



OPINION

Precautions, vigilance key during fire season

Last Tuesday, Aug. 23, the Oregon Department of Forestry issued a request for reports of suspected illegal activities — including those that could lead to charges of arson for purposefully set fires — in the state's forested lands. By the next afternoon, it became clear to Cottage Grove residents that such vigilance could be of vital importance each fire season.

On Wednesday, Aug. 24, South Lane Fire and Rescue, ODF and other agencies responded to reports of a fire on Mt. David in Cottage Grove that was already too close to nearby homes for comfort, a fire that soon threatened the rest of the dry, grassy and wooded hillside. The work of many, including that of a helicopter pilot credited with quickly squelching the flames, was necessary to prevent what could've been one of this community's costliest (and potentially deadliest) disasters. It soon became apparent that the fire may have been intentionally set, and locals here are left to wonder how such a reckless act could happen so close to them and their loved ones.

The following day, police arrested three teens suspected of setting a fire in a Bohemia Park restroom, only to be informed that the youths they were looking for had already set another fire near Walmart in a populated area. Police say they saw little remorse from the teens for actions that could have been life-altering or even deadly for many. But regret after the fact on behalf of these youths would have mattered little had these fires not been

quickly and properly extinguished, for it doesn't take an expert to notice that flames do not discriminate, that a fire cares little about its cause or the intent of the person that sets it. Which is why it is of vital importance that Oregonians take grave precautions during fire season and keep an eye out for those not willing to heed warnings to that effect.

This time of year, Oregon's fire agencies typically battle fires started by lightning or by people's carelessness. But in recent weeks, ODF says they've found themselves chasing down fire starts set by arsonists. Dozens of wildfires have broken out in recent weeks across Oregon — many of them under suspicious circumstances.

Law enforcement and wildfire protection agencies at all levels are working hard to solve these crimes and prevent future arsons. Vigilance is high among Oregon State Police troopers, county sheriff's deputies and state and federal forestry agencies' field personnel. Oregon's forests are expansive — 30 million acres — and they could use the public's help to put a stop to this rash of deliberately set fires.

Thousands of recreationists enjoying the forests this summer can serve as eyes and ears to report suspected illegal activity in the woods. Call the Oregon State Police Tip Line, 503-375-3555, to confidentially report tips. And by all means, be cautious this fire season, and encourage others to do so as well.



LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Just fine

I've been in this country almost 90 years. But its condition brings me a lot of tears. I don't want it to be in this condition any more. It was a whole lot better the way it was before. You would think he could make a better place to live. But he just can't find a better solution to find or give. So many of our nations' people still live in poverty even tho he promised from debt, he would set them free. In my life time I've never seen everything so bad,

Our nation is looking at the worst condition it's ever had. The country's poor people believed all of Mr. Obama's lies. Then we found out he had so many big money ties. Many poor people continue to eat out of garbage cans today. Or any other food that has already been thrown away. Be careful that you don't elect another one just like Mr. Obama next time, or one more that's convinced that all the hungry and homeless are just fine.

Glen Bricker
Cottage Grove

Offbeat Oregon History

Japan's balloon bombs could have done a lot more damage

BY FINN J.D. JOHN
For the Sentinel

On July 9, 1945, residents of northwest Oregon started seeing heavy smoke rising into the air over the Coast Range.

It wasn't an unfamiliar sight. Twelve years earlier, in 1933, the granddaddy of all Oregon forest fires had broken out in the same general region, and by the time it was snuffed out by early fall rains, it had turned 350,000 acres of prime virgin forest into a moonscape. Six years after that, it had happened again.

And now, like a six-year jinx coming on schedule to haunt the state, the forest was on fire again. It would happen again six years further on, in 1951.

But there was one particularly interesting thing about the 1945 burn: Nobody knew how it got started. Both the earlier burns had been started by log-

ging operations; this one, though, had just flared up, and when it was all over and done it was traced back to an almost inaccessible spot near the Salmonberry River — nowhere near any roads or logging operations.

No one will ever know for sure. But the best explanation for the outbreak of the third Tillamook Burn, five months before the end of the Second World War, is by far the most dramatic one:

Enemy action, in reprisal for the Doolittle Raids on Tokyo three years earlier.

Historian Robert Mikesh makes a solid case that the Doolittle Raids, launched in 1942 by the Pendleton-based 17th Bomb Group, shortened the war considerably by putting the Japanese military command into an intolerable psychological position. The scant physical damage done by the handful of B-25s was nothing compared with the damage they did to Imperial Japan's

pride, and after the raid the military was almost desperate to recover its lost "face." Among other things, this led to the Japanese steaming out in force to meet the American Navy at Midway — in a battle that looked a lot more even than it turned out to be, because of how much more punishment the U.S. could take.

It also led to a flood of innovation from the Japanese, brainstorming up ways to put some kind of hurt on the American homeland like the Yanks had done to them. One gambit, tried once in 1942 without much success, was the firebombing of the forest near Brookings by a submarine-launched seaplane.

