

History of the “Tales from the Rural Patrol”

By
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IVN Contributing Writer

The Washington Free Beacon is a nonprofit online newspaper that began publication in February 2012. A project of the Center for American Freedom, the Free Beacon reports on a wide range of issues, including public policy, government affairs, international security and media criticism.

Recently a Free Beacon writer, CJ Ciaramella, was travelling through Cave Junction and stopped at the Junction Inn for lunch. He also picked up the Jan. 29 issue of the Illinois Valley News and discovered “Tales from the Rural Patrol,” which he termed “...quite possibly the best crime blotter in American journalism.”

Ciaramella’s Free Beacon article about “Tales” described it as the most popular part of the paper, “...the section is so popular that some residents who move away still get the paper delivered, just so they can read the crime blotter.”

Ciaramella interviewed Dan Mancuso, Publisher of the I.V. News, whose favorite item was about “...a guy who kept calling in because he said people were coming into his house and rearranging his books.” Ciaramella then quoted excerpts from the Jan. 29 edition of “Tales.”

Following Ciaramella’s international trumpeting of this crime blotter, we deemed it only right that the writer be revealed. Former I.V. News owner Bob Rodriguez has treated readers to his own inimitable style

for many years and, with the exception of a break during his move to another state, still writes the weekly column. For readers’ further enlightenment, we offer a few questions and answers.

JH: When did you start writing this feature?

BR: Jan and I took over IVN early in 1986, and I began writing the “Blotter” in my style right away. There were people when we took over, including the late Bill Raymond of the former Raymond Realty in CJ, who felt that by listing all the incidents that it would be detrimental to the community in some way. I remember telling Bill that there is more crime in one day in a big city than the Valley had in an entire week. Others felt that more details were needed for each item. I explained that the intent is to show what is happening in various areas of the Valley so that residents and others can tell just where the hot spots are and what types of crimes and incidents are occurring. We always wrote actual separate stories about incidents that were more serious than what I would call the run-of-the-mill calls not involving major crime or significant injuries due to fires and motor vehicle accidents. The “Blotter” has been called the IVN’s comic strip. As you know, it is enjoyed by many.

JH: I understand that Jay Leno has read the I.V. News’ “Tales from the Rural Patrol” on the Tonight Show. Is this true?

BR: That is what I have been told by many persons. And I’ve also been told that some items have been read on radio stations in other states, plus some TV shows other than “To-

night.”

JH: What other noteworthy recognition has this feature garnered?

BR: Articles about the “Blotter” as I write it have appeared in the Bend Bulletin, the Eugene Register Guard, and Harper’s Bazaar. I think that some weeklies other than IVN also have used portions or noted the “uniqueness,” but I don’t have a list. Someone told me that they saw something in the Reader’s Digest years ago, but I don’t know if that’s true.

JH: What was the strangest or most interesting sheriff’s report you have come across?

BR: Wow, after all those years that is a difficult question to answer. One that comes to mind occurred in front of the Red Garter around 1988 or so. Former Deputy Dave Raymond (a son of Bill Raymond) was handcuffing an intoxicated man on the sidewalk in front of the business and observed a running man, naked except for a loin cloth made of a red warning flag, streaking down the sidewalk. When I asked Dave what he did about that, he just shook his head and recalled that he simply stared at the guy and said, “You have got to be kidding me!”

Another memory, which was not an item, but a full-blown story, was the night of rioting one Halloween. Some who were not there said that it wasn’t a riot. But I was there. There were hundreds of people lining both sides of Redwood Hwy. in Downtown Cave Junction. Rocks were thrown; it was ugly with fighting and general unruly behavior. Unfortunately I.V. Fire had to use fire hoses on the rioters; not what they

signed up for. The sheriff’s office at the time had a full complement of officers and many of them responded, as well as reserve officers. As well, we received responses from Grants Pass Dept. of Public Safety, Oregon State Police and several other law enforcement agencies in Josephine and Jackson counties. I think that we even got some California Highway Patrol officers. It was one hell of a night. Sorry; I could tell “war stories” that would fill a page or two so I’ll leave it at that.

JH: Have you noticed any particular patterns emerge over the years, such as a rise in drug-related incidents, or lower numbers of car accidents?

BR: What I’ve noticed most recently is the number of residential burglaries due, I believe, to the fact that with a mere handful of deputies available, people with crime in their hearts do not fear law enforcement. Another rise I’ve seen involves squatters and people who steal fixtures and the like from vacant homes. Very sad. A few years ago there was a huge rise in meth labs.

As for motor vehicle accidents, I do believe that there are far fewer than there used to be. My recollection is that I.V. Fire and AC Valley Ambulance (before American Medical Response began serving the Valley) used to respond to two or three fairly serious wrecks every week. Head-on collisions were not too uncommon. One that I especially remember occurred on Redwood Hwy. at the north edge of Selma when a 12-passenger van was struck head-on by a car whose driver was impatient and tried to pass another vehicle on a

slight hill. Strangely, those in the van were headed to a wedding in Crescent City; the two in the car were from the same city. The van was pushed over an embankment and ended up on one side in the creek. It was rather a horrible situation. Then there was the drunk driver who struck another vehicle head-on at Sis’s Gap (milepost 23 of Redwood Hwy.) one Sunday afternoon. There was fire and death; another strong memory. OK, one more. When there was a petting zoo near the current Great Cats World Park, a southbound vehicle with a load of passengers was turning into the park when it was struck broadside at high speed by a northbound vehicle. Former Deputy Bob Marshall radioed in that he had people lying all over the roadway and for AC Valley to send every unit it had. Strong memories that still disturb me.

JH: What is your reaction to the Washington Free Beacon recognition?

BR: It’s always nice to be recognized, especially when it’s complimentary! The writer was, I think, spot on when he wrote of the “dry humor and a certain vagueness of language that leaves readers to fill in the blanks.” That’s true. I have a tongue-in-cheek approach to presenting the sheriff’s office log items without wanting to be disrespectful.

I am pleased that we’ve changed the name of the piece to reflect that it’s from the sheriff’s office. There is a difference between deputies and police officers, as the latter are city cops while deputies are county cops. That’s my take. One more thought: Maybe ranking the “Blotter” as the world’s best is a tiny stretch.

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- Only one submission per student will be accepted at the state level.
- Submissions will not be returned and will become the property of the Oregon Mayors Association (OMA).
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- Previous statewide winners may participate but are not eligible to receive prizes.
- League of Oregon Cities (LOC) employees and dependents are not eligible to enter.

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- The poster contest is open to students enrolled in grades 4 and 5 or being home-schooled at the same grade level for the 2013-14 school year.
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- Students are encouraged to be creative and may use any art medium (e.g., poster paints, felt pens, colored pencils, pastels, crayons, etc.). The poster may be in color or black and white.
- The student’s name and a daytime phone number or email address for their parent or guardian must appear on the back of the poster.

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- The essay contest is open to students enrolled in grades 6 through 8 or being home-schooled at the same grade level for the 2013-14 school year.
- Essays must be 500 to 1,000 words in length and typed.
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