



The High Prairian

"All the news that's print to fit."

Volume 3, Number 3

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September, 2003

NOTICES

Fire Volunteers meet the 2nd and 4th Tuesday of each month at 7:00 PM at the Fire Hall.

Fire Commissioners meet the 3rd Thursday of each month at 7:30 PM at Fire Hall.

High Prairie Neighborhood Association meets the 4th Thursday of each month at 7:00 PM. The September 25 meeting will be held at the Taylor's church.

High Prairie Historical Society is held quarterly on the 4th Sunday of March, June, and September and the 1st Sunday of December beginning at 2:00 PM. Next meeting is September 28 at Morning Song Acres, Myrin and Audrey Bentz's home. Everyone is welcome.

Lyle School Board meets the next to last Thursday of each month at 7:00 PM at the Boardroom.

When requesting medical assistance or reporting a fire CALL 911

YOU DON'T WANNA MISS...

Audrey Bentz

On Thursday, October 23, your High Prairie Neighborhood Association (HPNA) will hopefully get the news as to whether a donated structure from Cal-Pine, for our High Prairie Community Center, is going to really happen.

We are all holding our breaths, crossing our fingers, knocking on wood, and saying the nicest words we can about Cal-Pine. Your part is to BE THERE at 7 pm at the little white church at 876 Centerville Highway!

WHAT'S UP?

Audrey Bentz

For the next issue of *The High Prairian*, we invite you to share any stories of interest: historical events, future events, comical events, special celebrations, ideas to make High Prairie a better place, or whatever you feel would be of common interest to us all. Send your signed article to PO Box 592, Lyle, or email to Doug and Dona Taylor, highprairie@gorge.net.

Autumn
2003



LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Dear Editor,

What is this story children have no shoes? Can not believe this in the USA.

Walsenburg, Colorado

Dear Editor,

Thank you for sending me a copy of *The High Prairian* which I rec'd yesterday and I am still reading the interesting articles, and poetry therein.

I would like to know the approx. population of Lyle, and also the estimated population of the High Prairie community.

I greatly appreciate the many items you have sent me at various times. My regards to your wife, and other members of the staff and writers of *The High Prairian*.

I am so pleased to be able to learn of the happenings of that area where my Great Great Grandfather, Jason S. Clark lived and worked both at High Prairie and also at Lyle, many years ago. Visiting the Lone Pine Cemetery several times afforded me a great appreciation of the families and closeness there was among the population at High Prairie in those days of yore.

My Best Regards to you and yours,

*Carroll Clark
Snohomish, Washington*

The High Prairian

P.O. Box 592 Lyle, WA 98635

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ANNOUNCEMENTS

Dona Taylor

Congratulations to Brian and Tina Heffling on their recent marriage at their home this summer.



Also our best to Billi and Helen Kearns on their marriage on September 6, 2003 at their home on Centerville Highway.



Our sincere apologies to Simone Woods for neglecting to mention her recent graduation in June from Goldendale High School. She will be leaving soon for college at eastern Washington in Cheney.

ICE CREAM SOCIAL

Lozetta Doll

31 Flavors it was not — Baskins & Robbins it was not — but it was SO much better! August 28, 2003 saw approximately 30 High Prairie friends and neighbors gather at the home of Lowell and Mary Turner for an ice cream social prior to the August Neighborhood Association meeting. There was homemade peach, maple nut, rocky road and vanilla ice cream with sauces and toppings galore plus home baked cookies. The entire evening was perfect — the weather, the socializing, the treats, and the sharing of produce and iris bulbs.

BE AWARE

Sharon Aleckson

It's back to school time. That means school buses and children along the bus routes waiting to be picked up for school. Watch for signs along the highways and roads that indicate that there is a school bus stop ahead. SLOW DOWN! USE CAUTION!! There just might be a school bus ahead that is stopped with children loading or unloading. We want our area children to have a safe and happy school year.

