

Letters to the Editor

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use cell phones or submit expense reimbursements as much as they currently are (example: Commissioner Hyde's one monthly cell phone bill was \$270, between October 22 and November 16, 2001, he traveled 1,596 miles and submitted an expense reimbursement claim for an additional \$566.73!). During this modern age of technology (with computers, fax machines and internet), why do commissioners feel they need to travel in the first place?

2) Fiscal responsibility starts

at home. The Board should always start making cuts in their own budget first! Why are taxpayers paying for commissioners coffee and bottled water and other departments and/or employees have to pay for their own? Where are the "standards and ethics" in this? Another very important question...Why do we have a Budget Officer (Commissioner Tony Hyde, annual salary of \$58,500 plus benefits almost equal to his salary), and a Finance and Taxation Director (Ruth Baker, annual salary of \$62,000 plus benefits, again almost equal to

her salary), and then hire an outside consultant (again), to prepare the budget for approximately \$70,000!!!! What, exactly, does Ms. Baker do?

3) When multiple persons are attending the same meeting, they should car pool or rent a bus to take everyone. At the recent AOC conference in eastern Oregon, each employee attending submitted a separate bill to the county for mileage and other expenses, costing us several thousand dollars. By the way, Commissioner Corsiglia stayed home, citing he didn't want to waste the taxpay-

ers' money.

4) Why would the county hire a facilitator for department head meetings while we are experiencing "shortfalls"?

5) Research potential new businesses before bringing them into the county, offering them exorbitant incentives (50 percent discount off of their building permits, the millions of dollars put into the road system, and a significant cost savings on the purchase of the property - given to them for what we bought it for), and allowing the business to pay cheap wages and no benefits. (Example: the US Gypsum plant in Rainier that has filed Chapter 11 in 2001). We will never recoup our losses.

6) Last, but not least, pay attention to the deadlines placed on bonds the county receives. A blatant oversight on the part of our elected commissioners [and] our Finance and Taxation Director cost us \$133,410 in June, 2001, paid to the IRS. Here's a hint, folks, it's related to our new jail. Due to pure neglect, the deadline was missed by four days, which would have been longer than that and cost more if the bond attorney hadn't told them about the readable arbitrage liability. This is just one instance where the county wasn't paying attention to contract requirements, missed a deadline and we had to pay for their mistake.

In closing, I keep hearing complaints from the commissioners about their long days, weeks and the hours they put in, and yet I also hear citizen complaints that they can't attend day meetings and would like evening meetings available. The commissioners should have known what the job required before running for election and certainly shouldn't run again if they don't like the hours.

Please don't take my word for all of this. Get out there and check it out for yourself! It's all available for anyone interested. Take up the cause and become informed citizens and taxpayers.

Sincerely,
**Thelma Bonar
Warren**

ceipt, not because of a late bond payment. Bond holders receive tax-free interest on this type of bond and, when bond requirements are not met in a timely fashion, the IRS applies a penalty. This penalty was developed in response to the abuse of bond funds by some agencies, such as Riverside County, Calif., which authorized construction bonds then invested the proceeds to earn interest and hide deficits in other funds. Columbia County's payment to the IRS came from legally earned interest of approx. \$670,000; it didn't create a deficit in either budgeted funds or the bond principal, but did reduce the amount of interest available for jail construction by \$133,410.

False economy to cut Project Independence

To the Editor:

The governor and the Legislative Emergency Board have reduced funding for Oregon Project Independence in order to try and solve state budget problems. How is it that they cannot see the value of a proven, economical program that helps seniors remain in their own homes? Oregon spends a meager \$6 million each year helping its frail, low-income senior citizens stay out of nursing homes, living out their later years with as much dignity and independence as possible.

Oregon Project Independence (OPI) serves Columbia County seniors who often have no family or are so frail they need help to remain at home. Most OPI clients are dependent for bathing, mobility and/or eating. OPI provides house cleaning, laundry, bathing, medication management, shopping and meal preparation assistance. If they don't receive this help they cannot stay at home.

In our community, most seniors who receive OPI assistance have very low incomes. Those who have any means pay part or all of the cost for their care. Proposals that eliminate in-home care services are penny-wise and pound-foolish. If there were other resources for assistance in our community, these seniors would use it. OPI is their last resort.

