

NORTHWEST OCTA UPDATE AND JOURNAL NEWSLETTER of the NORTHWEST CHAPTER

July 2001

Chapter Website: www.nwocta.com

www.nwocta.com/octastore.index.htm

Lethene Parks: President Don Popejoy: Editor

Convention 2001 Casper, Wyoming The Last Crossing of The Great Platte River Road

The 19th Annual Convention of the Oregon
California Trails Association
August 15-18, 2001

“For those of you who have not been to Casper before you will be at 5100 feet above sea level. Independence Rock is 6028 feet above sea level and Rocky Ridge is 7215 feet above sea level. High altitudes can slow you down and you can sunburn easier. Average temperature last year at this time was 87 degrees high and 52 low. Last year was hot and we hope it will not be that warm this year but prepare for it. It usually does not rain in mid August. The buses on the Dam Trip and the East and West tours are air conditioned with toilets on board. Bring your hats, sun lotion, cameras and sunglasses and have fun enjoying our beautiful trail and sites.”

Pre-Convention Hikes and Treks:

Fort Laramie to Glendo - August 13
Rocky Ridge and Sweetwater Valley - August 13
Two Day Cherokee Trail Tour - August 12
John C. Fremont Tour (The Dam Trip) - August 14
Hike to Saleratus Lakes, Sweetwater Station,
Independence Rock and Devil's Gate - August 14

Convention Bus Tours:

The East Tour - Travel along the trail to Richard or Reshaw bridge site, Rock in the Glen, Bissonette Trading Post, LaBonte crossing, Wagonhound Creek, Grindstone Hill, Ayres Natural Bridge Park, the Chamberlain Ranch and

the Larimer-Kelley wagon train attack site. Visit many graves along the way.

The West Tour - Start at Fort Casper and follow the trail along the North Platte River to the Red Buttes area, then west through South Pass, through the Devil's Backbone, Willow Springs and Prospect Hill, Independence Rock and then to the Martin Handcart Center at Devil's Gate.

Papers and Presentations:

Dr. Fred R. Gowans - Keynote Speaker

Susan Badger Doyle - The Bozeman Trail

James A. Lowe - The Bridger Trail

Dr. Jack Fletcher and Pat Fletcher - The Cherokee Overland Trail

Levida Hileman - In Tar and Stone

Victor Douville - The Impact of the Overland Migration on the Lakota

Lesley Wischmann - The Horse Creek Treaty - 1851

Dr. Michael Cassidy - Quo Vadis? The Red Buttes and Emigration History

John D. McDermott - Bridges, Bastions and Battles: The Significance of the Upper Platte Crossing

Don't forget the Book Room, Author's Night, the OCTA Band, the Raffle, the Silent Auction and the many Workshops!

Special Note: Please send to Joyce Bolerjack your chapter renewal form and your correct e-mail address for the e-mail mailing list.

Northwest OCTA Update

The *NW OCTA Update* is the newsletter published by the Northwest Chapter of the Oregon-California Trails Association. It is published on the 15th day of January, April, July, and October of each year. Also, a special Convention issue is done after each convention in August. Submission deadline for each *Update* is the 15th of the month previous to publication.

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From the Parks Bench

Lethene Parks

This time, as we all get out on the trails for summer outings, I want to write about excitement-the excitement people feel when they see and touch pieces of history and begin to realize that history is people and that the chain of people and history is continuous from our earliest ancestors down to us. Some images come to mind: my grandmother telling me about her earliest memory, soldiers on their way home from the Civil War coming through her father's Missouri farm and stealing chickens to have something to eat; being taken as a small child to see the Mullan Tree near Fourth of July Pass in Idaho; standing in ruts of the Natchez Trace in Tennessee looking at a bend in the Duck River and realizing that bend was where my ancestors lived at the time when Meriwether Lewis died only a few miles away; Don Popejoy standing in some Mullan Road ruts leading to a ford of Hangman Creek and saying "Doesn't it just make chills go up and down your spine?" Tom Laidlaw standing at the ruins of the old Hudson's Bay Company Fort Colvile and saying "I'm standing on the bottom of the Columbia River!" And most recently, on the Northwest OCTA Barlow Road outing, Stanton and Addie Rickey's two small granddaughters trying out a grave site to see if it fit a child, lying flat on the ground between the headstone and the wagon tongue marking the foot of the grave, eyes closed

From the Parks Bench

(Continued from page 2)

and tongues lolling out, a spray of wildflowers in their hands..

