



The

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NEWSLETTER FOR RESIDENTS AND FRIENDS OF THE LODGE AT OLD TRAIL

ADVENTURE

Climbing for Life

Can you identify this adventurer? We will announce who it is in the next issue of The Lodger.

Whenever the lights go out, I remember an experience that happened before going to college and while still living with my parents over 60 years ago. I was working for a mining company and did not pay much attention to the wet snow I had driven through on my way to work. It was Sunday and a special work day to “plumb the shaft” while miners had the day off.



A wire cable had been suspended from the top of the mine shaft to its bottom. A plumb bob attached to the wire and suspended in a barrel of oil kept the wire motionless. The wire was used as a point with known coordinates for the surveyors at various depths from the surface to transfer underground.

I had been sent to the very bottom level of the vertical shaft with three others of the survey team—1,263 feet underground. Lighting was limited, so we depended on the lights on our mining helmets to see. Even though the mine was being de-watered by huge pumps, it was still wet. The pumping was unprecedented. It resulted in a ten-mile long valley being drained dry, requiring the mining company to pipe municipal water to the hundreds of affected residents and businesses.

When the sparse lighting flickered, we began to worry that the wet snow had snapped the power lines. Then the lighting went dark and the pumps stopped, causing an eerie silence slowly broken by the crescendoing sound of the influx of groundwater that followed. We could barely understand the “abandon mine” order that was announced over the sound-powered phone.

With the cage (elevator) out of service, too, a vertical steel-rung ladder was the only way out of the mine. The deluge of water pouring down the ladderway filled my boots, pounded like rocks on my helmet, and took my breath away as I climbed to the surface. I did not see the levels branching out from the shaft where others had stopped to rest. The youngest of the workers that day, I was the first to reach the surface where mine officials greeted the emerging evacuees with shots of whiskey. I don’t know how long it took to escape the mine, but I was never so glad to see the light of day again.

Sunday dinners were a big thing in our household, as was an obligation to always be on time. I was scolded for not calling to say I would be late for dinner. My parents never did hear that I had just climbed a ladder that was the height of the Empire State Building!

As a precaution, we have postponed sourcing information for additional articles in this edition of *The Lodger* to limit personal interaction at this time. In the meantime, stay alert for coronavirus guidance from The Lodge and health officials.

Popcorn and More

If you like popcorn, you will love King’s Gourmet Popcorn. It is only available at a food trailer parked at Rockfish Gap. Made fresh daily in a huge gas-heated kettle inside the trailer, the popcorn is offered in plain state or blended with chocolate, cheese, or cinnamon in bags ranging from mini-size to the extra large “King Kong” bag.

For picnicking on the Blue Ridge Parkway or in your car at the nearby visitor center overlooking the Shenandoah Valley, King’s is also a great place for packing your basket with Nathan’s hotdogs and a variety of cold and hot beverages. Located at the entrance to the Parkway, King’s is the only food supplier in that area.



Looking to start his own business, cable installer and Nelson County resident Ronald King started making and selling popcorn seven years ago from under a tent at the same Rockfish Gap location. As the business caught on, he graduated into the food trailer. The business is open every day all year from 10 am to 6 pm.

On Route 250 at the top of the Blue Ridge, King’s Gourmet sits on the edge of prime real estate that used to be a popular food and housing spot for tourists. Redevelopment of the abandoned site is reportedly under consideration.

To get to King’s Gourmet from Crozet, take I-64 west to exit 99 and turn on to Route 250 east. King’s is a short distance on the right.



King’s Popcorn in the beginning and today.

BRIEFS

FOR THE FIRST TIME IN ITS 50-YEAR HISTORY, Amtrak passenger rail is projecting a breakeven of operating cost and revenue this year. The rosy financial situation can be attributed to both cost-cutting as well as record-breaking passenger ridership of 32.5 million in 2019.



Amtrak carried nearly one million passengers in Virginia alone.

That won't relieve the need for federal subsidies. Amtrak faces over a \$30 billion needed to bring its trains and infrastructure up to a state of good repair. Amtrak has been receiving subsidies of \$1.9 billion a year, but the administration is proposing to reduce that amount by half in the next federal budget, with an apparent goal of eliminating rail subsidies for long-distance routes altogether. Bipartisan congressional coalitions have rebuffed reductions in past years.

