

The INDEPENDENT

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Opinion

Missing checks illustrate problems in postal service

Checks mailed to Columbia County, most of them mailed from locations within the county, apparently have been sent by the U.S. Postal Service to Colombia, a country in South America. We say "apparently" because there is no actual proof of what happened to those checks, but employees in the Portland regional service center promptly say "Computer error," as though that were an excuse for mishandling mail.

If this were the only problem with the Portland service center, it would be forgivable, in spite of the magnitude of this foul-up. Unfortunately, the service from the regional center is frequently a mess, and the "reason" given is usually "computer error."

Before the postal service became so "efficient," mail sent from one Columbia County location to another never left the county. For instance, a letter sent from Vernonia to St. Helens went to the Scappoose Post Office, which sent it on to St. Helens. It never took longer than one full day for delivery.

Since the USPS eliminated the old-fashioned ways for the sake of efficiency, a letter sent from Vernonia to St. Helens still goes to Scappoose, then it goes to Portland so it can be efficiently scanned by a computer and efficiently routed back to Scappoose, then St. Helens. This is usually accomplished within an efficient three days.

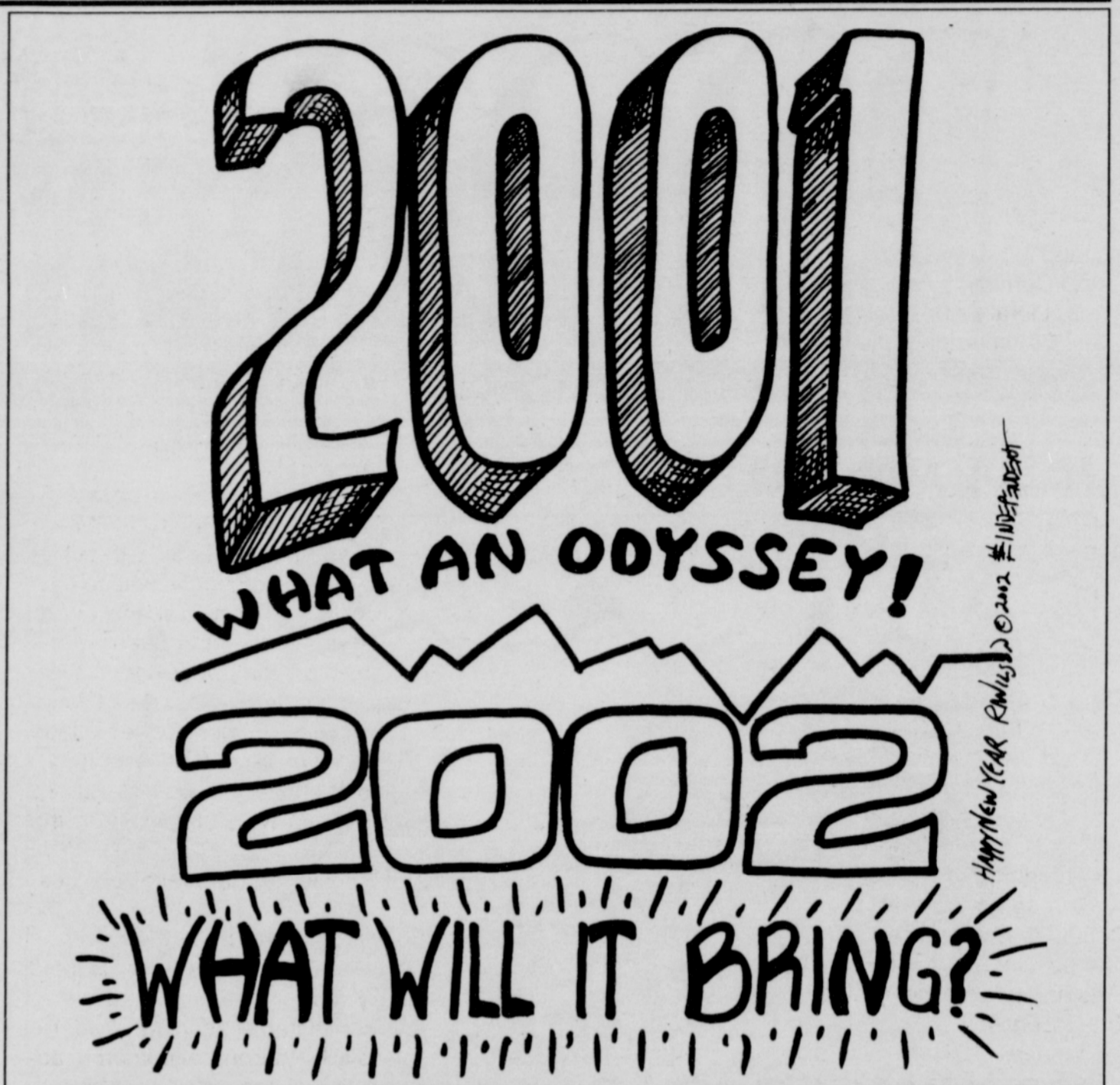
Another element in the drive for efficiency is the drive, itself. The old-fashioned way required traveling 28 miles to Scappoose then eight miles to St. Helens. Now a letter goes 28 miles to Scappoose, 20-some efficient miles to Portland, then 20-some miles back to Scappoose and eight miles to St. Helens.

