

OREGON PALEO LANDS CENTER

May 2017

Our Mission Statement

The Oregon Paleo Lands Institute works with the Gateway Communities of the John Day Fossil Beds National Monument to build social and economic vitality through efforts:

To conserve and promote the region's ancient and living landscapes, including the Earth's most complete record of the Age of Mammals (past 65 million years).

To develop and connect, with partners, the region's visitor services, recreational services, and natural history education, that support Eastern Oregon's top destination.

To welcome visitors and area residents at the Oregon Paleo Lands Center.

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www.paleolands.org**

Presidents Message

Greetings to all fans of the Oregon Paleo Lands Institute.

After a memorable winter, thank you for your supporting our mission to promote the beauty of the John Day Basin and highlight the stories it has generated.

We are grateful to have the support of local adventurer and OPLI Center Volunteer Lee Bouchard. Lee lives in Fossil and has demonstrated his commitment to our mission as a current Volunteer and as a past Board Member. Enjoy the story about Lee's 1958 river adventure **Uncharted Waters**.

OPLI has been busy building and strengthening partnerships throughout the state. Oregon State Parks is assisting us in developing a Volunteer Host program that will increase Center access and hours this summer. We are optimistic that a Host on site will also help us deal with the large influx of visitors expected around the time of the August 21, 2017 solar eclipse.



Plesiosaur has been raised to a new perch which frees up floor space for other activities

In 2015-2016, OPLI secured support from Trust Management Services and the Juan Young Trust to continue our education efforts with local schools and visiting schools and with other Center visitors.

Wheeler Family Foundation supported the move of our beautiful Plesiosaur sculpture up off the floor at the Center, freeing up space to accommodate larger groups and new exhibits. Oregon State Parks and Ford Institute provided funds to develop the new John Day Basin Joint Interpretive Strategy, found on the www.paleolands.org home page. Bonneville Environmental Fdn. is sponsoring a photovoltaic demonstration system that will reduce utility costs and improve the sustainability of the facility.

Despite our successes in program and project specific support, 2016 donations were slightly below 2015. Donations are very important for us to cover \$2000/month general operations including part time staffing, that many grantors do not readily support.

**November 2016-April
2017 Sponsors and
Grantors**

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The Board welcomes new Board members to assist our efforts and/or volunteers who could staff the Center. Camping spots can be provided for weekend volunteers who help at the Center.

Please consider a generous donation to support basic operations and to keep our valuable Center open to all who travel through this remote region. OPLI's Sponsorship program offers space on our website and Center for you to describe your organization and to help promote your services or activities to thousands of visitors annually. (See www.paleolands.org for details)

With your continued support OPLI will secure the resources necessary to expand interpretive staff, to increase access to the Center and provide quality resources about the wonders of the John Day River Basin.

Jeffrey Kee

President Oregon Paleo Lands Institute

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Call or write if you are interested in increasing your support and send us your stories from the John Day Basin.



Uncharted Waters

*By permission of Ruralite and local writer Jody Foss
Nov 2016. You can find Jody's books at the center or
<http://www.mulesacrossamerica.com/contact.html>*

Lee Bouchard remembers an adventure with friends on the John Day River

By Jody Foss

Lee Bouchard and Harold Hinds stretched out on their sleeping bags with their shirts rolled up for pillows. Camping in the sand on the edge of the John Day River, they stared up at the Milky Way and more stars than they had ever seen.

It was 1958, and the two Life Scouts from Portland had a month-long adventure of a lifetime, floating the river on a rubber raft from Mt. Vernon to the Columbia River, well over 200 miles.

**Thank you for your
continued support!**

Harold, Lee and their friend Larry Saul had planned this journey for a year, searching for maps, gathering gear and convincing their parents to let them go.

Lee was 16 and the other boys were 17

“Our parents trusted us,” says Lee, who these days is a volunteer at the Paleo Center in Fossil. “I’m sure my mother worried the whole time. Our parents probably knew if they said no we would be upset with them for life.”

The boys planned to bring back specimens to the then-new Portland Zoo and the Museum of Science. On the river, their cages were lost in the rapids when their craft capsized, but they managed to return with a live rattlesnake in a box.

The three mapped geological formations along the way and found a lower jaw of the ancient Oreodont, camel bones, turtle shells and fossilized horse teeth. They took notes, comparing the present wildlife with ancient fossils. They were working toward their merit badges in botany, geology, paleontology, zoology and herpetology.

After losing their gear and supplies, they lived off the land, shooting ducks and geese, a deer, rabbits, a porcupine and raccoons with their .22s. They fished for carp and salmon.

Although they started the trip in a canoe, they hit a series of rapids near Dayville and the bottom ripped out on a rock. Harold’s father brought them a military surplus raft so they could continue the trip.

Unfortunately, Larry was seriously injured on Sheep Rock when he lost his footing and tumbled down steep terrain while the boys were digging for fossils. He had to return home to Portland.

Since much of the river was unmapped, Lee and Harold go information about what lay ahead from ranchers they met along the way.

