



# OPINION

## Offbeat Oregon History

Oregon has been home since at least 12,400 B.C.

BY FINN J.D. JOHN  
For the Sentinel

Oregon is a very young state. Its oldest buildings – those whose dates are known, at any rate – went up in the 1850s; many a visitor from the East Coast, where there are still buildings constructed in the 1600s, has gotten a chuckle out of the fuss Oregonians make over architecture and artifacts barely over a century old.

But appearances are deceiving. As far as is known today, Oregon takes a back seat to nobody in a contest of antiquity. The earliest evidence of human habitation in North America is here – in the form of DNA that’s literally 143 centuries old. And it’s far from the only evidence that humans have lived in the land we know as Oregon for a long, long time.

The DNA was recovered in 2008 by a team of archaeologists from the University of Oregon, led by Dennis Jenkins, during an expedition to the Paisley Caves, near the town of Paisley. Paisley is in north Lake County, by the bed of what was, 13,000 years ago, a massive freshwater lake called Lake Chewaucan. (Over the millennia, Lake Chewaucan slowly evaporated and shrank, year after year, until today all that is left are the shallow alkali waters of Summer Lake and Abert Lake).

Dramatic and important as the discovery of this DNA was, though, it’s not likely anyone is going to want to see it on display in a museum. The DNA was extracted not from a mummified skeleton like Otzi the Iceman, nor a freshly fed mosquito encased in amber like in Jurassic Park – but rather from an artifact that goes by the neat, clean, clinical term “coprolite.”

Coprolites are – simply and bluntly put – feces. They’re ancient excretions that have either fossilized or been dried to the point that decomposition stopped. These particular ones, of course, were dried; and when they were tested in the university’s laboratory, they turned out to be 14,300 years old.

This was a big deal, because prior to this discovery the oldest known inhabitants of the Americas were a primitive culture known as the Clovis People, who lived 13,000 years ago. It’s also a big deal because the last ice-age glacial period ended roughly 10,000 years ago; so, whoever left these “artifacts” behind lived (and pooped) in the years of full ice-age glaciation – 30 centuries before the retreating glaciers loosed the Missoula Floods tearing through the Columbia River Gorge to form the Willamette Valley, and 10 centuries

before the Clovis people.

Scientists were not slow to analyze their find. The DNA indicated that the party who answered nature’s call 143 centuries before was of Siberian and East Asian origin, lending support to the “land-bridge theory,” which suggests that North America was populated by people migrating over the exposed seafloor from Siberia to Alaska during a time of low sea levels.

Since the coprolites were found, their authenticity has been somewhat hotly debated in the archaeological community. One study analyzed the old stools for diet content and concluded that they were the feces of herbivores, and the human DNA therefore had to be the result of accidental contamination by the sloppy University of Oregon researchers; those researchers, naturally, found this claim unconvincing. The debate continues, although Jenkins and his team have since returned to the site and found more specimens along with artifacts such as arrowheads.

