

MY OPINION FROM BEHIND THE GREEN DOOR

Stuck in the past

BY CHRIS BRATT

Last month I took a family member to the Rogue Valley Medical Center for a checkup at the outpatient section on the main floor of the hospital. During the wait time while she was seeing the doctor, I had a chance to examine an extended display of early-day (late 1800s-1938) photographs of logging operations in southern Oregon.

Hanging high on the long waiting room wall were impressive pictures of rugged looking loggers chopping, sawing and falling giant trees by hand, long-gone private sawmills once so prolific in the area and huge sections of old-growth logs larger in diameter than the height of the loggers themselves. I could find no written explanation about this display, although the wall did contain the names of many people I thought might have been dead but connected to these depictions of local antiquated sawmills and logging practices.

For me, these old images described a time in Oregon's history when logging was the principal piece of our local economy and was virtually uncontrolled. It was a time when our Oregon forests were so vast they seemed unending. I doubt if anyone in that era believed these forests could ever be harmed or eliminated given the tools and techniques that were available to forest-industry workers at that time.

Looking back at those earlier days, I realize we are still saddled with a long-term legacy of rapacious logging by private forest and mill owners for financial gain and political power. Like the western life of the early cowboys, gold miners and ranchers, there is also an ongoing nostalgic appeal of the loggers' connection to the land and trees while working to conquer the wilderness. Wealthy forest landowners and corporations have continued to maintain a controlling influence over forest policies and practices in the Northwest to this day.

In addition, the timber industry's

coziness and collaboration with forestry schools like Oregon State University and its over-representation on Oregon's Board of Forestry raise questions of undue corporate sway over both public and private forest-management regulations and laws.

Industrial forest advocates also continue to run a well-financed negative-propaganda agenda that lobbies against any additional protections for the environment. Touting a lofty connection to the land (an "abiding love of the forest") while providing jobs and products people need, Oregon's Seneca Sawmill owners recently had the brazenness to blame "radical activists" and "fringe elitists" (that's me they're talking about) for all of Oregon's financial and forest problems. Instead of any willingness by the timber industry folks to discuss the causes of fewer trees being cut (because of past destructive logging practices), they just continually attempt to vilify and berate all environmental people and groups. While the Seneca Jones Timber Company claims it "is dedicated to sustainable practices in every aspect of forest management," their monocultured second-growth tree farm grows trees only 40 to 60 years before they're cut—hardly a sustainable forest from the standpoint of most forest creatures and scientists.

Despite the destructive record of the timber industry's free-for-all logging model (an unsustainable monoculture based on extensive clear-cutting and pesticide use easily seen from many of Oregon's

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highways and byways), the Seneca Jones folks and their fellow travelers now want to expand their management scheme throughout our public forest lands. Using political pressure and highly misleading arguments, the timber industry is desperately trying to get Federal land management agencies to offer more trees for sale from our public forests. They want our government to subsidize an extensive tree-cutting

program that supposedly will bolster Oregon's jobs and economy and fund some counties' budgets. Do we really believe the private timber corporations are that interested in the long-term welfare of our forests and people? The boards of directors and owners of the timber corporations admit that first and foremost they are committed to enhancing the stock value of their shareholders. Making money is their top priority, not improving their forest's

health or the job market.

Since timber interests and supporters are pushing hard to acquire more access to cutting public trees, we have come to the crossroads of a potential big change in public forest management policy and practice. Do we want to go down the old destructive "boom-and-bust" road on our public lands, too? Or, will we be taking the new road leading to more ecologically and sustainably based actions for all our public lands in the state? I'm definitely on the road to new ecologically based forest practices, and I am suggesting to people in our towns and communities that they do the same.

Stay tuned for more details and actions as decisions are being considered by Congress. (Senator Wyden and others in Congress are considering some not-too-friendly environmental changes to public forest land ownership and laws).

Maybe you think I'm stuck in the past. Let me know.

Chris Bratt
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Chris Bratt

Applegate Valley Community Grange news

BY JANIS MOHR-TIPTON

Many thank-yous to the local community for attending our June 2 "Almost Summer Faire" and fund-raiser for a new roof for the Grange. With your support, we added \$1,035 to the fund. We are seeking more donations and applying for a grant to get the new roof on before the fall rains. Then we will be able to offer more community events and have a rainproof building available for rent.

In August, the members were busy planning future events, programs and activities for the coming year. Last fall, our Harvest Breakfast was a smashing success thanks to community support, so we are hoping to repeat it. Watch for the announcement in the coming months. (Ed. Note: Check out the Applegater Facebook page and website calendar for the dates.)

Earlier this summer the Grange members voted in support of banning genetically modified organisms (GMOs) in Jackson County. They felt that the unique topography and the micro- and

macroclimates of the county do not allow the propagation of GMOs without potential large and lasting damage to small, heritage, organic and other non-GMO farms and gardens. The combined dangers of cross-pollination, increased use of herbicides and pesticides, and the threat to natural pollinators such as bees and butterflies may affect the health and livelihoods of many county residents.

We invite you to consider joining us at our next Grange meeting on Sunday, September 8, 2013, at 6 pm for a potluck and lively conversation, followed by a business meeting at 7 pm. Then, from October 2013 to February 2014, come join us at the potluck at 5 pm, and the business meeting starting at 6 pm on the second Sunday of the month.

For more information, contact Paul Tipton or Janis Mohr-Tipton at 541-846-7501.

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Pancake Breakfast

Second Sunday 8:30 to 11:00

January 13, 2013
February 10
March 10, Seed Swap
April 14
May 12, Mother's Day
June 9
July & August, Closed
September 8
October 13
November 10
December 8

Bluegrass Jam 11:00 to 1:00

Bluegrass Jam in cooperation with Chinquapin Center for the Arts

20100 Williams Highway, Info: 541-846-6844 kathybob@oigp.net