

Port Orford *Today!*

Serving the Port Orford area since 1990

Thursday, December 24, 1998

Vol. 9 Number 49

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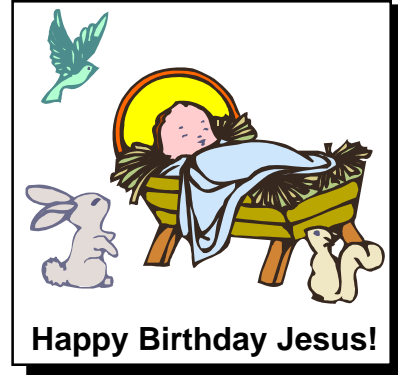
The Downtown Fun Zone

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Happy Birthday Jesus!

Happy Holidays By Evan Kramer



By the time this paper comes out Christmas will be upon us and with it a day of rest, festivity and religious observance for most. The weather feels like a

traditional Christmas with many area residents "enjoying" the snow. Monday was the Winter Solstice – the shortest day of the year. Now the days are getting longer. The robins have returned to Port Orford in large numbers and are devouring the holly berries. Anyone with a car or truck parked under one of these trees knows what I'm talking about.

Oregon has been treated to an unusual cold spell the past several days. It affected many local residents. Out where we live it was cold enough to freeze all the outdoor faucets but not the lines running into the house. On Monday morning the Fun Zone had no water as the water line from the City into the building froze. People living up the Sixes and Elk River were greeted with snow and motorists on Highway 101 faced snow and ice and terrible driving conditions on Sunday. There were five to six inches of snow on Langlois Mountain and it took snow chains to traverse the icy roads. The

weather even kept people in Port Orford as many decided they didn't want to drive north on Highway 101 to Santa's shopping mall in Coos Bay.

Numerous people in Port Orford and Sixes reported frozen water lines and other problems associated with freezing temperatures.

The level of Garrison Lake was slowly rising on Sunday afternoon, as there was no water flowing out through the outlet. I walked from Paradise Point to Haystack Rock on Sunday to get a better look at the changes this winter has brought on the beaches and dunes. There was a lot of evidence where ocean waves had flowed into the lake with at least one noticeable trough having formed.

Lake Levels By Evan Kramer

Port Orford City Administrator Johnny Alexander discussed lake levels and other topics with Jay Stoler and myself on Friday. Alexander reviewed the sequence of events concerning the recent unplugging of the Garrison Lake outlet. He said Mike McCabe with the Division of State Lands (DSL) wouldn't issue an emergency permit to the City until Wednesday, December 9. He said Frank Cali got a permit from a different DSL employee named Steve Moser. Alexander talked

about the vulnerability for flooding of the homes on the north shore of the lake as well as the sewer manhole on Lakeshore Drive and sewer pump on Lakeshore.

Alexander discussed salinity levels in the lake. He said the level is up to 1.7 which translates to about 600 parts per million of salt. He added that we have been very lucky with the quality of water from Hubbard Creek this year.

Keystone Pacific, the manufacturer of the City's water treatment plant will be here this week to look at the operation of the plant regarding turbidity levels in the water.

Alexander got back to lake levels. He said he had a meeting with County Roadmaster Dan Crumley, Todd from Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife and Mike McCabe (DSL) on Wednesday morning to work out an intergovernmental agreement regarding lake levels. The City and County have been issued a Standing Emergency Permit by DSL that will allow them to decide when to go out and open the lake outlet. The question which hasn't been resolved is "what is the activation point?" for opening the outlet. Alexander is looking for input from north shore residents about the activation point. Who's going to pay for opening the outlet

Continued on back cover

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Tide Predictions For Port Orford - 42° 44 N 124° 30 W

Produced by "Tides & Currents for Windows" version 2.0 by Nautical Software (503) 579-1414

