

**SIUSLAW VALLEY
FIRE & RESCUE**

Remembering SHDW Fire Chief Ron Prindel

Chief Ron Prindel, a pillar of the Swisshome-Deadwood Fire Department and the region it serves, as well as a man whose dedication to community and family created a legacy for the District, passed away recently.



BY PETE "BOA" WARREN
Recruitment & Retention
Coordinator for SVFR

If ever an individual was destined to found, build and sustain a critical, life-saving coalition, it was Chief Prindel.

Ron Prindel's passion for keeping everything shipshape may have originated through his tour in the Navy, which he joined in

1949, serving two years active duty and four years reserve duty.

While stationed in San Diego, he was rated as an Engineer on a Naval Destroyer. After leaving the Navy, he worked in the logging industry and operated various equipment, such as the Waggoner Lumber Jack. One day, while moving giant timbers, his buddy mistakenly parked a bit too close to logging operations. Sure enough, Ron's friend wound up buying a new truck as

Ron pancaked his friend's Bronco.

Undoubtedly, his heart skipped a beat at that moment and this incident may have prompted him to reflect seriously about more efficient emergency responses.

Ron volunteered as a firefighter for Swisshome Rural Fire in 1966 and quickly joined its Board of Directors. In 1968 — yes, a long time ago — Deadwood was without a fire department. We're talking garden hoses and buckets of water (a bucket brigade) thrown on fires by neighbors as the only resources available at the time.

Ron and some others decided it was time to start a fire department in Deadwood. Along with some financial support from his aunt, they secured funding for a fire station. However, Deadwood did not have the necessary equipment to establish a fire department. So, Ron worked with the bank and was able to buy two brand-new 1968 fire engines.

In addition, Ron worked tirelessly on the department's equipment to keep it all running properly. He considered proper maintenance of fire department engines, pumpers and auxiliary equipment vital to his department. Trained as a diesel mechanic, working on fire equipment came naturally to him.

Interestingly enough, Siuslaw Valley Fire and



**Swisshome/Deadwood Fire Chief
Ron Prindel**

Rescue recently trained with Swisshome-Deadwood Fire and one of those original 1968 fire engines was still in use, with only about 10,000 miles on it!

Ron also continually promoted the concept that contingency funds be available to fix or replace needed equipment. To the joy of local property owners, his actions improved the area's fire ratings for property insurance purposes.

Two years after establishing the Swisshome-Deadwood Fire Department, Ron became its Fire Chief and stayed in that position for 45 years. Finally, after five years as a volunteer firefighter and 45 years as Chief, Ron's health just didn't allow him to continue and he retired. But, he remained active in his community, helping his daughters when they went out on medical calls; he enjoyed driving them to help others in need.

During his twilight years, Chief Prindel, an active camera buff, added to his collection of photos. Even so, there are few pictures of him. He enjoyed travel and hit the road with his wife on many long trips after retirement.

They traveled in their RV to Alaska a few times and even took a train back east.

Chief Prindel will be remembered by many in his community for establishing a department for the area that remains as strong as ever with more than 30 current volunteer firefighters.

Many come and go, but Chief Prindel was the one who was there first — and because of his efforts, Swisshome-Deadwood has a department it can be proud of.

Rest in peace to a brother firefighter.

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NOTES FROM THE SILTCOOS — Wet and wild

The musical "Annie" played in Florence recently and I thought to myself: *Now that we are in weather transition maybe a better "Annie" hit song title would be "The sun will come out...in April?"*

The prognostication for the next five months or so can be summed up in few words, mostly with terms like "grey," "wet," "foggy," "windy," "stormy," "cloudy" and — my favorite

Pacific Northwest meteorological term — "icky."

None of these descriptors fit where I came from. I was used to sunny, balmy, mild, tepid, hot, dry, calm and my favorite non-PNW term, "boring."

When the climate is pretty much low 70s all the time with the occasional (twice a year if we're lucky) light drizzle, it is easy to get complacent and forget that other areas of the country are

not so blessed. It is also easy to become a weather snob because turning one's nose up did not usually result in a snootful of rain water.

