

In the Lolo Pass area

Tree program in question

by MICHAEL P. JONES
Post Correspondent

In the past three weeks 5,101 Christmas tree permit holders in the Zigzag Ranger District have been greeted by a variety of weather conditions, ranging from rain, hail, snow, gusty winds and even sunshine.

But good weather or bad, Jack Barber of Portland once again returned to the Lolo Pass area to cut himself a Christmas tree; something he's done off and on for the last 15 years.

Last Thursday afternoon Barber was accompanied by his son, Willie, and Brian Elsten of Gresham. They spent a couple of hours selecting two Christmas trees from the steep slopes of Lolo Pass.

Barber said that the two dollar price for the cost of a cutting permit, "just can't be beat." He said that generally he selects a 14- or 15-foot Christmas tree, "which is difficult to do in town, not to mention the outrageous purchase price if you can locate a tree of that size."

"If you search out a tree in town, it'll cost you anywhere from \$30 to \$35. But most of the time you can't even find one over 12 foot tall because nowadays people just have eight-foot ceilings."

Herb Evans, information officer at the Zigzag Ranger Station, said that it takes 15 to 20 years for a Christmas tree to grow 12 feet.

He said that with the U.S. Forest Service having the responsibility of vegetation control underneath the Bonneville Power Administration transmission lines in the area, that they were able to give the trees time to grow as well as provide the public with a "100 percent natural Christmas tree."

Evans says that with the power company now reassuming the responsibility of vegetation control beneath the lines, he has no idea what the fate of the Christmas tree cutting program will be.

"I don't really know about the program's future," said Evans. "I know we want to continue the Christmas tree program under the powerlines because of its success, but it's still up in the air."

To Barber and his two companions, cutting a tree in the National Forest has become a tradition. It has become an essential ingredient in Barber family holi-

day.

But trouble is ahead, according to these cutters. With the increase of persons taking advantage of the program, good trees are becoming scarce, and waste is becoming a problem.

"I don't see why they don't just take what they really want, and leave the others alone," said Elsten. "Too many trees are getting cut and then discarded. If this keeps up it'll be even harder the next few years to find a good Christmas tree."

Evans admitted that there were some problems

with cutters, but that they were minimal. He estimated that only one percent, if that, were involved in wasting this resource.

One of the results of the heavy influx of Christmas tree cutters in the area is the increasing number of "double-topped" trees, said Barber.

Evans said that this condition is caused by someone cutting a tree and leaving three or four feet of green leaves growing. "A bud on one of the limbs will take the role as the leader and grow straight up. Sometimes two will do this

and you will eventually get a double-topped tree."

Another complaint of Barber's is that the trees on the ridges are exposed to the winds in the pass, and become windblown and take on a ragged appearance. "This makes these trees the least sought out," said Barber, "and makes the other trees even more desirable."

But both Barber and the Forest Service see the program as an important asset to the area, if not to Christmas itself. Each wants to see the program continue and each wants to see the resource last for other generations.



Photo by Michael P. Jones

Willie Barber, Jack Barber and Brian Elsten are pictured after cutting a Christmas tree in the Lolo Pass area.

Carmony honored

Junior honors have been conferred on 309 students at Oregon State University, including Larry G. Carmony of Sandy, a business major.

The traditional honor is sponsored by the OSU chapter of Phi Kappa Phi,

national scholastic honor society. It is conferred on students who have completed their first two years of university work with grade point averages of at least a B-plus, and who rank in the upper five percent of their school scholastically.

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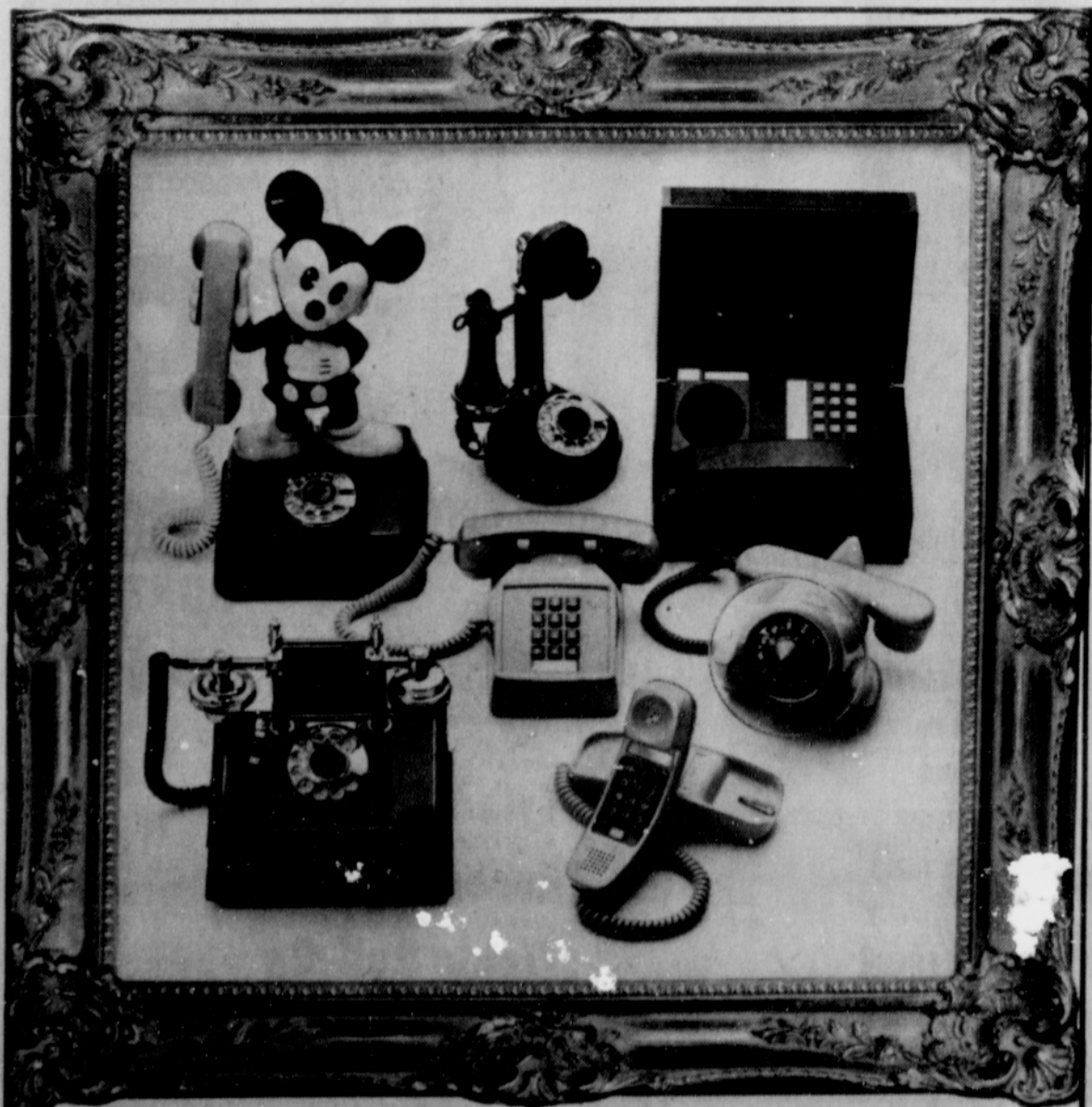
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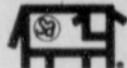
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