Date	Midnight to Noon			Noon to Midnight			Sun		Moon		Phase		
							Rise	Set	Rise	Set			
Thu Dec 24	3:53a	6.9	9:28a	3.6	2:58p	6.6	9:44p	0.6	7:45a	4:49p	11:48a	10:57p	
Fri Dec 25	4:39a	7.1	10:37a	3.3	4:06p	6.1	10:34p	1.2	7:45a	4:50p	12:19p	12:01a	
Sat Dec 26	5:28a	7.4	11:50a	2.7	5:26p	5.7	11:29p	1.7	7:45a	4:51p	12:51p	1:07a	1Q
Sun Dec 27	6:17a	7.7	1:01p	1.9	6:53p	5.5			7:46a	4:51p	1:23p	2:14a	
Mon Dec 28	12:29a	2.3	7:08a	8.1	2:04p	0.9	8:14p	5.7	7:46a	4:52p	1:59p	3:22a	
Tue Dec 29	1:30a	2.7	7:58a	8.5	3:01p	0.0	9:25p	6.0	7:46a	4:53p	2:38p	4:31a	
Wed Dec 30	2:31a	2.9	8:48a	8.8	3:53p	-0.8	10:25p	6.4	7:46a	4:54p	3:19p	5:38a	
Thu Dec 31	3:29a	3.1	9:37a	9.1	4:42p	-1.3	11:18p	6.8	7:46a	4:55p	4:14p	6:42a	

Computer Classes

Did you receive a computer for Christmas and haven't a clue what to do? Still haven't figured out how to e-mail the grandchildren on last year's computer? Well, Southwestern Oregon Community College, Gold Beach should be your next stop. We offer several classes that should fit everyone's schedule.

Southwestern has two Introduction to Computer classes, either on Tuesday or Wednesday evening. This class is for the complete novice. You will learn a little about hardware, software and the basic computer functions.

There is also a four-week Basic Word Processing class on Thursday evenings. This is intended for students who know their way around the computer a little, but need to get more out of their document software.

For the more advanced computer user we have CIS 131, Computer Information

Systems on Thursday evenings. This class is for those students familiar with the computer and basic knowledge of word processing. It covers about two weeks of word processing then focuses on spreadsheets and databases. It is a perfect class for people who work with computers, but need to learn more than word processing, then focuses on spreadsheets and databases. It is a perfect class for people who work with computers, but need to learn more than word processing.

Southwestern offers Saturday workshops. This term we have, Introduction to Windows 95, Intermediate Windows 95 and Beginning Internet. If you want a quick look and instruction, workshops are the way to go.

Both Gold Beach and Port Orford offer Self-paced Word Processing classes. Learn at your own pace with an instructor standing by to help, if needed.

Call SWOCC for more information or to

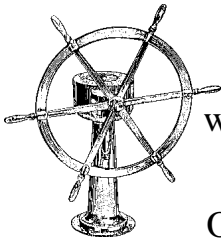
register. Gold Beach 247-2741, Brookings 469-5017 or Port Orford (Fridays) 332-3023.

Whale Watch Weeks

Whale Watching Spoken Here volunteers will be at the following sites from 10am till 1pm during the Whale Watch Weeks of Saturday December 26, 1998 through Saturday January 2, 1999 and Saturday March 20, 1999 through Saturday March 27, 1999.

Whale Watching Spoken Here Winter 1998 and Spring 1999 volunteers will help you observe the southbound migration of gray whales in the winter and northbound migration in the spring from thirty-one different sites. The sites include both Battle Rock Park in Port Orford and Cape Blanco State Park several miles north. For a complete list of sites contact Mike Rivers at (541) 563-2002.

WHEELHOUSE RESTAURANT



So that our employees can enjoy the holidays with their families, we will be closed 2:00pm Christmas Eve and Christmas Day.

Open again 7:00am December 26th.

Happy Holidays To All

Battle Rock Park, Port Orford

Senior News By Mary Yoder

Today I would like to start out by saying thank you for the beautiful Christmas wreath BJ and Dutch Heinauer. It is really special. Thanks from all of us.

December 17th rotary luncheon volunteers working were Bessie Laurson, Mary Evans, Kay Neal, Norma Ellis, June Dennison doing her part setting up the dining room – Lisa Wagner Cobb made crab cocktails for the rotary. Dishes and so forth – Roger Konkel, Owen Miller and Bill Butt.

