

Community Voices

NATURAL PERSPECTIVE — WOODLAND BLOOMS



By EMILY J. UHRIG, PH.D.
Special to Siuslaw News

With spring well underway, plants everywhere are displaying their seasonal colors. While the showy hues

of tulips and daffodils are especially popular, blooms of relatively underrated native wildflowers are also making their annual debut.

For Oregon, one of the most noticeable spring wildflowers is the Pacific trillium whose white flowers stand out strikingly against the darkness of shady woodlands.

Trilliums, also known as wake-robins, are members of the lily family sometimes referred to as Oregon's Easter lilies due to the timing of their blooms.

Starting out a snowy

white, the Pacific trillium's three-petaled flowers turn pink or purple with age. As ephemeral wildflowers, their flowering period is brief, which can make finding trilliums in the woods feel like a special experience even though they are relatively common.

The visible parts of a trillium grow out from an underground rhizome. This structure is actually an enlarged stem that serves as a storage site for carbohydrates made during photosynthesis.

That is, the rhizome

is essentially the plant's food larder. Since the trillium's leaves carry out the photosynthetic process, the loss of the leaves, as often happens if the flower is picked, can damage the plant by preventing it from making the food it needs for next year. Thus, as with other wildflowers, admirers must resist the urge to pick trilliums.

Like for many other plants, insects have important roles in the lives of trilliums.

Bees and beetles are common pollinators of the flowers and dispersal

of trillium seeds to new locations is also accomplished by insects.

Each trillium seed is attached to an elaiosome, a fleshy structure rich in fats and attractive to ants as a food source. The ants carry elaiosomes, with the attached seeds, back to their nest where they eat the elaiosome and discard the seed.

This relationship with ants allows trillium seeds to germinate in areas away from the parent plant.

Trilliums are slow-growing and surprisingly long-lived,

based on age estimates made by counting rings on rhizomes somewhat similar to counting growth rings on a tree.

It can take over 15 years for a trillium to reach reproductive age and some plants are estimated to be more than 70 years old.

So, if you're walking in the woods and happen upon a trillium this spring, enjoy its bloom, but leave it be.

It may very well have been there long before you; let it be there long after.

SIUSLAW VALLEY FIRE & RESCUE — BEING A RESIDENT FIREFIGHTER



CPT. PETE "BOA" WARREN
Special to Siuslaw News

What's a good volunteer organization have? Great volunteers! Siuslaw Valley Fire & Rescue is lucky to have many great volunteers in its ranks.

One who comes to mind right out of the "hotbox" is firefighter Colten Griswold.

Just a couple years out of high school, firefighter Griswold signed up and started volunteering at our fire department.

As he said, "I joined because it seemed like a good way to see if I wanted to pursue Fire/EMS as a career."

Apparently, he felt it was; firefighter Griswold celebrated his third year with the department last November.

It wasn't long after joining that he applied for — and was accepted — as

one of three "Resident" firefighter positions with the department.

And speaking of the Resident program, these positions have dropped response times by 30 percent this past year alone by having qualified firefighters as residents (or "sleepers") at the station overnight. When the pager tones out, not only are our residents out of their beds in a flash, they are responding to 67 percent of all calls.

Quicker response means quicker "knockdown" of fires and control of emergency situations.

Statistics to back that

up include response times that have shaved an average of 7.82 seconds per call for multi-unit responses, which comes out to around 30 percent faster times responding to emergencies than just a year ago.

Seconds may not sound like much, but in an emergency where lives are at stake, 7 seconds can make all the difference.

When not aggressively seeking out opportunities to enhance his firefighter skills, Griswold is helping others with theirs and, along the way, developing great leadership and training skills. It's not un-

common to see him giving a training class on a skill he's mastering.

As with most close-knit groups, some are given various names which ultimately stick with them, the "Great Coltini," has found a new namesake.

When Griswold is not running calls, you'll usually find him in the Break Room throwing down some video games, studying or working out at Coastal Fitness — possibly for a firefighter calendar...

In his "free" time, he is working towards his Paramedic degree and you'll frequently see him headed south to Southwestern CC

for classes.

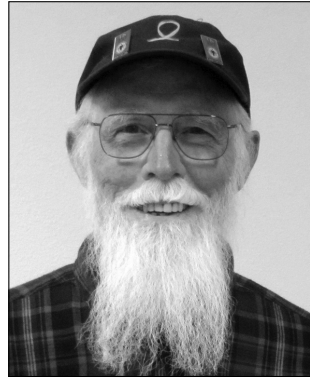
He's also working at Western Lane Ambulance when time permits.

His advice for those thinking of volunteering with the fire department?

"If you're interested in helping others or building a career, sign up!"

That's good advice from the "Great Coltini." He's jumping through the fire and heading the lights and sirens to a rewarding career. Contact me if you'd like to discuss the possibility of not only changing your life but possibly saving someone else's as a firefighter.

