

O'Brien Gal shares her love of folk

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The O'Brien Gal, a.k.a. Mara Lambert, moved to the Valley in 1972 "to be a Hippie" but her love of music goes back much further than that. She was raised in a family where pop, big band, and opera music mingled with Hank Williams. Lambert said, "Music has always been very important to me. It's gotten me through the good times and the tough times." The O'Brien Gal airs Saturday mornings from 9 a.m. until 11 a.m. and spins a varied selection but focuses on folk music. Her love of folk music started in junior high school during the 1950s "...before Folk was cool." British folk music hooked her first and she loved watching it evolve into Old Timey music on its way through the Appalachia's.

Lambert's done just about everything in her years in the Valley. She was on the crew that planted the first grapes for Bridgeview Vineyards, planted trees for the U.S. Forest Service for six seasons and anything else that was horticultural to hone her green thumb. She heard of Takilma's pirate radio station when

she was in Eugene and eventually became a DJ, staying onboard when Takilma FM moved to digital, so it was natural she'd do the same for the new community station KXCJ. She is also KXCJ's new Public Service Announcement Coordinator which is perfect for her because she's "... an Aquarian with Gemini rising." she said with a laugh. "You know, communication and language!"

Lambert likes to DJ because she "wants to put the music out there, to give it to people."

"I love surprising people with something they haven't heard before." She also loves the support of and rapport with the other DJs at the station.

Lambert likes to "go with the flow" and when she washed up in Takilma in 1972 she thought, "Wow! This is great. No way I'm going to leave and miss this party!" and she's been here ever since.

When asked what the hardest part of being on the air is she said, "You never know if anyone is listening. That's the hardest thing." So tune in to 105.7FM to catch her show Saturday morning and if you like what you hear, let her know!



(Photo by Laura Mancuso, Illinois Valley News)

The O'Brien Gal Mara Lambert hard at work at the KXCJ radio station Saturday, July 21.

FIRE ...

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According to Bill Queen, Public Information Officer for Pacific Northwest Incident Management Team 3, which assumed command of both the Natchez and Klondike Fires Monday, the general outlook for the Natchez fires is positive, though challenging.

"Generally, we're very fortunate to have the wind component that we do, but the heat works against us and the terrain is rugged," Queen said. "Vegetation continues to dry out and things are just wanting to burn."

"Crews are making good progress on the north, east, and west sides and we're looking at opportunities to construct line on the south side," said Matthew Paciorek, Rogue River-Siskiyou National Forest Wild Rivers District Ranger. "A couple of spot fires on the east side were taken care of, and the Poker Fire (just north of Natchez Fire) is contained at 3.8 acres and remains in patrol status."

"Folks are being very deliberate about strategy," Queen said, explaining how when several fires burn simultaneously, if impacts can be minimized on at least one fire, then more energy can be expended elsewhere. "The Natchez is the fire we're feeling good about - and that's because of the work that was done before we got here."

And according to several agency firefighters, part of that credit goes to the all-volunteer Sun Star Fire Club! The Sun Star community, a 160-acre holding in the national forest, has had a quick strike fire response team in place for 30 years, according to longtime resident David Baker, head of the Sun Star Fire Club.

"We have our own fire equipment and when a fire happens in our watershed we'll do initial attack," Baker said. "We're the first ones there. We set things up so that when the FS, ODF and IVFD get there, we back off to allow them to plug in and use our well-placed equipment."

Utilizing both of their fire trucks, 17 intrepid volunteers with the Sun Star Fire Club strategized and chose to attack one of three lightning strikes they knew could cause serious trouble - the Poker Fire. They arrived on the scene four hours before

agency firefighters, dug a line around the fire, and pumped 250 gallons of water on hottest uphill side of the blaze.

"We kept knocking down the head of the fire," Baker said. "Then as we were pulling out when it got dark, the FS showed up. They were able to add to our fire line and pump out another 600 gallons of water. Because of our initial effort that fire was contained by the end of the next day - and that prevented the fire from expanding toward our homes, which would have made the Natchez Fire Complex even bigger."

The Sun Star Fire Club predates a model now cropping up more-and-more throughout the rural west, where communities living in fire-prone forested locations choose not to wait for agencies to save them from wildfire. This self-determination is also praised by fire managers - and a mutual respect is evident.

"The agencies are doing the very best they can and we're just there to fill the gaps when they aren't there yet," Baker said. "They are very supportive of us - and us of them. They're doing a great job and we're so thankful they are so cooperative with us."

Meanwhile, approximately 9 miles northwest of Selma, near the Kalmiopsis Wilderness, the Klondike and Granite fires have merged and are now called the Klondike Fire. This blaze, moving through parts of the 2002 Biscuit Fire scar, grew to approximately 5,300 acres when this paper went to print, and has fire managers more concerned.

On Monday the fire did jump, north, across the Illinois River, prompting two heavy helicopters to drop water on those spots as there's heavy brush in the area. And once again, east of the fire, Oak Flat residents living along the Illinois River Road are under a level 3 evacuation notice. A strike team of engines has been deployed to the Oak Flats area to provide structure protection. Illinois River Road has been closed to public entry to ensure firefighters can access the area on the narrow roads.

"Crews are working on opening old Biscuit/Chetco Bar fire lines, firefighters and equipment are down at the community of Oak Flat, and work is being done to secure a line on the southern edge of the fire (087 road)," Paciorek said.

The nearby Chetco Bar and Labrador fire scars, along with some serpentine terrain that is naturally fire resistant, can also help control this blaze. And now, a team of fire experts has assembled to develop long term strategy. Fire crews and heavy equipment are also being utilized to improve existing roads and

old fire lines on the eastern and southern flanks of the Klondike fire.

A public meeting in Cave Junction is being planned. Go to <https://inciweb.nwgc.gov/incident/5998> to learn more or call 541-597-4784 to get meeting details. A website link will be made available to watch this and other community fire meetings online.

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