Trying that here along the Oregon coast will redefine the term "post-nasal drip."

It turns out the coast gets more rain annually than almost any other part of Oregon. I live close to Honeyman State Park, and checking the stats it says my area gets more than 70 inches of rain a year. Doing some quick math, those 70 inches a year translate to about a 1/2-inch a day during rainy season. That's 1/2 an inch a day every day for more than 5 months.

Toss in storm winds up to 75 mph, rain falling sideways, rain when it's sunny (this both scares and amazes me) and the hail and snow that Mother Nature on occasion throws down, and we have the textbook definition of "Don't like the weather? wait five minutes, it'll change."

I discovered that rain, when properly dispersed, creates the wonderland that is our backdrop of lushness. I also discovered that rain brings out slugs,

nature's land-based version of the hagfish.

Thank all that is holy that hagfish are not land creatures. One will produce a bucketful of mucus in an hour, while our little gastropod friends leave just a small yet obvious shiny streak of phlegm. Snails, slugs and other creepy/slimy creatures aside, without the rain here it would be a desert. I grew up in the desert and can tell you that I much prefer the electric green of the forest than the brown and tan of the dry sands and pointy cactus.

While I do love the isolation and the miles of nothing the desert presents and spent many days of my youth wandering around the dunes and dry washes of Joshua Tree, the Mojave and Anza-Borrego deserts, there is a very special feeling among the giants of the forests.

The living bark and branch crowding out the sun's rays, dappled and shadowy as the scattered beams stream down to illuminate small patches of forest floor, create a unique experience specific to the Oregon coast.

We are blessed that the drenching rains help create the

plethora of flora, from the glorious blooms and blossoms of spring and summer to the thick and shaded forests that coat the coast almost all the way to the tide line.

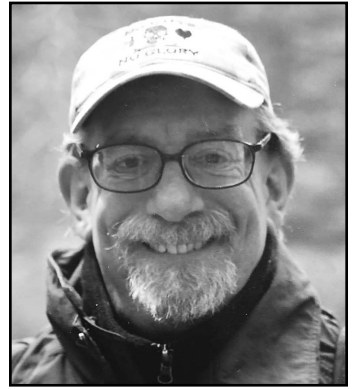
The diversity of plantlife in Oregon is quite impressive. Ferns of licorice and deer, sedges both tufted and creeping, flowers of nodding onion, cow parsnip and yellow monkeyflower, crabapple and shore pine trees, as well as shrubs with weird names like goatsbeard, devil's club, kinnikinnik and thimbleberry all reside here.

No, blackberry is not on the list; it is a non-native plant that we can blame its import on the British.

That plus warm beer and an ostentatious wedding every few decades.

And what about the wildlife? They seem to fare well during the rainy season, finding warm and dry hiding spots amidst the worst of the blows. Bear, deer, cougar and any manner of marsupial or rodent are abundant. Even snakes make their home among the sand valleys and tree roots.

The rains also bring the mush-



BARRY SOMMER
Special to Siuslaw News

rooms and the pickers, both wildlife in their own right and an integral part of the scene when the rains come.

The remainder of the tourists can be seen enjoying the last gasp of the season, alone in the campground and on the lakes yet enjoying the solitude that washes down when the clouds open up.

Yes, I love the rain.

The change from warm, languid days to the dark and overcast skies means another chapter in the cycle of life is upon us.

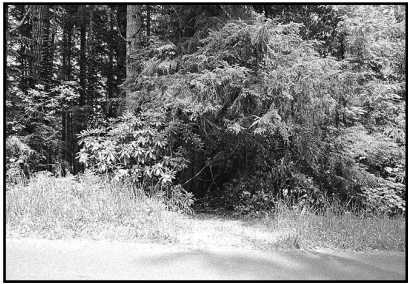
Days shorten, the sun hides and we huddle under our Eddie Bauer slickers, sucking down coffee as we do what we do best during the winter:

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