

The INDEPENDENT

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Opinion

Thanks are due WOEC

We rarely think of the line crews at West Oregon Electric Cooperative unless our power is out, and we rarely think of the people inside the WOEC offices unless there's a glitch in our monthly bills. Perhaps some recognition is due.

In past years, power outages and power surges have plagued members in WOEC's widespread service area. The trees and the terrain, the wind and the rain, sometimes heavy snow, all take their toll on cables, wires and poles—the common physical elements needed to carry electricity from Point A to Point B.

To be sure, there are still outages and surges, but there has been tremendous improvement in the past several years. The planning from the inside, and the implementation by outside crews, have greatly reduced the number of problems. Brushing and regular maintenance have eliminated many problems. Improved systems have eliminated others.

There are still areas that lack a back-up system to provide power when a major transmission line fails. That was a problem recently, when the Warren to Chapman line failed during last month's snow storm. But great improvements have been realized in most areas. It is appreciated.

...And on a personal note

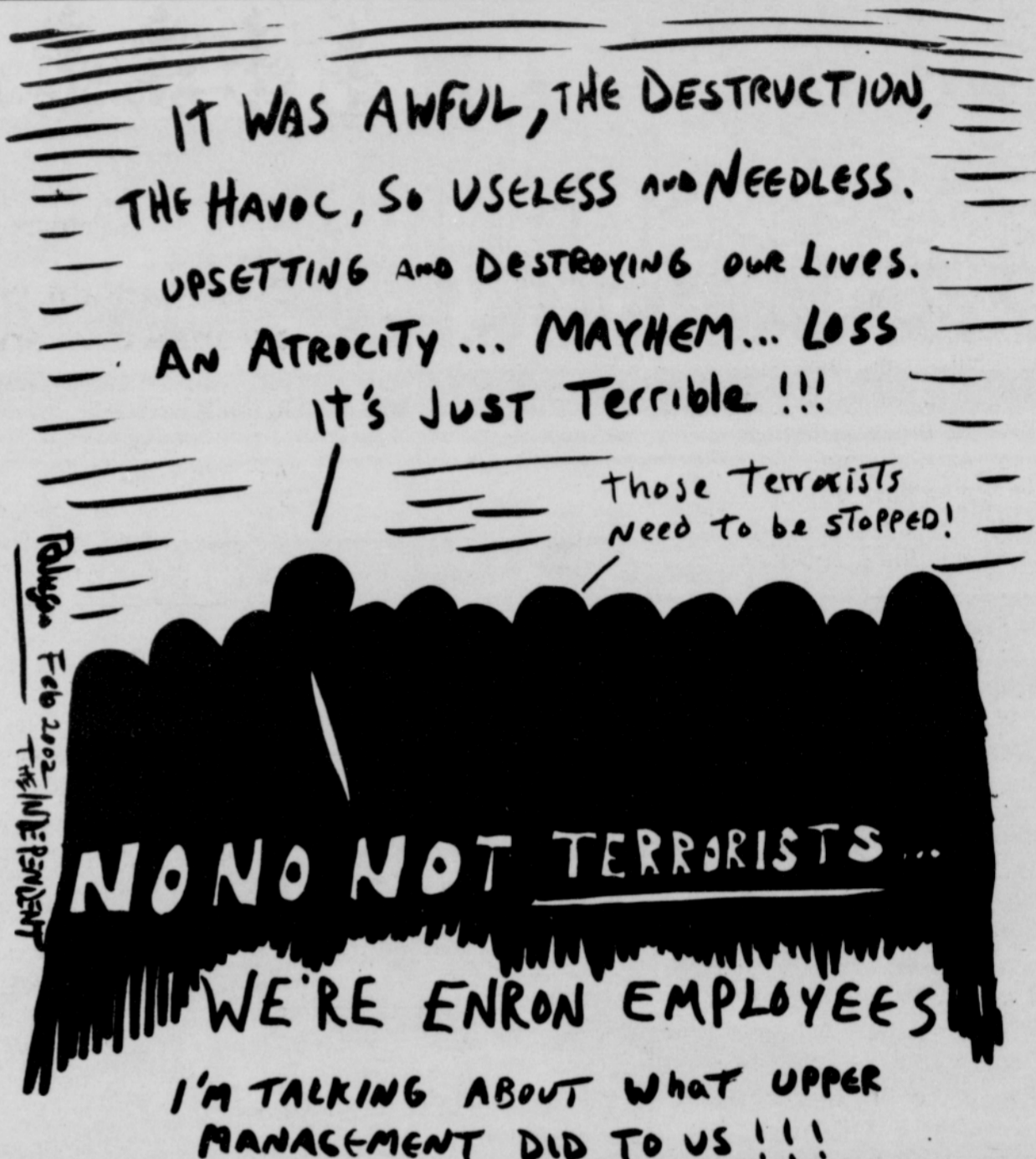
As most people in this area are aware, ye editor managed to roll her car on Timber Road. While unhurt from the low-speed accident, I couldn't get out of the car until it was stabilized. The first vehicles to stop were from WOEC. Grant Brown and Ryan DeLemos called for help, then stayed the whole time in case they were needed.