And I want to write about kids and how we can help them feel this excitement. I think the young Rickey girls will feel it and will remember their experience measuring an emigrant grave on the Barlow Road. My seventeen-year-old grandson, who considers himself a real cool dude, still remembers prowling through an old cemetery in Ohio looking for the graves of some ancestors and finding the grave of a little child with the same surname. I still remember the Mullan Tree and the awe I felt at a tree that was, at the time I saw it, nearly a hundred years old. For kids-or adults for that matter--to feel the excitement of history it must become personalized; they must be able to relate it to something in their own experience. Muriel Carbinier personalizes history when, as a living history volunteer, she stays in character and asks a visiting child "Now what is this TV you mention? I don't know about that, tell me." Tom Laidlaw does it when he appears in costume as William Cannon and tells stories of fur trade times. I did it in telling fifth graders at our local museum when I asked them if they were Oregon Trail emigrants what they would do when their only pair of shoes wore out. And history certainly became personal for the Rickey girls as they used their own bodies to see if the Barlow Road site was a fit for a child's grave.

As we pursue our trail adventures this summer and in the future, and as we read and perhaps do indoor programs during the winters, let us all remember the excitement we feel when we stand in the trail ruts and touch history. Let us all do whatever we can to personalize history and the trail experience for kids and others with whom we come in contact, so that they too feel the excitement. Let us all remember to let our own enthusiasm and excitement show. This I think is the best possible way to ensure preservation of the historic roads and trails that excite all of us who belong to OCTA.

Lethene

Editors Forum

Dear readers: This was a very quick edit job by your editor as time was a crucial factor. I got back from a Lewis and Clark elderhostel tour on June 27th, then slept for 48 hours. Once more conscious of the real world, I began to unpack, do laundry and repack as I set out in pursuit of Lewis and Clark once again on July 5th. This time I take along my good friend Tom Laidlaw who will be the instructor this time around. I had two days to put this issue of the Update together for you, plus Tom needed it ASAP as he wants it on the chapter website plus for the PDF file to e-mail before he leaves for St. Charles, MO. and the beginning of another elderhostel adventure.

Therefore, you will see some variance in the type set as I usually convert all text to the same format. For those of you who have a PC, go to our website and you will see the pictures that accompany the stories in this Update, plus other information not found in this issue.

There will be a special Convention 2001 issue of the Update, which will be out to all members by the first of September, or earlier.

Don Popejoy

Year 2001 Outings

Applegate/South Road Trail Marking Trip

June 11th and 12th

On a breezy, cool and overcast couple of days, over 40 people joined with tour leader Richard Silva to visit and experience the Applegate/South Road to Oregon trail from Davis Creek on Highway 395 above Alturas to the Oregon-California border, over 85 miles to the West.

Meeting in the BLM Office on June 11th, a large crowd of interested trail folks heard the plans for the next two days, reviewed topographical maps and arranged for all to have CB radios. In attendance were a large number of BLM and Forest Service employees, tourism advocate members, historical society members, Trails West members and of course OCTA members from both CA-NV and Northwest Chapters. A caravan of 15 vehicles snaked up the highway to Davis Creek for the start of our adventure.

Moving slowly around the South end of Goose Lake, Richard told us of the many emigrant routes in this area, mostly determined by the level of the Lake. He pointed out the bluffs that had to be climbed during high water years. We soon began to eat each others dust as we traveled up the graveled road gaining elevation to reach the large area known as the Devil's Garden. We turned South on an unimproved dirt road to reach the trail as it came west up the canyon from McGinty Reservoir. We traveled about one mile, got out and walked to the very distinct trail swales, much to the satisfaction of those who were not driving 4x4 vehicles!

After our short hike, Richard related an 1872 quote: "Camped in Dry Creek valley after rolling over the worst piece of rocky country on top of ground - for miles neither wheel or wagon nor foot of horse ever touched the soil. Ground covered with loose round rocks as thick as they can be planted - A Devil's Garden of the most approved type." Emigrant diaries all commented on the rocky trail over the Garden - we all concur.

We moved out in a cloud of dust, with Richard pointing out the 4x4, barely visible, two track roads that turn south into the Fletcher Creek route of the trail. The trail in this area, for about 10 miles, is one to three miles from any road! Those of us who will mark the trail next summer with

carsonite and steel rail markers took note of the distance required to carry the equipment and markers!

