

The INDEPENDENT

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Opinion

Ten years has gone by much too rapidly

This month, *The INDEPENDENT* has completed ten years in business and, though we'd rather see what the future holds, this may be a good time to take a brief glance backward.

It has been about nine years since the front page was dominated by pictures of four of the worst looking buildings in town. Accompanying the photos was a question: "Does Vernonia have to look like this?" The stimulus for that tactic was a city government that didn't care enough about the town (or the people) to even want it cleaned up.

It took some time, but now Vernonia has a city government that functions properly—most of the time (but who's perfect?). The city's economic base is still inadequate, but it's in far better shape than it was ten years ago.

The INDEPENDENT has chronicled the building of the water filtration plant and suffered along with the rest of the town during the sewer system rehabilitation.

When the community replaced the high school stadium lights — poles and all — at a cost to the school district of only \$3,000, it was a real pleasure to report people's efforts.

We fought along with other citizens to keep Metro from siting a dump at Bacona. Then worked with others to bring the linear park to Vernonia. It isn't all paved, yet, and the extension of the trail across Rock Creek to Vernonia Lake isn't done, but it will be accomplished.

This has been a great vantage point to see how the Fire District has developed into a professional operation. It's been equally good to see how both Vernonia and Mist fire districts have benefited from gas field royalties with both equipment and buildings.

It was great fun to be part of the action when Vernonia hosted Cycle Oregon. It was also profitable for the community.

The long, difficult and sometimes disheartening efforts to bring natural gas to Vernonia finally bore fruit. This was another true community effort.

The next sentence may seem silly, but here it is: It's a pleasure to go to the cemetery. The beautification efforts and excellent caretaking have created a truly beautiful area.

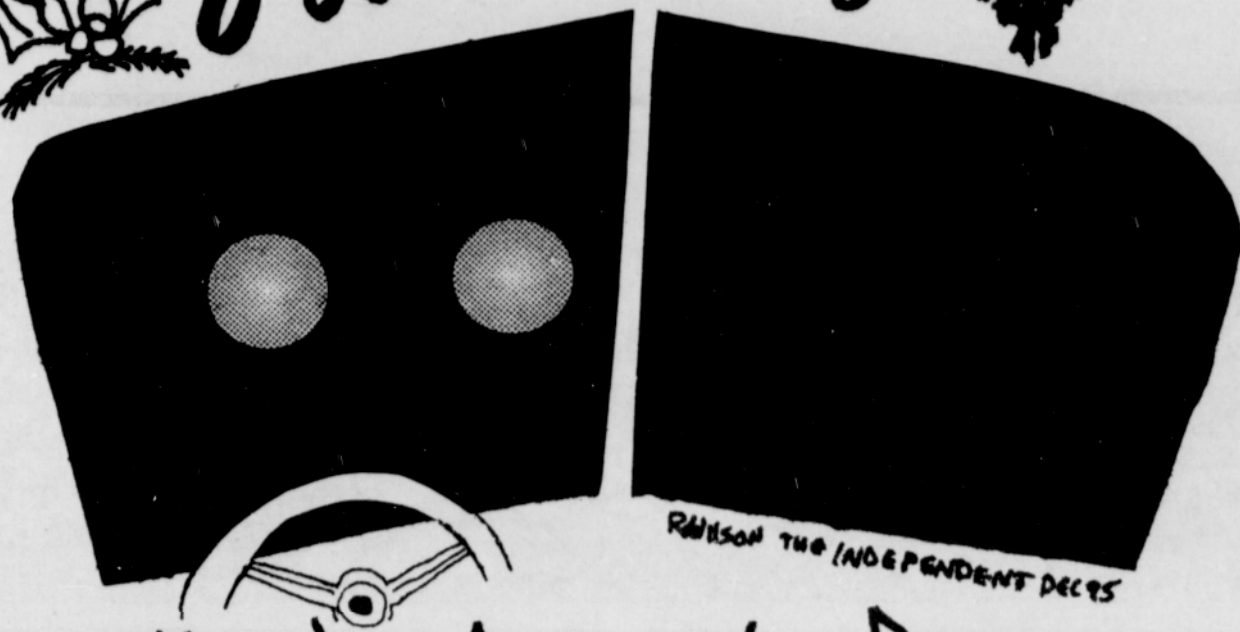
Now, after several years of trying to make it happen, *The INDEPENDENT* will be on hand to report on the highway realignment south of town. With luck, that job will be done by next fall and we can stop taking pictures of accidents at the bridge.