Pastor John and Lynda Cahill came by on their way home from the coast, and they stayed in case they were needed. Next was Vernonia Fire Chief Paul Epler, who was on his way home from physical therapy; yes, he stayed, too, and made sure help was on the way.

OSP Trooper Diamond arrived to take care of the necessary reports, and rescue units from both Tri-City Fire District and Vernonia Fire District arrived at about the same time.

The car was totaled; I'm fine.

The friendly concern of all those who kept me company and waited around in case they were needed made me realize that, if I'm going to have an accident, there's no better place to have it.



Ike Says...

By Dale Webb, member
Nehalem Valley Chapter Izaak Walton League

What is this white stuff outside my window? We finally got some snow and the kids are having fun. These days, snow makes me nervous. My fear is based on what happened to us back in 1996. It looks like, this time, our snow is going to melt slowly enough so it doesn't cause any problems. Have you noticed how high the river has been getting this year on just rain? Having two feet of snow up high and a foot of snow here at home has great potential for a repeat of a major flood.

The snow is also an added drain on the fat reserves of local wildlife. This year has to be taking a toll, with all the wet, cold weather. Research papers that I have read have shown that, after about thirty days of snow cover, deer and elk can reach the starvation point. We don't usually have snow on the ground that long in our area. It is well documented, however, that wildlife is gradually starving through the winter and it is only because of their fat reserves – and how well they can maintain those reserves through the winter – that they are able to survive. Excessive wet and cold weather depletes these reserves quickly; add in a condition like the hair loss syndrome that affects deer in this area and you have a recipe for disaster.

It is interesting to note that the hide of an elk is so effective as insulation that snow will not melt off of their backs in cold weather. I have read that elk fur coats are effective down to zero degrees Fahrenheit.

Matt Giles, Matt Chesley and I made our first kayaking descent down Rock Creek this year on

January 5th. The water at this time of year is plenty cold enough to give you an extra incentive for staying upright. Poor Matt C. uses a sit-on-top kayak and they are not known for a dry ride. But everybody stayed upright and we had a good time. The creek had only a couple of portages this year, which is fewer than in years past. We paddled about thirteen miles and by the end of the trip, here in town, we were all hurting pretty bad. The river height was 5.3 feet on the new upper Nehalem gauge. This trip would be better at 5.5 to 6.5 feet.

I got to experience some new wildlife of a different kind last month. As many of you know, I got hitched again and Donna and I spent our honeymoon in Las Vegas. Vegas is a very interesting town, to say the least. Flying in, the countryside appears weathered and desolate. The geology is interesting with mountains just outside of town that are tilted blocks of rock with very distinctive layering. It is amazing that people would have located in such an area, yet the meaning of Las Vegas is a desert swamp. Apparently there was, and maybe still is, a lot of water in the flat basin surrounded by the local mountains. This is not readily apparent, either from the air or on the ground.

We camped out (in a hotel) a few blocks away from the strip and would get our morning exercise walking up to the strip. The first thing you notice about Vegas is that the blocks are very long. The next thing you will notice is that the buildings are very large and it takes what seems like forever to walk the strip. We spent three days exploring the strip on foot and still did not

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