

Siuslaw News

Community Voices

MILITARY HERITAGE CHRONICLES —

Oregon's early military heritage



By CAL APPLEBEE
Special to the Siuslaw News

When one thinks of military heritage in conjunction with the State of Oregon, we often think in terms of WWII with the Japanese shelling of Ft. Stevens, the fire balloons launched by the

Japanese to destroy our forests in Southern Oregon, or even the home front beach patrols to guard against Japanese invasion from the Pacific Ocean.

In reality, our state's military heritage dates much earlier in time — back into the late 1700s and through the 1800s, following discovery and exploration of what was then called "Oregon Country."

Two different British Naval vessels visited the Oregon coast in 1788 and 1792 with one actually crossing the bar and traveling up the Columbia River.

Lewis and Clark's military expedition followed from cross-country in 1805, establishing Fort Clatsop. Over the following

decades, additional explorations by the Russians, Canadians and Brits culminated with the first large Oregon Trail Wagon Train reaching the Willamette Valley in 1843, bringing with it cultural conflicts between white settlers and Native American Indians and tribes.

The Willamette Valley settlers organized a provisional government as well as the first militia — the Oregon Rangers — almost immediately as clashes in 1844 between settlers and Indians in Oregon City resulted in four deaths.

In 1846, U.S. Congress created the U.S. Regiment of Riflemen whose initial primary duty was to be the Oregon Trail.

However, they were diverted to the Mexican War in 1846-1848 and didn't actually come to Oregon until 1849 — which by then had been established as an actual "territory."

In 1850, the U.S. enacted the Donation Land Act, which was intended to spur additional settlement in the Northwest by granting free lands to white settlers. However, many of these lands were previously occupied by Native American Indians and utilized as a major component of their culture.

This led to increasing conflicts which both the local militias as well as U.S. Cavalry would become engaged in.

Oregon's "Indian Wars" are

described by some historians as early wars from 1847-1856, and late wars from 1872-1880.

The 1855 Treaty attempt appeared to calm hostilities for a time, but the U.S. government's lack of follow through on some of the promises, as well as continued encroachments by settlers onto the tribal reservations, caused the frustrations to boil back to the surface during the late Indian Wars period.

That culminated in the now famous "Last Indian War" of the Nez Perce in 1877, when nearly the entire Nez Perce nation evaded the U.S. Cavalry for more than three months, covering over 1,500 miles of mountainous and grueling terrain through three

states.

There is much more to be learned about our state's military heritage, and we are holding a series of classes during Lane Community College's winter term throughout January, February and March.

Some of these classes will feature guest speakers, and will cover all the way up to current conflicts and the War on Terror.

Learn more and register for these classes by visiting the museum website at www.oregoncoastmilitarymuseum.com, call the museum at 541-902-5160, or visit the museum, 2145 Kingwood Street, Thursday through Saturday, from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.

NATURAL PERSPECTIVE —

Crab lovers await



By EMILY J. UHRIG, PhD
Special to the Siuslaw News

As usual, the arrival of the New Year brings with it many begin-

nings.

For seafood lovers, the long-anticipated beginning of Oregon's commercial crabbing season may be particularly welcome.

Set to open mid-January, the season has been delayed for over a month to allow the Dungeness crabs more time to bulk up with meat following their molt in late summer.

Dungeness crabs have indeterminate growth meaning they continue growing throughout their lifetime, which can last over 10 years if they're savvy enough to evade the crab pots.

Their shells, like the clothes of small children, are eventually outgrown. At this point, the old shell is molted revealing a new, larger one underneath.

Initially, a crab's new shell is soft and pliable, an advantage for the task of extricating itself from the old shell; it takes several months for the shell to fully harden and fill out with meat.

It's a fairly common misconception that the soft-shelled crabs appearing on menus in some parts of the country are a unique species when in fact they are just recently molted

individuals whose shells have not yet hardened.

While soft-shelled blue crabs, an east coast species, are a popular delicacy, the meat of our Dungeness crabs in their soft-shelled state is, unfortunately, not considered good for eating.

