



THE BUTTE FALLS BULLETIN

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What I am learning about "small town/country living" vs. "city living" - by Juliana Kelsall

For the past year, I have been staying with Darrel and Gale Wiltrout in their home on Obenchain Road. (I am a missionary home on furlough.) I grew up in a suburb of Portland, but the Rogue Valley has been my "home base" since I moved here in 1988. Trail Christian Fellowship is my "home church," so that is why I have been here during my furlough.

While staying with Darrel and Gale, I have been enjoying learning about "small town/country living" vs. "city living." I'd like to share some of those lessons, and I welcome corrections or further explanations. (The job of a missionary includes learning about the local culture, wherever you may be!)

The "country wave." When you are driving on Obenchain Road, it is customary to give a small wave to the drivers of the cars you pass along the way, even if you don't know them. This does not need to be a big gesture - usually it simply involves lifting a hand just off the steering wheel. This is very friendly and somehow reassuring to a newcomer like me - it is nice to be acknowledged in a way other than having a car horn honked at you, which is more common in the city, especially if you happen to be in front of someone who thinks you both could have made it through that yellow light. In September, I was housesitting in the Portland area. One day as I was driving through the neighborhood, a little girl out for a walk (with a man

who was probably her grandpa) waved at me. I automatically waved back, and she was so excited that she broke out in a big smile, jumping up and down and pointing. (Grandpa didn't get mad, even though interactions with strangers tend to be frowned upon in city areas.) I wonder if I was the first person to wave back at her all morning!

The gas tank. I think I almost gave Darrel a heart attack one day when he took my car "down the hill" to his friend's place so they could work on the brakes. Having grown up in a family with several teenagers who took turns using one of the parental cars, my general approach to filling the gas tank has been to hold off as long as possible. (After all, in the city there are gas stations every few blocks, and besides, maybe one of the siblings would fill the tank first!) Anyway, when Darrel took my car, the fuel indicator was on "E," but I had figured I could make it to the Midway Country Store the next morning. (It's mostly downhill from the house to Midway.) I'm glad to say that Darrel did make it (and managed to repair the brakes too, for which I am thankful). This event brought about my lesson in gas tank management in the country: never let it get below $\frac{1}{4}$ tank, and preferably not below $\frac{1}{2}$ tank. After all, you may need to drive "into town" at a time when the friendly folks at Midway are not available to put gas in your tank.

The animals. In the suburbs, you go to the petting zoo and buy food to feed to the deer that are penned up there. In the country, the deer are roaming freely, and you do one of two things - go to the store to buy "deer-proof" trees and plants (which aren't, and end

up feeding the deer anyway), or go to the store to buy ammunition and a hunting license. If all goes well, the deer will end up feeding you.

The post office. Postmaster Dan is the picture of courtesy and service. Not long after my arrival, Darrel and Gale introduced me to him. (Sometimes I pick up their mail when they are out of town, and they wanted Dan to know it was okay for me to collect their packages too.) Several months later, I had two large suitcases shipped home to me from overseas. I had given my friends the house address on Obenchain Road, thinking that they would use UPS. Instead, they used the post office. The problem here was that Darrel and Gale have a post box for their mail, because the postal service does not deliver that far up Obenchain Road. Where would the luggage end up? Would it simply be "returned to sender"? I called Postmaster Dan to try to find out what might happen. He asked for a description of the bags, and when they arrived, he informed Darrel and Gale, who picked them up for me. Something like this might happen in the city, if you know the right people, but I suspect that it is much more common in a small town setting, where personal connections are just the way things are done.

