

Winding Trails: by Al Hobart

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Illinois Valley News

Little Chetco to Vulcan Lake

Fame of the Kalmiopsis Wilderness, in Oregon’s rough-and-tumbled Curry County, is, such that almost everybody in our part of the world has at least heard about it, and has seen (if lucky) or read the description of the tiny beautiful shrub from which the Wilderness derived its name and fame.

Many have no doubt seen the famous little spring-blooming plant in the few readily accessible points near the periphery of the wilderness area; but so rough and precipitous is the terrain within the area, and so few trails completed in to its interior that few hikers have penetrated its hazardous near-impenetrable depths.

Hardy early-day miners, prospectors, and adventurers have explored much of this wild area, and dim remnants of the trails these pioneers used testify to the lure this primitive country and its natural treasures held for them.

Nowadays, in that section of this inhospitable environment that has been set aside as a sanctuary for the rare little Kalmiopsis, human activity has been restricted mostly to hiking, horseback riding, greatly curtailed mining operations, and scientific investigation –such as that being carried out by geologist Len Ramp, who is probably more familiar with this outback no-man’s-land than any other individual.

Still, in spite of its topsy-turvy topography and often densely tangled ground cover,

by exercising sensible precaution the Wilderness can be traversed without undue hardship.

Recently four of us, Perry and Ruth Davis, Ted Markham and I backpacked across the Kalmiopsis Wilderness from east to west, covering the 15 to 18 miles, from the Davis place to Vulcan Lake, in two short days. For part of the distance we were able to follow old time-blurred trails; much of the route, over which we were guided by such prominent landmarks as Red Mountain, Vulcan Peak and high rocky ridges leading away into the general direction of our objective, was very steep and our trail-less way up was chosen by weaving our way from side to side to avoid the many obstacles in our path. Each straight-line mile was equivalent to at least 2 miles of actual hiking.

In preparing for our adventure the 4 conspirators congregated one morning at the breakfast table in a local greasy-spoon to try to figure out the most logical steps to take in our long and dubious trek. Some of the distances involved were so great and our respective residences so far apart that certain ticklish problems needed some chewing over. Finally, after wearying ourselves to near exhaustion, and discovering ourselves eating out of each other’s plates, we decided we had it all doped out: first we row the corn across, then come back and get the fox; then we’d – There! You see what such brain-strain can do to commonly normal folks?

Anyway, it all worked out swell. We drove to the coast and up to Vulcan Peak in Ted’s two Volkswagens, leaving one of them there to be picked up later by four weary hikers. Next day Ted and I drove to the Wilder-

ness boundary gate in Babyfoot Canyon and hiked in to join Perry and Ruth, who had returned to their home on Little Chetco. The following day our across-to-Vulcan foot journey began.

To our delight we found that much of the old over-grown trail between Little Chetco and Madstone cabin on the main Chetco had been worked over by a couple of Len Ramp’s industrious scouts. We don’t know their names but we have mentally presented them with the coveted Trailmen’s Medal of Honor, trail-hikers’ highest award.

Some distance below the Madstone cabin site, entering the Chetco from the southwest is Fresno Creek, whose source is in the vicinity of Vulcan Peak. Half a mile up this stream, where, at Len’s suggestion, we were to begin the steep climb toward Vulcan Lake, we camped for the night. On the wide gravelly creek bed near the water we built a small guarded fire, and no food ever tasted better than the fried ham, mashed potatoes, hot applesauce, buttered toast, and hot cindery coffee that wonderful wilderness dinner provided. That night in our sleeping bags, comfortably stuffed with goodies and pure water, our lungs joyously bathing in cool pure air, as we watched the myriad bright stars overhead, we saw three man-made satellites glide brightly across the sky in different directions, and an occasional “shooting star” trying to compete but falling ignominiously by the wayside.

Early next morning, after a breakfast of bacon and eggs, browned mashed potatoes, coffee and toast, we began the toughest part of our journey, miles of steep rocky climbing.