The lunch stop was made at the Fletcher Creek crossing of the Crowder Flat road. With Richard reading diary quotes and relating historical facts from GLO maps and his other research, we moved on to where the trail exits from Fletcher Creek, then down the dusty road to where the trail turns Northwest toward today's Pothole Springs. Several vehicles choose to stop shortly after starting as this road was not graded and required high clearance. Those that continued saw some of the best swales of the day.

After turning around, and meeting those who waited, we started our trip back to Alturas. After about 35 miles of dusty, gravel road, the paved highway 139 looked awfully good. Days travel for most exceeded 100 miles! Richard announced a long day awaits us tomorrow, so we will meet at the BLM at 7 a.m..

It rained pretty hard last night, but the gravel road was just as dusty, as we headed back toward Pothole Springs from the Clear Lake side of the Devil's Garden. Pothole Springs is impressive, very green, lots of water. At the Springs is a Trails West rail marker, the aluminum plate is pretty well damaged by bullets. Also near by is the grave of Lloyd Dean Shook; it is not marked nor is it fenced. In 1971, Devere Helfrich with the Klamath Historical Society wrote that a basaltic headstone was found with the name, age 14, and date of 10/11/1851. He also writes that considerable research has been made, but no further evidence relating to a Shook family of 1851 has been uncovered. The headstone has been removed to a museum.

We returned, following the beautiful trail ruts toward Steel Swamp. Returning to the paved highway, we went north stopping to view the descent to Bloody Point. Although few swales are present, significant trail sights can be located. The Natural Bridge with its Lost River is well marked and nice interpretative signs are present. A number of future trail marking locations exist around the bottom of Lower Klamath Lake. Marking this trail will be a challenge! I heard no one say it could not be done, and in fact several are anxious for next summer's event.

Gail Carbiener

Year 2001 Outings

OCTA Annual Convention: Casper, Wyoming August 15-18, 2001

Naches Pass Trail Outing: July 28 and 29, 2001

Saturday July 28th - 8:00 a.m. meet at the McAllister Museum of Aviation, 2008 South 16th Avenue. Coffee, juice and rolls will be furnished at the Museum.

Driving Directions: Arriving from the south on Highway 97 or I-82 take Valley Mall exit at Union Gap. It is the first exit after Highway 97 joins I-82. Go west 2 blocks to Main Street, turn right and go about 5 blocks to Washington, turn left and take Washington Ave. west to 16th Ave. and turn south on 16th for one block to the Museum.

If arriving from the north on I-82 take the Naches Highway (Highway 12) exit west just after passing through the Selah gap and crossing the twin bridges. Next take the First Street exit, 16th Ave., and follow 16th south to the airport. Continue one block south from the corner of 16 and Washington

to the Museum. If arriving from the west on Highway 12 - 410 take the 16th Ave. exit and do as indicated above.

We will start the day with light airplane flights covering the route of the Naches Pass Trail between old Fort Walla Walla and the Wenas Valley at Selah. We want to get into the air by 8:30 and have a short briefing and assign passengers to pilots and aircraft.

After lunch (noon to 1:30) there will be a motor tour of the Toppenish Murals and the Yakima Nation Cultural Center Museum. Dinner will be at the Pingry house at 6:00 p.m.

Sunday July 29th - Meet at the Selah Civic Center parking lot located on the right side of First Street about 2 blocks before you get to Pringrey Ford (an auto dealership). We will travel from Selah and follow the Naches Pass Trail route through the Wenas Valley. CB radios would be desirable and 4 wheel drive vehicles are not needed. We will arrive at the Little Naches River to view some original wagon ruts.

Contact **Dick Pingrey** at 509-697-4765 or rjpingrey@msn.com

An Adventure: On the Oregon Trail with the Elderhostel Program

On May 7, 2001, an elderhostel group once again set out for the wide open spaces along the old (pun intended) Oregon Trail. Twenty seniors with the pioneering spirit meet in Kansas City, Missouri and began what they all agreed was a once in a lifetime experience. As one gentleman put it so bluntly after the fact, "My God, who would ever want to do this again?"

May 6th brought the group together for orientation and a welcome dinner at the Holiday Inn, where they were greeted by the staff from Alton L. Collins Retreat Center, located just outside Sandy, Oregon on the Barlow Road. Each of the hosteller's received their packets of information, among which were corresponding maps of the Oregon Trail from Gregory Franzwa's epic *Maps of the Oregon Trail*. The itinerary was set up by Janice Stevens, the on board coordinator from Collins, and as you will see, she did a tremendous job. Molly Smith, who lives on Mount Hood near the Barlow Road, was one of the on board historians, along with myself (Don Popejoy) and a geologist named Joe Dirt from Ashland, Oregon. Honest, that's his real name? Janice and Molly joined OCTA after last year's Oregon Trail tour. Today's adventures were very relaxing, as we made stops at Jesse James Farm and the steamboat *Arabia*.

