

**Siuslaw News**  
P.O. Box 10  
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# Opinion

## NEIGHBORS



### Long hiatus — Part I

BOB JACKSON  
NEIGHBORHOOD CORRESPONDENT  
For the Siuslaw News

Dear readers, this hopefully will serve as a partial explanation for the long lapse in my regular columns. My very first column written for the Siuslaw News appeared on Saturday, Dec. 28, 2002. As a fledgling typesetter, early on I had attempted to disentangle some of the archaic language that appeared in the earlier news items. I found it amusing, for example, that women were referred to as Mesdames, did they mean “M” Dames or “Messy Dames”?

This harangue of course has nothing

to do with the purpose of the following columns, which will probably bring back painful memories for others who have been on the same route that I have traveled for some time now.

Perhaps it started when my tongue got twisted up while I was sitting in Peggy’s doctor’s office. Her doctor recognized a problem at once, and almost magically, had a big wheelchair wheeled in. Consequently, I spent the night in the hospital: diagnosis TIA (mini-stroke). Prior to that, there had been the pneumonia

as a result of the ride in the big open Humvee during the Veteran’s Day Parade. I am probably missing a lot of things, but they ordered a CAT scan, which discovered a suspicious lesion in my left lung. A trip to RiverBend in Springfield resulted in a needle biopsy confirming that I had cancer.

I recall a Mary Tyler Moore show when she was told she had cancer, all she could do was stand there and utter “C-c-cancer!” over and over. As for myself, at first it was “oh well,” but soon reality and the seriousness set in.

The doctor put it to me that it would perhaps be better to let it take its course, as treatment was “iffy,” debilitating and many times ineffectual at best. I thought it over and

decided it would not be fair to not at least try for a cure instead of leaving Peggy with no hope at all.

And so began a series of five, weekly hour-and-a-half Friends of Florence cancer bus rides to Willamette Valley cancer institute on Country Club Road in Eugene for radiation treatments on my left lung. God bless PT Smith’s departed soul for the comfortable bus that would be waiting at Peace Harbor hospital entrance every morning at 8 a.m.

There was a different driver every day, some were women, some men. All were equally helpful and very careful and courteous drivers. Invariably they would always pull over to let faster drivers have the right of way. Almost robotic, they never ever exceeded the speed limit

— I was impressed.

There were pillows and blankets available, in fact the drivers said we were welcome to take a donated quilt home if we wished. With the high back seats, it was inviting to catch a nap now and then, and the interior was always kept comfortably warm.

I found not one of the bus passengers to be morose or gloomy; to the contrary, they were equally upbeat and smiling both ways throughout the trip. I think we were all aware of what a great blessing we were being offered, and at absolutely no cost to any of us because of a generous community and the foresight and persistence of the late Mr. PT Smith. And we were always on time!

More to come.

## JOY TO THE WORLD!



## LETTERS

### True meaning of Christmas

Last Monday afternoon, my husband and I were returning home to Florence after he had spent the morning at Sacred Heart Medical Center in Eugene. When we reached Walton, we realized we had a flat tire and pulled in to the Walton Store parking lot.

Since my husband had just had a cardiac procedure, he was unable to change the tire. Of course, it was raining and this senior citizen does not possess tire changing in her list of abilities. We were just about to phone for assistance, when a young man in the parking lot said:

“I’ll take care of that for you.”

So, this very kind and gracious man, named Aaron, took the time to change our tire. When we offered to pay him for his trouble, he refused, saying, “Lots of people have helped me, and I am happy to be able to help you. ... So now you can just pay it forward.”

We thanked him for his assistance, wished each other a Merry Christmas and resumed an uneventful trip to Florence.

And that, we know, is the true meaning of Christmas.

Sarah Farber-Hawkins  
Florence

### Gratitude for wreaths

Many thanks to Laurel Bay Gardens for donating the profits from their hand-made wreaths to the Memory Loss Respite Center of Florence, previously known as Alzheimer Hospitality Program.

Some of you may remember when wreath making was our primary fundraiser. We are no longer able to do that, so it is particularly meaningful for Laurel Bay to provide this offer to us. If you have not checked the wreaths out, they are beautiful and will last a long time.

The Memory Loss Respite Center is an underutilized service in our community. It provides four

hours of respite care for caregivers of persons with memory loss of any kind. It is a fun and nutritious (lunch is provided) time for those with memory loss to engage with others.

The program is an opportunity for caregivers to have some time for themselves knowing that their loved one is safely watched and entertained. We need more participants and volunteers.

We meet Monday, Wednesday and Thursday from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. at the Florence Senior Center, 1570 Kingwood St. Call 541-902-8539 for more information.

Carol Krasel  
Mapleton

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## 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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