

My Turn

By Debra Moore, Staff Writer



I have just completed my first year with Feather Publishing and what a year it has been. Covering the news in Plumas County has enabled me to meet people and experience things I never could have otherwise.

There have been some standout moments. When covering a vintage race car rally I found myself cruising at, 160 mph down Highway 70 in a Chrysler Viper. With the wind rushing through the open top, my driver laughed as we passed a motorcyclist so close I could have touched him. I said a silent prayer and then tried to appreciate the ride of a lifetime. (Once was enough.)

Oftentimes when politicians come to town I have the opportunity to attend their meetings and ask some questions. I've covered Congressman Wally Herger, State Senator Tim Leslie, Assemblyman Bernie Richter, and Attorney General Dan Lungren. With a political science degree as my background, these encounters are always appreciated. But my most unique experience occurred when United States Senator Barbara Boxer visited Chester last summer.

Rather than a formal meeting, I accompanied the group which took Boxer on a tour of the Collins Pine facility and then into the forest where she got a firsthand look at their award winning forestry practices. I was impressed by her questions and the obvious research she had done before her visit. But what I really enjoyed was the casual lunch which followed. It wasn't a banquet hall, but rather a small table at the back of the Knotbumper with the senator, two of her aides, and Supervisor Bill Coates in attendance. (Her sandwich of preference is turkey on rye, hold the mayo.) She discussed not only the future of Plumas County but her daughter's engagement to Hillary Clinton's brother, an encounter with a constituent in a local produce market, and the hectic pace of her schedule.

Last weekend I was asked to cover a training exercise organized by the Graeagle Volunteer Fire Department. They had received permission to burn a partially destroyed home. I arrived expecting to take pictures of the crew, only to be offered a suit, boots, and gear of my own. There was one moment when they were attaching the oxygen mask, that I thought "What am I doing?" But how I could pass up the opportunity to enter a burning building and observe firsthand what these volunteers face?

That is the best part of my job. Every day I get to enter other people's lives and get a glimpse of who they are, what they do, and what excites them.

I watched the face of the race car driver as he held the wheel with one hand and shifted gears with the other. Speed, and his ability to control it gave him a rush. The firefighters

had a gleam in their eye as they prepared to enter the burning structure. They were getting an opportunity to practice the skills they had studied and discussed.

But it's not just the people living on the edge that I enjoy covering. Recently I spent an afternoon with two young teen moms. I was moved by their honesty and their willingness to discuss a very private decision. I was impressed by their desire to make the best of a situation they would not have chosen.

I talked with a 94 year old man as the church he built 50 years ago was demolished. On what was obviously a sad day he shared with me the joy he had felt when it was erected. He pointed with pride to the reinforced support beams he had placed himself but which were now being ripped apart by the machinery.

I interviewed a man and his wife who spent the better part of the last five years writing a book only to donate all 700 copies of the completed manuscript to the Plumas County Museum.

In the last year I have been to countless meetings — school board, solid waste, hospital board and auxiliary, mental health, etc. For the most part these people are volunteers, individuals who believe so strongly in a particular cause that they devote hour upon hour of their own time to make things better.

As Plumas Unified School District experienced its fiscal crisis, I was impressed by the parents, students, and community members who came together to help. There were volatile meetings but it was only because the topics discussed touched the very core of their beings.

And of course I spent a good deal of my time covering the Board of Supervisors. To cover the board is to become familiar with many different topics. Almost everything that happens in the county has to come through the third floor board room. So do many different people. I've listened to department heads, elected officials, and citizen groups all lobby for their cause.

Though I've had some great experiences, the best part of my job is the new people I have met. When I visit a campus, the students say, "Hi newspaper lady." When I walk down the street people often stop me to ask about a story they read in the paper or to give me a lead on a new one. Some of the people I have met this year have become good friends and a very important part of my life. That has been an incredible bonus.

Thank you for sharing your lives with me and letting me write your story. Today marks a new beginning for me in many ways and I hope my second year at Feather Publishing will be as memorable as the first.