With our big guide-post, Vulcan Peak, in view from now on for most of the time, we were in no danger of going astray, and although we didn’t hurry, we made good steady progress.

At 4 o’clock that evening we affectionately greeted the sweetest little Volkswagen bus in the world, our lonesomely-waiting transportation back home. Weary, but happy at having completed our rough hike without incident, we were glad enough to finish our journey home sitting down. The lady of the party, whom we hairy-chested three were gallantly prepared to offer a piggy-back ride when the going became real rough, came through in a fashion that set us to wondering who might have had to pack whom out.

And then there was Harbor – dear, boaty, seagully, old Harbor! – where the drinks are the tallest and the coldest (soda pop of course) and the fresh-caught red snapper is the tastiest – at least so it seemed to us parched, starved four. Then on to journey’s end, a wonderful experience drawn to a happy close.



PATROL . . .

Continued from A-1

The ordinance explains that: “neighborhood means the neighborhood in which the party resides, which includes where he moves and circulates and transacts his business, and attends church, stores, mill and mixes generally with the people in the usual calls of life, and is best known, not extending to any great number of miles, and not extending beyond the same immediate section of his residence, and such acquaintances must be

within that limit.”

Right now, Evans and his fellow volunteers interpret this to mean that it’s OK for people to continue patrolling the specific neighborhoods they live in.

“While we’re sorting all this out, neighbors need to step up and become more vigilant,” Evans said. “For now, we’re reverting back to our activities as local neighborhood watch members who organize informally with their local team captains on their streets. This means that, for now, no one should be identifying themselves as a member of Cave Junction Patrol or CJ Patrol. If someone identifies

themselves as CJ Patrol at night - pretending to be on patrol - citizens should contact the police. All of our volunteers know to say they are from their own local neighborhood watch, like in my neighborhood, I would say: ‘I am part of the Hanby neighborhood watch.’

“As far as our businesses go, some of our members, as private citizens, are still driving by to make sure they are safe,” he added.

Evans also said, “If the city attorney comes back and says this neighborhood watch is currently problematic, then we’ll look for the city to revisit their codes to enable

us to meet state requirements and operate legally. And down the line, our goal is to become trained to the state’s Department of Public Safety Standards and Training protocols. And when we have our training, we’ll be providing limited liability insurance.”

Volunteers with CJ Patrol have been networking with the IVST, which has three goals: to provide reliable security for downtown businesses and residents throughout the I.V.; improve coordination between law enforcement, mental health and addiction agencies, which among other things, would help

improve emergency response times; and find solutions for long-term safety funding, according to Evans.

“The visionary goal is this: for the I.V. to have a comprehensive and sustainable public safety network which inspires community confidence and well-being. And this will take participation from our citizens,” he said.

To become involved with supporting efforts to enhance local public safety, Evans said people should connect with their neighbors and contact the taskforce at 541-787-5283.

DAN . . .

Continued from A-1

Though he mainly has only good things to say about the council since he has been a part of it, there are a few issues that Dalegowski wishes had gone differently. “I wish that the medical dispensary discussion had gone a completely different direction,” he said. “When the discussion first began, it was very exciting to think of all of the potential revenue.”

Dalegowski was one of two council members who voted against pursuing the marijuana related lawsuit that the city is currently embroiled in. “I would like to see CJ adapting to the evolving legalization of cannabis,” he said. He was also disappointed by the recent failure to refer a gas tax and a cannabis sales tax to the voters of Cave Junction. “In general, they would have been good for the city,” he said. “They would have had a good effect and brought in revenue.”

Law enforcement is the main thing that Dalegowski would like to raise revenue for, particularly law enforcement at night.

“The city is supposed to provide law enforcement, but it is just not fiscally possible right now,” he said. “Really, my main interest is to bring in additional revenue for the city. It’s pretty boring.”

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