

# An organic ski adventure

Thirteen of us started the winter in cabins that we had spent the summer jacking back to level and chinking from weather we knew would arrive at 7,500 feet up in the Salmon River Mountains.

I'd showed up with a mate and a two-year-old daughter in late July after spending six months on the road wandering across the West, stopping long enough to work for gasoline to nudge our old ex-telephone truck home rolling another hundred miles down the highway.

The last job I held was on the Blackfoot reservation as a location scout for a bunch of Hollywood buttheads who were trying to cash in on the mountain-meets-noble-savage theme. I quit when one of them got nasty with a waitress in a Browning, Montana, café as she tried to explain that there was no wine to go with their overkill steaks because it was a dry reservation.

That night we palavered with a couple who said that they'd spent a few days in a wonderful hot springs town above the Salmon River in Idaho. I'd fleeced Hollywood for \$500 so we climbed up the grade from the River of No Return and arrived in paradise during a spectacular summer thunderstorm. The young folks welcomed us, fed us supper, and I was hooked for the next 45 years.

The \$500 and some work at a sawmill was enough to fill our cabin with cases of canned goods, a large box of dried apricots and 15 pounds of almonds. It began to

snow just after dark on Halloween, while we were throwing an "Adios Civilization" party. Big Al the Kiddies' Pal covered "Teen Angel" just before he and his entourage cased up the guitars and headed back over the summit to spend winter at the fountainhead of pizza and beer.

We didn't have many visitors that winter. A couple of old friends spent three days frostbiting their toes while trudging in to visit. They left behind a set of pure wool itchy gray long johns that they didn't want to carry back out. I was to mail them in spring.

By early March there were five of us left in town. A flow of 113-degree water doesn't cure itchy feet or cabin fever, so eight folks including my kid and mate had hitched rides on snow machines back to civilization. I kept on soaking and smoking, drinking homebrew and building furniture, and rejoicing that my wallet was in the cupboard and that chickadees landed on my hat brim.

In April it began to stay above zero some nights. I was down to a diet of boiled potato flakes, dried elk, peanut butter, apricots and almonds, and decided that it was time to ski 32 miles for a piece of pizza and a couple hundred gallons of real beer.

I owned cross-country skis, cheap poles, and fake leather boots with less than five miles on them, but how tough could it be to ski into town? It was downhill, right?

So I packed up some apricots and almonds, a couple of tins of Prince Albert, a change of clothes, sleeping bag, and the

wool long johns to take to the post office. I headed toward town at daylight one Friday morning.

It was not all downhill to town. By three in the afternoon I was a mile over the summit, laying alongside the trail. The south-facing snow had heated above freezing point. Wads of ice stuck to my skis. That's when I remembered that I had not remembered to bring ski wax.

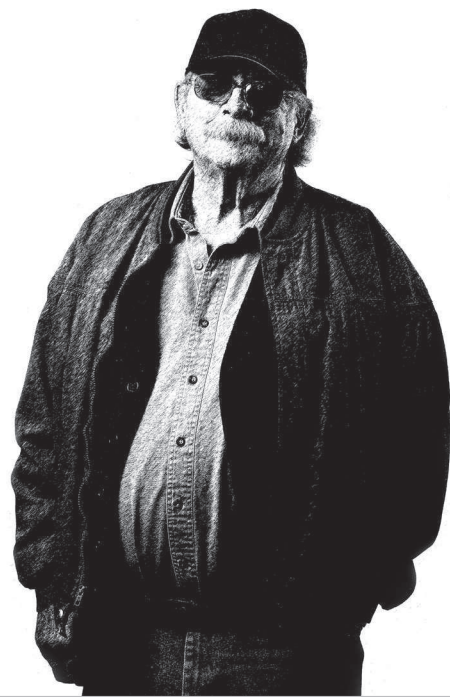
So I broke for lunch. While chewing a cud of almonds and apricots I thought about the situation and tried to recall what real ski people had said about klister wax. I knew it was a gooey substance.

