

AROUND ABOUT

with Justine Weatherford

February has become a great month for changing holiday dates. A few places began celebrating Lincoln's birthday on Monday, Feb. 5, others held with the usual Feb. 12, which happened to be on a Monday, too. Valentine Day and Oregon's birthday thankfully seem to stay on Feb. 14, but I personally got confused and decided that came on Thursday instead of Wednesday this year.

This week many calendars tell us that Monday, Feb. 19, was Washington's birthday, but history books say he was born on February 22. It is pleasing to see that Heppner merchants are prompting a Real True Washington Sale beginning today and continuing tomorrow and Saturday.

Now I notice that the changing of holiday dates seems slated to continue next month, too. The Catholic ladies in neighboring Condon have announced that they will have their annual St. Patrick's dinner and celebration on March 11.

How nice to learn from Heppner's St. Patrick's Church Altar Society President Marian Bronson that Heppner's celebration of its special saint's day will be on Saturday, March 17, as it should be. The Altar Society ladies are hard at work on their plans for another tremendous Irish Stew family night.

They would like to collect many white plastic Cool Whip bowls, in the large eight ounce size, to use for their super stew. They say they can use some of the smaller size for children's portions. If you can help, take bowls to either Eleanor Gonty at the Gonty Shop on Gale Street or to Pat Gentry at the Bank of Eastern Oregon. The lids are not needed.

Last week at least three community-type meetings were superimposed on the regular winter month schedule of second-week-of-the-month meetings. It is pretty difficult to try to get more than three or four evening meetings during a week and an evening class, too. Also, I'm finding several good TV series that make staying home more attractive.

Hope you noticed Anna Mae Steagall's good letters in the February Ruralite which tell of her son Tommy's interesting hobby of collecting calling cards. Anna Mae thanks people from many parts of the world for responding to Tommy's request for the little cards everyone used to have and use, but which only salesmen and politicians make much use of now.

Lois Allyn, Lexington, has explained to me how the new phone books are being distributed in our south county. Lois, Merlyn Robinson, Anna Schwarzin and Mark Peterson are employed by a distributing company that is contracted by the phone company. They are not phone company employees. Some people are receiving phone books through the mail. Most of the books in the area will be in homes and businesses by the time you read this. You will note that C.C. and Delpha Jones are not listed. Somebody goofed on that.

Last week Judge D.O. Nelson was explaining the county's efforts to warn folks of the dangerous places on the roads in the area which are breaking up from the effects of severe freezing and thawing. He said that the limited number of bomb-type flares had been put out and that very soon a great many of these flares were removed and some of them were broken up. Somehow this doesn't sound like a "kid prank." It smacks of adult vandalism and of citizens interfering with a branch of their government that is trying to help and protect them.

Why does anyone want to collect road flares? It should be hard for them to sleep realizing that some family could really be hurt because of their vandalism. All good citizens and flare-buying taxpayers ought to really try to apprehend these thieves. How about substantial fines or even jail terms for them?

By now you have read much about the spectacular total eclipse which is coming here next Monday, Feb. 26. I heard County School Superintendent Doherty mention that the timing, 8:15 to 8:20 a. m., is posing problems for our schools. Many children will be on buses or walking to school about then. Everyone is warned not to look directly at the eclipse because this could cause severe damage to eyes.

Sunglasses, smoked glass and other filters will not provide proper protection. I have not heard exactly how the schools are going to solve the problem of helping everyone witness and appreciate the unusual and rare phenomenon without any harm to any eyes. Surely parents will help their children understand the situation.

All astronomers are very excited about the eclipse because they can make certain studies only during solar eclipses. Years ago, for example, some astronomers thought that a small planet might exist between Mercury and the sun, but they needed an eclipse to test their theory. Investigations done during the eclipse showed that there was no such planet and disproved their theory.

The great Albert Einstein predicted that the effect of gravity caused light from stars beyond the sun to deviate from a straight path as it passed the sun. This deviation would cause an apparent change in the position of stars that can be seen near the sun during an eclipse. Careful study during an eclipse proved that his theory was true.

By observing the spectra of the corona and the chromosphere or outer layers of the sun much has been learned. For example, such studies during an eclipse revealed that the corona has a temperature of over 2,000,000 degrees Fahrenheit according to R. William Shaw who wrote of this in World Book.

Solar eclipses occur in series. Each eclipse in the same series occurs in a cycle of time called the saros which equals 18 years and 11 and one-third days. The ancient Chaldeans discovered the saros, or pattern or repetition of eclipses. A total eclipse can be seen only in certain parts of the world, and its path is never wider than 167 miles.

The shadow of the moon, as it comes between the earth and the sun sweeps across the earth at speeds ranging from 1,100 to 5,000 miles an hour. The eclipse may last as long as 7 minutes and 40 seconds. The longest total eclipse of modern times took place in June, 1955, and lasted 7 minutes and 7.8 seconds. Next Monday's eclipse will be less than one-fourth that long during its totality.

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