

J. D. SMITH
FROM THE HEADWATERS
OF DRY CREEK

Family snapshots may help clear some things up

I became an orphan at the age of 78. Three first cousins and my two kids are the only other living pieces of either side of my family. But memories survive. Here are a few of them recently retrieved from the maxed-out flash drive that is wedged between my ears.

One: My Uncle Darius (pronounced Dare-us) and I are watching a Roy Rogers movie on early television. He is half-cow-poke, half-electrician and wears a 38-inch inseam on button-fly Levis. I am maybe 11. Darius has a five-horse pack string and has twice taken me into the high Rockies on fishing expeditions.

On the little roundish black and white screen, Roy and Dale and Trigger and Bullet have exposed and nabbed the black-hatted banker who was trying to cheat an older couple out of a chunk of land where oil has been found. Somehow, a half a dozen average ranch workers turn out to be expert musicians, so everyone is gathered around in celebration of the triumph. Roy fires up his guitar, the others chime in, and he and Dale break into the opening stanzas of "Happy Trails to You."

Darius stands, then ambles over and turns off the television, saying, "You know, J.D., I don't know what I would do if anyone ever came up to me and actually sang right in my face."

Two: My mom and dad and I are headed up the canyon between Loveland and Estes Park, Colorado, in a 1946 Ford sedan. I am in the back seat, engrossed in a stack of comic books and oblivious to the splendor of roadside nature despite my mom's constant "Looky there. Isn't that beautiful?" We are coming around a long left-hand corner when my mom yells "Stop, Red, stop." My dad, who's real name was Kenneth but I never heard him called anything but Red, complies with her request. She hops out and scurries back about twenty yards, then comes running back to the car holding a wrapped and ribboned package, saying "Go, Red, go."

She rips off the ribbon and begins tearing at the plaid wrapping paper, then plunges her hand into the box, where some prankster has carefully packaged a couple of pounds of chicken guts. This did not deter her from always hoping for the best. My mom was a lifelong optimist. She had Lotto tickets for a drawing held the day after she died at the age of 101.

Three: I am a recent high school graduate waiting with my folks in Alliance, Nebraska, for a train that is to carry me to a very snooty college in the Boston area. Both of them had worked hard to be able to send me, as the first person in either side of the family, to an institute of higher education. For my part, I had been a good student, or at least had been given good grades for minimal effort, and in those days East Coast universities were searching for geographic distribution in their student body, hoping that some of us from the absolute boonies would get rich, and increase their endowments. I had a good scholarship and a work-study opportunity.

My mom worked as a secretary for a rural electrification district and my dad as a railroad fireman. They both had survived the depression of the 1930s in Nebraska.

As the train approaches to carry me into the future we all hug. The parting advice from my mom is, "We don't care if you end up digging ditches for a living as long as you are happy." My dad grins at me and says, "You are probably going to be eating with some folks with different manners than ours. Remember, don't pick your nose with your fork."