Could I brew my own from spruce sap? Should I wait for night and walk on the crust? Maybe I should just sit right there to be rescued, even though I hadn't seen another soul that day.

I was lighting my third home-roll when the solution came. The apricots! I could turn the apricots into impromptu klister wax. I used a Buck knife to scrape off whatever wax that got me that far, and then chewed the dried apricots, two-by-two, into a fine enough paste that I could apply a tin film to the bottom of the skis.

It worked. The spit and the apricots froze to a sheen when they met the snow, and I slid along at a pretty brisk pace except for one more heartbreaking uphill section. I spent the night in the well of a spruce tree, beat and cold, but after I wiggled into the itchy long johns and scrunched down into the sleeping bag, I actually got two or three hours of sleep before walking the rest of the way to town on the frozen crust. I kept those long johns for ten years.

By noon on Saturday I was bellied up

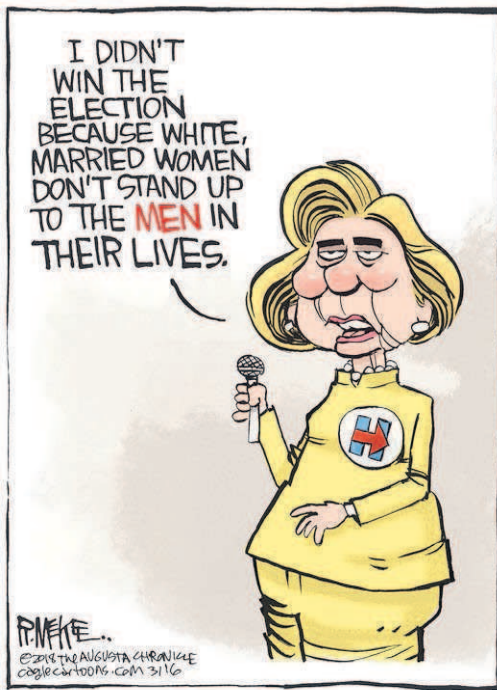
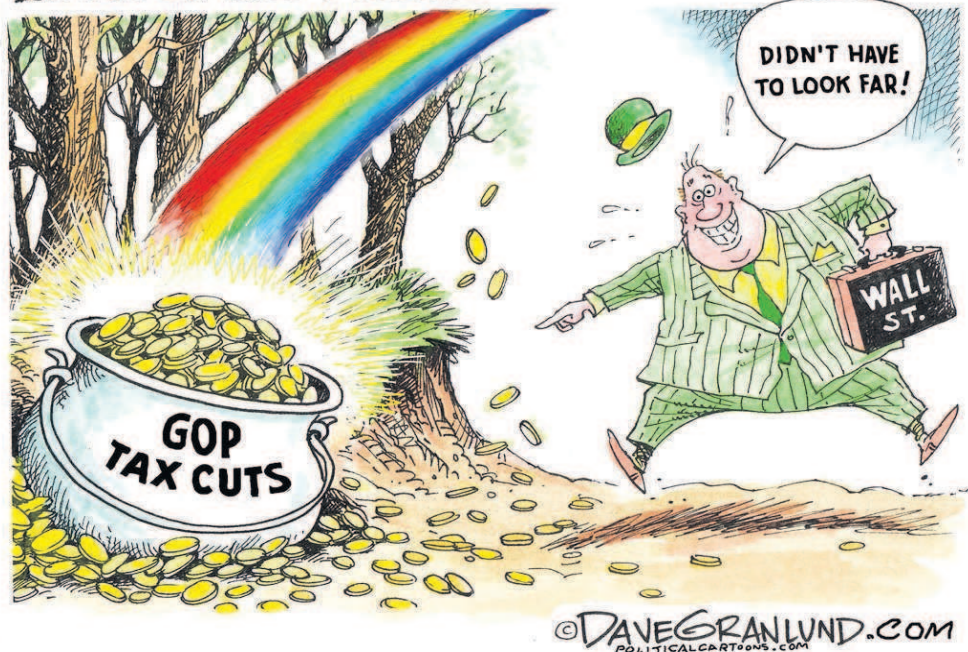


