

## **BMD Guest Viewpoint: A BMD 2021 Preview**

### **For CGS June 17 Issue**

By BMD President Don Williams & BMD Vice President Cindy Weeldreyer

One month from now, Bohemia Mining Days returns to Cottage Grove's historic downtown for two days. As the severe COVID-19 restrictions we've been living with for the past 15 months are now lifting, BMD 2021 affords us the opportunity to come back together as survivors of a deadly global pandemic and learn to accept a new normal in how we go forward with our lives.

**Grovers are Survivors** is the theme we've chosen for this year. We all have our survivor stories to share. For Bohemia Mining Days, it was our festival sponsors who still made their annual contribution last year that financially "kept the lights on" for us. Planning BMD 2021 has been quite the challenge for our board and production team. Since January, we've remained positive and determined to continue our efforts as the risk levels went up and down. We also faced the real possibility that two weeks after all the Fourth of July celebrations a serious spike in COVID cases might force us to cancel our event at the last minute.

**Why the move downtown?** The most compelling reason is our traditional Coiner Park venue is too small to space 75+ vendor booths six feet apart and leave room for attendees to maintain the required social distance.

Another reason is to bring Cottage Grove's largest event of the year to the doorstep of our small local businesses. Many of these business owners are longtime festival supporters. We want to show our appreciation for their decades of support by creating a positive economic opportunity for them to increase their bank account during our two-day event.

We hope locals and out-of-town guests discover a unique treasure in one of our small specialty shops, enjoy dining in one of the downtown eateries, or throw back a cold one on a hot day in one of the watering holes in The District. These downtown businesses are familiar to Grovers as they regularly drive by them on their way to somewhere else. This year, BMD gives them a purpose to stop and enjoy them.

The third reason for the move downtown is to respond to the hundreds of attendees who remember BMD's longtime roots there and have asked us, in surveys and on social media, to come back. Who knew it would, sadly, take a global pandemic to fulfill their request? In 1980, after 21 years downtown, the celebration grew so big, Bohemia City had to move to various larger venues before settling comfortably in Coiner Park. The last time BMD was staged downtown was in 1999 for its 40th anniversary celebration.

**BMD will essentially be the same this year.** We'll have live music, vendors, and a kid zone. We are grateful to *all* our performers this year who are donating their time and talent for your enjoyment. The string on our annual "shoestring" budget is exceptionally short this year, so their generosity significantly reduces our production costs. **IMPORTANT NOTE:** For Buck & Elizabeth fans, this will be their last appearance at BMD after nearly 20 years. We encourage their fans to come and say thanks for the memories and wish them well in retirement.

**Parades:** Happily, our three parades are back! The Grand Miners Parade on Saturday morning at 10 am will be staged on its usual route: 10th Street to Main Street to Gateway Boulevard. Two parades will be a little different. The Kiddie Parade will be on Saturday evening at 6 pm and the ladies-only Bloomers Parade will be Sunday afternoon at 2 pm. Both parades will be followed by a procession of the Ore Cart racing teams. The Saturday parade and the Kiddie Parade have been beloved Bohemia Mining Days attractions since its inception 62 years ago. Of course, the kiddos will still receive their participation ribbon and a cold treat at the end of their parade.

**Bohemia Mining Days will also be different this year.** It will be a daylight-only, two-day event we'll set up on Main Street between 5th and 8th Streets and between Whiteaker and Washington Avenues. We're wrapping the traditional attractions around the introduction of a new Slabtown vs. Lemati Feud competition: Mine Ore Cart Races. The inspiration for this attraction is the World Championship Outhouse Races in Virginia City, Nevada -- both have roots in each town's colorful mining history.

This is the part where we ask for your help now to ensure the success of our 2021 signature event. *We need more Ore Cart builders and racers to sign up and participate!*

**Mine Ore Cart Races:** Time is running short to squeeze in a weekend project to build the simple re-usable cart and field a team of five participants: two miners who will push the cart, one “tommyknocker” who will ride in the cart, and two alternates. The entry fee is a steep one: one shiny nickel (emphasis on shiny)! The early bird deadline to register is July 2. After July 2, the fee doubles! All race participants must be 18+ years old to legally sign the required liability waiver.

Here’s how it works: Sixth and Main serves as the both the start and finish line. The team races down to 7th Street where the “tommyknocker” jumps out and loads three 20-pound sandbags then jumps in and the team races back to Sixth Street. The semi-final races begin Saturday night at 6:30 pm and the finals begin at 2:30 pm on Sunday.

So... who’s ready to have some fun, meet new people, reconnect with old friends, and have bragging rights 50 years from now that he or she was one of the original racers when, like Virginia City, Grovers will host the *World Championship Mine Ore Cart Races*)?

