

Siuslaw News
P.O. Box 10
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Opinion

From the Editor's Desk

A good neighbor

By RYAN CRONK
Siuslaw News Editor

It was hard to put into words what I was feeling when I heard that Bob Jackson passed away Thursday. I was deeply saddened by the loss of not only a long-time, dedicated columnist, but also one of the nicest and most genuine people I've come to know since moving to Florence seven years ago.

It was just last week that Bob stopped by the Siuslaw News office on Maple Street to renew his subscription to the paper. He was a loyal reader, all the way to the end.

I could hear his soft voice through the door to my office and remember thinking, "There's good ol' Bob, back on his feet," but couldn't break away from my desk to say hello.

Hearing Bob but not seeing him was a running occurrence for me over the years that I've worked at the paper. In fact, it was just a couple years ago that I finally met him and put a face to his voice.

I had often heard Bob talking at the front counter while I was still a cub reporter sequestered in the editorial room, busily working on my next story. He seemed to always have a story of his own to tell, and most often it would end up in his next column.

It's a strange feeling to know that I won't be hearing his voice again.

Former Siuslaw News editor Robert Serra shared a message reflecting his time spent with Bob, whose first "Neighbors" column appeared under Serra's watch on Dec. 28, 2002, in the Siuslaw News.



Serra writes:

Sometime soon after the turn of the century, we decided to create a new weekly feature of the Siuslaw News that would enlist local correspondents to write something about their community. The column would feature not so much news, but "happenings" or recollections that would sample the people and the flavor of our town. We would call the feature "Neighbors." Bob Jackson was an instant candidate for the project.

Bob was a longtime resident of the area. He knew or knew about the fabled old-timers and had strong colorful recollections of those people who settled here and made their marks on Florence and the Siuslaw Valley. His memories and stories ran the gamut from the old days of steam donkeys and whistle punks to river barges, bridges, box factories, World War II and sleek old cars and boats that ran fast and ended up in bramble graveyards.

Some who have been here awhile and who got to know the colorful denizens of

Florence and the Siuslaw Valley in the 1970s and '80s affectionately refer to those fond and not-so-fond characters as the River Rats. Those were the people like Bill Karnowsky, Indian Bob, Lloyd Sell, Don Bowman and Phil Rosenweig who left their own history and defined the Florence of ago.

I don't so much associate Bob Jackson with Old Town Florence as I do with the lake and the river and the woods and the mills and the lore of the coastal Siuslaw Valley. But if there were a sidewalk of stars on Bay Street, Bob's would stand out, not as a shiny star, but as a pair of well-worn and scuffed calk boots.

Bob's weekly column was a long-standing faithful feature that educated, informed, entertained and inspired our readers for many years, up till the day before he died. Bob will be remembered for many things, including a modern-day storyteller and historian of the old River Rats and the town they left behind.

But at the end, and always, Bob Jackson will be remembered for being a good, honest man. And, one of our favorite neighbors.

Bob will be missed by not only all of us here at the Siuslaw News, past and present, but also our readers — many of whom have told me how much they enjoy his columns — and the community that he loved dearly and wrote about weekly on this page.

His final column appeared in Wednesday's issue. In his words, "And so I wrap this up, in what may not at times be a very neat package. Where and when do I go from here? ... As Yogi Berra once said, 'It ain't over, till it's over!'"

Until next time, Bob.

YESTERDAY'S NEWS

MOMENTS IN TIME The History Channel

- On Jan. 12, 1904, Henry Ford sets a land-speed record of 91.37 mph on the frozen surface of Michigan's Lake St. Clair. His four-wheel vehicle, dubbed the "999," had a wood-chassis but no body or hood.

- On Jan. 15, 1919, fiery hot molasses floods the streets of Boston, killing 21 people and injuring scores of others. Some 2.5 million gallons of molasses burst from a huge tank when bolts holding the bottom of the tank exploded, shooting out like bullets.

- On Jan. 11, 1949, in Washington, D.C., the cornerstone is laid at the first mosque of note in the United States. The Islamic Center was built with a 160-foot minaret from which prayers were to be announced.

- On Jan. 17, 1950, in Boston, 11 men steal more than \$2 million from the Brinks Armored Car depot. It was almost the perfect crime. The culprits weren't caught until January 1956, just days before the statute of limitations for the theft expired.

