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**Legacy** from 1A

he was closely involved with over the past decade was the Siuslaw Watershed Council (SWC).

Voth was a longtime board member, retiring in 2016 from the board, but still willing to assist in any way possible.

Dan Carpenter, Executive Director of SWC, felt Voth's contributions to his organization could not be over emphasized.

"Wesley was a prime mover on the board. He had great insight and knew a lot about the watershed. He also knew a lot of people and, most importantly, how to connect with them and get them involved," Carpenter said. "He was instrumental in our decision-making process and in the development and reach of the SWC."

Voth spent years working in the Upriver communities of Mapleton and Deadwood, delivering mail to his neighbors.

But Voth was not a typical mail carrier. He knew most of the residents who lived on his route and became friends with many of them.

His work brought him into daily contact with the Siuslaw River, as his customers live up and down the waterway.

His familiarity with the river and its inhabitants, both above and below the water, was extensive.

Voth cared as much about the fish as he did about the birds and the trees. His will-

ingness to share his observations, and the ideas generated by those observations, was something he grew more comfortable with as time passed.

Voth's column was an homage to earlier environmentalists, taking his field observations and translating them into a format that others could easily understand and relate too.

His "View from Upriver" column in the Siuslaw News often felt like the reader was reading an excerpt from Thoreau's "Walden" or John Muir's "Steep Trails," both cornerstones of modern environmental philosophy.

These are books that speak to humankind's connectivity to the planet and highlight the importance of the smallest plant or lichen. They take the position that men and women are tasked with the stewardship of Planet Earth, not its exploitation.

Voth was the local, modern version of these pioneering environmentalists.

On his route, Voth would often meet with customers and spend a few minutes discussing the heron by the neighbor's dock that was limping, or share his observations on the rushing stormwater that was causing changes in fish behavior, making it more difficult to catch the elusive creatures.

His participation with local environmental groups was long standing and his impact on others in those groups was profound.

Voth's belief in the impor-

ance of continuing to focus on the struggle to safeguard the fragile eco-systems in the Siuslaw Watershed never ended.

Carpenter remembers Voth's interest in a program the SWC participates in each year, in partnership with the U.S. Forest service.

"He was very interested in our native plant distribution program, which is one of our core programs. We give away free trees and shrubs to landowners with land along local waterways. And Wesley would monitor the trees and the shrubs, after they were planted by the new owners, to see how they were doing."

Voth was also a man of faith, often referring in his writings to his Quaker roots as a primary source for his concern for others.

Issues of social justice were also important to him.

A column from last year referred to a speech given by one of Wesley's heroes, Martin Luther King, Jr. The speech touches on Wesley's social concerns and his sense of his own mortality:

"The most moving speech I came across, and the one I find the most relevant to me, as an old white man near the end of his life, is the one he gave to a group of junior high students in 1967.

1. Have a deep belief in your own worth; in your own significance and that you matter.

2. Determine to achieve excellence; find your life's working be ready to go through the doors that open

for you.  
3. When you decide what you are going to do, do it well.

4. Be committed to the eternal principles of Beauty, Love and Justice. Don't allow anyone to pull you so low that you hate them. Don't let anyone cause you to so lose your self-respect that you do not struggle for justice.

5. You have a responsibility to make your nation a better nation in which to live, to make life better for everyone.

6. You must be involved in the struggle for freedom and justice. Do not give yourself to things that will not solve our problems.

These work for me as my resolutions as I turn 65, because another thing I share with Martin Luther King, Jr., is a birthday," Voth wrote.

The unexpected loss of Voth, a friend and colleague, was a shock to the newsroom at Siuslaw News.

However, Voth's passing has given all of his friends and co-workers the opportunity to reflect on the wisdom, kindness and insights that he inspired.

His love for the natural world was a passion and a vocation that he shared with any and all that were interested. His concern for the less fortunate among us was real and he gave freely of his wisdom and insights.

The passing of Voth was a major loss for the community, on many levels, but the positive impact he made, through his work and his words, will last forever.

**Neighbor** from 1A

community in that special world at the head of tide of the Siuslaw, the muscular river that forms the backbone of the one-time timber and mill communities.

As a contract mail deliveryman for the postal service, Wesley was especially suited to hear and, in turn, to tell the stories of the people along his mail route.

On the other hand, and perhaps more to his liking, he was a naturalist who loved to detail all forms of life as they appeared and carried on around him. He wrote of the change of seasons and of the birds and animals and fishes and trees and plants that are peculiar to those hills and that river and

his shy little creeks.  
Wesley came to writing naturally and learned and grew as a writer over the years.

Like an artist who chooses his colors carefully, Wesley savored every word as he painted his stories. One time he gently took me to task for changing the spelling of the word "grey" in one of his columns. He was personally hurt, telling me he had always spelled it that way and it was a favorite word.

I was following the Associated Press stylebook, I told him, but apologized and said I would respect his wishes and never change the spelling again. (To this day, I use Wesley's spelling of "grey.")

Wesley was not political in the classic sense of the word, but he was closely in touch

with political matters that went against his natural ethics. He gently wove those issues into his stories to make points about how we should treat other people and all of life. — and how we have an obligation to protect and steward the natural state for us now and for our children and future generations.

Wesley, through his columns, was a spokesman for our communities and for our times. This kind and gentle and quiet man loved everyone and everything.

He was our Neighbor in every positive sense of the word.

I'll be reminded of him and of his stories and of his goodness when I see the first perfectly formed salmonberry of spring.

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