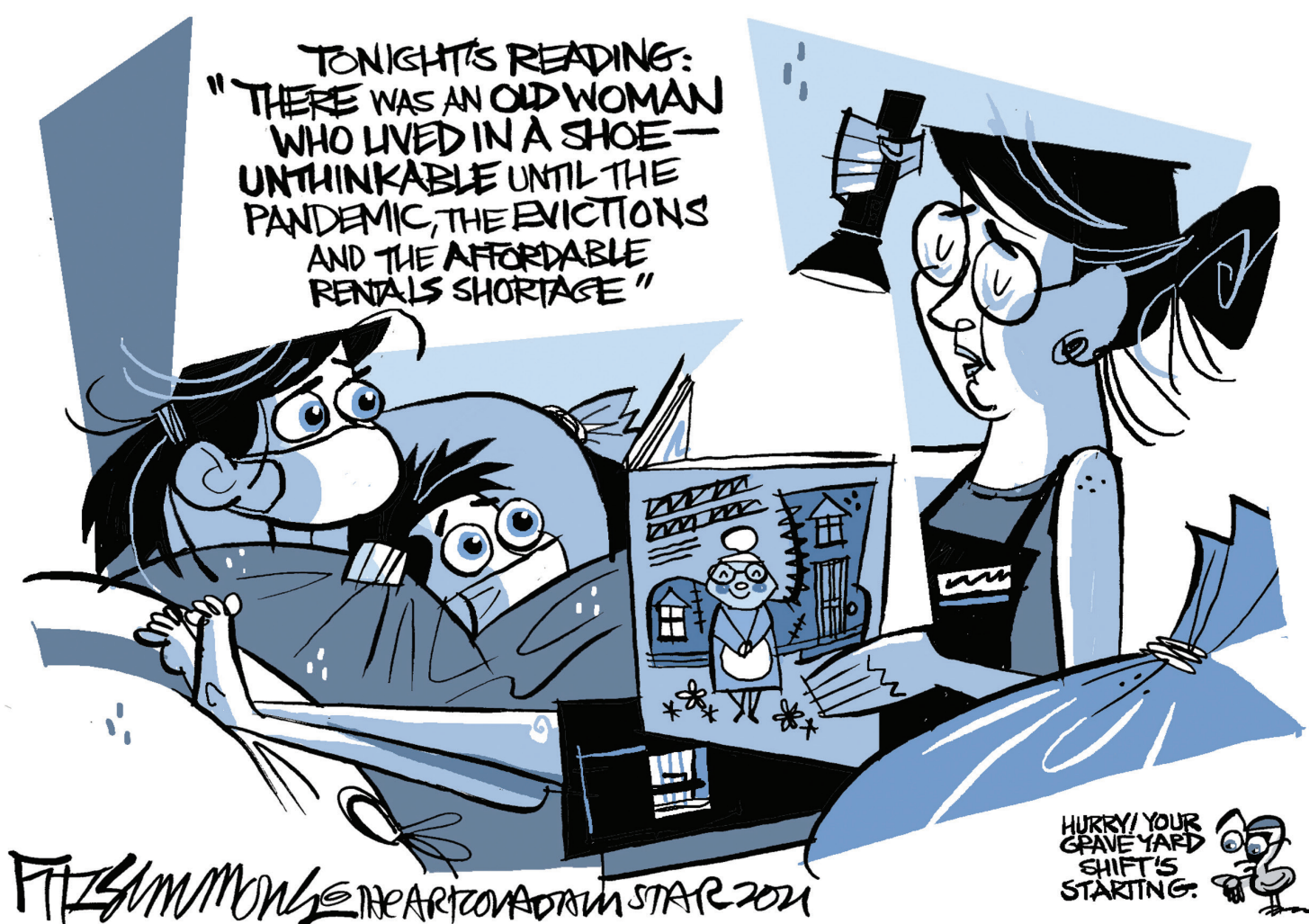
Four: I am 6 feet down in a ditch with a shovel, working behind a trackhoe, laying 10-inch blue brute sewer pipe through a church camp in Idaho. It is rocky mountain soil. The hoe has been walked back to its carry truck for a tooth replacement. Above me appears a woman with a Friar Tuck haircut, long woolen skirt and brown granny shoes and I hear her say, "Before you dig any further, I would like you to see my mayonnaise jar."

It is difficult to express the fear that this statement generated. What icky stuff was this person hoarding in a mayonnaise jar? Would it be out-of-range rude of me to decline the offer? What if I had stumbled onto some strange cult where people kept their waste in jars? Should I run?

At the upper limits of my fantasies the woman appears again at the lip of the trench, this time accompanied by a fellow with the same haircut and a guy version of her outfit. She says, "This is Father Damian, my manager."

Five: My dad and I are sitting in the bleachers at a rodeo in Council, Idaho, west one main drainage from where I am living in a teepee and cooking in an Airstream while tending 700 head of light steers. It is a warm high country afternoon. We have hot dog mustard on our fingers. My dad bumps my shoulder with his and says, "You know, I am really happy that you didn't turn out to be that stuffed shirt sumbitchin' lawyer I always wanted you to be."

