

County dims hopes for annual rally race with Vernonia as the hub

By Noni Andersen

Although everyone involved in last year's Oregon Trail Rally was saddened by the deaths of one team, the gathering of cars, racing teams, support vehicles and personnel in Vernonia was greatly enjoyed by the community.

In turn, the hundreds of people involved in the event also enjoyed their July day in Vernonia, so much so, that the rally group was considering an annual event here, with a full weekend of visitors.

But fire danger is great in the forests during dry summers, so Oregon Rally Group, which brought their premiere event to

Vernonia last summer, decided to move the event up to late April.

In December, just as organizer Mike Nagle was ready to apply for permits to use some Columbia County roads, the group received a bill from John Clouse, director of the county's Department of Emergency Management, for \$3,292.44, primarily for road work. Oregon Rally Group had paid the county \$3,063.37 in advance, then contracted with Matt Pihl to make additional repairs requested by county Roadmaster Dave Hill. Nagle was understandably upset and seeking answers.

At a meeting February 11, at the Vernonia Fire Hall, Hill said he was simply sending figures Clouse requested and didn't know they were billed to ORG.

Clouse, in turn, said the Board of Commissioners authorized the bill. Commissioner Tony Hyde didn't dispute Clouse's statement, saying the responsibility had to be with the board. Commissioner Joe Corsiglia said he simply didn't remember the incident. The bill was verbally rescinded by both Clouse and Hyde.

In spite of that, Clouse and Hyde both strongly implied that they don't want rally in Columbia County. Clouse repeatedly

raised problems the county had had with Hood to Coast events — clogging public roads, inadequate emergency services, creating public nuisances — which didn't apply. Rally runs on closed roads, hires their own security, has professional emergency services (and hires local emergency personnel), etc.

Hyde was somewhat more subtle. He just kept implying the timber companies didn't want rally on their roads and he didn't want to alienate them, particularly since negotiations are underway with Hancock to purchase the Columbia Main Line for a linear trail from Scappoose to Vernonia.

The local timber company representatives at the meeting agreed that they didn't want rally, citing damage to roads as their primary concern. They seemed somewhat surprised, and some seemed to be interested, when a representative from Simpson Timber in Shelton, Washington, recounted his company's many years-long, beneficial association with ORG.

The Simpson forester related that the company has had no problems and has the rally group fix only the roads the company plans to be using, noting that rally cars can run on roads with grass growing on them from disuse. He also spoke of major economic benefit to the community, especially

large donations to the food bank, with twice yearly rally events.

Vernonia's economy could, obviously, benefit from the presence of an annual event of this sort. Non-profits could make money, as well as commercial establishments. Whether that will happen is debatable.

Oregon Rally Group has many years of experience and knows what fees to expect. If Columbia County is going to insist on exorbitant fees, ORG will take their money elsewhere.

Between the Bookends

By Nancy Burch, Librarian
Vernonia Public Library



Do you know how to tie a bow tie? Can you list all of the James Bond movies with the year they were released and name the actor and the Bond girl in each? Did you know that some countries have compulsory voting and can you name them? Can you

name the singers at Super Bowls numbers 1-37? Did you know that 70 percent of the Miss Americas have been brunettes, 24 percent blondes, and six percent redheads? Would you like to know how to say, "I love You" in 33 languages? A recent acquisition, *Schott's Original Miscellany*, contains all of this information and much more. Also included in this book are such topics as coffee shop slang, the menu of the last meal served on The Titanic, a simplified version of Braille, instructions for measuring bra sizes, names of the seven dwarves, commonly misspelled words, and earthquake scales. If you have a question regarding some obscure subject, be sure to look in this fun little book.

Recent acquisitions by popular authors include *Sacred Time* by Ursula Hegi, *The Last Juror* by John Grisham, *Blinded* by Stephen White, *Aunt Dimity: Snowbound* by Nancy Atherton, *High Country* by Nevada Barr, *Trojan Odyssey* by Clive Cussler, *The Cat Who Talked Turkey* by Lillian Jackson Braun, *Divided in Death* by Nora Roberts, and *The Second Chair* by John Lescroart. I'm really looking forward to reading some of these and, hopefully, library patrons will be pleased with these new additions to the collection.

