

Harney County revisited

With the news cycle amped up to unprecedented volume, speed and spectacle these days, two and a half years can seem like ages ago.

But “Sagebrush Collaboration,” a new book by University of Oregon geography professor and land-use politics specialist Peter Walker, contains relevant lessons from an event that gripped the nation’s attention back in early 2016.

That’s when heavily armed and self-appointed “patriots” from out of state drove their pickups into the Malheur National Wildlife Refuge in eastern Oregon and seized the headquarters. They refused to leave until the federal government relinquished control of the land — “letting the ranchers

get back to ranching, getting the miners back to mining, the loggers back to logging.”

Led by Ammon Bundy, scion of a Nevada ranching family that had previous beefs with the federal government, the Sagebrush Rebellion had come to remote Harney County.

In the past, some of the local residents might have had philosophical agreement with the occupiers’ complaints of federal overreach, but more recently there had been a marked improvement in the relationship between Harney County’s ranchers and the management of the Malheur Refuge.

“For many Harney County citizens, ‘overreach’ might be better described as under-listening,” Walker explains.

But several years prior to the armed occupation at the refuge, the locals had figured out that there might be some value in coming together to talk through problems and figure out solutions together.

Politically conservative ranchers, progressive environmentalists, tribal members, Bureau of Land Management and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service employees, and local law enforcement had spent probably more hours than they’d care to count in developing partnerships, initiatives and councils to respond to a host of concerns.

They’d dealt with water use, invasive species, protection of ancient artifacts, the migration of young people out of the area and more.

But Bundy seemed unaware of Harney County’s success in collaborative ventures.

“In fact, despite all the time he spent inveighing against federal ‘overreach,’ Bundy himself did very little listening,” Walker writes.

The author seems to suggest that while this aggressive push for “federal free” land might find a better reception with disillusioned populations in other areas of the western U.S., it failed to impress the citizens of Harney County. Put off by an outsider with fiery rhetoric, they had no intention of dismantling their thoughtfully crafted collaborations at his behest.

“Ammon Bundy seemed unable to grasp that, for most

“Sagebrush Collaboration”
By Peter Walker
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\$19.95

Harney County citizens, his cowboy hat did not make him local.”

Walker engaged in intensive fieldwork for “Sagebrush Collaboration” — attending meetings and interviewing many of the major players involved in the standoff at Malheur, as well as digging into court records and researching the roots of the struggle for control of federally owned Western lands.

It must have been a dizzying amount of research to wrangle, and that displays in occasional unnecessary reiterations of certain points in the

SAGEBRUSH COLLABORATION

How Harney County Defeated the Takeover of the Malheur Wildlife Refuge

PETER WALKER



COURTESY OREGON

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The cover of Peter Walker’s ‘Sagebrush Collaboration.’

text. Another round of editing would have been beneficial in smoothing over some of the redundancies.

The Bookmonger is Barbara Lloyd McMichael, who writes this weekly column focusing on the books, authors and publishers of the Pacific Northwest. Contact her at bkmonger@nwlinc.com.

SEPTEMBER Maintenance and Clean Up tips

INFORMATION FROM THE OSU EXTENSION SERVICE

MAINTENANCE AND CLEAN UP

- Harvest winter squash when the “ground spot” changes from white to a cream or gold color.
- Pick and store winter squash; mulch carrot, parsnip, and beets for winter harvesting.
- Protect tomatoes and/or pick green tomatoes and ripen indoors if frost threatens.
- Stake tall flowers to keep them from blowing over in fall winds.
- Dig, clean, and store tuberous begonias if frost threatens.
- Harvest potatoes when the tops die down. Store them in a dark location.
- Optimal time for establishing a new lawn is August through mid-September.
- Aerate lawns.
- **Early-September:** Apply 1 pound nitrogen per 1,000 square feet to lawns. Reduce risks of run-off into local waterways by not fertilizing just prior to rain, and not over-irrigating so that water runs off of lawn and onto sidewalk or street.

PLANTING/PROPAGATION

- Divide peonies and iris.
- Plant or transplant woody ornamentals and mature herbaceous perennials. Fall planting of trees, shrubs and perennials can encourage healthy root growth over the winter.
- Plant daffodils, tulips, and crocus for spring bloom. Work calcium and phosphorus into the soil below the bulbs at planting time. Remember when purchasing bulbs, the size of the bulb is directly correlated to the size of the flower yet to come in spring.


