



Offbeat Oregon History

Legendary sinister video game

It's a scenario that would have chilled the blood of any parent of a teenager in the early 1980s:

One day when the Beaverton Mall opens for business, there's a new coin-op videogame cabinet tucked into the back recesses of the video arcade by Sunrise Photo. It's made by a computer company nobody's ever heard of before — a German outfit called "Sinnesloeschen."

Soon the kids are lining up to play the new, hypnotic game. They play as long as they can, as long as their supply of quarters holds out, and afterward stumble off through the mall in a trance-like state, sometimes unable even to remember their names and home addresses.

It soon becomes clear that Sinnesloeschen isn't a computer company at all, but a shadowy military-technology group. And the game isn't a game at all, but some kind of behavior-modification tool developed for an intelligence agency — the CIA perhaps — or, worse, the KGB. The game bores into the players' minds like a worm, leaving them helpless as heroin addicts. They can't remember their phone numbers, they can't remember who their parents are, but they always remember their way back to the tall, sinister black cabinet with the electric-green letters across the top that read, "POLYBIUS."

Every day or two, sinister-looking men in black suits and opaque Foster-Grant sunglasses appear in the arcade, pushing their way through the crowds of zombie children, inspecting the high-score chart and copying down information from a special output screen. Then, without a word to anyone, they disappear.

Then one day, a week or two later, just as dozens of parents are wondering what they have to do to save their children, a whole crew of the men in black appears at the arcade. Shooing away the crowds of disappointed zombie children, they load the machine on a hand truck and wheel it away. No one ever sees it, or them, again.

So ends the Legend of Polybius, the mysterious mind-controlling videogame.

The Legend of Polybius is an urban legend set in Oregon. According to the story, these mysterious game cabinets were deployed

in a tiny handful of obscure video arcades in the suburbs of Portland, and used to test videogame-delivered mind control algorithms. When their effect on local kids got too obvious to keep a lid on, the experiment was halted and the mysterious agents picked the games up and disappeared with them.

There remains a possibility — a tiny one, really too small to measure — that the legend is true. But none of the vast crowds of children, or their parents, have ever come forward, and the name of the company — Sinnesloeschen, apparently a clumsy portmanteau of two German words meaning "Senses" and "Erase" — is a dead end. "What H.P. Lovecraft's Necronomicon is for books, Polybius is for videogames," writes Portland historian Joe Streckert. "The legendary creation is a character in and of itself, and any hapless humans curious enough to open its pages (or press its start button) will soon find their minds warped by the secrets contained therein."

The legend of Polybius doesn't appear in any written records until about 17 years after it supposedly happened, in a 1998 forum post on the coinop.org Website. The anonymous poster claimed to have discovered the games' operating software, and recapped the zombie-players-and-men-in-black story.

After that, the story bounced around here and there on the Internet for a few years before getting picked up (and thoroughly debunked) by the online mythbusting site Snopes.com. And after that, suddenly Polybius was all over the Internet.

Several different people, with varying degrees of non-credibility, stepped forward to claim involvement in the darksome game. Several other people built fake versions of the game and tried to pass them off as the real thing. And one joker even built a fake Website for Sinnesloeschen, the shadowy German company that supposedly made it.

But Polybius probably hit its pop-culture peak when a Polybius cabinet appeared on an episode of The Simpsons — the episode titled "Please Homer Don't Hammer 'Em," from September 2006. It has the words "PROPERTY OF U.S. GOVERNMENT" stenciled on its front.

Ultimately, Polybius is a fun sort of legend — the kind of thing that's almost, but not completely, certain to be untrue. But, like the tall tales of waterfront smuggler-shanghaier Bunco Kelley and the equally unlikely legends of lost gold mines and buried pirate loot, its contribution to Oregon's history is not much diminished by the fact that it's most likely fiction.

(Sources: Streckert, Joseph. The Legend of Polybius (Kindle Edition). Portland: Amazon, 2015; Dunning, Brian. "Polybius: Video Game of Death." Skeptoid Podcast, Ep. 362, 5-14-2013)

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A word from Councilwoman Slay

Throughout my time on council my priority has been IMPACT. I feel compelled to focus on things and people that impact our community, whether negative or positive.

Brent Czaban plant manager at Weyerhaeuser, Cottage Grove's biggest local employer, made a huge impact when he announced Thursday that beginning in March we will see a radical change in shift posture.

What does that mean exactly? It means that day shift in both the mill and the planer will be curtailed, and hundreds of employees will be affected. After years of working towards the sought after day shift positions, these people will suddenly go from working during the week to working Friday thru Monday.

To put this into a little clearer perspective, the families that work opposite shifts here to avoid leaving their child with someone else, will now need to make other arrangements. The single parent who works while their child is in school, will now pay daycare for half of their work week and rarely see their child. The amazing community members who volunteer their time here, the consumers who spend their money here during the week, and even the godly who preach for us on Sunday will no longer be available to do these things. This will impact our entire community.

The shift posture is not the only thing changing at Weyerhaeuser, the mood itself is somber, people are frustrated, angry and yes even afraid. For many it is just not possible to make the new shift work, and after years of dedication will be forced to seek employment elsewhere, somewhere outside of our community.

I am writing this strictly to show support to my co workers, some of them are my friends, my family and even my constituents. They are all facing a very unexpected upheaval here at work, and I am asking the community to support them during this strenuous time.

Reach out to them if you know them, pray for them even if you don't and please respect the fact that many people in our very small community are facing some difficult life choices after years of stability. I ask that you show kindness and patience to those who may seem rude or short tempered. They will be fighting unimaginable personal battles in the coming months and will need our support more than ever.