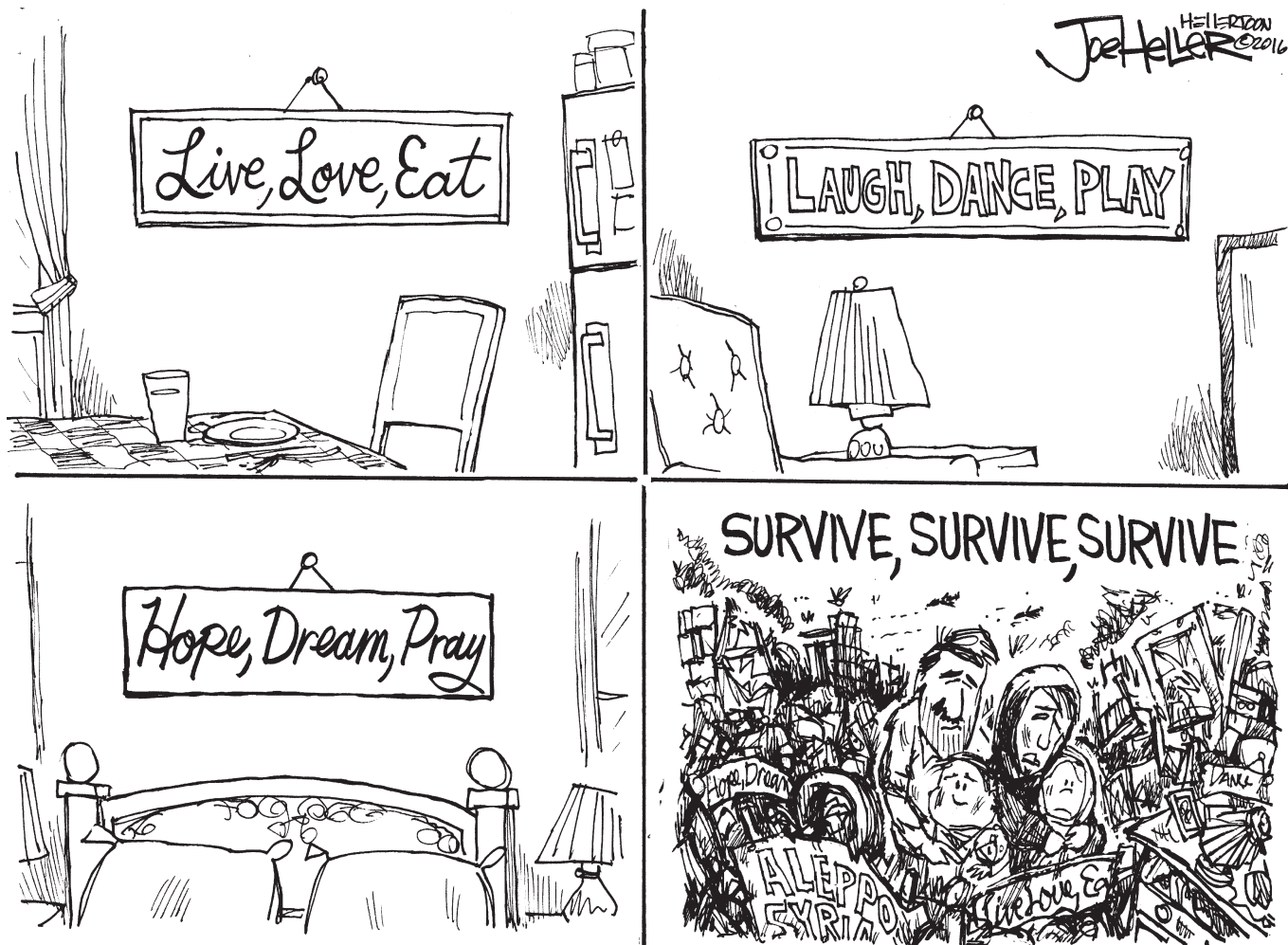
Even if the evidence for the 14,300-year claim were thrown out, though – maybe the coprolites could turn out to have been from the extinct Oregon Cave Elk, or perhaps the Great Western Jackalope? – Oregon’s title as prehistoric capital of the West will still be safe, thanks to a pile of sandals found in a cave near Fort Rock in 1938 by Luther Cressman, a University of Oregon professor remembered today as the “father of Oregon archaeology.”

Dr. Cressman – who’s also famous for having once been married to Dr. Margaret Mead – found the sandals with the help of legendary Oregon rancher-raconteur Reub Long, on whose Fort Rock property the cave stands. They’re made of sagebrush bark and look not much different from that type of modern beach sandal that’s woven out of ropes. These were radiocarbon dated to an age of 9,000 years.

Actually, they almost weren’t radiocarbon dated at all. After bringing them back to the university for study, Dr. Cressman carefully treated every square millimeter of the ancient footwear with a chemical preservative. A few years later, when the radiocarbon-dating technique was developed, Dr. Cressman was doubtless vigorously kicking himself for this. Once doped, the sandals could not be dated. Luckily, he had not found and “ruined” all the sandals; a return visit yielded a few more that he’d overlooked, and the dating was done on those.

Some of these sandals can be viewed in the Fort Rock Museum in the nearby town of that name, or – for

Please see **OFFBEAT**, Page 7A



## It’s open enrollment time: Five tips for selecting the right health benefits

ARTICLE SUBMITTED BY  
UNITEDHEALTHCARE

Fall signals the start of many annual traditions – a new school year, football season, and holidays such as Halloween and Thanksgiving. Fall is also the season for another important annual tradition: open enrollment, when many people have an opportunity to select or change their health benefits for the following year.

With the vast majority of Americans – approximately 155 million – obtaining health benefits through their employer, it’s an important time to ensure you make choices that support your and your family’s needs.

Selecting the right health benefits can feel challenging, but reviewing the available options and choosing carefully can help you find solutions that can work for you and help you make more informed choices that may improve your health and even save money.