December 21st was pinochle - tell you about it next week – missed it.

December 25 is the Christmas potluck. It will be at 1pm – bring something tasty. The main part of the meal will be furnished by the center. Hope to be seeing you there. I hope some one brings deviled eggs. I sure like them. I don't know how to make them.

December 29th is membership meeting – If you like to know what's going on at the center – best you come.

Now remember from now on the birthday party will be on the day of the first lun-

cheon – January 9th. Here are the January birthdays: Jim Britell on January 2nd, Maybell Bieth on January 3rd, Mary Yoder on January 7th, Bill McMullen on January 11th, Al Brintzenhofe January 24th, Roger Konkel January 28th and Dot Mathews on January 30th. Now all birthday people are invited to come members or not, age makes no difference. You will be given a free luncheon. Isn't that neat? Tell everyone with a birthday. The more the merrier. Rummage sale 8 till 1pm. Can't think of anything else so will close with this:

To those we love and see each day
And other loved ones far away
To all good friends whose friendship means so much.
And those with whom we're somehow out of touch.
Merry Christmas.

Port Orford Police Log

Dec. 15 – 8:48am: Port of Port Orford reported illegal camping and use of electricity. Settled by contact.

Dec. 15 – 9:30am: Report of Costa tractor and trailer traveling on Washington St. Gone on arrival

Howard S. Lichtig Attorney at Law

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Dec. 15 – 2:30pm: Report of vehicle blocking traffic at the Port of Port Orford. Handled by contact.

Dec. 15–4:15pm: Assisted Mental Health with domestic violence victim; no report, no action.

Dec. 16 – 4:30pm: Lost check found, turned into Police Department. Party contacted, check returned.

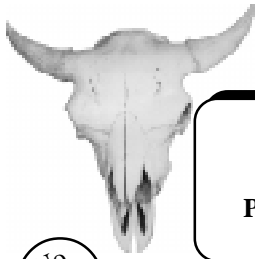
Dec. 17 – 5:40pm: Civil dispute at Jewels by the Sea. Handled by contact.

Dec. 18 – 7:45am: Vandalism at Battle Rock Wayside restroom (men's); under investigation.

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Letter to the Editor,

Occasionally there is good news. Curry County will not be the testing grounds for Compound 1080, a deadly poison with no known antidote.

The US Department of Agriculture has cancelled the registration for the use of Compound 1080 in Oregon.

Many thanks to local residents who gave testimony against bringing this poison into Curry County.

Jack Pruitt

Introduction to Windows '95

Are you trying to learn to use your Windows '95 program? Not sure about upgrading? Want to prepare for Windows 98? Then we have what you need. Southwestern Oregon Community College is offering an Introduction to Windows '95 workshop, Saturday, January 9th. The class is being held from 9am till 4pm at the Gold Beach Southwestern office at the Curry County Fairgrounds.

If you need to learn more about the in's and out's of this integral program, this workshop is for you. The workshop will cover the basic features of Windows '95 and will introduce you to the new features offered in this popular program.

The cost of the workshop is \$38. Pre-registration is required. This class has filled the previous term, so sign up soon.

Call SWOCC for more information or to register. Gold Beach 247-2741, Brookings

Join us at
Paradise Cafe

from 5pm to 8pm, Dec. 24
for

Christmas Eve Dinner
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Wednesday Dec. 30

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469-5017, or Port Orford (Fridays) 332-3023.

County Seal Contest

Curry County is holding a contest for a county seal. The seal should reflect Curry County's history, future and uniqueness. Designs should be submitted to the Commissioners Office by 5pm February 16, 1999. The winner will be announced at the March 1, 1999 Commissioners' meeting. The winner will receive \$25. For an example of a seal or for further information, contact the Commissioners' Office at (541) 247-7011 ext. 222.



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Minimum Wage Goes Up

The following information is from the State of Oregon Employment Department newsletter "Oregon Labor Trends."

