



Betty Kaiser

Dear readers,

I don't know about you, but I'm worried about this year's ongoing bad news. Especially news of the thousands of people who have died or are suffering from COVID-19. The heartbreak in families of losing loved ones, is overwhelming and life as we knew it has become depressing.

How bad is it? Well, I used to listen to the radio every morning to get the weather report. Now I listen to learn the rules of the day about social distancing, masking or not masking, quarantines, how many have died, etc.

In writing this column today, I said, "Enough al-

Betty Kaiser: Chatterbox

An old-fashioned Christmas

ready!" I need to share an old-fashioned good news story. News from a time when life was not easy but it was simpler. A time when it was Christmas and you didn't have to worry about whether or not Amazon was going to run out of presents!

So here goes! Nineteen years ago in 2002, I interviewed Marvel Stephen, then 82, a freelance writer here in Cottage Grove. She had contacted me and wondered if I was interested in her story. You bet I was!

Sitting in her quiet living room she said quietly, "Now is a nice time." She was originally a country girl who always wanted to be a writer. Instead, she married, had children and did motherly things for her daughter Pam's Brownie Troop and her son Stuart's activities.

Along the way, a friend of hers introduced her to writing contests about different products that paid winners

good money. Her biggest prize was a trip to Miami Beach. Later she would write a weekly column for the Dead Mountain Echo newspaper in Oakridge and other magazines.

At the time of our interview, her husband has passed on and Marvel was in remission from lymphoma. However, she was writing again and selling her stories to magazines. She had contacted me to share one of her stories that was prominently featured in a beautiful, full color edition of "Country Woman Christmas 2002."

Her true story sweetly and accurately captured life in a bygone era, when gifts were homemade and love was often the glue that held them together. Here's an excerpt:

"The year Papa decided I should learn to ski, deep snows covered the land, the buildings, even the towering trees on our small farm



in Montana. Our rustic house was bursting with excitement and activity. Christmas was only a few weeks away.

"December's early sunsets urged us to finish our chores and supper quickly so we could get to work on our Christmas gifts. Having recently mastered the art of making French knots, I chose to embroider dish towels cut from flour sacks. Mother was tatting lovely lace to trim her presents and Papa was creating a

pair of skis for me.

"Working close together in our cozy kitchen made it impossible not to be aware of what each other was making — but we were clever at pretending we didn't know.

"No one mentioned anything about Papa crafting skis for me, but I knew what he was doing."

Her story goes on to describe the excitement of Christmas morning and the failure of the homemade skis. Somehow, the tips of the skis had straightened

out and Marvel tumbled down the slopes, instead of gliding down them. Papa apologized profusely, but Marvel only remembers sighing, "Oh, Papa. This is the best Christmas I've ever had."

"I wanted to say more as I put my small mittened hand in his large gloved one, but I couldn't find the words to tell him he'd already given the greatest gift of all...his love."

Thank you, Marvel. I shook my head in wonder then and I do so today. Love and gratitude are the story of Christmas and our interactions all year long. They will go on in spite of COVID-19 and other depressions. Keep looking up and God bless us everyone!

MERRY CHRISTMAS!

Contact Betty Kaiser's Chatterbox at

942-1317 or email bchat-ty@bettykaiser.com



COURTESY PHOTO

A revitalization grant helped with the remodeling project of downtown's Bank Building.

'Granted,' it's a great idea

Main Street Revitalization Grant could spell success for an area business

CONTRIBUTED BY JON STINNETT
DOWNTOWN COTTAGE GROVE
PROGRAM ADMINISTRATOR

Of the many benefits that Downtown Cottage Grove can offer the community, the Main Street Revitalization Grant has to be near the top of the list.

Recently, the State Historic Preservation Office of Oregon announced that it will fund the Main Street Revitalization Grant in 2022-23 after a Covid-related hiatus in 2020-21. The grant application process will take place this coming spring, and it could end with a Cottage Grove business or non-profit receiving up to a \$200,000 grant for a project that aligns with the Main Street program's goals.

A nationwide program, Main Street works to revitalize downtowns through efforts to promote economic vitality, enhance a community's design, promote activities downtown and organize its revitalization efforts. Main Street Cottage Grove has been part of the program for several years, and last year, Main Street merged with the Economic and Busi-

ness Improvement District to form Downtown Cottage Grove.

Projects that will be chosen for the Main Street Revitalization Grant must be located within the boundaries of Main Street Cottage Grove, which include the downtown Historic District and areas to the north and south on Highway 99 and east and west on Main Street. A successful project will involve acquiring, rehabilitating, or building structures in that area. It must also "facilitate community revitalization that will lead to private investment, job creation or retention, establishing or expanding viable businesses, or creating a stronger tax base."

Property owners who wish to apply for the grant "must demonstrate the past or prospective capacity to work with project leaders in designated local communities or downtown Main Street districts." Most recently, Main Street Cottage Grove applied for a Revitalization Grant on behalf of Len Blackstone, owner of downtown Cottage Grove's Bank Building. The grant helped Blackstone finish the building, which is now thriving with upstairs apartments, a pizzeria and popular coworking space on the ground floor.

Got a project that the Main Street Revitalization Grant can help make possible? Reach out to us at downtowncottagegrove@gmail.com or by calling 541-731-9284 to learn more about the application process. We'll be reviewing grant proposals in January to prepare for an anticipated March application deadline.

LORANE COUNTRY NEWS

CONTRIBUTED BY LIL THOMPSON
FOR THE SENTINEL

- MERRY CHRISTMAS, everyone!
- The students have been enjoying this week off and next week, too. They return to class on Jan. 3 at the regular time.
- Several of the wrestling students are doing extremely well, taking first and third places. Crow High School wrestles next on Dec. 27 against Thurston at 6 p.m.

- Cougar Mat Club will be raffling off three amazing, custom-made tables made by local Shawn Ott. Tickets will still be sold at their meet on Dec. 27 with the winners drawn during the meet.

- A reminder to all Lorane Grangers: The next meeting is the third Thursday of January, on Jan. 20 at 7 p.m. Their next dessert and Bingo is scheduled for Saturday, Jan. 29.

- Wishing each and everyone a very merry and blessed Christmas. Just count your many blessings, even if you're alone. May God bless you.

6-day weather forecast

FRIDAY	SATURDAY
42° 36° Rain	39° 32° Rain/Snow
SUNDAY	MONDAY
37° 33° Snow Showers	39° 34° Rain/Snow Showers
TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY
39° 30° Rain/Snow Showers	36° 26° Snow Showers

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