At one point, the two boys plunged over nine waterfalls between sheer rimrock walls that dropped the river 30 feet in a few miles.

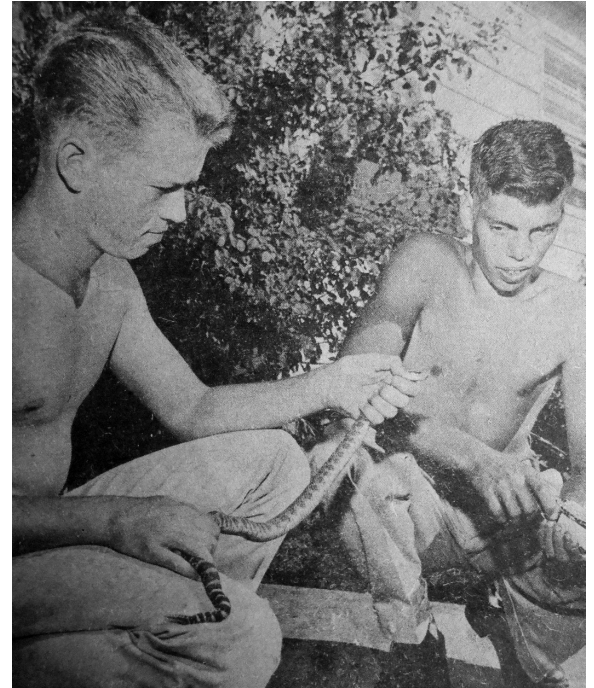
“We were into it before we knew it,” Lee says. “It was terrifying, like being in a wind tunnel. We could hear this roar, and then the current got us and sucked us down like a whirlpool, then it dropped off a waterfall into a deep pool. We landed upright, amazingly enough, but everything was wet.”

They portaged around serious rapids to avoid more near drowning incidents.

At Rock Creek, there was a huge reinforced concrete irrigation dam.

“We knew what we were getting into at that point because there was no current and we were rowing against the wind,” Lee says. “There was a big spillway on the side that cut across the dam, an overflow for high water and fish navigation. We shot that spillway on our rubber raft. If it wasn’t so much trouble to carry our raft back up, we would’ve gone down it again.”

Today, the John Day is a different river than it was back then. Lee says a large flood in 1964 took out many of the waterfalls and that dam. These days, rafters can depend on a detailed map of the river.



Lee, left, and Harold Hinds on their adventure. The boys hoped to return to Portland with many live specimens, but instead returned with fossils, rocks and rattlesnakes. “There was no river rafting back then,” Lee says. “I do believe all the newspaper articles about our trip helped pioneer the sport.”

The boys traveled two weeks without seeing a fence, a trail, a house or even a cow. They marveled at the Aurora Borealis, rarely seen this far south.

They saw a doe with triplets and found an eagle's nest that was 6 feet across.

"We counted 54 deer in one day," Lee says.

Since they carried no ice chests, they asked ranchers to buy supplies or would buy them at little stores such as the ones in Kimberly and Spray. They drank water right out of the river, and got so sunburned their skin was dark brown by the time they reached the Columbia River.

"We had hats but never even thought about sunscreen," Lee says.

Occasionally, the boys would call home when a rancher let them use their party line telephone.

When they passed through Kimberly, the boys were befriended by the family who owned the Texaco Station there. Lee met the cowboys and the manager at that time, and returned from Portland to work at the W4—which is now Longview Ranch—for room and board the following summer.

While working on the ranch after high school, Lee says he fell in love with the area's climate, culture, geology and people.

After high school, Lee spent 33 years in the Army, working his way up to lieutenant colonel. He left Portland and returned to Fossil when he retired in 1993.

"Like a lot of people, I was tired of the rat race, the pollution, the traffic," he says. "I didn't need it anymore."

Lee did not quit traveling after his big river adventure in 1958. He traveled in his career and for pleasure, and has been to all 50 states.

Although the boys went their separate ways after high school and have not kept in touch, Lee says he fondly remembers his adventure, thinking of it just about every time he looks at the river.

"We were just kids, but it was a learning experience," Lee says. "I think it's good to let your kids have an adventure. Take a year off after high school and see the world a little bit. Then maybe college makes more sense to you.

"There's a whole world out there. You can read about it, that's fine. You can hear others talk about it, but that's not the same as experiencing it for yourself. See the world, go new places, get off the beaten path. Walk someplace where there is no trail."

Oregon Paleo Lands Center Needs You!

You can support the Oregon Paleo Lands Center in a variety of ways. Your financial support now in 2017 is vital to continue our mission of exploring, teaching about, and protecting Oregon's paleo lands. Donor benefits include a 10% discount on retail merchandise at the Oregon Paleo Lands Center in Fossil, a regular newsletter with information about scientific discoveries, history, and news of the Paleo Lands, and advance notice of upcoming OPLI and partner organization events. All donations are tax deductible.

Interested in volunteering at the Center or serving on the Board?
Contact us at paleolands@gmail.com or www.paleolands.org or at
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