

Hospitality for all seasons

The home I was raised in was small. It was located on a quiet street, just one block east of the highway, and seemed to be a magnet for gathering people together for as long as I can remember. The driveway wasn’t paved and there was a line drawn in the gravel for a free throw line on our basketball court, which was often filled after school with boys and girls of all ages.

There was nothing fancy about it, and like my own home now, it was furnished with hand-me-down couches, comfortable chairs, and a well-loved kitchen table. No one ever felt like they didn’t fit in — on the gravel court or around the table.

My grandparents’ home was the same way. It had a very small kitchen and one very long davenport. There was always something good to eat and the davenport was always filled with people who would rather squeeze in next to a friend than sit by themselves. Rather than worrying about the lack of space, my grandma created clever

ways to squeeze in just one more chair around the table for a meal or a friendly game of pinochle. The minute anyone walked through the door, they knew they were welcome.

After nearly 16 years of establishing the feel of my own family’s home, I can’t help but be reassured that the feeling of warmth and welcome isn’t just something defined by the decorations on the porch or the size of the home. It’s more about how we make the people in our lives feel welcome when they’re with us. It’s our actions, not our appearance. It’s our words holding truth as we live the way we speak.

And, it’s not just about where we live either. Warmth and welcome can be felt in the bleachers of the gym, in the cafeteria at school, in the local coffee shop, and even on a park bench. It’s something we are fortunate enough to carry with us wherever we go.

I also believe hospitality isn’t just

something that a person is born with. It’s a choice they make in how they live and how they invite others to join them in what can often be a bit of a mess. It’s inviting the substitute teacher to eat lunch with you. It’s filling your car with kids that need a ride to practice and a playing the kind of music that they like. It’s asking your neighbor if they need any eggs when you have a dozen to spare. It’s holding the door open at the restaurant, and thanking the waitress for doing her job even before she’s taken your order. It’s seeing people for who they are, inviting them to be themselves with you, and truly expecting nothing in return.

As we enter into this holiday season where perfection can be our worst enemy, and loneliness seems to hover over even the most popular, may we remember that hospitality is a gift that we can give freely. It’s opening our hearts, our tables, our cars, and perhaps the door, with no ulterior motive. It’s taking a chance that even in the mess and unpredictability life seems to shake at us on a regular basis, that we live in a world where there is more hospitality than we ever imagined possible.



LINDSAY MURDOCK
FROM SUN UP TO SUN DOWN

The beginning of the end of America’s best idea

AGOURA HILLS, Calif. — When I was a little kid I passed through a ghost forest in Montana, the blackened, standing skeletons of the largest wildfire in recorded American history. That was the Big Burn of 1910, which torched an area nearly the size of Connecticut in a weekend.



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Comment

What remained of that blowup told a story: of hurricane-force winds, of 100-foot trees that crushed firefighters, of a land so scorched by intense heat that it was decades before seedlings sprouted in some places.

But at least life returned. And over the last century, a healthy forest emerged along with a consensus political view that wildland was essential to our national character.

Today, walking over the ashen floor of another spectral land, I’m struck by how naked everything looks in the world’s largest urban national park. Almost 90 percent of the federal land in the Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area was burned in this month’s Woolsey Fire. The smell alone is mournful.

The story it tells is grim, a portent of nature altered and convulsive. It’s not just that this audacious experiment — a huge parkland on the doorstep of a metro area of 13 million people — is now on life support. It’s that, as we are the first species to radically disrupt the world that gave us life, much of that world may soon be unsafe for human habitation.

California used to have distinct fire seasons. Now the storms of flame and smoke are year-round, and all of the nation’s most populous state is a fire zone. One in eight Americans lives in a land that could turn catastrophic on any given day.

Last year it was the wine country north of San Francisco and the mountains above Santa Barbara. This year it’s the area around Yosemite National Park, the



peopled canyons of the northern part of the state, and this last best open space on the shoulders above Los Angeles.

In the north, the town of Paradise was essentially wiped off the map, with more than 13,000 homes gone, more than 80 people killed, hundreds still missing, thousands homeless — the deadliest fire in state history. It’s a human tragedy.

In the south, it’s almost 100,000 acres put to flame in the mountains that meet the sea, with deer left charred in their tracks, an iconic Western-set movie ranch burned into black and white, the sweet-scented chaparral and sage highlands all of a moonscape. It’s a tragedy of nature.

The two, wild and urban, have long had a tenuous coexistence in the Golden State. Of late, it’s reached a breaking point, with climate change happening at an

accelerated pace — “the new abnormal,” as Gov. Jerry Brown calls it.

But which is more of a threat to our existence: a natural world that is symptomatic with the sickness of excessive human intervention, or the people who deny the change — the willfully ignorant in charge of the federal government?

We witnessed the worst of reality-avoidance when President Donald Trump visited the fire zones a few days ago. After a drive-by look at the wastelands, he suggested raking the forest floor, as he imagined they do in Finland. He said he wanted to “make climate great.” The Finns set him straight. The world laughed.

Trump has a crackpot for acting attorney general, Matthew Whitaker, a man associated with a company that

promoted time travel and Bigfoot. And yet the president denies the peer-reviewed, consensus driven evidence on climate change.