But probably the most interesting innovation to be inspired by the Doolittle raid was the world's first intercontinental weapon system — a system based on a modernization of a technology from the 1700s: Hydrogen-filled balloons. They became known as "fire balloons."

The Japanese had discovered that the jet stream runs from Japan straight across the Pacific Ocean to North America all winter long at speeds of over 100 miles an hour. At speeds like that, they realized, a balloon launched from Japan would reach the U.S. in about three

days. So they got busy figuring out how to take advantage of that.

There were serious engineering problems, though, involved with overnight balloon flights. The sun would warm the gas during the day, increasing the lift; and it would then cool off at night. If left to its own devices, a balloon would simply sink into the ocean after sunset.

To deal with this, the Japanese engineers rigged the balloons with an ingenious clockwork mechanism rigged to an altimeter. When the balloon dipped below 30,000 feet or so, the mechanism would release one or two bags of ballast, sending the balloon back up into the right altitude range again. When the morning came and the expanding gas threatened to raise the balloon out of the jet stream, the clockwork would open a gas valve, venting some of the helium gas to keep it at the proper height.

Each balloon was rigged with enough ballast to go through two day-night cycles. On the third day, engineers calculated it would be over the continent, and the clockwork bomb-control device would drop its payload of incendiary or antipersonnel bombs, after which the balloon itself would self-destruct.

The Japanese finally got these weapons worked out to their satisfaction in

the fall of 1944. On the island of Honshu, nestled among protecting hills, a team of schoolgirls worked to build the balloons out of tough, light mulberry paper; they were rigged with the clockwork, ballast and bombs and launched into the sky, one by one, for all that winter. A total of roughly 9,000 of them rose into the sky over Japan and started out across the Pacific Ocean. It was the longest-ranged attack in military history, a record that would stand until 1982 when the British broke it during the Falkland Islands war.

A few days later, odd things started happening in the American and Canadian West. A father and son on a fishing trip one morning on a north-woods lake saw a balloon drift by and disappear over a nearby hill — and then a big explosion echoed through the woods. Two farmers working in a field were startled by another big explosion. A mother was tucking her child in for the night when the tyke's bedroom was lit up by the flash of a big explosion near the window.

In all these incidents, all that remained of whatever it had been were metal fragments, blast craters and sometimes bits of mulberry paper.

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Soda and junk food affect children's behavior and school performance

BY JOEL FUHRMAN, MD
For the Sentinel

The standard American diet, chock full of soda and other sugary drinks, fast foods and other low-nutrient foods, can have a major impact

on the health and lives of our children. Rising rates of childhood obesity driven by this way of eating have received much attention; however, low-nutrient foods are still having negative effects on the physical and mental health of children who are not

overweight. Children are not immune to the damaging health effects of the standard American diet, which can set them up for a lifetime of poor health, ranging from heart disease to behavior problems and lower cognitive performance.



On average, U.S. children and teens consume over 200 calories a day from soda and other sugary drinks, and it is estimated that about 14 percent of their calories come from fast food. As a result of the poor diets of American children, more than one-third of normal-weight teenagers (and about half of overweight teenagers) have at least one diet-related risk fac-

tor for heart disease. These dietary patterns have the potential to dramatically affect not only public health but the productivity of our future adult population; studies have implicated poor diet in limiting intelligence and academic performance and also drawn parallels between consumption of sweets during childhood and violence in adulthood.

A study on soda consumption found an increase in behavior and attention problems in five-year-old children (as assessed by their mothers) with increasing daily consumption of soda. Forty-three percent of the five-year-olds in the study drank soda at least once a day. The authors adjusted their results for potential confounding factors that might affect behavior, such as hours of television and a stressful home environment, and still found a significant association between

soda consumption and aggression, withdrawn behavior and poor attention. They proposed that caffeine and/or fluctuations in blood sugar might be responsible for the association between soda and behavior problems. Blood glucose levels do affect the workings of the brain, and habitual high sugar intake has been shown to impair cognitive function. Several previous studies on high school students have also associated soda consumption with aggressive behavior, as well as depression and self-harm. Plus, higher sugar sweetened beverage consumption is linked to diabetes, cardiovascular disease and cancers.

In addition to soda, higher fast food consumption in fifth grade (four or more times per week) has been associated with poorer academic progress in math, reading and science between fifth grade and eighth grade.

Children who ate fast food one to three times per week—a common level of intake—compared to those who ate no fast food had lower scores in math. These results suggest that children eating fast food frequently could slow their academic progress.

The food habits children develop in their early years have a substantial impact on their physical health and mental well-being throughout the rest of our lives. Parents need to know this information, so that they can help their children to live healthfully, maintain a positive mindset and reach their full cognitive potential.

Dr. Fuhrman is a #1 New York Times best-selling author and a board certified family physician specializing in lifestyle and nutritional medicine. Visit his informative website at DrFuhrman.com.

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