

WASHED IN by a WASHOUT by Mary Jane Eby

The last week of December, 1993, it was a very wet week with strong winds and rain storms. I was driving to the camp on the 11 mile road to Drift Creek Camp, when suddenly there was a small lake beside the road on the mountain side and on the inside curve there was water 'oozing' out of the soil down over the bank that dropped far below to Drift Creek!! I told myself I should stop my 'trusty' jeep after going around the curve and see what really is happening. Suddenly I realized there was a big break in the middle of the road and that the entire road would be collapsing, ending far below in the ravine-- very quickly!! I had a strong urge to turn around and drive back out of the mountain road BUT Amos Oesch, an elderly volunteer was building an 'earth quake proof' new fireplace and chimney as the final building project of the new Activities Building, and there was a possibility he was working at the camp that day. A phone call to his house before I left home that morning was that he possibly was at the camp. Since our resident Care Takers were on vacation, there was no one at the camp, except possibly Amos and if something happened to him there would be no one there to give him access to the phone in the lodge or any care, if needed. Within the hour the road washed out and I was marooned in this huge rain soaked forest with no road to drive my jeep back home!

When I arrived at the camp it was totally quiet and no Amos to be found. I learned later that he decided to not drive from Salem to the mountains but did not inform anyone of his decision. I was at camp but had no possible way to drive back home since the 'back road' was already closed as the mountain top had collapsed and had the road completely obstructed! The one phone in the lodge was working so I phoned, my husband, Larry, at our house down by the Siletz River. I bravely shared my story and that I would remain at the camp for the night BUT he insisted I should not be there by myself! You should have heard our phone conversation as the afternoon became darker!! He finally told me he would get in our car and try to drive up the 'back road'. There were trees fallen on that road from the recent storm so there was no way!!

Finally, I was able to locate our closest Board member, Steve, who lived in Siletz. He was ready for the challenge, saying he would grab his chain saw, drive his trusty pickup truck, stop for Larry on the way, and they would try to reach me at the top of the mountain! I drove up the back mountain road until I came to the impasse and I could hear the chain saw way below! I parked my Jeep by the mountain slide and waited.

Finally Steve and Larry appeared and were able to find enough 'tufts of grass' to prevent us from sliding down side of the muddy mountain! We arrived down that back road just as darkness arrived AND my bed felt very good that night!! I have had to hike the several miles to that huge 'WASH-OUT' on the other road several times the following months/years as the reality of what happened -- it was so very real!!! I do have a snapshot of the devastating WASHOUT to share with you. The Forest Service staff chose to not repair the washed out road so that road was closed for any public use AND the back road was also closed, permanently. The current only road to Drift Creek Camp is the road you traveled on today to drive to the camp. I was thankful for God's protective presence for a day I will never forget!