CHEF CHANGE AT THE LYLE HOTEL

Peyt Turner

Michael (Mike) Dority, the former chef at the Lyle Hotel, has left this town of 800 people for a city of 10,000 people near Beijing, China. Mike is in charge of enticing more Westerners to his new restaurant for conferences and large events. He said this would be the biggest challenge of his career, especially with the language complication. Mike has been replaced at the hotel by Carl Solum, a one-time Corvallis resident, and a former protégé of Mike's at the Pump House in Fairbanks, Alaska. Carl came straight from the airplane and bus, walking in to do the Sunday brunch at the hotel. Area residents welcome Carl to Lyle and look forward to a similar fare at the hotel, with the great special prices this winter.

Mike brought a new dimension of food to the area, especially when the hotel had specials in the off-season months. He had a flair for sauces and brought a new dimension in dining to Lyle, especially for those of us off the beaten path. Mike will be sorely missed at the hotel and in the High Prairie area where he was involved in two memorable fish and game dinners with some of the local residents.

IN MEMORIAM

Compiled by Dona Taylor

Jean Schilling, 73, passed away in Goldendale on July 18, 2003. She and her husband Robert moved to High Prairie in 1948 and purchased the Lester Omeg farm. They farmed and ranched here until 2000 when they sold the farm and moved to a smaller one in Goldendale. Jean's mother and maternal grandparents were part of the Morris family, some of the early settlers of High Prairie.

Katherine Collins a resident of High Prairie from 1982 until 1997 passed away at Beaver Creek, OR on September 2, 2003 at the age of 89. Mrs. Collins enjoyed raising horses and she owned many.



HAS OUR CAT BEEN YOUR HOUSE (BARN) GUEST?

Cindy Henschell

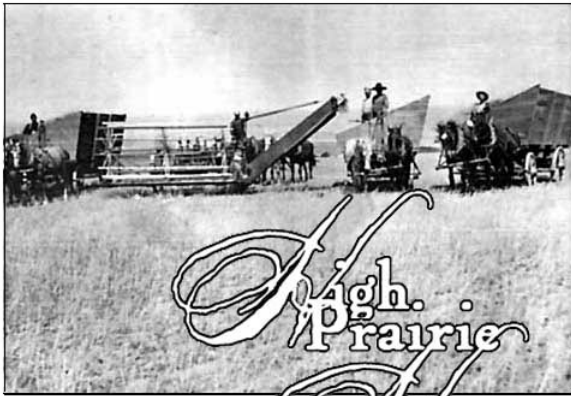
Should you meet her in your barn or under your wood pile, this is Carol. She is currently at home, asleep on my chair, but Carol has an unusual habit that means she may have crossed your path.

Carol is eight years old and lives with four other cats, a dog, four geese, and two humans (Fred and I). Though we are wary of the prairie predators and round everyone up at night, each summer since 1996 when we all moved to High Prairie, Carol has occasionally eluded us and gone on "camping trips" that last from overnight to two weeks. This year she took off for about 13 days on Memorial Day weekend and disappeared again just before Labor Day for ten days.

In that time she could be returning to her birthplace near Carson, Washington but we have seen her at the old wooden grain bin near Anderson's pond and one year Vicki Koch photographed her asleep inside of an old combine on the Clark homestead, thinking that she was just a photogenic stray. She evidently wanders the prairie and is careful to steer clear of coyotes and owls. She comes home apparently well-fed and reasonably clean.

Though certain small rodents would disagree, she has a sweet temperament. If she shows up on your doorstep sometime, give us a call (365-5283).





Douglas Taylor

High.
Prairie
History

LESTER AND ANNA OMEG

Lester Ernest Omege and his wife Anna, with their two children, Walter 14 and Letha age 3, (she eventually became Mrs. Sydney M. Johnson of Lyle, WA) came to Klickitat County by S.P.&S. Railroad to Wahkiacus in early March of 1919. They were met at the station by Lee Richardson with his four-horse team and wagon. He had just finished hauling his wheat crop for shipment. It was only three miles to the Richardson place at the top of the hill but the grade was steep and narrow in places. Four horses were needed to pull the empty wagon up the hill when the road was dry. Now it was wet and the mud was nearly axle deep in places.

The Omege and their family possessions were loaded into the wagon and the journey began to what was once known as the Sam Courtney ranch.

Lester Omege was born at Marquams, Oregon near Canby, March 30, 1879. He moved to Toledo Washington from the Willamette valley in Oregon in 1891. Here his mother died when he was 12 years old. Shortly after his Mother's death Lester started out on his own working for wages.

