

Guest Column: I just love this place

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Let's take a short election news break and change subjects for a moment.

Allow me to reflect on how fortunate I am to live in Del Norte County; it is truly a very special place with some very special people.

Thirteen years ago this month, Angie and I permanently moved to Crescent City. Speaking for my wife, we've been in love with Del Norte County and it's people ever since.

For years prior to our actual move, we'd be traveling up from Santa Clarita, north every opportunity available to explore, embrace and enjoy everything about the Redwood coast and the magnificent trees, some as old as time itself. Living in Del Norte County is a dream come true for us.

Being of curious nature, I would often approach many of you folks, introduce myself and ask the proverbial icebreaker question, "So, where're you folks from?" Answers of varied from, "I was born here," to "we've been up here for (blank) years from (blank location)."

Geography varied as one would imagine. The conversation was friendly, refreshingly curious and thawed the ice of not knowing the person to whom you were speaking. And the curiosity was always reciprocal.

The resiliency of Del Norte is quite amazing. The community response to our Take a Bite out of Blight program initiated nine years ago was phenomenal. Scores of folks rolled up their sleeves and started to clean up long-standing human-created trash dumps which blighted our pristine neighborhoods.

Fifty-two organized cleanups later, I see many of your wonderful faces and I'm just humbled and so honored to call you folks my friends. Church of Latter Day Saints Mission volunteers and the Mormon Church have always been there to help on our numerous blight cleanup projects and service to those in need.

Community outreach for the Woodruff family whose parents perished last year when a giant Redwood tree fell atop their moving vehicle, was nothing short of incredible. The Woodruff couple drove down U.S. Highway 199 at Walker Road when tragedy befell them. Folks around Del Norte dug deep into their pockets and raised \$30,000 for the five Woodruff children through the dozen retailer drop off bins throughout the county. These generous folks are a very special people.

Years back, I was reminded the Welcome to the Redwood Empire Del Norte County signage at Highway 101, the CEC airport and Highway 199 portals was looking pretty wretched and needed some serious refurbishment.

A Take a Bite out of Blight volunteer introduced me to an aspiring Eagle Scout Daniel Standring. The young Mr. Standring, as part of his quest for the rank of Eagle Scout, volunteered to refurbish those signs which today appear as pristine as the surrounding environment, thanks to Daniel's efforts

I still treasure many of those initial introductions, many of which have grown into full blown friendships.

Living in this community affords me many opportunities to interface with lots of different people including drivers and passengers of many out-of-state vehicles. An out-of-state license plate was like a magnet to me.

Last week, a senior gentleman was walking from the Lighthouse parking lot while I was in my front yard. We nodded at one another and I asked him where he was from. He replied, "North Dakota."

"North Dakota? Wow! The Peace Garden state. Sure's cold up there," I uttered, which, pardon the pun, broke the ice, introduced myself and he said his name was Howard. I'm kind of a geography bug and pride myself on knowing a lot about the fifty states. Del Norte County has quite a few North Dakota transplants.

We enjoyed a half hour conversation about Crescent City, Del Norte County and the Peace Garden State. Howard candidly admitted folks here were not like the friendly folk atmosphere of rural North America. I was determined to give Howard the very best impression of his visit to Del Norte County, and to do so sincerely.

This incident prompted me to start additional ice-breaker conversations, and it reminded me of my very first Triplicate letter to the editor many years ago entitled, "So, where are you folks from?"

As divided as we are politically, perhaps almost Grand Canyon-esq in politics, we are all just trying to make the best of life through really tough times.

I may not agree with some folks' politics, but I can appreciate we all have something to give to improve the quality of life in this very special place we call home.

Both Lighthouses, one easily accessible, the other a bit more difficult without a helicopter, are rich in history and culture. Stout Grove, Mouth of the Smith River, the endless beaches along South Beach, the breathtaking, awesome Trees of Mystery, the rich culture of the Yurok, Elk Valley Rancheria and Tolowa dee'ni Tribes, the magnificent Klamath and Smith Rivers, fascinating Ocean World, the Crescent City Harbor and the countless hiking trails in and out of the Redwood National and State Parks.

Share and enjoy every possible and positive experience in Crescent City and Del Norte County. And let's be extra friendly, inviting and curious to all of our visitors. Each tourist dollar circulates eight times before it leaves our community.

May I also suggest that, if you observe trash in an area other than a refuse bin, please pick it up and dispose of it appropriately. Take a Bite out of Blight.

Crescent City and Del Norte County is truly very special place. Let's keep it beautiful; whether we reside here are not.

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