The State of Oregon minimum wage goes up on January 1, 1999, to \$6.50 per hour. Voters passed a ballot initiative in November 1996 raising the minimum wage from \$4.75 to \$6.50 in three annual steps

culminating in the \$6.50 on January 1, 1999.
Oregon has and will continue to have the highest minimum wage in the country.
President Franklin Roosevelt signed the national minimum wage into law in 1938. The minimum wage then was 25 cents per hour. The national minimum wage has increased 17 times since 1938 and is now set at \$5.15 per hour.

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As of the second quarter of 1998 107,000 hourly-paid workers in Oregon made \$6.00 or less per hour. This represents 11.4% of those employed. Another 9.5% or 88,600 hourly-paid workers make \$6.01-\$6.50 per hour.

There are 936,000 hourly-paid workers in Oregon out of a total of 1,681,000 employed workers.

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Whale Watching

Whale Watch Volunteers are needed: So many people share our enjoyment of marine mammals. Consider everyone who was involved with the release of JJ or Keiko's move to Iceland. Add the largest turnout for any two consecutive whale watchers last ('97) spring and winter ('97/'98). Add those who volunteer valiantly in the El Nino rain and winds this year to patiently describe to someone to someone where the last southbound blow was seen, all of you who phone, write, e-mail and simply ask or express your own voluntary interpretation and concern about whales and their kin and the many professional, scientist, and interpreters who make it possible to experience them year round.

Here on the Oregon coast, we have a very unique window on the world of marine mammals, with gray whales' peak migration timing coinciding with Christmas

and spring breaks. Our "Whale Watching Spoken Here" focuses much attention on that window and even opens it a bit wider for more people to see not only gray whales then, but many ocean-related subjects year round.

Battle Rock Park and Cape Banco are two of the sights where counts are taking place. New volunteers are always needed. There is a training session if you are interested in helping out. Contact Mike Rivers at (541) 563-2002. E-mail address is mjrrivers@teleport.com/

SWOCC

SWOCC is excited to announce that we are adding another college level transfer class to Gold Beach's schedule. In addition to our Math lab, Office Administration and Sociology classes, we will offer CIS 131. Computer Information Systems is held at Gold Beach High School on Thursday evenings. This class is for those

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students familiar with the computer and basic knowledge of word processing. It covers about two weeks of word processing, then focuses on spreadsheets and databases. It is a perfect class for people who work with computers, but need to learn more than word processing.

These courses may be taken by anyone, whether you are pursuing a college degree or not. The college level courses are a benefit to those attending college; they are basic core curriculum, suitable for many degree and certificate programs. They may also be taken by high school students who want to get a head start on their college education. If there is any question on what classes to take, check with your high school counselor or college advisor.

Call Southwestern for more information or to register. Gold Beach 247-2741, Brookings 469-5017, or Port Orford (Fridays) 332-3023.

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Gold Beach Chamber

Gold Beach Chamber of Commerce Banquet will be held at Docia Sweet Hall on January 16, 1999. The theme of this years Banquet is "Destination Gold Beach" and the Guest speaker; Billie Rathbun-Moser who is marketing manager for the Oregon tourism Commission is a dynamic speaker.

The Chamber will announce this years winners of Citizen and Business of the year 1998 and the Mayor will announce the city's selection of Volunteer of the year 1998.

This years winners of the Chip program will also be announced and a drawing will be held in which all chip receivers will have a chance at a fun get-a-way somewhere in Oregon.

Social hour and dancing will begin at 6pm till 7pm when a great Banquet buffet will be served, the Chamber program will start at 7:30pm and dancing will be from 8-10pm. Everyone attending will have a great time with one of the best dance bands in Oregon. We hope to see you all there for a really fun night.

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Watershed Workshop

The topic of the next free Watershed Steward workshop will be "Stream Ecology". There is a Wednesday night lecture presented at Brookings library on Alder on January 6 from 5:30pm - 7pm. That is followed by a field trip Thursday, January 7th from 9am - 1pm. Please dress appropriately for the field trip.

The lecture discusses salmon life cycles, their habitat needs, and where they live in the watershed and ocean. The relationship between salmon and other aquatic life will also be discussed.