At the age of 21 Lester filed for a homestead in Douglas County, Washington. It was there he met Anna Petersen. She had come to America from Denmark with her mother to join her father, Nes Peterson, when Anna was three years old. Lester and Anna were married February 11, 1903 in her parent's home near Farmer. Life on the homestead was not always easy or pleasant. After nine years, the Omege moved to Layton Prairie near Toledo, Washington where Lester grew up, with the assistance of John Taylor. John Taylor drove a four-horse team pulling a wagon in 1910 that moved the Omege's back to Toledo. This trip took several weeks with the Taylor's taking 5 year old Ben with them. Walter was about the same age. Lester acquired a sawmill in Toledo and operated it before moving to High Prairie in 1919. This was dairy country but Lester didn't care for that kind of work. He liked to clear land on his farm and to build barns and a comfortable home, which he did.

Lester Omege never got wheat farming out of his mind and decided to get back in that business during World War I. He learned that Mr. Lee Richardson, who lived east of the mountains, had such a farm and wanted to make a change. Lester went to see the Richardson and their farm and they came to see what Lester had to offer, during the summer of 1918. Both parties eventually agreed to trade, lock stock and barrel. Thus in April 1919 Lester and son Walter were engaged in plowing land on High Prairie with two ten-horse and mule teams in Klickitat Co.

One day when Lester was opening up a furrow around a field his moldboard plow hooked a rock. The hitch broke and frightened his team and ran away with tugs and singletrees flying in the air. The run-aways circled and came back to stop behind Walter's outfit. Some of the harness was torn off and the team was out of wind to run any further.



Lester decided to put some of the land into alfalfa to supplement the livestock feed, to build fertility and to stop soil erosion. This was very rewarding.

One evening in April 1926 a fire was discovered high on the steep roof of the family home. A spark from the chimney had landed on the tinder dry shingles and touched it off. The home was completely destroyed. If it hadn't been for the very prompt arrival of High Prairie neighbors and their untiring efforts the two barns and some other buildings would have gone up in smoke. Our High Prairie Neighbors did what seemed impossible that windy evening. God bless their souls. For several months Mother did the housework and cooking in an old granary until the new home was built during the summer. This was many summers before the P.U.D. (public utility district) was established to bring electricity to farms in this area.

As Lester Omeg and Nellie Taylor were brother and sister, the families got along exceptionally well and often worked together. Here Lester raised wheat and alfalfa along with the livestock of cattle, hogs and horses. He was considered a prominent Klickitat county wheat farmer. They eventually selling the Ranch on the Prairie to Schilling and Stout and bought the farm above Lyle in 1945. This was the only farm on the hill above Lyle at that time, Now there are many homes and also the Lyle school and grounds are part of the original Omeg farm.

Lester learned his work ethics at a very young age and was a very industrious individual throughout life. The old saying better "wear out than rust out" fit him to a tee.

Lester loved to be working at something and derived much pleasure from the things he accomplished. He was honest with all men: and his word was as good as gold. His death came suddenly April 36th, 1946, as the result of a heart attack. He was laid to rest near relative's graves in the IOOF cemetery at The Dalles, Oregon. His loving and faithful wife Anna entered that house not made with hands eternal, January 7, 1966.

Editors note

Much of the foregoing was written by Walter Omeg, son of Lester and Anna Omeg and presented to me by his daughter Donna Sanford of Bend, Oregon

DLT

OUR FIRST SCHOOL DAYS IN KLICKITAT

Reprinted from "Sketches of Early High Prairie"

Written by Nelia Binford Fleming, 1949

The first time we went to school in Klickitat, my sister Lola, who was eleven, went to school in Goldendale. That left Revvie, nine, and me, seven, to go alone three and a half miles to school. Father bought us a pony to ride, which had been very highly recommended as a "family horse." I think the "family" must have been a scattered one, for that pony scattered us all over the prairie! We would start out bravely, both Revvie and I on the pony. Usually either on the way to school, or coming back home, that pony would buck us off. She would put her head between her knees, throw up her hind feet, and the small Tates would come tumbling down. She did this at the slightest provocation, or for the sheer pleasure of bucking, or to see us roll. Sometimes we were more or less bruised up, but more often, just jolted up and frightened. We would limp disconsolately home, and Father would start out to find the pony. As there were practically no fences, and the pony could wander for miles, this search would often require a day or so. In that case we had a vacation from school until the pony was found.



