

## PRESIDENT'S CORNER

January, 2012

All throughout the thirty-something years I spent with the Postal Service, I always said, "I'm going to retire as soon as I'm eligible; 30 years is long enough at one place and I've got other things to do with my life". But for the longest time, I didn't know what that 'other thing' was. I knew it needed to involve horses and the mountains, and some sort of aid or service. I thought of working for an outfitter....nah. Boring. I thought of working for the DEA and riding the backcountry looking for dope growers and drug smugglers. Eh, maybe not. I tried Idaho Mountain Search & Rescue, thinking what better way to search for lost people than with horses! But by the time I got there, they didn't have a horse unit, and I ended up humping that damned old heavy pack up and down brush-covered mountains on my BACK. The whole time I was thinking, "*Where is my horse? Why am I carrying this pack up and down these hills when I have a HORSE?!*" So I eased myself out of that predicament.

If it hadn't been for 82 barn cats I needed to spay and neuter, I probably wouldn't have found the Squaw Butte Back Country Horsemen. And I owe it all to Lou Ann. Through a series of events involving the cats and the spay/neuter program she was involved with, I got to know Lou Ann, saw she had horses, and asked her where she rode. When she replied that she belonged to the Back Country Horsemen and they did trail maintenance and rode in the back country, I exclaimed, "That's exactly what I want to do!" A love affair was born.

I immediately went looking for this Squaw Butte Back Country Horsemen bunch, and what I found was a dream come true. It *was* exactly what I was looking for---the service of working on trails and keeping them open and maintained for everybody to use; the opportunity to ride in the back country with people that know what they're doing and where they're going; and a bunch of awesome, super people willing to teach me how to pack into the back country and are even nice about it when you have a big old horse-wreck.

I could not have asked for a better organization to become involved in. The people that make up this group are some of the nicest, down-home folks you'd ever hope to meet. They're friendly and corrigible and just all around good people. They are hard working, and serious about their chosen past-time.

Everybody involved in this Squaw Butte Chapter does their share to make the Chapter one of the best in the state. We have folks willing to travel hours and miles to go to public meetings and put in the time it takes for us equine groups to have a voice in how forests and trails are managed. They spend time working with state groups to develop new areas and new trails for all us outdoor enthusiasts to enjoy. Without these people advocating for special-interest groups, a lot of trails in the backcountry would not stay open.

To keep those trails open also takes sweat and hours on the trails, trimming brush and cutting out trees blocking the trails. We have people that spend countless hours working with the Forest Service and

scheduling projects for us to work on. And we have people that actually volunteer their time and sweat to go do that work! It is not easy work, either, but there are always people willing to do it. I find that incredible.

All in all, this is just an incredible group, and I have the utmost respect for everyone who contributes to making things happen. Just because you're not out there sweating on the trails doesn't mean you're not contributing; I know there's tons of things that get done that seem to go unnoticed. But if those things didn't get done, why, you can bet we'd notice. Everyone does their part. They do it willingly and happily, year after year, with sometimes no more thank you than a plate of food at the potluck, because after all that hard work, we still like to hang around the campfire with each other and eat.

You guys are so good at doing what you do, I'm having trouble keeping up. When I became President and started getting in the swing of things, I'd ask somebody about doing something that needed to be done, only to find out that it was already done, and they were on to other things. I told Rob my motto was going to be "I must hurry and catch up with them, for I am their leader!" He said I shouldn't worry about being out in front leading, but just keep up and make sure everybody is going in the right direction. I don't care about being in front; I just want to be close enough to the pack that I can keep everybody in sight and not get left behind.

This is a tremendous group, and I'm proud to be a part of it and all the good things we do. I hope as president I can keep up!

Safe and Happy trails; see you on the next switchback.

Janine Townsend