**J.D. SMITH**  
FROM THE HEADWATERS  
OF DRY CREEK

to the bar, telling backcountry stories with pizza grease in my beard. Three days later Cayenne Ken and I drove the back way up the Salmon River to the snow line and skied the last twelve miles home by whiskey and moonlight, before the sun got to the snow. The summit opened again to vehicular travel in June and our population returned to 13.

J.D. Smith is an accomplished writer and jack-of-all-trades. He lives in Athena.

## Luck of the rich...



## Farm bill an opportunity to invest in community

The original 1933 farm bill helped pull us out of the Great Depression by addressing market failures that decimated prices and made it unprofitable for farmers to move food to the cities where people were hungry. While we face different challenges today, the 2018 farm bill should still provide solutions for farmers and those needing food while sustaining our natural resources.

This is especially important for our family farms, which have been evaporating like puddles on a hot day. Tens of thousands of small and mid-sized farms — those with less than a thousand acres — have been lost in the past few decades. Some farm bills have focused benefits on huge, corporate-owned farms, leaving smaller farms struggling to compete in an unfair market. To survive, smaller farms were forced to grow commodity crops for overseas markets. The 2018 farm bill should correct that imbalance. It should incentivize family farms to grow real food. It should make it possible for carrots and broccoli to cost less than a box of mac and cheese. It should be good for our family farmers and good for our health.

**Good for our family farmers**  
We all have a stake in ensuring that small farms are not run out of business. We should strengthen their viability by:

- Increasing reference prices (under the Price Loss Coverage program) to account for the cost of production.
- Strengthening crop insurance, including whole-farm revenue coverage and expansion of insurance options to livestock.
- Providing programs to give new, veteran, and diverse farmers and ranchers better access to land and capital.
- Providing assistance to transfer existing farms to new younger farmers.
- Establishing a two year tax program for small businesses that rely on the weather, so that family farms don't fold because of one bad weather year.

**Good for our health**  
We should support subsidies that help provide local food. We need to move away from subsidies that make junk food cheap and vegetables expensive. When we make it profitable to grow healthy food and sell it at local markets, food growers and food consumers will all benefit.

**Good for our land**  
The next farm bill should add acreage and funding for the Conservation Reserve Program. This program gives farmers a financially viable path to conserving land, while giving everybody the benefit of better



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water quality, less erosion, and less atmospheric carbon. These programs can't be giveaways. They should prioritize projects that demonstrate meaningful improvement. Let's invest in our future and stretch our federal money by working with farmers to create conservation that maximizes effectiveness for everybody.

We also can't afford to ignore our changing climate. We must invest in climate mitigation research. Changing weather patterns are impacting the availability of water.

### Don't throw the little guy under the bus

The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) helps everyone by keeping families healthy and boosting agriculture. Farmers receive about \$6 billion in annual revenue from SNAP. The recent White House proposal, which would change the program to hand out boxes of food rather than allow consumers to choose for themselves, would take us in the wrong direction. The federal government should not dictate what we eat.

The distribution of food assistance through a voucher system puts the responsibility for getting food on the recipient, not on the government, and profits local grocery stores and farmers markets — not one major corporation who gets the contract.

### Good for our economic engine

Job creation in rural communities must be part of the new farm bill. It should include financial incentives and other types of help to start up local businesses that will process and distribute locally grown food and link producers with the specific markets they need to sell it. It should also reclassify farm workers in a separate category, not just "unskilled labor," and make it possible for regional sponsorship of those workers. This would provide protection for the workers and families who put food on our tables.

