

Booster

Judy DePuy

Truckee, California, is a lumber town and a railroad stop. It plans to hold an array of events marking the 150th anniversary of the transcontinental railroad this year, and volunteer Judy DePuy is involved in promoting it. More information and a link to a Facebook page on the commemoration can be found at goldspike.org.

Why is Truckee celebrating this anniversary?

Truckee is celebrating because the town wouldn't be here nor would we have opened up this area if it wasn't for the railroad. The railroad was so important, and Truckee was so important to Nevada in that they needed the lumber for the Comstock Lode, you know, for the mines over there. And then they also needed Truckee because they needed the ice—which is another another industry that Truckee had—because as they went deeper and deeper in the mines ... it got hotter and hotter, up to 140 degrees. So, the miners would take buckets of ice down with them into the mines. ... When the Comstock Lode petered out, [Truckee] changed it so that it was a destination location. So Truckee was important. And the other thing that was important was, there were a lot of options as to how to do the transcontinental railroad [route]. But what happened at the same time was the



Civil War. And President Abraham Lincoln realized that he needed to unite the country. So what the Southern senators wanted was a Southern route, but they seceded from the union so the only people voting were the Northern senators and they felt, let's go North. It was Theodore Judah who surveyed and mapped the route to get through the Sierras, down to Truckee that then went into the Reno area.

How will Truckee celebrate it?

We're starting on May 10 with a ribbon-cutting. May 10, 1869 was the date that the golden spike was [driven]. The Union Pacific and the Central Pacific met at Promontory, Utah. Then, from May 10 all the way through Labor Day, we're having a speeches series at either Donner Memorial State Park or the airport or other venues in town. We have walks, where we walk and talk. We also have a

passport program that visitors can come in, pick up a passport, and it's kind of like a scavenger hunt. You go to all these different places, learn the history—from Donner Summit all the way down to Truckee, and you get a stamp, a unique stamp for you to put in your passport. We're also trying to do a concert on China Wall. ... We also have the Old Jail Museum open and the railroad caboose.

What's China Wall?

Between [railroad] tunnels seven and eight, there's a 150-foot wall just off of old Highway 40 that the Chinese built, and it's made with no mortar. It is perfectly pieced together and it is spectacular. ... But it has great acoustics because it's in a bowl, and we're trying to have a concert up there and get people to come to that. ... They've actually done a concert there before, but that was like 15 or 20 years ago.

Do you know if other communities along the route are doing what Truckee is doing?

We are going up to Roseville next week, and they're only having that week-end—May 10. They're doing something that weekend. We haven't heard what Carson City [site of the Nevada Railroad Museum] is doing, but ... we're also communicating with them and trying to coordinate. We've been in touch with Verdi, their historical society. They aren't doing anything that we are aware of. They're just probably going to piggyback with us. □

NOTES FROM THE NEON BABYLON

BY BRUCE VAN DYKE

What is past is prologue

OK, at this stage of the game, denying the reality of climate change, a.k.a. global warming, is *exactly* like a guy who smokes four packs of Marlboros a day but “denies” the threat of lung cancer. He can say he doesn't “believe” in lung cancer all he wants. He can say he doesn't believe that smoking 80 cigarettes a day poses a threat to his longevity. Fine. But when that big black blob shows up on the chest X-ray—well ...

It's become slightly fashionable to opine that it's already too late. That the massive machinery of human-fueled climate mischief is now in place and, since we're reluctant to do a damn thing about it, we are, ultimately, doomed to feel Gaia's weather-rockin' wrath more and more as the 21st century marches on. I confess to having a soft spot for these types of apocalyptic conversations—oh, you betcha. But maybe it's time to pump the brakes

just a tad on OID (our inevitable doom) by recalling acid rain and the ozone layer. Remember those?

Acid rain was detected in the lakes of the industrial northeast in the late '70s, and the causes were quickly discovered. Yes, geologic activity was a trouble-maker, but humanity was as well, especially since we were belching a lot of sulfur dioxide into the atmosphere. Many lakes and streams were found to have harmful acidic pH levels, and the effects on overall ecology were negative. So you know what happened? We actually did something about it! You know, like, in a scientific, bipartisan way? I know, weird, right?

We studied the situation through the '80s, and by 1990, Congress was ready to do something. No, really! It passed amendments to the Clean Air Act that reduced emissions of sulfur dioxide, and, as a result of us acting with *actual intelligence*, lev-

els of acid rain have since dropped 40–60 percent. Gee, waddyaknow. We really ... *did* something.

Also in the '70s, scientists discovered that our use of CFCs (chlorofluorocarbons) in aerosol sprays was mangling Earth's ozone layer, which has the very important job of protecting us from the sun's vicious UV radiation. So again, the governments of industrial nations *actually took action* (no shit!) and capped the use of CFCs, and by 2003, well, waddyaknow again. Measurements confirmed that ozone depletion was being reduced.

No, man-caused problems with the ozone and acid rain weren't eliminated, but they were mitigated and controlled. See, back then, we didn't *suspect* science, we respected it. And then used it. *What a concept*. So maybe, just maybe—it's not too late with climate change? □



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