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



Securing a thriving future for the Columbia Basin



GOV. KATE BROWN

OTHER VIEWS

Over the many years I have engaged with stakeholders and tribal partners about a path forward in the Columbia Basin, one thing is clear: The status quo isn't working. Iconic salmon and steelhead stocks continue to decline, with several now on the brink of extinction. As we know, extinction is irreversible. However, there is still time for a collaborative solution that will benefit all in the region.

The Columbia and Snake rivers are economic drivers that we have developed for local and regional prosperity. Salmon and steelhead are keystone species critical to the region's ecosystem and the economy, as well as subsistence and cultural health for tribal peoples who have fished the rivers since time immemorial.

I know that abundant salmon and steelhead populations can coexist with a robust, growing regional economy that includes affordable and renewable power, water for agriculture, and affordable transportation of goods to regional and international markets, while being respectful of Tribal culture, history and treaty rights. But, if action does not come swiftly, the losses will be substantial and irreversible.

Decades of development, including the mainstem dams and reservoirs placed between critical alpine nursery areas and ocean feeding grounds, have had devastating impacts on wild salmon and steelhead. For nearly 30 years, these species have remained listed under the federal Endangered Species Act. Now, the climate crisis is compounding those impacts through warmer waters, lower river flows and deteriorating ocean conditions.

Through it all, the federal agencies responsible for operating dams on the

Columbia and Snake rivers have continuously failed to meet the minimum needs of the fish required by the ESA.

This is not a time for entrenched thinking or political ideology. I was one of the first lawmakers to offer my support when Idaho Republican Rep. Mike Simpson proposed \$33 billion in economic investment to help ensure a healthy future for the Columbia Basin while respecting the history, culture and rights of the region's Tribal people.

Simpson's proposal reflects the clear science: Removal of the Snake River dams must be part of a comprehensive solution for salmon and steelhead in the face of climate change. His proposal also recognizes that the dams cannot be removed without first replacing the essential services they provide, investing most of the \$33 billion in the energy, agriculture and commodity transport sectors, and calls for a moratorium on litigation.

In addition, just over a year ago, I partnered with the governors of Idaho, Washington and Montana to launch the Columbia Basin Collaborative, aimed at working toward robust goals for salmon and steelhead while also ensuring regional prosperity. We hope to have the Collaborative chartered and funded this year so it can begin its work in earnest in 2022.

If it were up to me, none of this would have to be decided in court. Unfortunately, that was not a view shared by the Trump administration or the federal agencies in charge of dam operations. Oregon, along with other plaintiffs, is in litigation over Trump-era rules that are unlawful, as well as the federal plan for dam operations that is inadequate to protect salmon and steelhead.

Before we took this step, while the federal government completed its plan, Oregon helped negotiate the interim period of litigation-free dam operations and good faith, providing constructive input throughout the process, all in hopes that federal agencies would bring forward a legal plan.

They did not.

This federal failure left us with no recourse but to ask the courts to intervene to remove the Trump-era rules and inadequate federal plan, and help the region pivot toward a comprehensive solution. Absent comprehensive federal legislation and funding, or a timely and collaborative regional solution, legal action is currently the only avenue available to help address these issues.

It is my fervent hope that the Biden-Harris administration will take steps to reverse the Trump-era rollbacks to environmental stewardship, including this latest federal plan for dam operations, so that we can get all parties back to the table to develop a lasting solution.

While this litigation plays out, Oregon will continue to seek and pursue all opportunities for collaboration. One possible path would be for Congress to fully fund Simpson's proposal and provide the Tribes, Northwest states and key regional stakeholders with time to work with their congressional delegations to develop legislation to implement it. This is not the time for hesitancy. I respectfully ask my fellow leaders in the region: If not Simpson's proposal, then what? If not now, then when?

My priority is to ensure we have robust, harvestable salmon and steelhead populations throughout the Columbia Basin for generations to come. We can do so in a manner that combats climate change with growth in clean and renewable energy, ensures a cost-effective irrigation system for farmers and ranchers, invests in safe and economical transport of goods and secures vibrant recreation opportunities in and throughout the Columbia Basin. It won't be easy. But it's the only way to ensure a vibrant future for the region.