Hartland School House — Where we went to school.

WANT TO KNOW MORE ABOUT THE HISTORY OF HIGH PRAIRIE?

Join us on September 28 at 2:00 at Morning Song Acres for the High Prairie Historical Society meeting. Everyone is welcome.

GARDEN TIPS

Master Gardener, Judi Strait

As hot as it's been the last few days, it's hard to believe that fall is just around the corner. The days are definitely getting shorter though and I can see a hint of brown on the oak trees so I guess fall isn't too far away.

There are a lot of things we can do to get our yards and gardens ready for winter.

October is a good time to apply a copper fungicide to cherry, peach, apricot and nectarine trees. Do this as leaves begin to fall and be sure to cover all branches with spray to control blights and canker disease.

Apples will start ripening soon. They will ripen on the south side of the tree first. Store apples in shallow boxes at about 40 degrees.

To prevent sun scald on young fruit trees and to keep the sap from starting to move on sunny winter days, paint the trunks with white latex paint mixed half-and-half with water. It is also a good idea to remove leaves, weeds and dropped fruit from around the trees to discourage mice from hiding there and eating the bark. Prune and destroy all dead and diseased limbs and branches.

Roses should be pruned back after the first killing

frost. You should also mound soil 6-8" high around the base of the rose bush. Straw can be used to protect the bushes from winter cold.

Give your evergreens a few long, slow waterings before the ground freezes. This will help prevent burned needles and scorched leaves from dry winter winds.

To prepare the vegetable garden for winter, till crop debris into the garden. This will benefit the garden by improving the soil structure and will also disrupt the life cycle of many pests by exposing larvae to winter cold. Plant a cover crop of winter rye or vetch in the fall to add organic matter to the garden in the spring. Till under in the spring before the plants start to flower.

Store mowers and other garden tools in a dry place. This is a good time to clean and repair them. Hoses should be drained and stored where they won't freeze.

Houseplants need less water when light and temperatures drop in the winter. Fertilizer should be withheld from November to March. This gives the plants a rest and they will grow better in the spring.

See you in the spring!

Judi

MORE GARDEN TIPS

Audrey Bentz

DO NOT READ THIS WHILE EATING!

In our early years of High Prairie gardening, we had a great tomato crop developing, but returning to check it out after being gone for a week, noticed that something had stripped the leaves of all the plants. Then I was horrified to see these UGLY green worms having a feast (soon known of as Tomato Hornworms). Naturally, I screamed for Myrin (my rescuer) and he picked each one off (as I hid) and he carefully put them all in a pail.

The X-rated part: (for violence ☺):

After recovering, I followed my "organic" suggestions, got a second hand blender (well labeled!), pulverized them with water (thanks, Myrin). I strained the mush and sprayed the stuff over the tomato plants. Had a great crop of red beauties, and the hornworms seem to have permanently evacuated this organic war zone.

(Shared by popular request of certain neighbors!)



APPLES ON THE HIGH PRAIRIE - BUSINESS OR HOBBY?

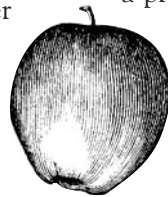
Fred and Evelyn Neth

We did not move to the High Prairie in 1998 to grow fruit. We wanted to get away from the I-5 corridor and retire in a rural environment. The High Prairie offered more than we dreamed possible. Twenty acres on Schilling Road at an elevation of 2200' with a 360 degree sweep of Mt. Hood, Mt. Adams, Mt. Ranier, the Goat Rocks and the Simcoes. And affordability! Waking up to this panorama never ceases our wonder and our privilege.

What do we do with land? We began by fencing out cattle. Then we planted 2500 Ponderosa Pines to cut down on water and wind erosion, and to beautify the landscape. In two years we saw the return of wild flowers, grasses, Hungarian Partridge and raptors.

A southern slope looked ideal for grapes, but a study of vineyards by WSU revealed that most grapes in south central Washington are grown at an elevation under 1300'. Orchardist friends from Yakima recommended we try Gala apples on V trellises with small M9 root stock. So our experiment on the High Prairie began.