Beyond considerations of shell status and meat content, crab enthusiasts should also be aware of a marine toxin called domoic acid.

The toxin is produced by microscopic algae that are taken in by filter feeders, like clams and mussels, which are

in turn eaten by crabs.

For humans, consuming crab or any other shellfish containing high levels of domoic acid can cause amnesic shellfish poisoning (ASP), a serious, sometimes fatal, illness involving neurological damage that can bring about memory loss and confusion.

The danger of domoic acid was unknown until the late 1980s, when the first cases of ASP were reported. Subsequent studies pinpointed domoic acid as the culprit and monitoring programs were put in place.

The Oregon Department of Agriculture (ODA) regularly tests shellfish for biotoxins, including domoic acid, and harvesting will be closed in areas where levels are unacceptably high, as is currently the case for crabbing along the southern Oregon coast.

So, if you're planning to break out your own crab pots, check first with ODA for the latest on biotoxin levels in your area, but otherwise:

Happy crabbing!

SIUSLAW VALLEY FIRE & RESCUE —

What a year it was



By PETE "BOA" WARREN
Special to Siuslaw News

Another year has slipped into the Siuslaw Valley Fire and Rescue's (SVFR) annals. What a busy year we've had, both at home and away.

Starting off, we added 16 members from our April volunteer Firefighter Academy. In addition, we held the Up-River Academy, which featured SVFR firefighters mutually

training upwards of 15 volunteers from Swisshome-Deadwood Fire Department.

Invigorated leadership from Upper Deadwood Creek and Swisshome-Deadwood Fire departments strengthened relations with each other and SVFR, as the latter taught an Upriver Academy, which consisted of an intense three-week-end class.

Expanded training piqued the interest of their department volunteers and membership sky rocketed.

Everyone worked well together as department leaders worked toward a common goal; later in the year, Upper Deadwood Creek joined Swisshome-Deadwood Fire Department and now they are sitting at about 30 volunteer

firefighters.

Mapleton now hosts a monthly training class, taught by SVFR, at their local high school for all the departments in the area. This well-attended training class benefits all who are involved.

Medical calls have risen exponentially throughout the district. Taking that into account, SVFR and Western Lane Ambulance have worked together in a concerted effort to get more medically-trained personnel out there where it's needed through EMR and EMT classes conducted for area firefighters.

Meanwhile, Florence folks weren't immune from frequent reminders of choking smoke as air quality around town and the west was once again pungent

from the effects of massive fires in Oregon tearing through fields, woods and structures.

Local firefighters not only fought the local wildland fires, but also went on conflagrations throughout the west as they helped battle some of America's largest fires.

While the fires have temporarily abated, we always hear reminders to be prepared for a major catastrophic event. Taking that into consideration, we were able to secure a substantial Seismic Grant to help ensure that the buildings protecting our personnel and resources are structurally sound during an earthquake.

In the latter part of 2017, one of our longer-term members, Fire Marshall Sean Barrett, retired and will be surely

missed. In fact, Sean was one of my mentors as I progressed through my firefighter career.

Retirement wasn't the only way we lost people, former Battalion Chief Asa Hamon was struck down in a job site he was working. His passing had a profound affect on those who knew him. The news reached almost 48,500 hits on Facebook.

In addition, long-time Swisshome-Deadwood Fire Chief Ron Prindel finally succumbed to cancer after a valiant fight. But through him, Deadwood-Swisshome has evolved into a stronger fire department for everyone involved.

SVFR also lost a long-time, and beloved Battalion Chief Harry Moore, whose decades of commitment to the department

have left a lasting legacy.

A big benefit to the community was the arrival of Marines Toys for Tots. Western Lane County banded together and helped distribute toys for Christmas, along with our 24th Coast Guard City service members volunteering their time to help run this event.

As the holiday season was in full-swing, generous people brought in "loads" of CCC's (cookies, cakes and candies). Helmets off to Coastal Fitness, as they are graciously waiving fees during our annual Firefighter Fitness Challenge... so our firefighters can rid themselves of the effects of all those CCC's!

Pete "Boa" is the Recruitment and Retention Officer for SVFR.

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