"God made man in the East, only so he would have to travel to the West."

Author Unknown

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Tuesday, May 8th, found the Big Blue Bus, as the hosteller's called our wagon which was driven by our wagon master, Mike Warren, at the National Frontiers Trail Center and the Bingham Waggoner House. While my elders were searching the Center for books and information, I headed over to OCTA HQ's and had a nice visit with Kathy and Suzanne. I had asked the ladies to work up an OCTA packet for the group which included the recent OJ, a copy of the recent NFP, application forms, the September 2000 National Geographic (the one with the *California Trails* article and the wonderful fold out map) and the OCTA logo pin. Well, as I was loading all this onto the bus, Janice and Molly noticed the awesome cookies that Kathy made just for me. Since I was spending the next 15 days with these two ladies, I decide the best course of action was to share.

Ross Marshall gave the group a nice tour of the Santa Fe Trail swales on the Bingham Waggoner estate, just across the street from the NFTC and OCTA HQ's. Ross was just the first of several on-site OCTA hosts that I had asked to visit with us along the way. As you can tell by now, OCTA played a major role in telling the history of the Oregon Trail and related sites. In the afternoon we found ourselves at Alcove Springs, where in fact some water was going over the top and formed a lovely waterfall, not only to see, but to hear as well. Duane Iles asked a *Friend of Alcove Springs*, Jack Holler, to speak to us about the springs and show us the swales near the Big Blue River in Kansas. Jack also showed us where he thinks the location of Sarah Keyes grave is. It sure fits the diary descriptions and we had the chance to use divining rods and sure enough, there is someone buried there. It must be Sarah! We all agreed. The evening was idled away in wonderful Marysville, Kansas and after a delightful morning, May 9th, was spent at Homestead National Monument, we rode across the gentle prairies and rolling hills, following the Little Blue River to Rock Creek Station located just inside the Nebraska State line. After a couple hours following the trail through the area and accumulating numerous ticks, we loaded the wagon with more supplies and books, and headed off for Kearney, NB and the fascinating Platte River. The hosteller's learned about the Great Platte River Road and how the Mormons followed the north side of the river while the Oregon and California bound emigrants stayed on the south side. The Platte River was magnificent as it flowed in and out of inlets and small coves, and then around islands and sand bars which were populated by thousands of birds, among which were the tall and sleek Sandhill Cranes.

This morning, May 10th was a buzz with talk of visiting the newest interpretive center, the Great Platte River Road Arch. This arch spans the interstate and some 12,000 vehicles pass under its shadow every day! The Arch opened last year in July and is an amazing historical attraction. After lunch and a visit to Fort Kearney, we made our way leisurely to Buffalo Bill Cody's Ranch, completing what one hosteller said was a wonderful display of three of the toughest men ever to roam the West: Jesse James, Wild Bill Hitchcock at Rock Creek Station and now Buffalo Bill. "Yes, sir're" I said, "only on the Oregon Trail can that happen." I'm not sure what that meant, and neither did he. The night was spent in Ogallala, NB and I could hardly wait to proudly show them OCTA's California Hill.

May 11th was to be a very busy and exciting day. These folks had waited a long time to become official "rutnuts"; that is, to actually, finally, get to walk in real Oregon Trail ruts. Well, here my dear elders is California Hill! Today they earned their OCTA pins. I explained how this was the emigrants first ascent of any kind and as we walked to the top of the hill, they understood the significance of this area and could look back to the crossing of the South Platte. I told them to keep this vision in their minds as we traveled the highway through the valley of the Platte, towards Windlass Hill and the descent into Ash Hollow. Once we reached the top of the Windlass Hill, it was fantastic to see the looks of awe and understanding on their faces! What could be any better then this? How about Courthouse and Jail Rock? Or Chimney Rock? How about Scott's Bluff and gazing across the Badlands towards the river and the town of Scotts Bluff, or looking down on the Oregon Trail that went through Mitchell Pass? "Oh my," said one lady "I had no idea of the Oregon country's grandeur." Dinner was at the Chuck Wagon opposite Chimney Rock and after a jolting wagon ride, a tremendously large and thick steak and several ice cream cones, we enjoyed a wonderful campfire sing-along with Molly and a tall, dark stranger, whom the women said had a voice like an angel. That night, with sunburned faces, arms and legs and with delirious smiles on their faces, the rutnuts slept well.