- On Jan. 14, 1969, an explosion aboard the aircraft carrier USS Enterprise kills 27 people in Pearl Harbor, Hawaii. A rocket accidentally detonated, destroying 15 planes and injuring more than 300 people.

- On Jan. 16, 1979, faced with an army mutiny, Mohammad Reza Shah Pahlavi, leader of Iran since 1941, is forced to flee the country. Fourteen days later, the Ayatollah Khomeini, spiritual leader of the Islamic revolution, returned after 15 years of exile and took control of Iran. In November, Islamic militants stormed the U.S. embassy and took 52 Americans hostage, holding them for 444 days.

- On Jan. 13, 1999, NBA superstar Michael Jordan announces his retirement from professional basketball for the second time, saying he had lost the drive and desire to continue playing. Jordan originally had announced his retirement in 1993.

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VIEW FROM UPRIVER



A different form of resolve

WESLEY VOTH
For the Siuslaw News

My birthday comes this time of year, so besides it being the beginning of a new calendar year, it's the beginning of a personal year as well. For me, this is always a time of reflection. During the years I was a public school teacher, I had students write a wish for the world, one for their community — in their case, the Hawaiian island that was their home — one for their family and one for themselves. Coming at it this way, I found that the wish each had for themselves tended to be unselfish as well.

Parker J. Palmer, a writer whose thoughts I find compelling, wrote that this year when he began a column on "resolutions" he mistyped it as "revolutions," which got him thinking

about the project in a completely different way. I share his aversion to making our country into a gated community against the rest of the world. Or one that views certain race and class privilege as anything other than un-American. His words got me to thinking again about what I would like to see, for my world, my country.

So here are my wishes for a different kind of world, my commandments as it were, if I was in a position to make such things:

1. Stop all war and fighting of all kinds immediately.
2. Repurpose every weapon, piece of military equipment and all military personnel and funding to address the true work of humanity, such as below. These resources have been stolen from humankind.
3. Protect, restore and ensure clean air, water and soil in every place in such a way as to endanger no species of life, and restore local sustainable agriculture wherever it has been lost.

4. Provide health care, dentistry and vision services to all as basic rights.

5. Provide housing for all who do not have, using first the empty and unused buildings and homes every community seems to have in such abundance.

6. Repair and adequately maintain roads, bridges, public transportation and other public infrastructure.

7. Adequately fund free and appropriate public education from pre-school to grade 16.

8. Adequately staff and maintain all parks, national forests and public spaces.

9. Repurpose all penal institutions into intensive rehabilitation centers, where even people confined for life can improve themselves, contribute and experience safety and care.

10. Fund research into every aspect of human inquiry, but especially health including mental health, environmental restoration, recycling and actually clean energy.

In my dreams? Yes, but where do we get if we don't dream? Shouting isn't something I do, neither do I spend time listening to it unless it is from people in distress. But for me, and as we head deeper into another political season in this country, these are issues where I take a stand.

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.

Write to:

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Siuslaw News

Published every Wednesday and Saturday at 148 Maple St. in Florence, Lane County, Oregon. A member of the National Newspaper Association and Oregon Newspaper Publishers Association. Periodicals postage paid at Florence, Ore. Postmaster, send address changes to: Siuslaw News, P.O. Box 10, Florence, OR 97439; phone 541-997-3441; fax 541-997-7979. All press releases may be sent to PressReleases@TheSiuslawNews.com.

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Saturday Issue—General news, Thursday noon; Budgets, two days prior to publication; Regular classified ads, Thursday 1 p.m.; Display ads, Thursday noon; Boxed and display classified ads, Wednesday 5 p.m. Soundings, Tuesday 5 p.m.

NEWSPAPER SUBSCRIPTION RATES:

In Lane County — 1-year subscription, \$71; 10-weeks subscription, \$18; Out of Lane County — 1-year subscription, \$94; 10-weeks subscription, \$24; Out of State — 1-year subscription, \$120; Out of United States — 1-year subscription, \$200; E-Edition Online Only (Anywhere) — 1-year subscription, \$65.

Mail subscription includes E-Edition.
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