The field trip will involve a tour of Rowdy

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Creek hatchery and some local streams to illustrate classroom concepts. This workshop is part of the Master Watershed Steward Program that includes monthly lectures and field trips. These programs are open to the public.

The workshops are presented by South Coast/Lower Rogue Watershed Councils in cooperation with Curry Soil and Water District, OSU Extension and Southwestern Oregon Community College.

Contact the OSU Extension office at 247-6672 or 1-800-356-3986 to register, ask questions, or receive a list of workshops for the program.



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The Downtown Fun Zone

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(541) 332-6565

1999 Social Security Changes

In 1999, the Social Security wage base will be \$72,600 up from \$68,400 in 1998. Beginning January 1, 1999, employers should withhold Social Security taxes (6.2%) from employees' wages up to \$72,600 and withhold the Medicare tax (1.45%) on all wages. Employers must match the tax payments withheld from employees' wages.

In 1999, an employee will earn one Social Security credit for each \$740 in earnings, up to a maximum of four credits for the year. Social Security beneficiaries who work can earn more in 1999 before their benefits are reduced.

Beneficiaries under age 65 in 1999 can earn \$9,600 before their benefits are reduced. For every \$2 a person under age 65 earns over \$9,600 \$1 is withheld from benefits.

Beneficiaries between the ages of 65 and 69 can earn \$15,500 in 1999 without reducing their Social Security benefits. For every \$3 a person earns over \$15,500, \$1 is withheld from benefits.

Benefits are not reduced for persons who are age 70 or older and continue to work, regardless of how much they earn.

Persons who receive Social Security disability benefits must report all of their wages, no matter how little they earn.

CPR Class

Would you know what to do if your child, spouse, or co-worker suddenly stopped breathing? Don't be caught unprepared. Southwestern Oregon Community College is offering an American Heart Association Adult CPR course on Saturday, January 9th from 9am to 3pm at the Brookings College Center.

The Adult CPR class is specifically for concerned community members who want to learn a valuable lifesaving skill. A book will be provided during class, and you will have the opportunity to purchase it after the class. CPR and anti-choking skills are taught. The cost is just \$26, register today, call 469-5017.

Name the Airport

Curry County is holding a contest to name the Brookings Airport. The airport named the "Brookings State Airport" was previously jointly owned by Curry County and the State of Oregon. Names should be submitted to the Commissioners Office by 5pm on Jan. 8, 1999. The winner will be announced at the Jan. 19, 1999 Commissioners' meeting. The winner will receive \$25. For further information, contact the Commissioners' Office at (541) 247-7011, ext. 222.

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You Are Invited

The Port Orford Senior Center extends an invitation to each and everyone to come share a Christmas Potluck. Bring your favorite salad, dessert or relish dish, and be a part of the warm fellowship and enjoy great food. The Senior Center is furnishing the entrée and beverage.

Hope you'll come and enjoy a happy get-together Christmas Day at 1pm at the Port Orford Senior Center located at 1536 E. Jackson.

Warm Holiday wishes from all of us at the Senior Center.

Surfing the Internet

<http://teraserver.microsoft.com/default.htm> - Microsoft has gathered ariel photographs from all over the world - more than four terrabytes (4,000 Gb) of uncompressed images! Should keep you looking for a long winter's evening! Thank you Harborside for calling this to our attention.

<http://www.rootsweb.com> - The oldest and largest genealogy site on the web. According to their web site, RootsWeb hosts more than 2,700 Websites and 3,600 mailing lists. RootsWeb has a dozen servers and five T1s worth of bandwidth, and handles more than 1,300,000 Web hits

and 3,000,000 pieces of e-mail on a typical day. RootsWeb expects to be adding several more main servers and a sixth (and possibly seventh) T1 within the next few weeks.

RootsWeb a Mom and Pop operation run by Brian Leverich and Karen Isaacson. They started RootsWeb out of the money in their pockets with the server in their home and do their best to determined to keep genealogy free on the internet.

Their corporate sponsor, Palladium recently got bought out leaving them in the lurch. If you would like to contribute to help, visit their web site for details.