The USPS needs a new motto for the computer age: GIGO. Garbage In, Garbage Out applies as well to systems as it does to computers.

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This issue of *The INDEPENDENT* marks the beginning of our 17th year of operations.

Vernonia, Mist, Banks, the whole area, have undergone some remarkable changes in the past sixteen years. We have been privileged to observe and report on them and, sometimes, participate in the process. We hope to continue serving our community with the information that is needed for an informed citizenry.



Ike Says...

By Dale Webb, member
Nehalem Valley Chapter Izaak Walton League

Happy New Year! Another year has passed, oh how fast! 2001 was a good hunting and fishing year. I am tired of eating Salmon and I need to buy a deep freeze to store more game. What will this new year bring for the outdoor enthusiast?

Steelhead fishing should be good again this year, now that the water levels have receded to fishable levels. Remember that this fishery is catch and release for all wild steelhead.

The smelt run on the Cowlitz should be big again this year. There have been some fish caught in the Columbia already and some have said that the ocean is so thick with smelt that it's interfering with the shrimp fishery. Maybe this is why dad is saying I need that new deep freeze.

Trout season in local streams will begin on May 25 and will be the usual catch and release, with no bait allowed. It's too bad we have not been able to sway the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife to allow a limited consumptive fishery for cutthroat in the Nehalem, since it appears that this fishery is very healthy.

Don't forget about clam digging. At last word, it has reopened on the Oregon coast. Clam digging can be expensive. A co-worker found this out the hard way up at Long Beach, Washington. He noticed the clam diggers leaning into the wind while he drove his pickup down the beach. Not thinking, he stopped in a likely spot and opened his door, which was abruptly torn from his hand and from his vehicle. Oops! The repair shop he took his vehicle to took one look and commented, "You must have been clam digging."

We have several other vehicles in here from that storm." Well, at least my friend stopped his wife from opening her door before it was too late.

It's too early to tell what Deer hunting will be like this coming year for the east side of Oregon. This winter is shaping up to be, at the least, a normal one, and if the snow persists into spring, there could be significant mortalities. On the west side, I feel there will be significant mortalities due to the hair loss syndrome. People are already reporting hairless deer. The 34 consecutive days of rainfall we had in late fall will have sapped a lot of the fat reserves from local deer and make them vulnerable to the hair loss syndrome. Deer numbers are already down and I think that this next season will see a significant decline in deer harvested in local units. ODF&W has given no indication of backing off from harvesting female deer, which will only speed up the decline.

Elk hunting this fall is a question mark. Eastern Oregon is struggling with declining elk herds in a lot of units and a tough winter will not help the situation. Without an aggressive predator control program, some units will never recover, since they are apparently in a recruitment deficit due to predators (including man). In the local area, elk herds appear to be doing well, yet I am puzzled by the lack of bull harvest both this year and last (2000 = 309 bulls in the rifle season). ODF&W has given no indication of backing off from the cow harvest, which usually is about equal to the bull harvest. I doubt that we will see any significant increases in bull harvest this coming year and, in fact, will experience dire

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