Often criticized for being inferior to the national railways of other countries, Amtrak is, nevertheless, a welcome alternative for the many persons who either object to flying or avoid driving because of traffic, distance, or physical limitations.

UPDATE: The coronavirus outbreak caused a steep fall in March passenger numbers and revenue for Amtrak. They are warning of hard times ahead. Cancellations are up more than 300 percent, and future bookings have fallen by half.

WHO WOULD TAKE A JOY RIDE ON AMTRAK FROM CHARLOTTESVILLE TO STAUNTON?

Erika Housare would—and did. She tells of surprising her two young daughters with an introductory rail trip to Staunton. “The girls were enchanted,” she wrote in the C’VILLE Weekly.



A frequent driver to Crozet, Housare said “Seeing Albemarle from the tracks offered a totally different perspective. It was exciting to shoot through Crozet at high speed. I felt as if we were strangers in these parts again, wending our way past the unknown fields of Greenwood and beginning the long climb up the Blue Ridge.”

With just one half-fare ticket allowed per adult, the threesome made the one-hour trip for \$30. One-way adult tickets from Charlottesville to Staunton cost \$12. The family caught one of the Amtrak Cardinal trains that passes through Crozet in the afternoon on the way to Chicago three times a week.

Housare says her older daughter pulled out a little notebook on the train and wrote “Dear Mom, Thank you for this.”

WE SOMETIMES USE TECHNOLOGICAL TERMS

without knowing what they really mean. A common temptation is to imagine “the cloud,” as a huge data system somewhere out there in the atmosphere. So, we ask, what is “the cloud?”



Rather than some amorphous mass, the cloud is a metaphor for a system of interconnected data centers and servers that can be remotely accessed by users with a computer. And what is a server? It is a computer program that serves users with data. A good example is Gmail. By accessing Gmail, a user can be served messages. Other kinds of servers will provide other kinds of data. Servers can be public, those that anyone can access, or private, those reserved only for users who are granted access.

By utilizing the cloud instead of a local network, data and computing can be made available to anyone, anywhere in the world via the Internet and a web browser. Cloud-stored data saves space on a local phone or other private computing device and protects it from loss if the device becomes inoperable. Data are often stored at multiple centers to further guard against loss. Some data centers are rented. Amazon and Microsoft made cloud storage rental big business.

A DECLINE IN HUNTING IS SLASHING CONSERVATION EFFORTS

because government conservation activities depend on hunters for financing. Guns, ammunition, and other hunting gear are taxed to support game agencies. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service reports a decline in hunting license sales from a peak of 17 million in the 1980s to 11.5 million in 2016.



Hunters say the rising expense of hunting is a cause for the decline. Others cite fewer places to hunt as more private properties are posted against hunting.

State wildlife agencies are cutting back on construction projects, leaving positions vacant, and reducing programs to aid pollinators and to protect wetlands and endangered species.

Many areas set aside for wildlife are increasingly visited by hikers, bird watchers, and other outdoor recreationists. A tax on outdoor gear seemed like a logical new source of funding, but a recent attempt failed when manufacturers and retailers objected.

Other so-called user taxes are also proving to be as problematical. Gasoline taxes are another example. The taxes used to build and maintain roads are expected to decrease as more vehicles become electrified or more efficient, even as roads remain no less used.

Legislators have the unhappy task of finding alternative funding sources.

THE EASTERN U.S. WILL ULTIMATELY LOOK MORE LIKE THE WEST.

Plants will have to adapt to less water and rivers and streams will shrink. Researchers in a new study say climate warming will lead to the depletion of shallow ground water by increased evaporation and plant transpiration, inhibiting the vital connection that surface waters depend on. Scientists from the Colorado School of Mines, Los Alamos National Laboratory, and the University of Arizona published their findings in a supercomputer study that for the first time considers the effect of evapotranspiration on groundwater. “We are facing a crisis in global groundwater storage,” said the researchers. “Huge groundwater reservoirs are drying up at an alarming rate, and that’s a problem because they nourish major growing regions around the world.” The study was published in *Nature Communications*, a peer-reviewed scientific journal covering the natural sciences.



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