I'm ready to sit down with anyone willing to work with me to make that future a reality. Let's get it done.

Kate Brown is governor of Oregon.

Taking care of our trees and shrubs during drought



JEFF BLACKWOOD



DAVE POWELL

UNDERSTANDING OUR CHANGING CLIMATE

"My trees are turning brown. I have been watering them, but they still look poorly. What is going on?" These comments are often heard, especially following our tough start to summer. So, what is happening to some of our favorite trees and shrubs?

For several years, climate scientists have warned that climate change will make itself known through weather extremes. Two weather extremes are expected more than others: heat waves and heavy rainfall. We have seen examples of these extremes throughout the country in recent years. Hotter, drier summers, accompanied by longer wildfire seasons, are becoming our new normal.

In 2014, we had temperature extremes in November that went from 60 degrees to 10 degrees in half a day. Over the next two years, the consequences of this extreme frost event were clearly evident on trees and shrubs throughout our area, with many plants damaged and others killed. In April of 2019, we had the McKay Creek flood, followed by severe flooding in the Umatilla River early in 2020. Last fall, Labor Day fires west of the Cascades set new records for property damage, while burning more than a million acres in Oregon.

We recently survived an unusual heat wave in late June that climate scientists

said would not have been possible if not for human-caused climate change. When Pendleton reached 117 degrees F on June 29, scientists deemed this event to be a one-in-a-thousand-year heat wave. But if we continue emitting greenhouse gases at current rates, then by the 2040s, scientists expect a heat wave of this same magnitude to occur every five to 10 years.

All these events impact our vegetation, fish and wildlife, our economy, our food supply and our health. This year, dryland wheat crops were affected by heat stress, which caused protein levels to rise and the crop's economic value to fall. The June heat wave decimated mid-summer crops of Walla Walla sweet onions. Soft fruits were hit especially hard by drought and heat.

When it comes to our trees and shrubs, the combination of low soil moisture, high temperatures for an extended period and sunscald on needles and leaves have stressed plants to a point where much of our urban landscape could look substantially different over the next few years, just like it did after the 2014 frost event.

In a recent presentation, Erica Fleishman, director of Oregon's Climate Change Research Institute and professor at Oregon State University, said our current drought has been several years in the making. Soil moisture is lower than we have seen in recorded history. She stated we have experienced drought for 14 of the last 20 years, with six of those years in moderate to severe drought. Currently, almost 90% of the West is in some level of drought, with 25% being assigned to what is called exceptional drought.

So, how can you help your stressed trees and shrubs? Experts suggest to deep water through the summer and early fall. Resist

the temptation to trim off dead or dying leaves and limbs until fall. Pruning now can stimulate new, tender growth, which is vulnerable to continued stress throughout the rest of summer. Make sure there is adequate mulch to retain moisture and protect roots from heat. As we approach winter, make sure there is good soil moisture around your favorite plants.

If your favorite tree or shrub does not survive and you want to replace it, the big question is this: Which species will survive for another 30 or 40 years, given the challenges we are seeing today with a changing climate? Look to the future and think about the climate we expect over the next 20 or 30 years. Try to pick a species that has a better chance of dealing with warmer, drier summers and unusual frosts.

Advice on what might successfully survive our changing climate may be found in many places, including Choosing the Right Tree resources from the Arbor Day Foundation website. And, you can review a "Right Tree Right Place" resource developed specifically for Pendleton on the Pendleton Parks and Recreation website.

Our trees and shrubs bring much beauty into our lives, and they nurture our mental well-being by providing an ever-important connection to the natural world. Climate conditions this year dealt us a bad hand. We must accept that we no longer live in the world we once knew.

Climate touches all aspects of our lives, so going forward, we must adapt to a new reality, to a new world.

Jeff Blackwood and Dave Powell each retired from a career with the U.S. Forest Service. Both are members of Eastern Oregon Climate Change Coalition.