Saturday was another beautiful day and as we crossed over into Wyoming, the sun seemed to shine brighter and hotter. Our visit to Fort Laramie saw the elders scurrying about listening to the headsets provided by the visitor center and taking pictures of Old Bedlam, the Officers quarters and the oldest building in Wyoming. At Register Cliff we saw Alva Unthank's signature and hundreds of others, then marveled at the depth of the Guernsey ruts. As we made our way towards Casper, Wyoming, I pointed out the location of Alva Unthank's grave and told his story to a sadden group of people.

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Day by day we made our way across Wyoming. Leaving the Platte River behind at Casper, we picked up the Sweetwater River near Independence Rock, following it closely to the Devils Gate, past Split Rock and into Lander where we spent another restful night. Then in was on to South Pass where the Big Blue Bus made it's way on the Oregon Trail, kicking up dust just as the oxen of old did. Once across the Continental Divide, we knew we were half way home. Two days were spent in Rock Springs, Wyoming: a time to relax, do laundry, catch up on post cards, write in our diaries and journals. A side trip was taken to the Flaming Gorge in Utah and became one of the highlights of the entire trip.

Fort Bridger was the main event on May 16th as was the crossing of the Bear River at the Wyoming/Idaho border. Montpelier offers a small town atmosphere with a big time trail attraction, known as the Oregon California Trail Center. The tour group visited this center on the morning of the 17th and here it was that I almost got married! Well, not really...you had to be there to understand what I mean. Anyway, after lunch it was on to Fort Hall, the Stricker Store, the Raft River Crossing and the Last Parting of the Ways, and into Twin Falls, Idaho.

Friday, May 18th brought us to a major decision: should we stay on the south side of the Snake River, the Southern Alternate, or cross over at Three Island Crossing? Since we were having lunch at Carmella's Winery in Glenns Ferry, we crossed over. Bill Wilson, president of the Idaho/MT chapter, met the hosteller's at Bonneville Point and gave a historical background about Captain Bonneville and the point that bares his name. Bill read some diary quotes and then, along with my good friends Gail and Muriel Carbiener, who were meeting with the Id/Mt chapter over the weekend to do some trail marking, we walked some of the trail as it descended down into the Boise Valley and the city of Boise, Idaho.