Watching Vernonia Pride has been wonderful. This is more of a movement than an organization, and it works! If there was ever any doubt, take a look at the outstanding Christmas decorations this year.

A last thought. The city started toward professionalism when it decided to hire an administrator. Mike McAlvage was a good choice because his ideas and enthusiasm are contagious. He's leaving now, but we can honestly say "Thanks, Mike, for combining government and enthusiasm."

Who knows what the next ten years will hold?

Have a Safe and Joyful Holiday 1996



Ike Says

By Dale Webb, member
Izaak Walton League, Nehalem Valley Chapter

Well, another elk season is past. Another bull is in the freezer and another lesson was learned. This year's elk season was kind of slow, locally, in the first season; the second season started out slowly but seemed to pick up steam after the first four days. I didn't see the display of horns in downtown Vernonia (in front of the taverns) that I used to see, but maybe the elk hunters are a kinder and more sensitive bunch of guys these days. I saw only one bull in the back of a pickup this year, while driving through town. This is a far cry from what could be seen a few years back.

It will be interesting to see the harvest report from this year's season. I bet it will be around 400 bulls for the Saddle Mountain Unit, which is about half what it should be. Of course the three cow elk I saw laying on the ground on the first day of the cow season, while driving home from work, wouldn't have anything to do with it. Would it?

I finally managed to chase down a bull this year — after running all the fat off of him. It sure is frustrating to hear horns crashing through the brush, yet not be able to see even a hair. I think my partners and I ran this one herd around so much that they finally had to stop and eat or starve to death. I caught up to my elk on the Tuesday of the second season, just as the rains were starting to hit our area.

The elk were feeding in a salal patch just over the hump of a hogback ridge. I stood there listening for a good ten minutes, trying to figure out which way the elk, less than fifty yards away, were heading. Every time I thought they were going to the right I would hear one moving to the left; when I moved left they seemed to be moving to the right. All this time I couldn't see a single elk through a dense cover of jack firs and tall salal bushes. Finally, noticing a little hump that would offer a slightly better vantage point, I moved to my left. After a painfully slow sneak to the hump, I was about 20 yards from an elk that was hidden in a cove of tall salal. I could hear it, but couldn't see it. This, to me, is what elk hunting is all about. The pull of the trigger just brings a successful hunt to a close, though not always. This is where the lesson was learned. For a

guy who can recite from memory where his bullet will hit from a dead-on hold out to 500 yards, it's amazing that I forgot where it would hit at 20 yards! After reaching the elevated vantage point, I finally saw an elk and, lo and behold, the first thing I saw was horns. Of course I didn't see enough of the horns to just pull up and shoot. This elk was about 45 yards away, yet I could hear that other elk just in front of me at 20 yards (boy, the adrenaline was pumping now!). Finally the bull moved forward and all I could see was a five-point rack with nothing to shoot at (things were really getting exciting). The bull finally moved a little forward and offered me a shot at the top of the neck and shoulder.

I couldn't stand it any longer (I just knew the animal in front of me was going to pick me up on radar). Standing in a cleaner strip of timber with my left leg against a rotten log, I was afraid to move too much or the elk would see me. I had a problem with a second-growth tree about 20 yards in front of me that restricted my shooting lane (along with all the other sticks and limbs). Well, I thought, if I just lean hard to my left and turn my gun on its side, I'll get past that tree. So I pulled down on the bull's neck and squeezed old Betsy off. The bull seemed to disappear behind the tree, as the rifle recoiled and obscured my vision. I took two big steps into the clear while chambering another round and, all of a sudden, a bull elk jumped right out in front of me at about 20 yards.

I could see the whites of his over-sized eyes as he froze in his tracks. My mind whirled as I tried to figure out what had happened. Was this the same bull I had just shot at? It was possible he ran toward me. I hadn't seen an elk on the ground as I got in the clear and he should have been down from a clean neck shot. Was he wounded and standing in front of me? My mind finally said it doesn't get any better than this; put this bull down and, with a shot to the neck, the bull was dead.

After making sure the bull was down for the count, I started wondering if I had shot two bulls. I started tracing hoof prints and, sure enough, I shot a different bull than I had shot at first. I killed the animal that was 20 yards in front of me hidden in tall salal. I started track-

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