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JOHN B. HOUSER, Barber-Hairdresser, 553 - 19th Street, Port Orford. 332-2050. Hours Tues. thru Fri. From 9 to 5 and Sat. 10 till 3.

CARPETS DIRTY? Need Janitorial Services? Call Sunrise Carpet Cleaning! And insured. Free estimates. Call Cliff at 347-3164. Residential and commercial, licensed.

PUBLIC NOTICE

THE CITY OF PORT ORFORD Planning Commission has a vacancy. Any individual interested in filling this volunteer position is asked to submit a letter of interest to: The City of Port Orford Planning Commission, C/O Mayor Gary Doran, P.O. Box 310, Port Orford, Oregon 97465. We are an equal opportunity employer.

THE CITY OF PORT ORFORD is seeking to fill a position now vacant on the Port Orford Parks Commission. Any persons interested in filling this vacancy please send a letter of interest to: The City of Port Orford Parks Commission C/O Mayor Gary Doran, P.O. Box 310, Port Orford, Oregon 97465. We are an equal opportunity employer.

MISCELLANEOUS

THE GALS FROM HOMESPUN Cottage would like to thank Sea Breeze Florist and Coast Candle for their contributions to our decorations at the Hughes House.

TANDEM AXEL FLAT BED Trailer new tires \$400 obo 332-0655.

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FOR SALE: FIREWOOD Soft available 332-9031.

RENT A MOVIE. New movies this week: "Blade", "Cats!", "Wrongfully Accused", "The Rat Pack", "Cousin Bette", "My Brother's War", "Secret of Nimh 2", "Sargeant Bilko" (3 tapes, 4 episodes per tape), "Cadfael" (3 tapes, series IV), and a new Nintendo 64 game, "Mission Impossible". We also rent DVD's and will be expanding our Playstation and DVD titles as time goes on. The Downtown Fun Zone is open 9:30am till 6pm Monday thru Thursday and from 9:30am till 7pm Friday and Saturday. Closed on Sunday.

L&R VARIETY open 7 days a week 9am-5pm. Something for everybody: gifts, collectibles, tools, books, knives & jewelry. Good prices. 1819 Oregon St., Port Orford.

MINISTORAGE/U-HAUL. 200+ storage units, 150+ climate controlled. Airport-U-Stor, across from Ocean Spray 347-4356.

Letter to the Editor,

To all the kind and thoughtful people of Port Orford, and beyond. I want to thank you all for your cards and kind wishes. I am sure Nadine is pleased.

God bless you all,

Robert Viles

Uptown Frames

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Planning Meeting Continued

The Port Orford Planning Commission met on Tuesday night and heard a presentation from Mike Hewitt regarding the rezoning of a 50-acre parcel of land (Tax lot 300) located off Paradise Point Road. The property is currently owned by C & K Market, Inc. and is in the Port Orford Urban Growth Boundary. Hewitt and his wife Theresa own Lot 301, which adjoins the 50 acres on Tax Lot 300. The applicants are requesting a comprehensive plan and zone change from Residential Two (R-2) to Exclusive Farm Use. The Hewitts plan on putting in a 5 acre cranberry bog on a portion of the property. They have a 5-1/2 acres of cranberry bogs on Tax Lot 301. One of the bogs was constructed in 1947.

Down zoning the property would result in a 50-acre reduction in vacant land with the urban growth boundary. The land would be converted to exclusive farm use. Planning Commission member Leo Langner asked Hewitt how would it affect the tax base. Hewitt said farmland is assessed at a lower value. He said most of the 50-acre parcel of land was not buildable because of the amount of it which is wetlands and another part which is affected by a potential toxic plume from the now closed Port Orford dump.

Nathaniel Wander, representing the Kalmiopsis Audubon Society, asked Hewitt why he wanted to buy 50 acres when the cranberry bog would only take up 5 acres. Hewitt replied that he could protect the water source and the surrounding trees.

Commissioner Langner said the planning commission needed a workshop to prepare a recommendation to the Curry

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County Board of Commissioners. The County hearing will be held on Tuesday, January 12, at 1:30pm, in the commissioner's hearing room. The Port Orford Planning Commission will hold a workshop on Tuesday, December 29, starting at 10:00am, at Port Orford city hall to formulate their recommendations to the county. The decision on the down zoning will be with the county commissioners.

