

The hardware store next door

According to the calendar and the scenery surrounding us, winter has arrived in my neighborhood near Helix.

Because I am fortunate enough to have a warm, dry place to sleep and am well-fed, I enjoy many aspects of the season. Christmas music on the radio, breaking ice on the water trough, chopping wood and traveling to watch daughter Annie and her schoolmates play basketball are a few of my favorite things. (By the way, I'd be interested to know the opinion of my neighbors and friends as to whose rendition of "My Favorite Things" is their favorite. My top three are by Tony Bennett, Julie Andrews and John Coltrane.)

On a recent jaunt to watch basketball in Wallowa, my wife's car was out of washer fluid and the road grime accumulating on the windshield made it hard for her to see the road and difficult for me to scan the countryside for old trucks, tractors and farm implements. This situation was easily remedied by a quick stop at one of my all-time favorite places of business — the local hardware store. From the time I was but a wee lad accompanying my father to the family-owned and operated hardware concern in Stanfield to buy a couple of

Without hardware stores, America could not have been built and certainly could not be repaired.

pounds of sixteen-penny sinkers out of the bulk nail bin, I have been enthralled by these important and sometimes under-appreciated supply houses without whom America could not have been built and certainly could not be repaired.

Pendleton is blessed with one of the finest hardware stores (on south Main Street) I've ever frequented and its no-nonsense approach, incredibly broad inventory selection and knowledgeable staff who actually care about the customer serve as a fine example that, in my opinion, is too seldom emulated by the "big box-store" competition. Like many other hardware stores, it is also a great place to visit with other folks who have been DIYers since way before it became a fad.

One of my most unique hardware store experiences occurred in the town of Union. Located just down the street from a beautiful old Carnegie library is a combination hardware and liquor store. I purchased a prybar and a bottle of peach schnapps.

Our little town of Helix had a hardware store from at least as early as 1895 when a Mr. Sones (either Pete or Fred, further research required) set up shop. The Norvell family became proprietors around 1905 and for many years sold farm implements,

including P&O and, later, Oliver plows. We have one such plow purchased in the 1930s in our collection. John Freeman Young bought out Norvells in the early 1950s and was also an insurance agent.

For a time, he was also a dealer in Calkins farm equipment. I have a receipt for a rod-weeder purchased by my grandfather for \$388.50. When I moved to Helix in 1993, Bob Fowler was the proprietor and still had the best selection of carriage-bolts in Umatilla County.

Most of the windmills in our area were either sold through or shipped to local hardware stores. Flint & Waling, Fairbanks-Morse, and the ubiquitous Aeromotor were some of the brands marketed locally and brought in by rail to long-forgotten sidings such as Ring Station, Warren and Hillsdale. We have in our supply a new-in-the-crate Fairbanks Morse Model 40 mill that was shipped to the hardware department of Touchet Valley Grain Growers.

It may appear foolish to some (thankfully, not including my wife) that I would possess a "new old stock" windmill, but you never know when you might have a need for one. The same can be said for nine ladders, seven cordless drills, 11 hammers, eight sawhorses, four large boxes of electrical supplies, six coffee cans filled with plumbing fittings, three bolt bins, and a pair of pliers and a shovel in all seven pickups on the place. Nearly all of the aforementioned came from hardware stores and help satisfy my primal urge to be surrounded by tools.

I see the Powerball jackpot is at \$400



MATT WOOD
FROM THE TRACTOR

million now. If I win, I think I'll head back over the mountain — there was a "Business for Sale" sign in the window of the combination hardware/auto parts store in Wallowa.

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Matt Wood is his son's hired man and his daughter's biggest fan. He lives on a farm near Helix, where he collects antiques and friends.



Drastic management changes aren't the answer to wildfire

Like a lot of small towns in the West, my town of Ashland is nestled in a lovely valley surrounded by conifer forests. The forests grow on public lands managed by the Forest Service and the Bureau of Land Management, and last year, as in many recent years, there were fires on those lands. The town of Ashland was not threatened, but our valley filled with thick, eye-burning smoke for weeks at a time.

It was miserable. Outdoor theater and music events were canceled, drastically affecting the summer tourist season, which is critical for our economy. Folks who would usually be out hiking, camping, fishing, birding and rafting stayed indoors. Parents kept their kids inside. Everyone got cranky. We've never had a summer with smoke as bad as this.

Understandably, people don't want to go through this again next summer — or ever. And so the search is on for solutions. Some are taking this opportunity to advocate for drastic changes in public-lands forest management. The primary vehicle for this effort is the "Resilient Federal Forests Act," H.R. 2936, often called the Westerman bill for its primary sponsor, Republican Rep. Bruce Westerman of Arkansas. In the name of making forests "resilient" to fire, it would promote logging by sharply curtailing existing environmental laws.

Among other provisions, it would restrict citizen involvement in public-lands management by limiting legal challenges under the National Environmental Policy Act and other laws; greatly expand "categorical exclusions" in areas of up to 10,000 acres where logging and post-fire salvage could occur without any environmental assessment; and eliminate the "survey and manage" program that provides data essential for informed forest management. This truly radical bill has passed the House and awaits consideration by the Senate.

Let's be generous for a moment. Let's say that the Westerman bill is not a cynical attempt to exploit anxiety about fire to achieve otherwise unattainable amounts of logging, long sought by the timber industry. Let's assume that it's a genuine attempt to solve the problem of fire — which, of course, implies: (1) that fire is a problem; and (2) that it can be solved.