None of us can guarantee that we'll never need any help as we age. Not all of us will be fortunate enough to have enough family and friends to help with our basic needs. If we

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Between the Bookends

By Nancy Burch, Librarian
Vernonia Public Library

Last year's decision to feature special seasonal/topic/author materials on a very visible display table has been a big success. Because these eye-catching displays attract the attention of library patrons as they enter the door, the featured materials have a high turnover rate and that is exactly the result that was anticipated. The Valentine's Day display has just been replaced with one featuring "Spring Green." Materials on this table will change, as some are checked out and others are added, but the display presently includes the following: *To Marry an Irish Rogue*, *The Spring Cleaning Murders*, *Night Gardening*, *The Garden in Bloom*, and *Mulch Ado About Nothing*. If it sounds as if the staff has fun with this display, it is so true.

Other displays include those entitled Patron Picks and Staff Selections. In the near future, an attempt is going to be made to personalize some of the library's materials with comments from local readers. This is a project that has been accomplished in some bookstores where it has caused much positive feedback.

The Friends of the Library and The Vernonia Study Club have each selected some materials to add to the library's collection in memory of Mercedes Proehl. Each of these was selected with Mercedes' personality and interests taken into consideration. They include *Dakota Incarnate*, *The Homesteader*, *Pinochle is the Name of the Game*, *What's Wrong with Timmy?*, *Homestead*, *A Cup of Comfort*, and *100 Flowers and How They Got Their Names*.

One of the library board members, Judy Thiringer, has begun a tradition of purchasing several of her favorite books of each year to donate to the library in memory of her family. These special books may be found in The Conolly Collection.

Marianne Lane has presented a subscription to *The Reader's Digest* to the library and the Sturdevants have recently subscribed to *American Heritage* magazine for the library. Gina Faber also recently gave the library a very generous donation of audiocassettes and the Pastor family just presented a nice selection of videotapes.

New acquisitions include *Fall on Your Knees* (Oprah's latest recommendation), *Elizabeth... The Life of Elizabeth Taylor*, John Grisham's *The*

Summons, Tim Green's *The Fourth Perimeter*, Tom Clancy's *Shadow Warriors*, Barbara Taylor Bradford's *Three Weeks in Paris*, Susan Vreeland's *The Passion of Artemisia*, and Nancy Taylor Rosenberg's *Conflict of Interest*. The pictorial account by Life, entitled *One Nation... America Remembers September 11, 2001*, is also new, but is a non-circulating item.

My personal recommendations for this month are *An Affair of Honor* by Richard Marius and Kris Nelscott's two Smokey Dalton mysteries entitled *A Dangerous Road* and *Smoke Filled Rooms*. Marius's novel is about World War II, Tennessee mountain life, adultery and murder. I loved this book—every 591 pages of it. Kris Nelscott is an author who lives on the Oregon Coast, but her protagonist is a private investigator whose home is Memphis, Tennessee. I have not been able to find any other information on Nelscott, but am very interested in knowing her background and what has enabled her to depict characters and circumstances so far removed from the vicinity in which she resides. These mysteries are filled with suspense and fictional suspicions about the circumstances of the assassination of Martin Luther King.

The library has much to offer. Be sure to look around on your next visit for special displays, audiocassettes, videos, magazines, new books and, of course—tax forms.

It seems appropriate to close with some quotations from another of the books, *Irish Folk Wisdom*, from the special display table,

"Wisdom is what makes a poor man a king, a weak person powerful, a good generation of a bad one, and a foolish man reasonable".

"Three things that are not to be trusted—a fine day in winter, the life of an aged person, and the word of a man of importance unless it is in writing."

"Humor is like a feather pillow—it is filled with what is easy to get, but gives great comfort."

Don't forget the Friends of the Library will be meeting Tuesday, March 5 at 7 p.m. in the library, and that membership dues for the year 2002 are now being accepted.

Vernonia Library 701 Weed Avenue
Hours: Mon., Wed., Fri. 10 a.m.-5 p.m.
Tues., Thur. 2 p.m.-7 p.m.
Sat. 10 a.m.-2 p.m.
Preschool Story Time, Mondays, 10:30 a.m.
Phone: (503) 429-1818

Editor's Note: The county had to pay \$133,410 to the IRS as an "Arbitrage Rebate" because they failed by four days to pay out 50-percent of the County Jail bond money within twelve months of re-