

Siuslaw News
 P.O. Box 10
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Opinion

VIEW FROM UPRIVER



It doesn't get better than this

WESLEY VOTH
 For the Siuslaw News

where Norm spent what turned out to be the last few hours of his life, and had fished since boyhood.

It was a perfect morning for fishing the creek, dawn coming on slowly with a light misty rain. I didn't see anyone else on the road or parked or camped after I turned off at Indiola. As I exited my vehicle, the early joyous chorus of birds was just starting up: the haunting call of the Swainson's thrush, the melodious song sparrows and winter wrens and American robins each with their own hymns.

As I began hiking down through the brush, I jumped a large bull elk with thickly branched velvety antlers grown to about 3 feet so far. He wanted to be seen, and let me get a very good look while regally displaying every fine feature of his superiority in size and magnificence, demonstrating his species' characteristic nimbleness despite their mass, pushing straight through the salmonberry thicket, across the slippery rocked creek, and up the far muddy

bank with ease.

Even in my prime, which has been more years ago now than I spent in childhood, I moved through such terrain at a much more circumspective pace. I won't concede, however, that it is any less my element than his.

In the low and extremely clear water, I find the trout in the riffles rather the pools, and retain just one, a lovely perfect 10-inch beauty that is a deeply golden brown with dark mottled spots and the red slashes at the bottom of the gill plates that identify it as a native cutthroat. It is fat from feeding on salmon fry, and I wrap it in lady fern fronds and carry it in my jacket pocket just as I did as a youth.

Small crayfish, bright orange and obvious in the water, remind me that when we were boys, that is what we used as bait. Such is not legal these days, the regulations restricting terminal gear to artificial flies or spinners thought to attract and put at risk mostly larger fish. I realize suddenly that I'm carrying on a quiet conversation with Norm, feeling his company and camaraderie in this place that held such meaning for him. And that I can appreciate in much the same ways.

I wade back up the creek, going as usual just

a little deeper than my boots are good for, enjoying the feel of the water filling them as I remove some heavy line from the stream together with a tangle of salmon lures showing that there are those who persist in fishing for them here when it's been a number of years since this place was open for salmon.

Just before I leave the water to go back up the bank, I watch a pacific jumping mouse cross the stream by leaping from rock to rock and then swimming the last part before disappearing into the brush. I usually only see these mice dead, or crossing the road in my headlights, so it's great to watch one in action in daylight. They are regular mouse sized, but with tails as long as the trout in my pocket.

As I walk back to my vehicle it is not yet 7 a.m., and I pick and eat salmonberries, competing with several robins who make a point of grabbing the best ones just ahead of me. I've been eating these orange berries all month, finding the first ones on May Day itself, incredibly early.

Eating the fish later, its wild flavor reminds me again of the day, of the sounds and smells and preciousness of life and this place, what is gone and what remains.

The main reason I continue to fish is to get me out to places where I wouldn't be otherwise, and at times and in weather I might otherwise have been home. My friend Norman Beers and I used to talk every year before Memorial Day weekend about where we planned to fish for trout. Norm usually fished Indian Creek for the spring opener. I usually headed high in the Cascades to a mountain lake near a cabin where I've gone all my life, where I would often be the first one to reach the lake through melting snow.

This year I couldn't get away, and decided instead to fish the section of Indian Creek

LETTERS

Dental work appreciation

The staff at Mapleton Elementary School would like to extend a huge thank you to Dr. Holmes, Dr. Linton and their staff for volunteering their time and services to help our students.

We are truly grateful for the dental screenings they do and the dental work they provide. They do an amazing job, and we truly appreciate them including our school in their efforts to help our community.

Carrie McNeill
 on behalf of Mapleton Elementary Staff

Invasion memo anniversary

The recent GOP race to characterize the Iraq go-to-war decision as a "mistake" based on "faulty intelligence" begs one to recall the famous "Downing Street Memo," leaked 10 years ago, May 2005, describing the 2002 White House mind-set for justifying invasion.

The memo reflected a British intelligence briefing to Prime Minister Blair based on meetings between lead British and White House national security staffs eight months before invasion.

Important parts read as follows:

"Date: 23 July 2002

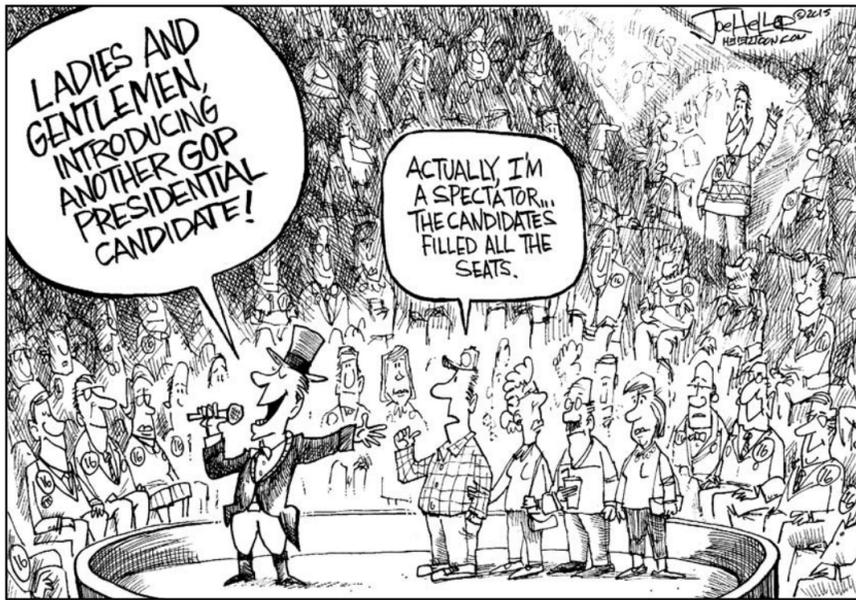
"Military action was now seen as inevitable. Bush wanted to remove Saddam, through military action, justified by the conjunction of terrorism and WMD. But the intelligence and facts were being fixed around the policy ... no patience with the UN route. ... There was little discussion in Washington of the aftermath after military action. ... It seemed clear that Bush had made up his mind to take military action, even if the timing was not yet decided. But the case was thin. ... The Attorney-General said that the desire for regime change was not a legal base for military action."

We all know what happened next.

Bush-Cheney "fixed" a series of false alarms to justify a "solid case" for war — African uranium, mobile biological weapons labs, nuclear enrichment tubes, WMD missiles.

Every evening news show had its own concocted "mushroom cloud" over an American city courtesy of roving "White House Iraq Group" staffers such as Condoleezza Rice.

The Downing Street Memo — undisputed by the White House — anticipated this publicity effort for what it was: a lie.



Current GOP candidate efforts to dress up Iraq chaos as originating from a "mistake" are no different, no less cynical, no more moral. Indeed, some of the same staffers are being used. To complete the "optics" for this \$2 trillion fantasy, the GOP only needs the likes of Sarah Palin or Chuch Norris, perhaps as Secretaries of State and Defense.

Rand Dawson
 Siltcoos Lake

Don't handicap our students and increase the danger to the rest of us. Put it in the requirements.

Jim O'Connell
 Florence

Driver's ed, a life skill

This week, the national news reported that the main cause of teen deaths in the United States continues to be from auto accidents, and that most of those killed weren't the driver.

Later, I was talking with a friend who told me that our high school no longer offers driver's education as a class. To me, our high school education should prepare a student for life, whether that's to continue with higher education, or for basic entry into the job world.

Either way, proper driving is a skill that can save lives, and, I think, ought to be part of that education. Having a professional teacher instruct the students in the best driving actions and the rules of the road should be mandatory for all capable students, for their safety and the safety of others, and should be included in their education at Siuslaw High School.

Better-informed voters

As a voter who tries to be informed on the issues and candidates running for office, this May election was frustrating for me because it was very difficult, if not impossible, to find out information about some of the candidates who were running, most of whom were for boards of directors for various Lane County entities (e.g., Lane Community College, Siuslaw School Board, Port of Siuslaw, etc.).

When I received my voter's pamphlet and, later, ballot, I tried to match the candidates to their statements in the voter's pamphlet. Unfortunately, the pamphlet did not contain statements from over 50 percent of the candidates (opposed or not) I was asked to vote for.

I did not receive any written material, nor could I find a Facebook page or website or published statement on the Internet when I searched their names.

What I was looking for was a statement from the candidates that told me three things: who they are, why they are qualified to be on the board and what they hope to accomplish as a

board member — simple, straightforward, something every candidate should be able to articulate.

Without this information, it is difficult to make an informed decision about whether or not I should vote for a particular candidate.

I encourage every candidate for office, whether for the first time or after numerous elections, to please place a statement in the voter's pamphlet with answers to those three simple questions.

I realize that most of these positions are non-paid volunteer positions, but there is little or no cost to including this information in the voter's pamphlet and letting the voters know something about you.

At the next election cycle, it would be very useful if the Siuslaw News sent a short questionnaire to each candidate running with just those three questions.

A supplement to the paper with the candidates' responses before the election would enable the voters to get to know the candidates better and, perhaps in the end, make a more informed decision that better represents how the voter feels about the candidates.

Pat Reno
 Florence

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR POLICY

The Siuslaw News welcomes letters to the editor concerning issues affecting the Florence area and Lane County.

Emailed letters are preferred. Handwritten or typed letters must be signed. All letters should be limited to about 300 words and must include the writer's full name, address and phone number for verification.

Letters are subject to editing for length, grammar and clarity. Publication of any letter is not guaranteed and depends on space available and the volume of letters received.

Libelous and anonymous letters as well as poetry will not be published.

All submissions become the property of Siuslaw News and will not be returned.

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