### Preparing our next generation

The 2018 farm bill should provide research and development, business assistance and financing for transferring these profitable businesses to new, younger farmers. Most U.S. farmers are nearing retirement age, while young people who want to start up or buy a farm often cannot afford to.

This 2018 farm bill should be good for all of us, urban and rural, and preserve our proud farming and ranching tradition.

Jamie McLeod-Skinner is running in the Democratic primary for Oregon's Second District. She, along with other candidates, will participate in a forum Friday at 7:30 p.m. at BMCC in Pendleton.

## Keep the ADA's teeth

As an attorney with a mobility impairment, I have a guilty secret: My favorite weekly brunch spot is likely out of compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act. For the past several months, the automatic door opener displayed prominently outside the entrance has been non-functional.

The door is extremely heavy, so heavy that even wait staff at the restaurant have a hard time opening it. I use forearm crutches to get around, and such doors pose problems for me because I have to balance with one arm while leveraging my weight with the other arm to get a door open. The wait staff have been extremely apologetic, but so far no action has been taken to fix the door opener.

The barriers posed by such doors have been a constant theme in my life. I was born with cerebral palsy, and being a child with cerebral palsy involves hours upon hours of physical therapy meant to prepare you to try and survive in the world around you.

When I was in elementary school I preferred to use a wheelchair rather than crutches, and I was bluntly told by my physical therapist that if I didn't learn to go up and down stairs on crutches then I would never be able to access all the places I wanted to go.

The same applied to doors. Even though I started school two years after the ADA passed, I was told to never expect doors to have an automatic opener, and to learn to open them myself — this even applied to the heavy metallic doors of the public school I attended.

However, in the 28 years since the ADA passed, much progress has been made towards making society accessible. Under the ADA, I currently have the right to ask my favorite restaurant to fix its barrier to entry, and this right can be enforced by a court. However, under legislation that the U.S. House of Representatives passed last month, those rights would be severely restricted.

H.R. 620, misnamed the "ADA Education & Reform Act," would neutralize enforcement of the ADA and make it harder for people with disabilities to enforce their rights. The bill would require people with disabilities to give businesses three months written notice to fix a barrier to access. The adequacy of a notice could then later be challenged in court by business owners who simply don't want to comply with the law. And after three



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DENNEY  
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months, a business could still ask for additional time without fully fixing the barrier. This means that, even after giving more than adequate notice of the problem, people with disabilities could still be excluded from businesses that choose to ignore the law. Particularly in small towns, where there may be only one option for each type of business, this would create barriers to shopping, eating at restaurants, watching a movie, and being active in the community. And, businesses that follow the law will suffer if people with disabilities limit their spending because they fear being turned away due to experiences at other businesses. The law and society will revert back to the expectation that steps and doors are a problem for the person with the disability to deal with.

Many businesses have made great strides in making sure that people with disabilities have equal access to restaurants, businesses, theaters, and stadiums. The ADA today is crafted in a way that we don't have to choose between the civil rights of people with disabilities and thriving businesses. It embodies a thoughtful consensus that unites the interests of the business community with the interests of people with disabilities.

The ADA also provides tools and support to businesses that seek to comply with their legal requirements. Federal agencies are required to assist businesses in understanding the requirements of the law at no cost to the business.

I still need to write to the management of my favorite restaurant to let them know that they need to fix their door. For now, I at least know that they'll be legally required to take some action. I'm sure that both the wait staff and anyone using a stroller or carrying heavy bags will be grateful. A door that nearly requires two arms to open is an obstacle for everyone.

However, if the Senate passes H.R. 620, it would allow the restaurant and thousands of other business owners who aren't following the law to do nothing. The U.S. Senate must reject it so that public places remain accessible to everyone, and so that people disabilities can feel confident that they won't be turned away at the door.

Matthew is a staff attorney with Disability Rights Oregon. He grew up in Ontario.