We planted in April of '99. Then came the reality check. In September deer invaded and stripped every tree. This set back the trees a year and required deer fencing the entire orchard. Through that winter the small root stock rocked in the wind and struggled to get its roots in solid soil. The trellises had to be constructed sooner than planned to give the trees support. This was



followed by erecting wind screen to break the punishing winds.

We are growing with organic guidelines: no chemicals, no pesticides. One big advantage is no infestations from surrounding orchards so far.

Conservation of water has been achieved by drip irrigation limiting the watering to an 18 inch strip down the center of each row. Heavy mulching with alfalfa hay or straw further cuts the watering by one-third to one-half by sheltering the soil from drying winds. Results are very successful.

Admittedly, growing fruit on the High Prairie is swimming upstream. We are vulnerable to the winds, early fall freezes and late spring frosts. More than one local orchardist has told us we would never get any size or sweetness in our fruit. But we are achieving a Gala apple of good size, deep color and outstanding flavor. Further, we are experimenting by budding and grafting a new variety of apple, Honey Crisp, developed by the University of Minnesota. It is very sweet and firm and likes higher altitudes.

So, apples on the High Prairie? Are they cost effective? Not on our books. When will we realize a profit? Probably never. But someone said that once a hobby starts making money, it is no longer a hobby. But we are having the pleasure of growing quality fruit in and adverse environment for it and loving the process.

HIGH PRAIRIE WEB SITE UPDATE

Cindy Henschell

The High Prairie web site has gone through some changes. Besides making it a little easier to read *The High Prairie* online, the History Pages have been expanded with the intent of placing the pioneer family histories on the web site. These are currently in book form, meticulously researched by Vicki and Jim Koch and supplemented with photographs of the people and places on the prairie. Our goal is to make these histories more widely available.

Other changes can be seen on the Fire District 14 pages. Minutes of the Commissioner's meetings and the current financial statements can be read.

On the "wish list" is a way to send postcards featuring the scenes from past High Prairie calendars by email to friends, family, and prospective prairie-dwellers.

Bookmark the site and come back frequently:

<http://www.highprairie.us>

LIVING IN THE COUNTRY WORKSHOP

Lozetta Doll

On Saturday, September 13, 2003, a workshop was presented in Goldendale by Washington State University — Klickitat County Cooperative Extension Service. Bob Edwards and Tom and Lozetta Doll from the High Prairie area were in attendance. Unfortunately, for whatever reasons, the presenters outnumbered the participants. It was an informative and interesting program and, if offered again next year, it would be well worth the time to attend. Topics included the Right to Farm Law in Klickitat County, Open Range Issues, Water Concerns, Animal Care and Control, Noxious Weeds, Wildlife, Rural Fire Control, Solid Waste, Roads, and Alternative Agriculture Issues. There was adequate time allowed for questioning after each presentation. Although the workshop description seemed to lean toward agricultural issues, it was an excellent introduction to country living, even for people who have lived in rural Klickitat County for several years.

THIS IS OPEN RANGE COUNTRY – WHERE
THE DEER AND WILD TURKEY ROAM

(And Sometimes Cattle)

If You See “Lost” Cattle – Here Are Some Names
Of People To Call,

Along With Their Telephone Numbers:

Dave Welch is the Range Deputy for this area
(509) 493-1014;

Ron Ferguson is the Theft Inspector
(509) 773-3505;

Helen Rolfe is the Brand Inspector
(509) 773-8011.

Before calling any of these people, try to identify the cattle, i.e. brand, ear tags (color of ear tag(s), which ear is tagged), sex, coloration, etc.



FIRE DISTRICT 14

Cal Edwards

Response calls for 2002 reported by Doug Hutchison, Fire Chief:

41 - Total calls HPFD in 2002

27 - fire calls

14 - medical calls

Of the 41 calls:

10 were mutual aid in Klickitat County

2 were mutual aid in Oregon

17 were automatic aid to Lyle

12 were in the High Prairie District, some of which we received mutual aid from other districts

Of the 41 calls:

14 were medical

13 were grass fires

5 were structure fires

5 were motor vehicle accidents

3 were illegal burns

1 was a hazards condition

RECOGNIZING COMMUNITY SERVICE: DOUG AND LAURIE HUTCHINSON

Lozetta Doll

Doug and Laurie Hutchison are part of a growing number of husband/wife (partner) firefighters. Doug is a firefighter based out of the Vancouver Fire Department Headquarters near Vancouver Mall and Laurie is a firefighter for the Portland Fire and Rescue based out of the Hillsdale Fire Station in southwest Portland. They serve their respective fire departments with dedication and enthusiasm. They are able to coordinate their shifts (24 hours on duty, 48 hours off duty) so they work the same days of the week.

