



The
Chatterbox
It must be spring fever!

BY BETTY KAISER
For the Sentinel

On these glorious, sunny days, I do not like to be inside, tied to my desk and a keyboard! Outside there is real work to be done: moss to be scrubbed off planters and walkways; weeds to be pulled; bushes to be shaped; roses to be uncovered and winter’s damage to be repaired. And of course, roads to be traveled.

In springtime, if it’s a sunny day outside, then I’m a gloomy inside person. So now that I’ve got that out of my system, here comes another confession—I’m not getting much done inside either. I’m sitting here looking at the blank computer screen with a road trip brain, dreaming about new places to explore.

One of the many things that I love about Oregon is that it is such a compact state. In our RV days we traveled to just about every nook and cranny possible in the PNW. Now, for the first time in 35 years, we are touring by car, bus or train and there aren’t many places we haven’t been.

Where to go next? That is always the question. The answer usually arrives when the monthly edition of Travel Oregon arrives in my inbox. They have great suggestions for cities and regions to visit, places to stay, things to see and do in places large and small.

Last month their visitor information concentrated on the “Seven Wonders of Oregon.” In no particular order, they are: Crater Lake, the Willowa Mountains, Painted Hills, Columbia River Gorge, Mt. Hood and the Oregon Coast. I was able to check off five of those areas as well explored. We had been near the Painted Hills but were unable to stop on our way to Baker City.

Baker City is worth the long drive just to visit the National Historic Oregon Trail Interpretive Center. There, the story of the Oregon Trail comes alive before your

eyes. The 23,000 square foot facility is more than a museum or monument. The story of tens of thousands of men, women and children who walked for 2,000 miles comes alive through life-size exhibits, interpretive trails, special events and Oregon Trail ruts. The living history performances bring life to the trail experience. I even bonded with one of the oxen over its long eyelashes!

Having been-there-done-that, its time to visit the Willows and the Painted Hills. Both destinations make me a little apprehensive. First, I’m not fond of deserts—high or low. We took a trip one year from our home in Ventura (on the California coast) to Death Valley—the lowest, driest and hottest area in North America. Not our favorite trip.

It was, however, one of the last California National Parks to check off our list. We had to go. The valley is known for its isolation, sizzling temperatures and lack of rain. But it was only May. How hot could it possibly be? Well, we would soon find out. This was the early 1980s. Information was limited. There were no computers or cell phones. Word-of-mouth, maps and encyclopedias were our guides.

As I recall, we drove into the town of Ridgecrest at dusk. We had plenty of water and snacks in our ’81 Oldsmobile but only about a quarter-tank of gas. Our maps indicated Death Valley was just down the hill. We decided to head down and fill up in the valley.

I can still see the long, winding, isolated road to nowhere that greeted us. We promptly turned around, filled up the gas tank and ate a hamburger (our last meal!) at the only café in town. Down, down, down we went. There was no traffic. We were the only car on the road. It was almost dark and we had a sinking feeling wondering if the road would lead to civilization and a comfy, air-conditioned motel.

We gratefully arrived about 9 p.m. and

the heat was tolerable. The next morning we woke up to brilliant sunshine and (gulp) 100-degree heat. By the time we had breakfast and headed out on a tour bus to Scotty’s Castle, the temperature had climbed to about 117° F.

Scotty’s Castle was 53 miles from the Furnace Creek Resort where we were staying. The castle and grounds are famous for opulence in the middle of nowhere. In the early 1900s, Albert Johnson grubstaked a gold mining expedition for Walter Scott (Scotty). The gold never panned out, but Scotty convinced everyone that he had money from secret mines in the area and built a castle. Actually, Johnson and his wife built the spectacular \$2 million home as a vacation getaway. The National Park Service now owns it.

Today Death Valley State Park is quite the destination spot. The Furnace Creek Inn has luxury lodging as high as \$370 per night. Its amenities are endless and of course, include swimming pools. A nearby mini-town built by the Pacific Coast Borax Company today features another hotel and the Amargosa Opera House. Things are a wee bit different than during our visit.