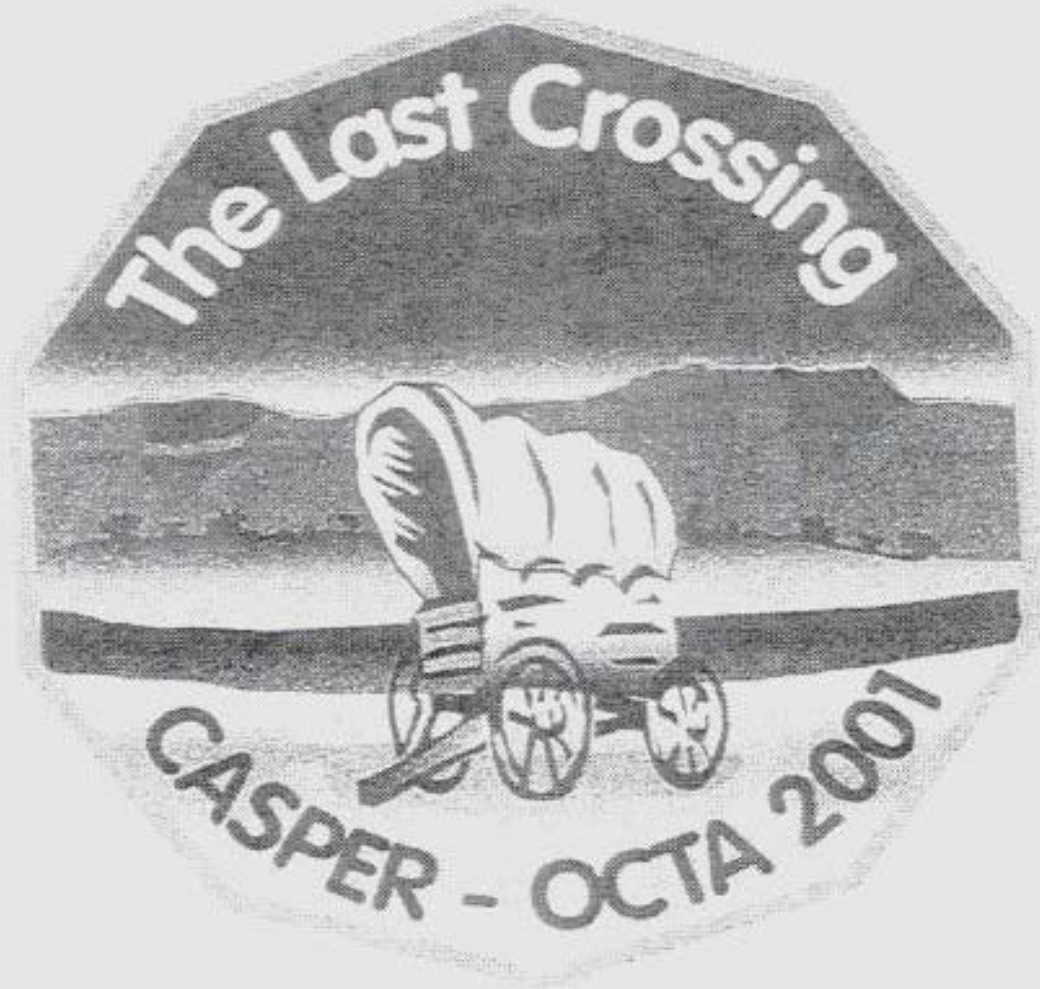
Saturday morning we were off quickly and as we crossed over into Oregon, we made our way through Keeney Pass and walked in the parallel ruts, then followed the BLM concert markers into Vale where we stopped at the Rinehart Stone House. We followed Interstate 84 into the Baker Valley and Baker City. Another great steak dinner found us in Haines, Oregon and then another miracle day on the Oregon Trail ended.

The Oregon Trail Interpretive Center near Baker City was a remarkable site for everyone on the bus. Hanging there on the side of Flagstaff Hill made the trail, coming out of Virtue Flats, seem truly like a mirage in the desert. Next came the wonder of the Blue Mountains, and as one of the ladies said "I can't believe it, the mountains are blue!" we saw amazing ruts descending Ladd Hill. From Hilgard Junction to Meacham, Oregon I was able to point out the many carsonite markers that the NW chapter had put up in the spring of 1998 and we saw portions of the trail as it paralleled the interstate for many miles. The Oregon Trail took us into Washington as we followed closely the Whitman route into the town named twice: Walla Walla. Here we once again, and for the last time, walked on the Oregon Trail as it passed by the old mission grounds. When night fell, we had made it to The Dalles and just like the emigrants of old, we had another decision to make. Weather permitting, we would go around Mount Hood and follow parts of the Barlow Road in the morning. If the weather turned bad, we would follow the river route into Oregon City.

Monday, May 21st, was the last day of this incredible journey. Can you save the best for last? Not always, but we came very close. The weather was as beautiful as you could wish for and Mount Hood stood out like the glacier gem that she is. Sam Barlow (Tom Laidlaw, another OCTA host) met us at Laural Hill and discussed the near impossible odds of making it down these 60% grade chutes. The splendor that is Mount Hood, showed us they way into Oregon City and the end of the trail at Abernathy Green. Sam Barlow lead a weary, but elated group of Oregon Trail elders around the green, explaining passionately, as only Sam can do, about what the emigrants faced next. Sam seemed stricken, but about what I was not sure. I boldly asked him what he seemed so concerned about and his reply was "Why are all these people so old looking? Have they been on the Trail long?"

This 16 day journey ended at the Alton L. Collins Retreat Center in Eagle Creek, Oregon. Dave Welch, OCTA President and guest speaker, told of his research for his g-great grandfather who came out on the Oregon Trail and headed for California. One lady (Dorothy Krugner) said that Dave's talk "was inspiring. My husband understands now why I pursue genealogy, not for the dry data, but for the real life drama and experiences that families should not forget." The closing dinner and ceremony, was a fitting testimony to our "shared" journey across this wonderful land of ours. Twenty-five lives touched each other briefly, but poignantly. Thoughts, feelings and emotions were not hidden, but rather, expressed openly, for we had done what few others have ever attempted to do, we followed the Oregon Trail in a Big Blue Bus.

Submitted by Don Popejoy



NW OCTA UPDATE
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