In 1998 they bought their 20 acres of High Prairie, put up a house and moved here in February 2001. They were drawn to High Prairie because of its proximity to the Portland/Vancouver area and its sunnier, drier climate. Doug first got acquainted with this area when he fought a fire in the Klickitat Canyon in 1992. Building a horse barn on their property presently occupies a good deal of their time and energy. They have a fourteen-year old horse and are preparing to welcome a six year old to their stable.

Doug grew up on a farm near Pleasant Hill, Oregon in the Eugene area. He joined the local volunteer fire department when he was 16 years of age. In 1986, three weeks after graduating from high school, he joined the Air Force, specializing in firefighting. Laurie was raised in Portland, Oregon and graduated from Grant High School in 1988. Laurie started out working on an independent fire crew, followed by two years with the Department of Natural Resources, before joining the Portland Fire and Rescue. Doug and Laurie met at Paramedic School where he was teaching.

Speaking with the Hutchisons on the eve of 9/11,

the talk naturally turned to that catastrophic event. They both spoke of getting off their shifts about the time the planes hit the Twin Towers and of sitting for hours in front of television sets with their fellow firefighters and EMTs. They were both requested to stay on duty in case they were needed at the airport or in the Portland/Vancouver area. They traveled to New York City three times during 2002 to show their support to the FDNY personnel. Their first trip was in March when they joined approximately 50 firefighters from the Portland area to march in the St. Patrick's Day Parade. They attended the large Memorial for the 343 firefighters in October. They went to New York again in December to attend a ceremony during which Laurie's uncle donated to the Great Neck Fire Department outside of New York City, 16-foot tall marble replicas of the Twin Towers that he himself had built. Doug and Laurie's lives have been enriched by the friendships that they have formed with some of the New York firefighters.



Doug and Laurie are both volunteer firefighters for Fire District 14 where Doug also serves as the Chief. They devote many hours to the community and seem genuinely happy that they are able to do so. They greatly appreciate the support the Fire District receives from the community, and we in the High Prairie community are lucky to have professional volunteers such as the Hutchisons working on our behalf.

Editors Note:

Doug comes to our area as a Paramedic and Laurie as an EMT and serve the High Prairie Fire District in that capacity. Doug has been instrumental in writing grants for the Fire District. Doug and Laurie's medical experience is greatly valued, as well as their other capabilities.

THE GREAT PORCUPINE CAPER

Richard Smith, Husum

One period in my career stands out for it was not only interesting, but we had a lot of fun while learning about Porcupines at the same time.

I had always had an interest in Porcupines, mainly because of the damage they caused to trees and other property. Way back in 1957 or so I saw a study, where it was calculated that a single Porcupine could cause over three thousand dollars damage in its lifetime. Now, keep in mind that when this study was done, the value of timber was about thirty dollars per thousand board feet for Douglas Fir and fifteen dollars for Ponderosa Pine. Today, those same trees sell for several hundred dollars per thousand. As for other property, Porcupines are attracted to salt. Anything that a person handled would acquire a minute amount of salt. If Porcupines were about, and you left a shovel or any other wooden handled tool out, they would chew on the handle and ruin it. Plywood has a glue that has traces of salt, so doors, walls and particularly our outhouses in campgrounds were practically destroyed over time. If you left a car or tractor so they could get in they would chew up the seats, steering wheel and gearshift knobs. Because of road salts, they would chew up the fan belts, wiring, hoses and even the tires. I once saw where a Porky must have gotten a huge surprise; one logger had an old truck he used for water and had left it on the job. A porky or several, had done a number on it, hoses, belts, etc. One Porky had been under the truck chewing on a tire and had chewed through until it blew out, as they held about seventy pounds of air pressure, it had blown the Porky across to the other side of the truck hard enough to leave quills embedded in the opposite tire. That must have been one shocked Porcupine.

