with the cleanups of Hogue’s Meadow, and the cleanups on Rough and Ready Creek, groups have formed to cleanup the awful trash left on public lands by low lives and vandals. One recent group, calling itself the Friends of French Flat, has cleaned up massive loads of rubbish, dumped into and near the Logan

Cut. Inspired by the leadership of Greg and Mary W.; the community rose to support their valiant efforts to restore the French Flat area, a beautiful lowland ecosystem.

Just two years ago, another group of various volunteers, took it upon themselves to clean up a piece of property near the corner of the TCA property, along the creek. This tiny bit of land had 2 trailers and an old mobile home abandoned on it, and attracted the homeless and other vagrants to hide there. The people were fed up with looking at that horrible sight, so they got permission from a Mr. H. and started a massive clean up, including recycling of any of the metals and other materials. As days went on, many from the community stopped to help or donate funds for gas money. Finally, it was done and cleaned, and one man even stayed on over the summer to rake and clean all of the trash out of the creek. It was a labor of love, to know that the children would be safe walking around town again. Surprisingly, the real owner of the property, after hearing of and seeing the clean up, was so appreciative of the community of Takilma, that she promised to donate money to the Dome School and the Library.

Then just this last fall of 2012, the little red “Love House” in Takilma, where Otis lived and Ed Little Crow and Kitty lived before him, burned down. Tragically, it took his life, that Halloween Night. Afterwards, the community decided that the sight was just too heart-breaking to live with and started a cleanup of that place too. Today, the work is nearly done, and the scars are healing over. People are envisioning just letting that land rest, and having it be an open space for those of us that are left to carry on life in Takilma. Someone remarked recently, “Otis’ passing felt like the end of an era.” The Spiral Living Center held an Otis Jones Memorial Bike Ride, all the way to town, the summer of 2013.

Takilma once had a sign at Four Corners, which said “Nuclear-Free Zone Think Globally-Act Locally”, and it reflected the general

philosophy of the population. It was art donated by Jeffry, but it was stolen, presumably by the same thieves that stole the Angel Sculpture off of the Coffee Heaven roof in the middle of the night. These thieves favored stealing public art and bashing mailboxes. The long tradition of thievery in the Illinois Valley, started back in the 80’s when the bronze plaque from the Waldo Township memorial marker was stolen. The people all over the Valley were angry about that loss, and it as an issue brought people together, to protect a priceless piece of history. A replica plaque has recently been replaced on that marker by the E Vitus Clampus Organization, after people did fund-raising to try to replace it.

The people of Takilma no doubt had their share of challenges over the last 40 years, but they always worked hard, and found solutions to better their lives and the lives of their community and now even their town; Cave Junction. People from Takilma that worked in the trades were creating inroads with the locals and being appreciated for their special talents and abilities. From Doug’s Building Designs and abilities to be a “go-between” and mediate with the Building Dept., to Robert’s dedication to the best in plumbing workmanship, to Charlie’s engineering of tree houses,

and human-powered cars, to Mike’s muscle with the concrete, to Lance’s woodworking, to Otto’s car and pump repairs, to David’s fertilizer and firewood deliveries, and many more industrious workers. It seems people really found their calling in Takilma.

Many bridges were built in the schools and other organizations, because the Takilma people were some of the best teachers they had. Takilma people like Alyce, Della, Sally, Cathy, Bill, and Trish were among the most favored teachers at Evergreen Elementary and Lorna Byrne Middle School. With Takilma people getting involved in town because of their children, it seemed that the lines were getting blurry; the hippies were fully part of the larger community. The talents and skills of some of Takilma’s best and brightest were finally being noticed and appreciated by the general public. The old stigmas were melting away. As Alyce fondly remembers “People were surprised and told me, but you’re just so nice!”

Author Kindi Fahrnkopf is a poet and flower child of the 60s who has lived in Takilma for 33 years. She moved to Cave Junction in 1979 with her husband and two small children to open the Cave’s Cobbler shoe repair and Birkenstock shop.



The site of the former “Love House” today. The house that Kitty bought and lived in, eventually took the life of her Otis, on Halloween night, 2012. What remained was cleaned up by the community.

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