US TOO FLORENCE — BEHIND THE HEADLINES



By BOB HORNEY
Special to Siuslaw News

Our local Us TOO Florence Prostate Cancer Education/Support Chapter provides a unique opportunity for residents of Florence and its surrounding communities who want to stay abreast of the very latest information regarding prostate cancer — which happens to be both the most common non-skin cancer, as well as the second-leading cause of cancer death among U.S. men.

As our name indicates,

one component of our group meetings is education. I've been a bit remiss in not highlighting that aspect enough. We are so much more than just a group of men with prostate cancer joining together (many with wives) in support of each other.

Every prostate cancer survivor and supportive spouse/friend contributes to our education just through their comments as they relate their experiences with prostate cancer. This is a critically important part of our meetings.

Twice a month we have access to the expertise of our trusted urologists Dr. Bryan Mehlhaff and Dr. Roger McKimmy, along with his PA, Cameron Derbyshire.

This looks all well and good, and it is — but we are missing a key segment of our male population that I would like to see at-

tending our meetings and bombarding all of us with questions. I'm speaking specifically of the men who are trying to determine their own course of action regarding prostate cancer, whether it is about the starting point (screening) or some point further along the prostate cancer journey.

Our meetings are attended by men at all stages of the disease along with expert urologists in prostate cancer care.

Where else could one find such experienced sources to query?

Most men seem to wait until diagnosed or even after treatment to attend one of our meetings and we can certainly help them prepare for what will be and what may be ahead. For today's discussion, I would like to focus on men coming to our meetings and asking about our personal expe-

riences with prostate cancer screening.

Also, ask our urologists about this "baseline" PSA test they recommend during one's 40s.

We prostate cancer survivors attending the meetings would find sharing our personal experiences with men who are entering that confusing area of prostate cancer screening a welcome educational adventure.

We often share our treatment results following diagnosis (usually from screening), but much less often get to provide "food for thought" about screening for undiagnosed men (and spouses) to consider.

You would probably find us to be strongly pro-screening. Okay, but then how did we deal with the positives and negatives? Much of the positive information regarding screening ends with

the word, "but."

That leads to statements such as: "But the PSA blood test is not prostate cancer specific;" "But an elevated PSA number may cause you anxiety for no reason;" "But a low number may mask an aggressive prostate cancer (under-diagnosed);" "But the DRE (digital rectal exam) where the doctor inserts a gloved finger in the rectum to feel the prostate, may cause you discomfort;" "But you may be diagnosed with a cancer that would never have caused you harm (over-diagnosed);" "But you may be treated for that same 'harmless' cancer (over-treated) and end up incontinent (lack of urine control) or impotent (lack of sexual function);" etc.

Every man has, in one way or another, faced the above negatives and made his peace with them. Yes,

that peace even meant some men turned their backs on everything prostate.

Their choice, they live with the results! Others of us decided on our own (or with spouse) to be screened, some decided in consultation with their primary care physician and some with their urologist. In the end, our decision was that screening had more positives (like life-saving) than negatives.

Our choice, we live with the results!

We've made our decisions and dealt with the results, the good, the not-so-good and even the ugly. It is our hope that our experiences can be shared and help others.

A Chinese Proverb says: "To know the road ahead, ask those coming back."

That's us on the road coming back ready to help those just starting out.

THE MORAL OF THE STORY — A TWIST OF A KNIFE



By KAREN D. NICHOLS
Special to Siuslaw News

Yesterday while drying my freshly washed

knives, my Dad's collection of pocketknives came to mind; he always carried one.

When Dad returned from work, I'd run to the bottom of the hill where his ride dropped him off. With me on his shoulders, he'd climb the path through lupine, nestled among mustard greens. Blossoms covered the hillside in a yellow and purple quilt. Dad often used his pocketknife to cut bouquets for Mom or me.

At .20 cents a gallon, going for a ride in our '37 Chevy became a cheap outing. Along the way, if Mom spotted cattails or Queen Anne's Lace, Dad would cut a bunch with his pocketknife.

Before going to the beach, Dad would cut green switches from trees for skewers to roast hotdogs or marshmallows.

His blade sliced apple skin into a long, red, dangling spiral.

My brother and Dad played Mumblety Peg or

threw knives at targets.

Dad could fix anything with his knife. It could be a screwdriver; his knife and needle-nose pliers repaired jewelry; he'd pick locks or whittle toys; he could open cans or scrape away crud; need to sharpen flat woodworking pencils? Out came his knife.

When I got splinters, he'd sterilize his knife with a match and wipe with alcohol. Under his goose-neck lamp, I'd extend my hand, then squint while he dug out the culprit. Us-

ing his handkerchief, he dried my tears.

Honed to a razor-edge, he said he could shave with his pocketknife. Though I never witnessed the pocketknife shave, I remember feeling his soft cheek against mine and smelling his sweet shaving soap after a safety-razor shave.

Today, I fumbled through a drawer searching for a barrette. Unbelievable! How did it get there? Why would I store it in with hairpins and

barrettes?

But there it was — the pocketknife he carried the last years of his life — unnoticed for 30 years.

Was this a coincidence after yesterday's recollections? Or from his lofty perch, did Dad leave it for me to find?

The moral of the story: Even though gone, parents are just a memory away.