Now, back to Oregon’s desert hot spots. The stunning Willows Mountains are said to be one of Oregon’s most beautiful secrets and a multi-day adventure. Pictures of the Painted Hills are spectacular. The colors shift and change with the difference of light and the seasons. Wild flowers flourish at this time of year. Both destinations sound wonderful. But they’re still far away in a hot, desolate setting.

To go or not to go? That is the question. But the road is calling...

Betty Kaiser’s Chatterbox is about people, places, family, and other matters of the heart. Contact her at 942-1317 or via e-mail — bchatty@bettykaiser.com

Survey details
response to potential
school bond

BY MATT HOLLANDER
The Cottage Grove Sentinel

The South Lane School District bond-advisory committee is expected to present its formal recommendation at the May 4 school board meeting. Based on conversations thus far, it seems likely that the committee will endorse a general obligation bond to replace Harrison School. Last week, the group indicated strong support for a 25-year, \$29.8 million bond as opposed to a 20-year, \$23.2 million levy.

Helping guide many of these discussions has been the School District’s bond survey, a six-part questionnaire completed by 485 respondents.

Of those respondents: The most represented groups were elementary-school parents and school-district employees. Fifty-seven-percent were between the ages of 30 and 49. Over 88 percent said they would support issuing a general obligation bond to build a new Harrison School, if there were no increase to the high school bond tax levy rate; 55-percent said they would support more facility upgrades by increasing the high school bond tax levy rate.

In addition to replacing Harrison School, the most highly prioritized projects included adding classroom space to facilitate full-day kindergarten; safety and security upgrades at all schools in the district and

network upgrades for technology throughout the district. Respondents also recommended other projects that were not listed, including an auditorium for the high school and renovations to Lincoln. The bond committee has since taken these under consideration.

The informal survey was available on the school district’s website for about a month this past winter and was promoted through email and social media.

School District spokesperson Garrett Bridgens, who helped develop the survey along with members of the committee, said that he was very pleased with the rate of response, especially given the lack of formal advertising.

“One of the goals we’ve had for this process was to create a community conversation about what we want to do,” he said. “The questionnaire was meant to be an initial survey of the community that would help guide some of the decisions of the bond committee. And I think it accomplished that goal.”

Depending on what transpires at the May 4 meeting, Bridgens expects that a more scientific polling of the community would take place before the bond measure is placed on a ballot.

If the school board accepts a recommendation to move forward with a bond levy, the school district would likely seek to form planning and voting committees before summer begins, Bridgens said.

BOND

Continued from page 1A

desire held by many to upgrade the District’s theater, as evidenced by a recent survey. Architect David McClean, himself a member of the committee, told the group that he’d compiled a rough \$5.5 million estimate for a new theater, and it was eventually agreed that significant upgrades such as a new sound booth and lighting could greatly improve the current theater’s function.

Local business owner Tim Schweitzer represented a voice of skepticism the committee. Schweitzer pointed out Wednes-

day that, as the owner of four taxable properties in Cottage Grove, he is not excited about the prospect of paying more property taxes through a prospective bond. He inquired about remodeling Harrison as opposed to building a new school.

Superintendent Krista Parent responded that the footprint of the current Harrison Elementary is not big enough to expand the school in ways such as building a gymnasium that doesn’t have to double as a cafeteria. She said the footprint also doesn’t include enough space for parking and that there would be nowhere to house nearly 500 stu-

dents while the renovations took place. McClean added that the seismic upgrades necessary to expand Harrison to two stories would also be cost prohibitive.

The committee elected a small

group that will work to craft an official recommendation for the South Lane School Board. They plan to present their recommendation at the Board’s May 4 meeting.

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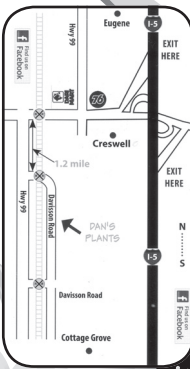
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