Let me be clear this is not a lay off, no one is being fired, with the new 13 million dollar project that will stream line production, it is simply a "change in shift posture". This change is being made to gain an additional nine hours of maintenance time a week. Weyerhaeuser could curtail a less desirable weekend shift but feels the additional 9 hours is worth the sacrifices their employees will make.

I have always realized Weyerhaeuser is a huge corporation, and profits matter. We at Cottage have almost always made money and stood a foot above others in the industry. Our safety records, our commitment to a quality product, and our dedication to our mill has been proven time and time again. These records are not achieved with machines alone, they are achieved by PEOPLE, people taking pride in what they do, and being proud of where they are. In my almost 13 years of employment I have been proud to say I work for Weyerhaeuser, until today. Today I am saddened and disappointed that for the first time in my career Cottage Grove Weyerhaeuser is behaving like a corporation rather than the small town sawmill we have come to know.



Tomatoes and heart health: the low down

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For The Sentinel

Carotenoids are a family of over six hundred phytochemicals, including alpha-carotene, beta-carotene, lycopene, lutein and zeaxanthin. Carotenoids are abundant in green and yellow-orange vegetables and fruits and help to defend the body's tissues against oxidative damage, which is a natural byproduct of our metabolic processes; oxidative damage from free radicals contributes to chronic diseases and aging.¹

Lycopene is the signature carotenoid of the tomato. The lycopene in the American diet is 85 percent derived from tomatoes.³ Lycopene is found circulating in the blood and also concentrates in the male reproductive system, hence its protective effects against prostate cancer.⁴ In the skin, lycopene helps to prevent UV damage from the sun, protecting against skin cancer.⁵ Lycopene is known for its anti-cancer properties, but did you know that lycopene has also been intensively studied for its beneficial cardiovascular effects?⁶

Many observational studies have made a connection between higher blood lycopene and lower risk of heart attack. For example, a study in men found that low serum lycopene was associated with increased plaque in the carotid artery and triple the risk of cardiovascular events compared to higher levels.⁶⁻⁸ In a separate study, women were split into four groups (quartiles) according to their blood lycopene levels; women in the top three quartiles were 50% less likely to have cardiovascular disease compared to the lowest quartile.⁹

A 2004 analysis from the Physicians' Health Study data found a 39% decrease in stroke risk in men with the highest blood levels of lycopene.¹⁰ Data from an ongoing study in Finland has strengthened these findings with similar results. One-thousand men had their blood carotenoid levels tested and were followed for 12 years. Those with the highest lycopene levels had the lowest risk of stroke — they were 55% less likely to have a stroke than those with the lowest lycopene levels.¹¹ Previous data from this same group of men found that higher lycopene levels were associated with lower risk of heart attack as well.¹² A meta-analysis of 12 trials also found that daily supplemental tomato products (approximately 1 cup of tomato juice or 3-4 tbsp. of tomato paste) reduced LDL cholesterol by 10% — this effect is comparable to low doses of statin drugs (with no risk of side effects, of course).¹³

Of course, lycopene is not the only nutrient in tomatoes — tomatoes are also rich in vitamins C

and E, beta-carotene, and flavonol antioxidants just to name a few.³ Single antioxidants usually don't exert their protective effects alone; we learned this lesson from clinical trials of beta-carotene, vitamin C, and vitamin E supplements, which did not reduce cardiovascular disease risk.¹⁴ It is the interactions between phytochemicals in the complex synergistic network contained in plant foods that is responsible for their health effects, and this is something that we cannot replicate in a pill. Out of all the common dietary carotenoids, lycopene has the most potent antioxidant power, but combinations of carotenoids are even more effective than any single carotenoid — they work synergistically.¹⁵ Blood lycopene, as used in many of these studies, is simply a marker for high tomato product intake; similarly high alpha-carotene and beta-carotene levels are markers of high green and yellow-orange fruit and vegetable intake. Colorful fruits and vegetables provide significant protection.

In a given year, a typical American will eat about 92 pounds of tomatoes.¹⁶ Enjoy those 92 pounds and even add some more. Add fresh, juicy raw tomatoes to your salad, diced or unsulphured sun-dried tomatoes to soups, and enjoy homemade tomato sauces and soups. Be mindful of the sodium content of ketchup and other tomato products — choose the low sodium or no salt added versions. No salt added, unsulphured dried tomatoes are also great. Diced and crushed tomatoes in glass jars are preferable to those in cans, to avoid the endocrine disruptor BPA. Also keep in mind that carotenoids are absorbed best when accompanied by healthy fats — for example, in a salad with a seed or nut-based dressing.^{17, 18} Lycopene is also more absorbable when tomatoes are cooked, so enjoy a variety of both raw and cooked tomatoes in your daily diet.^{19, 20}

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. Submit your questions and comments about this column directly to newsquestions@drfuhrman.com.

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News from beyond The Grove

Lorane Grange meets this Thursday, February 2 at 7:00 pm. Last Saturday, they enjoyed a wonderful turnout for their spaghetti dinner and bingo. Forty ate and 23 played bingo, but no one won the progressive blackout. So, next month it will be even greater. Plan on Saturday, February 25 to come out for another great evening of dinner and bingo in Lorane.

Crow HS freshmen spirit gear fundraiser has been extended until February 6.

It is student designed and quite appealing. CHS student scholarship applications are out and due between now and April. Check with the office.

Oregon Battle of Books (OBOB) regional battles begin February 15.

Lorane Christian Church invites you to bring your family and friends to a no host Friendship Dinner on Sunday, February 12 at Sizzler's on Gateway Boulevard in Springfield. It all begins at

5:30 pm. Come enjoy this evening with friends and neighbors.

CAL School Board meets at Lorane Grange this month on February 16. Executive session begins at 6:30 and the open board meeting begins at 7 pm.

For those community members interested, there are three fireboard positions coming open. Check with Lorane Fire Department.

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.