Most Western conifer forests, except those along the rain-drenched Pacific Coast, are adapted to frequent fires. That is true of my region of southern Oregon, where studies of tree rings have shown that fires historically returned to a piece of ground every 15-20 years or so. Most of those fires



PEPPER TRAIL
Comment

were relatively low intensity, and many were likely set deliberately by Native Americans, who made sophisticated use of fire as a land-management tool. These fires cleared out dense thickets and fallen limbs and maintained a relatively open forest structure in many areas.

Decades of fire suppression, coupled with logging that has replaced complex mixed-age forests with uniform-aged stands and tree plantations, has certainly made things worse, increasing the likelihood of severe, stand-replacing fires.

But that is increasingly overshadowed by another factor affecting wildland fire frequency and severity: climate change. There is not a single mention of the role of climate change in the Westerman bill, so it looks like I was too generous to set aside that whole cynical exploitation thing.

Much research now supports the correlation between climate change and fire seasons that start earlier and end later, with more days of extreme "fire weather." Such fire weather led to the devastating fires of 2017, in Northern California. Those fires burned at least 245,000 acres, destroyed almost 9,000 buildings, and cost over \$3 billion. They were almost entirely on private land, not on national forests. The severity of those fires had nothing to do with a lack of logging.

We are kidding ourselves if we think we can find a "solution" to wildlands fire and the smoke that comes with it. Such thinking denies fire its place as a natural and inevitable part of this environment where we have chosen to live. Our forests need fire, and there is no way we can exclude it. Instead of trying to log our way out of fire danger, we need to adapt ourselves to the reality of living in this fire-adapted landscape. We can, and should, practice "fireproof" landscaping around our homes, and carry out larger fuels-reduction projects in high-risk areas like the wildland-urban interface at the edge of our towns.

But we can't "solve" fire here in Oregon any more than Florida can "solve" hurricanes. Both are natural phenomena — and both are bound to get worse with unchecked climate change. Our best hope of a future with ecologically appropriate forest fires and tolerable levels of smoke is to take immediate action to limit climate change. What do you say, Congress: Want to focus on a real problem for a change?

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Use TV white space for rural internet access

Since 1913, the Oregon Cattlemen's Association has been working daily to assist and represent all cattle producers throughout the state. We work hard to protect our communities and assure that our voice is heard in all areas affecting the industry.

Internet access is one of those areas, which is why OCA is proud to have joined a new, national coalition called Connect Americans Now, which is dedicated to closing the digital divide.

The internet has become as important a tool for a rancher as a horse or rope. Ranchers need real-time market information when making business decisions, ranging from the price of grain to the price of cattle, to buying necessary equipment and accessing key government statistics. The internet provides the quickest and most efficient means for obtaining this information.

This, of course, depends on access to broadband technology. In the rural parts of our state where many of our ranches are located, high speed internet options are limited or nonexistent, depriving ranchers of important, internet-based technologies. Our members also care deeply about their communities and rural patches of our state that are without high speed internet miss out on critical educational tools, global information, economic opportunities and healthcare services.

If this trend continues — with some communities developing broadband access at a rapid pace, and others continuing to operate without such access — then the rural divide will continue to grow, leaving many residents and businesses at a disadvantage, in many aspects of commercial and societal life.

Connect Americans Now has an innovative way to bridge the digital divide. The technology exists to transmit broadband through the TV white space spectrum, using the same type of technology that allowed the old rabbit ear antennas to pick up far off TV signals, but now we can utilize an unused portion of that telecommunications spectrum to serve broadband to rural communities.

This TV white space spectrum already exists and reaches 80 percent of the underserved rural population in this



JEROME ROSA
Comment

country. Let's use it for broadband.

Not only is this technology maturing and available for use, it's also affordable. We do not need to build new infrastructure, we just have to harness a portion of the spectrum that already touches rural communities. A study conducted by Microsoft estimates that using TV white space to deliver broadband Internet in rural areas would be 80 percent cheaper than fiber optic cable, and 50 percent cheaper than LTE wireless technology.

The Federal Communications Commission and our leaders in the federal government should support the development and deployment of this technology. The sooner our members can take advantage of affordable broadband access, the sooner their operations, their families and their communities can begin to benefit.

Specifically, the FCC should be encouraged to ensure that three channels below 700 MHz are available for wireless use on an unlicensed basis in every market in the country. This is what it will take for TV white space technology to succeed.

Agriculture is the lifeblood of numerous small towns and communities across Oregon and across this country. As such, it is critical that our elected officials support policies that promote healthy, productive agricultural businesses and rural communities as a whole, as well as innovative business plans to help achieve success.

America's ranchers know firsthand how valuable communications is in the agricultural world. Being online has supercharged, for example, the sale barns — live auctions in which cattle and other livestock are sold to the highest bidder — that we rely on for our economic survival. Getting sale barns online has allowed us to expand our reach around the world. And a slower, unreliable, and immobile broadband only holds us back.

TV white space technology represents a way for our members to stay successful via increased productivity, they just need the means to access that technology. Please join OCA in supporting the development of TV whitespace as a broadband vehicle.

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Jerome Rosa is president of the Oregon Cattlemen's Association.

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