To make open enrollment season easier, consider these five tips:

Take time to review your options: Don’t wait until the last minute to make your benefit elections or rush through the process. Instead, start early and get your questions answered. Your employers and health plan representatives are available to help with the process. Remember there’s more to each plan than co-payments, deductibles and premiums. Take

a few minutes to check if your doctor is in the plan’s care provider network and that your prescriptions are covered.

Look for incentive-based wellness programs: Some health plans offer wellness programs that enable people to earn financial incentives – such as lower premium costs or deductible credits – for completing health assessments, signing up for a health coaching program, lowering cholesterol, going to a gym or even using a fitness tracker to monitor daily walking patterns. These incentives can help save you money, in some cases up to \$1,500 a year, and encourage you and your family to practice healthier behaviors.

Take advantage of health care apps and online tools: Many health plans have created apps and online resources to help people locate a health care professional or check if their doctors are in-network, compare treatment costs, review claims and find more information about their health plans. For instance, the Health4Me app (available for Apple and Android devices) makes it possible for all consumers to comparison shop based on quality and cost for more than 875 common medical services across nearly 600 health events.

Open a Health Savings Account: More employers are offering health plans that include a Health Savings Ac-

count (HSA) option. An HSA is like a personal bank account specifically for health-related expenses – you own all the money in it, including contributions from your employer. HSAs offer a triple tax advantage: money is deposited pre-tax from your paycheck and accrues interest tax-free, and withdrawals are not taxed as long as funds are used for qualified health-related expenses.

Don’t overlook other important benefits available to you: Specialty benefits, such as dental, vision, accident or critical illness insurance plans, are often lower-cost options that can protect you and your family from head to toe. Research shows a connection between oral health and overall health, so adding a dental plan may help prevent larger medical problems. A vision plan may offer eye exams that can identify chronic conditions like diabetes, and offer reduced pricing on frames and lenses. Critical illness plans can provide important financial benefits for unexpected health situations.

Many employers conduct open enrollment during a two- to three-week period between September and December, so now is the time to learn about your health benefit options. A little extra time spent today can pay off next year in having a plan that works for you.

## The best foods for healthy eyes

BY JOEL FUHRMAN, MD  
For the Sentinel

As a child, you probably heard that carrots are good for your eyes.



This may be because carrots (and other orange and yellow vegetables and fruits) are abundant in beta-carotene, which is a provitamin A carotenoid, meaning it is converted to vitamin A in the body. Vitamin A is important for eye health, especially for night vision as it helps to produce a pigment called rhodopsin in the retina, which helps

the eye detect low levels of light and allows us to see at night. Vitamin A deficiency is known to cause night blindness.

However, beta-carotene is not the only carotenoid that contributes to healthy vision. Out of about 600 known carotenoids, twenty have been found circulating in human blood and only two are found in the eye. They are lutein and zeaxanthin, which cannot be synthesized by the body and are primarily found in green leafy vegetables. Once consumed, these two carotenoids accumulate in the macula, the inner portion of the retina, which has a high concentration of photoreceptor (or light receptor) cells. The typical amount of lutein and zeaxanthin in the macula (called “macular pigment”) is quite low among Americans, due to low intake of leafy greens. The retina is the most metabolically active tissue in the body, and lutein and zeaxanthin provide antioxidant protection. Furthermore, macular pigment reduces glare, enhances contrast and visual

acuity, and acts as a filter to protect the macula from blue light damage. Blue light is a part of visible light (and sunlight), and electronic devices and energy-efficient lighting increase our exposure to it, especially in the evenings.

The idea that leafy greens benefit vision began to gain momentum about 20 years ago in research on age-related macular degeneration (AMD), a disease in which the photoreceptors in the macula are progressively damaged or lost, causing impaired vision. AMD is the leading cause of blindness worldwide. In 1994, a study on AMD found that higher total carotenoid intake was associated with lower risk of the disease, and lutein and zeaxanthin were the specific carotenoids most strongly associated with decreased risk. When looking at foods, higher intake of spinach and collard greens (rich sources of lutein and zeaxanthin) were also associated with decreased risk. More studies followed, many reporting that higher

lutein and zeaxanthin intake was linked to lower AMD risk. Supplementation trials in AMD patients also reported increases in macular pigment (more lutein and zeaxanthin in the eye) and improvement in visual performance.