The Commission considered a letter from T.P. Vallejo on behalf of the Paradise Partnership requesting an extension of the preliminary plat approval for the Paradise Terrace Subdivision from December 31, 1998 to December 31, 1999 because of weather limitations.

Darryl Niemi, a co-partner in the project, spoke about finishing the final plat in September 1999. He said the developers

have had soil problems including the moisture content. Tom Vallejo told the commission Paradise Partners had contracted with Bracelin & Yeager Excavating and Trucking to correct any problems on the property, which have included silt runoff.

Commissioner Justin Baumann recommended granting the applicant a one-month extension to answer all 15 conditions that were applied to their development on June 12, 1998 by then planning director Gerald Parker. Leo Langner requested a detailed 20 line construction schedule from the developers. The commission passed a motion that the developers have all their information in to the planning commission by December 31. The commission would then have time to consider the information before their January 12 meeting.

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Lake Levels

continued from front cover

hasn't been resolved. Alexander thinks the County should pay for it. He reiterated that the lake outlet is on property owned by Camille Mouchawar and he will write to him asking for a temporary easement to go on the property.

Alexander said Mike McCabe suggested residents living on lakefront property both in and outside the city form a Lake District. This would be a taxing district with elected representatives. That district could then be charged with deciding the lake level. Alexander thought a tax base of \$3,000 a year would cover the district's costs.

Alexander repeated his praise for city employees, which he had stated at the December city council meeting. He said they give 110% effort and wanted them to know they are appreciated. He said the city sewer plant has an operator on duty seven days a week from 7:00am to 3:00pm.

This is the second meeting of this type between the press and city administrator and we all want to have these meetings regularly.

Angel in the Park By Graeme Graydon



At Christmas time 1994, I lived briefly in Ashland at a transition point of my life. A great adventure had just been completed and the new one not opened. Most of my time was spent taking long walks. Two nights before Christmas Eve, as I walked through a deserted and very bleak Lithia Park, I was surprised to see, on a park bench, directly under a light beside the walkway – a very large black man. He wore an orange turban-like thing on his head, but otherwise seemed warmly dressed, sitting there as comfortable as can be, gazing at the duck pond. As I walked slowly by, I glanced at him and said “Good evening,” and returned to my thoughts.

The next moment I heard “Good evening, and may you have a very Happy Christmas – Sir.” The voice felt like brown velvet and rolled like soft thunder in my ears. Startled I stopped in my tracks, spun around and managed to respond – “and may you have a Happy Christmas too,” and I resumed my walk. But my mind was

racing – where have I heard that voice – who is he.

Five minutes later, in the main street, I remembered. “Oh My God!” and I ran back into the park to find him. But the black man had gone. So had the park bench and the light. I went back and forwards trying to find them – there was definitely no seat or light near the duckpond. But that voice – What I remembered was a dream I had when I was 5 years old. I found myself walking through the center of a huge ballroom, gold and scarlet trappings on the walls, glowing wood floor, holding my little hand was the biggest man I had ever seen and his skin was gleaming black. He was a giant but so tender that I fell secure and warmly in his care. Without a word we walked the entire length of that great hall towards large French doors. The doors opened as we approached and we stopped on the threshold. Outside was the deepest indigo night sky studded with brilliant points of light.

The gentle giant looked down at me for a long moment – then in a voice that felt like brown velvet and rolled like soft thunder – “Follow me.”

He stretched his arms wide, leaned forward and flew. It was the most natural thing for me to follow him, and I flew just behind him through the sparkling night.

My 1994 Christmas was spent alone. No friends, no family, no cards or presents. I cooked myself a special dinner, listened to the most beautiful music and had the Happiest Christmas I had ever known, just as the black man had wished. Not all angels wear wings.

Hughes House

Pictures of the Christmas Open House at the Hughes House are up at <http://www.capeblanco.com> More to come.

Merry Christmas to all!

Martha Weaver-Britell

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