

The INDEPENDENT

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Opinion

Some corrections, some more thanks

Fatigue and stress do funny things to a body. One of those things is not knowing what day it is. How many people have been saying, "What date is this?" Nearly a month after the flood, there are still many of us who can't keep track of the date.

Nevertheless, we really do know the peak of the flood was on Feb. 8, not Feb. 12 as printed in the last issue of *The INDEPENDENT*.

Another error occurred because of unusual, or unfamiliar usage of terminology. When told that the Columbia County 9-1-1 system was "flooded", we assumed that water was in the basement of the courthouse in St. Helens. In this case, however, "flooded" had a more specific meaning, i.e., it meant that a particular part of a telephone system couldn't be used. The 9-1-1 system was working, but couldn't reach Vernonia by telephone. Thanks to 9-1-1 administrator Sally Smith for explaining; we appreciate it.

None of that changed the fact that local problems had to be handled locally. The lack of communication was a problem and, if ham radio operators hadn't been available, it would have been worse. A microwave relay system would be better than telephones for an area like this.

Another "system" needs to be mentioned. Mike and Marcella Seager have done a great job of keeping people up-to-date via Vernonia CATV. Their quick response and willingness to update information as soon as it was available has been invaluable, both during and after the crisis. It's easy to take these things for granted, but the system is only as good as the people running it.