The two novels that I have most recently read are by two of my favorite authors — William Kent Krueger and Kris Nelscott. Krueger's newest offering, *Blood Hollow*, is his fourth to feature Cork O'Connor, Aurora, Minnesota's charismatic former sheriff. When evidence points to the guilt of Solemn Winter Moon as the murderer of a beautiful high school student, O'Connor fights an uphill battle, encounters prejudice, surprise twists and miracles before the truth of the matter is revealed. Nelscott's enigmatic African-American P.I., Smokey Dalton, and his young friend, Jim-

my, are still hiding their true identities as they try to survive in Chicago in 1969. This is a Chicago, torn apart by racial strife, gang wars, drug problems, and police corruption. Smokey is a lone man trying to help make things right under almost impossible circumstances in Nelscott's fourth novel of this series, *Stone Cribs*. It continues to amaze me that Nelscott, a lady who lives on The Oregon Coast can capture the issues of this era in American political and racial history and present them through the experiences of an African-American man living in Chicago.

The book for discussion this month is *Cold Mountain* by Charles Frazier. Date and time for discussion of this book will be Tuesday, March 2 at 7:00 p.m. in the library. There is still time for anyone wishing to read this book and take part in discussing it.

Pre-School story time continues to be held on Monday mornings at 10:30 and the Reading Enrichment Program is held on Mondays at 3:30 on days when school is in session.

The library has quite a nice collection of books on cassette, as well as some in CD format. The diverse video collection is being supplemented with some DVD's. Many of these items have been donations, but there is quite a nice selection of both audios and videos. Microfilm of Vernonia's newspapers may be viewed and printed with the microfilm reader. Interest in Vernonia's past continues to be of importance to many area residents and former residents. The library has copies of *The Oregon American Lumber Company—Ain't No More*, *Vernonia, the Town that Wouldn't Die*, *75 Years of Nehalem Valley History*, and *Vernonia, A Pocket in the Woods*. Videos of "Ring of Fire", "The Vernonia Incident" and "The Flood of 1996" are also available.

This is "your" library. An ongoing attempt to provide materials that "You" want to use is one of the most important goals of the library staff. Suggestions are always welcome.

Vernonia Public Library: 701 Weed Ave.
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, 10:00
a.m., when school is in session.
Phone: (503) 429-1818

What is Rally?

Rally racing is a 2-person team event, with a driver and navigator, racing against the clock on unfamiliar, closed roads. They navigate with a map.

Teams may be either amateur or professional, with sponsors ranging from local auto shops to Mitsubishi or Subaru.

Rally is an international sport. Teams in Vernonia last year came from Europe, Japan, Canada and nearly every state in the U.S.

Erik Kesterson Honors planned at VHS, March 10

A public gathering will be held March 10 in honor of Erik Kesterson, the 1992 Vernonia High School graduate who lost his life in Iraq when his helicopter crashed. He would have been 30 years old on March 10.

The commemoration will be in an assembly at Vernonia High School and Erik's mother, MJ Kesterson said that the family would welcome a few words from local people who knew Erik. Anyone who would like to speak is asked to call Mayor Cindy Ball for more information. She may be reached days at 503-397-4555 ext. 100, or leave a message for her at Vernonia City Hall, 503-429-5291.

Erik's brother, Tim Mahalak, is planning the event. He may be reached at 541-954-1269, or by email: <timmahalak@cmfsg.com>.

Arrangements are not yet final. Additional information will be published in the March 4 issue of *The INDEPENDENT*.

Letters

Vernonia Lions not Raft & Craft sponsor

To the Editor:

There have been statements in two recent issues of *The INDEPENDENT* that the Vernonia Lions Club is sponsoring a Raft and Craft Festival.

This is a mis-statement. The Lions Club is not sponsoring this festival nor are we supplying start-up funding.

Our only agreement has been to provide a Polish sausage and kraut concession for the event.

Sincerely,
**Bill James, President
Vernonia Lions Club**

The INDEPENDENT gladly publishes information about local events and organizations, but we can be only as accurate as the information provided.