

A moment with Mary: By Mary Halvorsen

The hike was to begin at 7:30 a.m. the three of us having not walked the trail from the Oregon Caves Chateau at 4,500 feet, to Mount Elijah at 6,390 feet, in 30 years. We had worked summers together in the '70s, had lived in the cedar-barked 1920's Chalet, and stood now, beneath its archway, before slinging our packs on, and starting off.

We filed along, heads down, leaning into the ascent, small pinecones lining each side of the trail in shallow gutters. At a vista of blue, smoke-shrouded hills we took pictures and continued the climb. It was under towering Douglas firs and Port Orford cedars, through slanting meadows, wildflowers bowing over our heads, holding onto their rust colored blooms. Passing under a cluster of berries, the shape and color of miniature tomatoes, I wondered aloud if they were edible, thinking that my friend, based on his Native American heritage, would know. He picked one, put it in his mouth and immediately spit it out.

Worrying it may be toxic, I asked, "Is it bitter?" His reply was a grimace, "Not really, it just tastes like nothing." I offered, "Maybe they aren't ripe yet, maybe they don't come ripe until late fall when the bears really need them," stopping just short of pointing out that life is a perfect circle.

Emerging from the woods, a flowerless meadow opened, golden and brief in the sun. I stopped and looked hard at it, at the wheat-like wild grass, the narrow path, its light brown surface like powdered suede, sloping away and disappearing into the forest one-hundred feet across. "This is where Joyce and I took pictures in 1977. We were both wearing Osh Kosh overalls and I had a blue bandanna." Standing in the spot where my best friend and I had taken turns posing 40 years prior, fresh from Iowa, climbing our first mountain, I had another photo taken, this time in multi-pocketed canvas shorts, the metal button at the waist a constant nag, gray, Columbia hiking

boots, and an earth tone hair tube.

We continued our 4 mile trek; our steps deliberate, as if walking towards something that had been lost. The topography began to change. Large boulders sat just off the trail, and we now traversed native gravel and embedded stone. The trees began to thin, to get short, and the sun was on us. Bugs clicking like castanets motored from boulder to boulder, one landing at my feet, indistinguishable from the brown, dry leaves that littered the path. We stood looking out at the hills and mountains surrounding the Illinois Valley and a silver flask was produced. We toasted those we had lost in the last year, then the last 20.

Eating sandwiches near the pile of rocks supporting the sun-bleached, wooden cross with "Mt Elijah" carved into it, two women with rounded packs passed through. One was in her 20s, the other had long, white hair, pulled back, an Indian print, knee-length skirt, and sleeveless top. As they gained distance, I remarked, "I hope that is what I am still doing in 20 years. She has to be pushing 80." My friend looked over, "I was thinking the same thing."

We searched awhile for a yellow, gallon container once called "the mustard jar," that decades of summer employees had filled with their thoughts, on scraps of paper, upon reaching the summit. We heaved large rocks

and dismantled piles of stones, but succeeded only in unleashing hundreds of flying ants onto our necks and backs, as if we were trespassing, trying to unearth something that now belonged to the mountain.

Walking back down, stiffness began to set in, hot spots manifested as pressure on a couple of toes, the sound of our shoes on the soft trail, all that could be heard. I thought of my husband at home, of barbecuing, of our friends leaving the next morning. I wanted to stay on that mountain a little longer and try to remember what it had been like to not have a plan, and not care, to see if I could recapture some of that, and take it home with me, where the plan is everything.

Perhaps the places where we were young are where we need to return, that in going back, the burden of the years, of mortgages, raising children, and loss, are lifted for a moment, giving us a glimpse of who we were before we took it all on.

Maybe those unfettered, unencumbered 20-year-olds in overalls and bandannas, are waiting to guide us as we get older, to lend a hand if we stumble, to show us the way. A September day spent hiking on a mountain where we were all young together, might be for visiting the past, and walking towards the future, or for reclaiming who we were, before we had a plan.



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No More, Don Moore

I have lived here in the Illinois Valley my entire life, thirty one years. In that time I have never felt the urge to write a letter in this column. So thank you Mr. Moore for making me come out and shine some light on the nonsense you're selling our community. In Mr. Moore's advertisement in last week's paper, he makes it sound as if with one phone call he was able to get lights at River. St. and 199 installed. What a joke.

Anyone who grew up in this community or lived here over three decades knows that my grandparents Robbie Robinson and Joan Robinson went out into traffic with no lights and only a stop sign to insure the safety of our community's children. All three of our schools are accessed through this intersection. As well as the high school parades and the Labor Day Parade. They did this every school day for years. Not because they wanted attention or had some agenda. They did it because they saw a problem that needed addressed and did what they could to help. My grandparents and my mother Loretta Richards had to collect hundreds of signatures from concerned citizens went to multiple city council meetings and the city finally got a flashing crosswalk sign at the intersection.

My family gave their time, a section of their commercial property and love of the community to make sure that people's children got to and from school safely. This included having to go against the police who called their efforts a distraction to drivers. But the community recognized their efforts and awarded my grandparents Citizens of the Year. Unfortunately, my grandfather passed away a year before the new stoplights were in place, never getting to see what he fought for come to fruition.

Mr. Moore was just lucky to be mayor at the time. Note the state came to him not the other way around. As well as the fact that he states the light at this intersection to have been "unimportant" at the time. I would never vote for a man who attempts to raise his own reputation by standing on the deeds of good people who are no longer with us. What they did will never be forgotten by me or the people of this community. And those who are voting adults now who Robbie helped across Redwood Highway.

Nathan Richards
Cave Junction
Paid advertising

The campaign to elect Don Moore mayor of Cave Junction has been implicated in several violations of the laws of the city for which he seeks office. Multiple complaints have been filed with the city, but with minimal enforcement ability little can be done. Perhaps Mr. Moore assumes that as a former mayor the law does not apply to him!



120 Redwood Hwy.
16 sq. ft. sign. Only 6 sq. ft. allowed - **violation** of Cave Junction municipal code 17.32.040 (C) (3).



199 Lister St.
Advertising candidate from parked vehicle. No advertising from parked vehicle allowed - **violation** of Cave Junction municipal code 10.04.260 (E) (3).



329 Caves Hwy.
16 sq. ft. sign. 6 sq. ft. allowed - **violation** of Cave Junction municipal code 17.32.040 (C) (3).



103 Redwood Hwy.
Multiple campaign signs for same candidate. One is allowed - **violation** of Cave Junction municipal code 17.32.040 (C) (3).

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