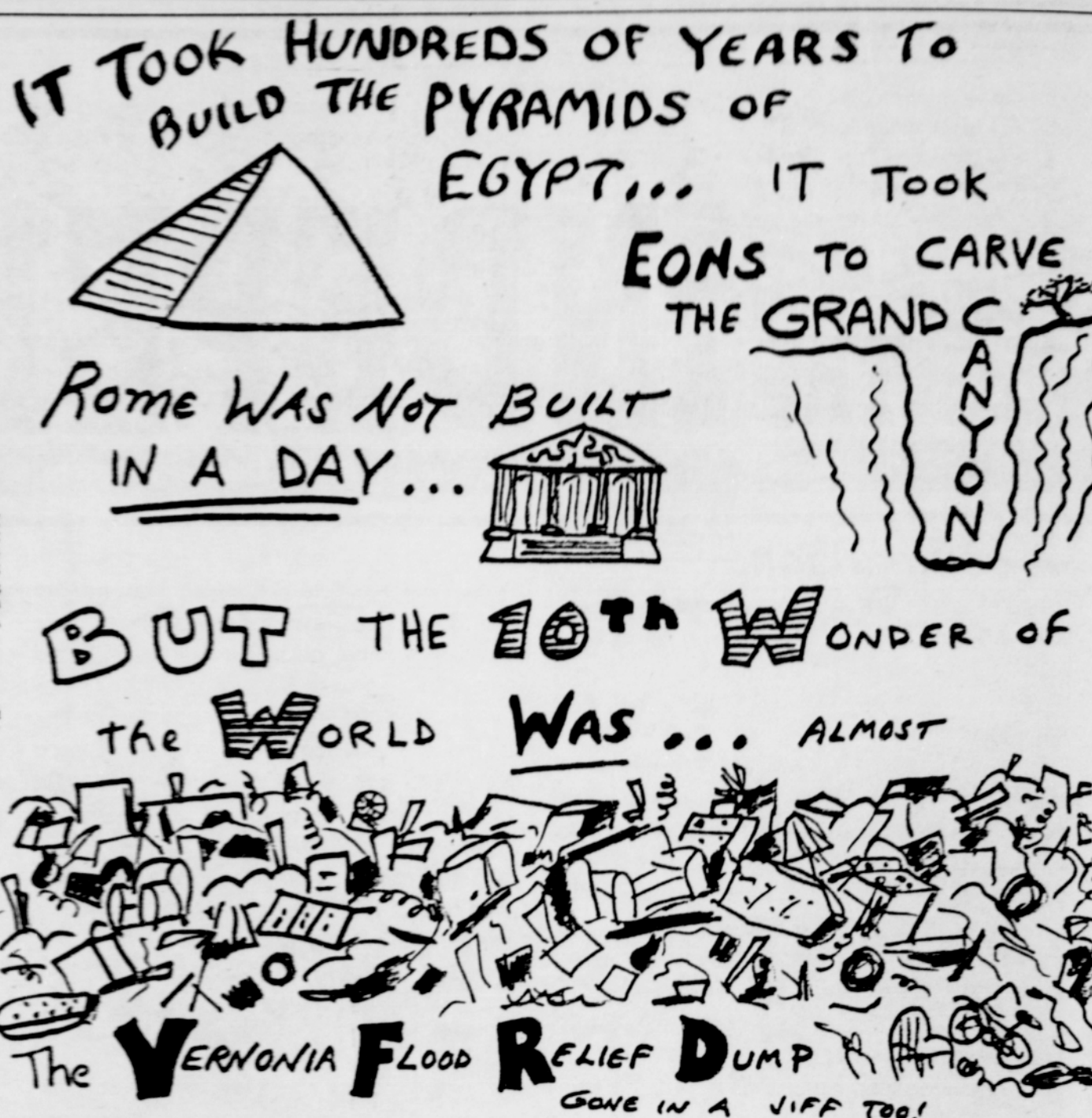
Help is still being offered

The recent generous gift from Intel, of computers for the high school, is a reminder that while many needs are being met, there are many people who feel uncomfortable at accepting donations. Genny Fisher has asked *The INDEPENDENT* to remind folks that they aren't being offered welfare. The donors who have responded with food, clothing, linens, paint and building supplies, cash and more, understand that welfare doesn't fill all needs. For instance, there are very good clothes for adults and children at the Vernonia Grange, along with many other items, and they have been donated by people who want their gifts to be used.

Information wanted.....

The INDEPENDENT is trying to get the names of all donors - individuals, businesses or agencies - who have helped or are still helping people in the Nehalem Valley. The lists are fragmented because some have given to the schools, some to the city, some to the Red Cross, some to churches, etc.

If you know of anyone helping with money, goods or labor, please send us their names. We want to include them in a planned "thank you" from all of us.



Ike Says

By David Michael Jones, member
Izaak Walton League, Nehalem Valley Chapter

It seems appropriate to deal with the recent flood event and to list how it affected the fish in the streams. First, we probably lost a lot of our spring chinook spawn in the Nehalem system and other coastal streams. Although the coho spawn in the smaller streams they were flooded with silt and probably took a hard hit. If the flood waters and drift didn't tear out the redds, the silt and sedimentation can adversely affect the eggs or fry in the following ways—smother or suffocate the eggs in the gravel, seal the alevins in the gravel after they hatch (oxygen may be able to get in but fish can't get out), and/or hide food when they come out of the gravel. The silt can also make it difficult for a fish to breathe and can cause clubbing on the gill surfaces.

I have had reports that the logging roads held up well, and in many instances better than the county and state roads. This is a plus for forest practices in favor of the fish and those of us downstream from those roads and lands. I would like to thank the logging companies that opened their roads for public use during this time of stress and emergency.

Culverts. Some failed during or after the flood and many will be weakened and have to be replaced. It is required that new culverts let both adult fish and juveniles pass. The requirements are for a zero-percent slope, and the bottom of the culvert should be at low stream level. It is best to wait until low water to do the replacements if possible. One reason our coho are in such trouble is that, in many instances, they couldn't even get into a stream if they wanted to, because the lower end of the culvert has a fall of feet and not inches. It is, of course, a lot harder for the cutthroat trout, which are a good deal smaller than coho salmon. I will list the phone number and address of the Oregon Dept. of Fish and Wildlife biologist at the end of this column if anyone

has questions or needs advice about a culvert or any other concerns.

One thing that can happen to a culvert or bridge is that the drift can pile up against it and blow out the structure or road. The trees, logs, chunks, and whatever floated down river, should be left in place. For one thing, there is a liability involved. If key logs are pulled out of a jam or if most of it is cut for firewood, it is no longer a natural event and the person doing the cutting is responsible. In other words, if the next high water carries it downstream and it blocks a culvert and blows out a road, this wouldn't be a natural event. During a natural event storm, the log jams will help to slow the stream down and actually help with flood control. (This is also a reason why channelization is not good for a stream; there are no corners to slow down the water.)

Large woody debris. Large woody debris in the stream is good for fish and is what nature intended. Usually the root wad is upstream and the top of the tree is downstream. Often a couple of small pools will form on the downstream ends of the root wad and the trunk of the tree will stabilize it. The top and branches provide cover and protection and give escape cover for the smaller fish. One reason the "Ikes" are planting cedar and other conifers in the riparian zones of our rivers is that the conifers will last a lot longer in the stream than the aders that are the remaining trees in the riparian zones along many of our streams.

Anyone with questions can contact the Fish and Wildlife biologists at Hamlet Rt./Box 360, Seaside, OR 97138. The phone number is (503) 738-7066 and the Fax is (503) 738-6929. They can also give you information on a cost share and tax advantaged program to install screens on water diversions.

Help Wanted: Volunteers are needed to help plant trees in riparian zones. The trees will be coming this week. Call me at 429-9251 if you can help.

Don't forget possible property and income tax relief

People whose real property or personal property was damaged by the recent flooding are reminded that tax re-

lief is available on both the county and federal levels.

Call your county assessor for an application to prorate

your property taxes. Casualty losses may be deductible on your federal income tax. To find out, call the IRS or your accountant.