Glimpses of Brillion

By CAPT R. Claude “Frenchy” Corbeille, USN (Ret)
22 October 2026

It was not a pleasant outing with a blustery cold wind hitting me in the face, and I abandoned the road in favor of the forest at the earliest opportunity. A sizable flock of turkeys saw me coming and ran off through the trees and while I was stopped trying to see where they went, a middle size deer got nervous and fled, waving its white tail in farewell. Soon after the deer, the strident call of a blue jay overrode the noise of the wind, like it was squawking in protest of my presence. I could see the edge of a field ahead, looking through the naked boles, and a particularly strong wind gust sent a cloud of leaves scurrying along the fence line, leading me to think, briefly, that it was a flock of grouse or quail running on the ground. It was not a very pleasant time to be afield, but then we who wish to get our ration of exercise by walking the country byways don’t get to select the weather we want, but rather we learn to deal with whatever comes our way. I took note of the myriad collection of acorns and fallen hickory nuts strewn about among the dead leaves and I thought that the critters who subsist on mast will surely be well fed. There was an almost solid carpet of acorns, crackling underfoot as I walked among the oak trees.

On a totally different note, let me tell you about our recent Dungeness crab experience. In days of yesteryear, we always ate one crab each, and on some occasions, we each ate two of them for a meal. Our appetites are unchanged but our capacity is less, so now we each eat a half of a crab, and the second half I remove from the shell and we save the meat for a special crab salad. It was 1958 when we lived in Seattle, a pretty nice place back then, and we ventured into the most popular seafood place along the waterfront, on Pier 37, if I remember right, a restaurant named Ivar’s on the Wharf. I know I had steamed clams, but Barbara was more adventurous and opted for this thing called “Crab Louie.”

We learned subsequently that it is so named for the dressing poured over the crab meat, chopped lettuce, and sliced hard-boiled egg, and had its early beginnings when some chef a couple hundred years ago made a special salad dressing for one King Louis; I don’t know which Roman Numeral goes with it, but it’s not important. The dressing is special, and it is especially good when used with crab meat and lettuce. There are not a lot of cooks who know how to make the Louie dressing, but my head chef knows how, and I am blessed. I always think that if it was good enough for a king, it’s good enough for me, and I look forward to saving a portion of the crab meat solely for use in the crab Louie salad. If the thought crosses your mind that I should just buy one crab instead of two, keep the thought under your hat. I will continue to buy two when they are available.

Why am I thinking about Merriam elk? That is a really roundabout thought train. A lady who reads my literary prose remarked that I reminded her of Zane Gray. For me, that was a very complimentary comparison because in my younger days, I read just about every book that Zane Gray wrote and enjoyed every one of them. A title that sticks in my mind is “Under the Tonto Rim,” and I learned while living in Arizona that the thing he called the Tonto Rim is actually the Mogollon Rim. I also learned that Zane Gray’s cabin was located below the rim, accessible by leg-o-mobile using a one-mile path. I had to see it, of course, and Barbara and I made the trek. My first and only lasting memory of anything I saw in the cabin was a shoulder mount of a Merriam elk, a now extinct species that will never again be seen by anyone, except as a mount on display in a Phoenix museum. I, of course, had never seen a Merriam elk, but the instant I saw the one hanging on the wall, I knew what I was looking at. It was definitely different from all existing elk species and in my mind, its face strongly resembled that of a jersey cow. I knew the story of the Merriam elk, how there had been lots of them in that part of the world, but they were extirpated by thoughtless settlers who viewed them as contenders for the available forage needed for cattle. And now, if you find yourself in Arizona, near the town of Payson, or Strawberry, or Pine, you will be near or on the “Tonto Rim,” but you will not be able

to visit Zane Gray's cabin and see the Merriam elk, because a forest fire swept through that area not long after we were there and everything got consumed in the fire.

I will be working the registration desk Saturday for our annual Walk Through Brillion. I look forward to seeing many of you there and I do hope that you will take a moment to say "Howdy." It is always a gala occasion and I look forward with alacrity to being a part of it.

Freedom Is Not Free
Frenchy Sends with Warm Regards