Our A-plus president didn’t even have enough of a presidential grip to get the name of the ruined town of Paradise right. (He repeatedly called it “Pleasure.”) Nor does he pretend to know the difference between sub-Arctic Finland and arid California. His administration blamed “radical environmentalists” for the fires.

But it wasn’t environmentalists who kicked up 50 mph winds in a state that had seen barely a whisper of rain over the last six months, hot gusts that bounced through canyons thick with man-made combustibles.

The national parks, oft-called America’s best idea, were created by people who looked beyond their own lives. Those people made great ancestors — benevolent, farsighted, selfless. What they protected were islands of diversity that humans were fast destroying. Climate change has put these parks in real peril.

Shed a tear for the Santa Monica mountain wonderland. The dozen or so mountain lions, and maybe a couple of the bobcats that have been collared and tracked, are still alive. But what of all the other species staggering among the black sticks of charcoal in the park? Fires that used to happen every 100 years here now occur every 20.

From the crests of its highest peaks to the Malibu shore, you take in a sweep of devastation. This bleak vision of tomorrow is not inevitable. It took guts and real political courage to hold this mix of public and private land in trust for the public, back when Congress worked for the common good, in 1978. It will take even more courage and farsightedness to save it. My fear is that the view today is just a preview of coming destruction.

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Timothy Egan worked for 18 years as a writer for The New York Times, first as the Pacific Northwest correspondent.

How — and why — to save the family farm

By DOUG KRAHMER
and BRUCE TAYLOR
For the EO Media Group

Oregon farmers and ranchers face many challenges. In a global economy, they often cannot be assured of a decent price. In a changing climate, they might get too much or too little water in any given year. Added to that, they often face uncertainty over how their land will pass to the next generation.

Farmland in Oregon is changing hands — fast. Two-thirds of Oregon’s agricultural lands — more than 10 million acres — will change hands in the next 20 years, according to research from Oregon State University. The same research tells us that up to 80 percent of Oregon farmers and ranchers may not have a succession plan.

In this transition, productive agricultural lands may be may be subdivided into parcels too small to keep in production. Or they may be converted to non-farm uses like residential or commercial development. Oregon won’t just be losing agricultural land — we will be losing our farming heritage and important habitat for native fish and wildlife.

All of that’s bad for farmers, bad for our economy, bad for our environment, and bad for Oregonians’ quality of life.

Last year, a bipartisan coalition in the Legislature came together to solve this problem by creating the Oregon Agricultural Heritage Program (OAHF) to help farmers and rural communities plan

for the future. The new program aims to provide grants that help Oregon’s farmers and ranchers plan for generational succession, and protect or enhance the agricultural and conservation values of their land.

The next step happened 10 months ago, when the Oregon Agricultural Heritage Commission was formed — made up of 12 leaders representing Oregon’s farming, ranching, conservation and tribal communities. Since then, these leaders have collectively volunteered hundreds of hours developing the program.

But one of the key pieces of this puzzle is unfinished: the Oregon Agricultural Heritage Program will remain an empty promise until the Legislature funds its implementation. If we want to provide reliability for Oregon’s farms and ranches, and the rural communities and fish and wildlife that depend on them, we need to invest in their future.

Investing state funds in our agricultural



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heritage will also mean that Oregon can finally access the growing pot of federal Farm Bill funds available to protect U.S. agricultural land. Each year, Oregon leaves millions of federal dollars on the table because we do not have a state grant program to match this USDA funding. Dedicating state funds to Oregon’s agricultural heritage will help us access these federal investments for our communities, families, and fish and wildlife. It will also demonstrate the state’s commitment to our rural communities.

Working lands support many different kinds of fish and wildlife habitats. Sagebrush habitat on large ranches is critical for sage grouse. Flood-irrigated hay meadows in southeast Oregon sustain seasonal wetlands for migratory birds. Oak woodlands and savannas support almost 200 species of wildlife. And streams and rivers crisscross most working lands, providing fish habitat and wildlife corridors.

Investing state funds in our agricultural heritage will also mean that Oregon can finally access the growing pot of federal Farm Bill funds available to protect U.S. agricultural land

Keeping farmers and ranchers who are good stewards of these lands in business through generational changes will help maintain these important habitats for years to come.

Gov. Kate Brown showed her support for this program by convening the work group of agricultural and conservation interests that developed the Oregon Agricultural Heritage Program. The Legislature showed its support last session by providing funding to set up the Oregon Agricultural Heritage Commission. We now need our governor and legislators to invest \$10 million in the 2019-21 state budget to finally put this program to work. This is an investment in our agricultural heritage, working lands and wildlife, local economies, and Oregon’s way of life — big changes are coming, and we need to act now.

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Doug Kraemer is chairman of the Oregon Agricultural Heritage Commission. He has served the Marion County Soil and Water Conservation District since 2001. The owner of Berries NW, he has previously served on the Oregon Board of Agriculture and Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board. Bruce Taylor is vice chairman of the commission and is a Portland-based coordinator for two regional bird habitat conservation partnerships: the Pacific Birds Habitat Joint Venture and the Intermountain West Joint Venture. A former congressional staffer and newspaper reporter, he also worked for Defenders of Wildlife, managing its Oregon biodiversity program.