These results sparked the marketing of eye health supplements containing lutein and zeaxanthin. However, previous findings on isolated carotenoid supplements should urge us to be cautious; several trials of beta-carotene supplements have reported an increased risk of lung cancer, cardiovascular disease or overall mortality. This is an unacceptable risk for a nutrient we can easily get from foods, which have no risk. These nutritional benefits are also enhanced by accompanying phytonutrients in green vegetables that have further benefits to the entire body.

The typical American diet is dangerously low in leafy greens, and the average adult’s intake of lutein + zeaxanthin from foods is a meager 1.5 mg per day. Just

a single cup of cooked spinach or kale contains more than 20 mg of lutein + zeaxanthin, and collards more than 14 mg; commercial vision supplements commonly contain 10-20 mg of lutein plus two mg or less zeaxanthin. So, a healthful diet actually supplies more of these beneficial nutrients for the eye than supplements do, and of course leafy greens have several advantages over supplements, in particular a huge variety of additional carotenoids and other beneficial nutrients, with no risk of excess.

Dr. Fuhrman is a #1 New York Times best-selling author and a board certified family physician specializing in lifestyle and nutritional medicine. The *Eat To Live Cookbook* offers over 200 unique disease-fighting delicious recipes and his newest book, *The End of Heart Disease*, offers a detailed plan to prevent and reverse heart disease using a nutrient-dense, plant-rich eating style. Visit his informative website at [DrFuhrman.com](http://DrFuhrman.com).

## Cottage Grove Sentinel

116 N. Sixth Street · P.O. Box 35 · Cottage Grove, OR 97424

**ADMINISTRATION:**  
JOHN BARTLETT, Regional Publisher.....942-3325 Ext. 203  
GARY MANLY, General Manager.....942-3325 Ext. 207  
publisher@cgsentinel.com

ROBIN REISER, Sales Representative.....942-3325 Ext. 203  
robin@cgsentinel.com  
TAMMY SAYRE, Sales Representative.....942-3325 Ext. 213  
tsayre@cgsentinel.com

**NEWS DEPARTMENT:**  
JON STINNETT, Editor.....942-3325 Ext. 212  
cgnews@cgsentinel.com

**SPORTS DEPARTMENT:**  
SAM WRIGHT, Sports Editor.....942-3325 Ext. 204  
sports@cgsentinel.com

**CUSTOMER SERVICE**  
CARLA WILLIAMS, Office Manager.....942-3325 Ext. 201  
billing@cgsentinel.com  
LEGALS.....942-3325 Ext. 200  
legals@cgsentinel.com

**GRAPHICS:**  
RON ANNIS, Graphics Manager

(USP 133880)

Subscription Mail Rates in Lane and Portions of Douglas Counties:  
Ten Weeks.....\$9.10  
One year.....\$36.15  
e-Edition year.....\$36.00

Rates in all other areas of United States: Ten Weeks \$11.70; one year, \$46.35, e-Edition \$43.00.  
In foreign countries, postage extra.

No subscription for less than Ten Weeks. Subscription rates are subject to change upon 30 days' notice. All subscriptions must be paid prior to beginning the subscription and are non-refundable.

Periodicals postage paid at Cottage Grove, Oregon.

Postmaster: Send address changes to P.O. Box 35, Cottage Grove, OR 97424.

**Local Mail Service:**

If you don't receive your Cottage Grove Sentinel on the Wednesday of publication, please let us know. Call 942-3325 between 8:30 a.m. and 5 p.m.

**Advertising ownership:**

All advertising copy and illustrations prepared by the Cottage Grove Sentinel become the property of the Cottage Grove Sentinel and may not be reproduced for any other use without explicit written prior approval.

**Copyright Notice:**

Entire contents ©2015 Cottage Grove Sentinel.

## Letters to the Editor policy

The Cottage Grove Sentinel receives many letters to the editor. In order to ensure that your letter will be printed, letters must be under 300 words and submitted by Friday at 5 p.m. Letters must be signed and must include an address, city and phone number or e-mail address for verification purposes. No anonymous letters will be printed. Letters must be of interest to local readers.

Personal attacks and name calling in response to letters are uncalled for and unnecessary.

If you would like to submit an opinion piece, Another View must be no longer than 600 words.

To avoid transcription errors, the Sentinel would prefer editorial and news content be sent electronically via email or electronic media. Hand written submissions will be accepted, but we may need to call to verify spelling, which could delay the publishing of the submission.