It’s a great opportunity to pair up our young whippersnappers with our old-timers. The young ones will set the record of race times in this new competition all others have to beat. The experienced builders, with a workshop or garage, will build the fastest cart. We are happy to match up willing builders and wannabe racers, so we have lots of competitors on Main Street on the third weekend of July for this inaugural race. To make your match and to get help with cart construction, call Dick Secord at 541.942.7138 or visit the Bohemia Gold Mining Museum (red barn across from Bohemia Park) on Thursdays between 1-4 pm.

The minimum cart dimensions are designed for safety yet leave much to imagination and creativity in the final design. Materials can be as simple as reinforced cardboard or scrap wood to as fancy as a metal one with flames and a powder coat finish. Each cart must have a light source and be built upon a wheeled base, with steering and brakes optional. The competition is for all comers and not limited just to locals.

After more than a year of being apart for health and safety reasons, let’s pour out our pent-up desire for fun by participating in this newest Bohemia Mining Days tradition. Throw down a challenge to your competitive friends, family members and co-workers. Wouldn’t it be fun to see green and yellow carts squaring off with black and orange ones? We encourage businesses and organizations to field a promotional team using a cart emblazoned with their business name. Registration packets are available on our website: [www.BohemiaMiningDays.org](http://www.BohemiaMiningDays.org).

One of the most important lessons we’ve learned from COVID-19’s impact on our organization is how utterly dependent we are on a three-day event to provide a year’s worth of administrative and program revenue. Since 1959, Carnival revenue has paid for more than half of BMD’s production costs. This year, the uncertainty of affordable local labor to set up and tear down rides forced Rainier Amusements to cancel all its small-town contracts. Ouch! So, we are trying a few new “fun/fund-raisers” to diversify our revenue streams in the future.

**The Feud Game:** We are expanding our annual Slabtown vs. Lemati (Lem-ah-tie) Feud into a hybrid in-person and virtual competition (like the Ducks & Beaver rivalry) with the two towns raising money throughout the year to produce our beloved summertime tradition. In 2012, BMD resurrected this historical feud in a fun way by offering family-friendly Americana and mining themed competitions.

Starting with BMD 2021, we are virtually re-creating these two historic towns, within the boundaries of the South Lane School District, for the purpose of finding fun ways to see which town can earn the most points each month by raising the most money and by recruiting the most settlers (aka volunteers). At the conclusion of BMD 2022, we will tally up the points and celebrate the victorious town with much fanfare... and then the competition begins anew.

In the 19th century, newspaper ads in faraway cities solicited settlers to Old West towns. Well, consider this newspaper article as BMD's call for "settlers". We need settlers who will bring their creativity, community spirit, and passion for Bohemia Mining Days and proudly put down roots in Slabtown or Lemati to provide year-round support of our organization. You can learn more about it on our website.

Stop by our Information Booth in All America City Square on July 17-18 and sign up to play by registering to vote in the town of your choice. To ensure the game's success, Slabtowners and Lematians must elect their town leaders. These elected leaders will become familiar faces in their respective City Hall/Saloon as they lead and sustain this strategic effort to develop year-round revenue and volunteers to produce Cottage Grove's largest event of the year.

The game is still very much a work in progress. The goal is to invent a community-based game that fosters a friendly rivalry and provides opportunities to strengthen and enhance our real-world town. Individuals of all ages (especially those who have a "pioneering gene") are invited to join in the adventure of re-establishing these historic towns in a virtual way to ensure our beloved summertime tradition continues.

We thank the Brewstation for hosting Lemati's City Hall/Saloon and the Covered Bridge Brewing Group for hosting Slabtown's City Hall/Saloon as places to conduct "town business" and to meet your new neighbors. Each pub is creating a special brew for their respective town with \$1 donated to BMD for each glass sold. A non-alcoholic beverage, with a nod to our under-21 Helena Saloon, will also be available. Drink up!

**BMD Food Feud:** This is another fun (and yummy) new fundraiser we are introducing this year. Inspired by the Food for Lane County annual Grilled Cheese Experience, we have created a Food Feud in partnership with local eateries. Go to our website for more information on participating restaurants and where you can pick up a passport to take this culinary adventure. The event runs from July 6-20.

**Historical Films:** We've partnered with the Opal Center for Arts and Education, Crystal Rose Productions, and the Cottage Grove Historical Society to show two historical films. The *Bohemia Mines* OPB documentary by local videographer Dan Hill and the Historical Society's *Morelock Films*, which depicts in black-and-white what our town looked like in the 1930s and 1940s and what Grovers did back then.

**Join in:** To join in the fun go to our website: [www.BohemiaMiningDays.org](http://www.BohemiaMiningDays.org) There you can download applications to be a vendor or to volunteer, to enter the Grand Miners parade, to register for the Mine Ore Cart Races, to participate in the Food Feud or to learn how The Feud Game is designed to bring our community back together in healthy ways after a global pandemic.

**BMD is back!** We thank Sentinel readers for choosing Bohemia Mining Days as the most missed community event in 2020. On behalf of the Board, and our BMD 2021 Production Team, we invite you to participate in all the fun we have waiting for you on July 17-18 in historic downtown Cottage Grove.