For all the years I worked for the Department, we would always kill Porcupine whenever and wherever we could. They even went so far as to furnish .22 cal. ammunition for that purpose.

About 1960 we were asked to catch ten live Porcupines and take them to our research center in Olympia. They were trying to determine the best ways to attract them so they could try to control them with poison. This simple request began what I call the "Great Porcupine Caper." It lasted for several years and had us ... that is the Local Department of Natural Resources District heavily involved with Porcupines. We progressed from capturing those first ten, to acting as collectors of noses for the timber companies in their bounty program. Then catching and buying live Porkies preferably females for Medical research, to filling an order for several hundred that were purchased and transported to Montana, by the U. S. Forest Service for research. I don't recall the final numbers, but over time, we must have handled nearly a thousand live Porcupines.

BRING'EM BACK ALIVE

Our first attempt at live capture was preceded by a strategy meeting. It consisted of those who volunteered for this daunting task, the selection was based solely on those willing to spend half the night on their own time, without compensation driving the back roads. Judgment, common sense, and experience were not required.

Porcupines are mostly nocturnal animals so we obviously had to look for them at night ... that question was easy to solve. However, porcupines are full of quills, they can weight up to twenty or thirty pounds and they use their tails as a swatting weapon. They are slow, so keeping up with one is not hard, but how in the world do you catch one, get it into your vehicle and back to the compound? We had many plans ... none of, which were very practical without the porcupine's cooperation, which as you can imagine was not forthcoming.

The first night Chuck Haight and I went out armed with only a shovel and a rope. We did capture a live porcupine ... if this capture could have been filmed it would have been priceless as a documentary on how not to conduct a live capture.

We spotted our victim in a newly cut hay field; we jumped out of the vehicle and chased it down. Then proceeded stop it with the shovel. The next step was to get the rope around its neck. This was the first big problem, a porky puts his head down for protection, and if you are at all familiar with the anatomy of a Porcupine you will notice that they really don't have a neck as such. After wrestling the Porky over what seemed the whole field, being careful not to injure it or ourselves; we managed to end up with the rope around its middle. By this time, we were some distance from our vehicle so we proceeded to drag the Porky with the rope as it would not cooperate and let us lead him. The Porcupine was trying to hold on to anything it could grab, with all four feet and would after a short distance have a large ball of hay picked up. With its weight and the weight of the hay we were getting pooped out and would have to stop and get rid of the hay ball. After a long and tiring journey we finally reached the pickup where another problem presented its self. What were we going to put the Porky in to transport it? Maybe by now you can see that this whole operation was poorly planned and was being executed by people who really had no idea what they were doing. We had large wooden tool boxes about 5ft.x4ft.x4ft to carry our tools and equipment build in the beds of our pickups, so we just dumped it in there, and went home.

The next day, when we took it to Glenwood where we had a holding pen, we found it had gotten out of the rope and we had to spend over an hour getting it out of the pickup box

and into the pen. Thus ended our first excursion into the realm of Porcupine trapping.

With much effort and hilarity we did finally manage to get the ten Porcupines that Olympia wanted. It was left to me to transport them. We had an old fire warning sign, which was about 3 inches thick and large enough to cover the back of a pickup truck. We wired this down securely and put the Porkies in the bed of the pickup loose. I had always thought that Porcupines were more or less mute, but found out differently that night. I parked the truck near where our bedroom was located. Those critters kept us awake most of the night with their squealing, thumping and banging.

The next day when I got them to the research center they sent me out to the area where they were to be kept, to turn them over to a fellow, who I finally found up in a tree. I never determined why he was in the tree ... maybe he just liked it up there. Anyway, when I told him I had their ten Porcupines he told me to put them in a certain pen. I politely informed him that they were loose in the back of the truck, and if he wanted them he had to come and get them. With a lot of mumbling and grumbling he got out of his tree and I had a lesson on how to handle Porcupines. He showed me how to pick them up with your bare hands. This revelation simplified our lives. From that time on after relaying and demonstrating this procedure, we became experts in the care and handling of live Porcupine.

The procedure is really quite simple. The topside of a Porcupine is loaded with quills, including the tail. There are no quills on the belly or under the tail. In addition to quills, the Porcupine is covered with long, very strong guard hair. When threatened the hair and quills stand on end. A Porcupine will try to escape and preferably climb a tree if it can. If you prevent that, they will protect their head by pushing into something and tucking the head in. The only dangerous part of a Porky is his tail, which he will swat with.

Once you have it cornered and stopped, hold the tail immobile with a stick, or if wearing heavy boots step on the tail to hold it. Grasp the long hairs on the very tip of the tail securely so it can't pull away, as this is what it will attempt. Reach your free hand under the tail (remember, no quills on the underside) then slowly wrapping your fingers around the tail and at the same time; sliding your hand towards the tip of the tail lay the quills down. As soon as you have a secure grip, pick the Porcupine up by the tail. The Porcupine cannot lift its self, so there is no danger of being bitten or scratched. As you have to hold it out away from your body they get pretty heavy very quickly, but you can lower it to the ground to rest your arm and if you hold on to the tail it will only try to pull away.

We eventually got into the business of collecting live Porcupines for the Universities of Washington and Oregon. When we started out they would pay five dollars for a female

and one dollar and a half for a male. This required us to learn how to tell the sex of a porcupine. I won't describe the procedure here, but it entails more than just looking. What they really wanted were pregnant females, but we had no way to determine that.

It was discouraging to go to all the trouble of capturing a live porcupine only to find that it was a male and worth less than a female. We finally got the Universities to pay three dollars and fifty cents across the board. That way, when a person would bring in a live porky they would receive ... Three fifty from the University and an additional fifty cents from the timber companies for a total of four dollars a head. We had several people who made quite a few dollars on the side. The Dept. employees could not collect any of this money, as we were the representatives of the Universities and the Timber companies. We did bring in live porcupines when we could; the money went into a district pot that we used for incidentals like buying coffee for the office, etc.

Before the "Great Porcupine Caper" if you found a porcupine it was simple, you just killed it. When they became valuable and were to be taken alive, things became more complicated. Before, if you came across one in a tree you just shot it out of the tree. Now ... someone had to go up the tree to shake it out so it could be captured on the ground. This led to many funny sights, such as when a man and a porcupine are trying to occupy the same flimsy space on a limb at the same moment. As I always insisted upon being the ground man, I was treated to many very funny and entertaining situations. At times, it was hard to tell who was chasing whom.

If you were alone, it was hopeless as you couldn't climb a tree, evict a porky and get down before it would climb another one. When this happen to me, I would fall back on my old training and shoot it. When I brought in just the nose, one fellow I worked with would get all upset and want to know why I didn't bring it in alive. I use to enjoy putting him on, and would make up stories just to get his goat. I once told him that I tried to bring one in that I had found in a tree. That I had ordered it to come down, and even counted to ten before firing. Another time I made up a story about one I had captured alive. I had ordered it into the back of the pickup, but it had refused. So in this case, I put a rope around its neck and tied it to the bumper, but it apparently couldn't keep up, for when I arrived at the compound, all I had was a frayed rope and a nose. This was all bull, but he was so gullible he would swallow almost anything.

Editors Note

Dick Smith is a retired Department Natural Resources employee. I had worked with Dick for the DNR for a short time years ago. I also had collected Porcupine noses on my own getting as many as 13 in one day.

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ODE TO CHARLIE

Written by Tom Doll

Ol' Charlie Horse came a'calling last night,
Left a tight wad in my muscles before daylight.

Can you imagine the sky turning dark blue in the
moonlight

As I lumbered out of bed to turn on the PUD light.

The silence was suddenly broken by the calls of Wiley
the coyote

As he prepared to wov his love out of sight.

I listened for the sounds of those who slept,
But my moaning and groaning was all I heard.

As I groped for my "Myoflex" in the cabinet drawer.

Expecting some relief from the white cream I was led to
believe

That foretold the years of ancient past as I rubbed the
trail of his pain before.

The journey of Ol' Charlie's death has now begun

But what is dying and death of Ol' Charlie before
daylight?

For haying and climbing these hills, he will be reborn
another day

As we live and age in a life of strife.

For our cycle of life can be remembered by Ol' Charlie
crying in the night.