

whatcom Independent

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FREE EVERY FRIDAY

Marietta fears future flooding

Residents asking for county help before the rains come

by TAYLOR PHIFER
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MARIETTA - When it comes to flooding, Marietta residents have definitely gotten their feet wet. The small community, with families boasting tenth generation ties, has a love-hate relationship with the Nooksack River.

For hundreds of years the river has been a historical trading spot and source of food and transportation for the people in the area. But it has a menacing side. Nearly every year heavy rains swell the river over its

banks putting the small neighborhood under several feet of muddy water. Marietta, near the mouth of the river, lies below the high water mark and is protected by a dilapidated levy. Last year, water came cascading over the levy, once again flooding streets and living rooms. With the wet season only a month

away, residents have submitted a petition pleading with County officials for more sandbags and repairs to the aging levy.

"The County has not spent a dime here in twenty years except to paint some road stripes," Marietta resident Jere Boyd said. "We're just

then as a \$1 million project.

"It just didn't pencil out to fix the levy or buy them out," Paula Cooper of the Rivers and Floods Division said. "Now we're getting better information. Can we do less construction and find something feasible?"

"We're not really asking for money. We want an emergency plan. The only time anything gets done is after an emergency, when it's too late."

— Marietta resident Jere Boyd

asking for some ditches, culverts and sandbags. We want (the levy) beefed up before the flood season."

In 1999 the County Floods and Rivers Division identified several solutions to Marietta's flooding. Among them were buying out the town completely and relocated residents or fixing the levy, estimated

of the properties is considerably lower than average because they are in a flood plain.

"The county said they would double the assessed value to relocate me," said Boyd. "I can't relocate on that amount."

The value of the properties also

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Whatcom County Jail workcrew members help sandbag the Nooksack River bank near Marietta.

photo Taylor Phifer

Kids still don't have money for auctioned animals

Fair officials says delay in payment is "normal"



Kayla Jones poses with her prize-winning pig at the Northwest Washington Fair. Jones, as a novice first-time entrant, won Reserve Grand Champion. Jones and the other entrants have not yet been paid the auction proceeds for their animals. Fair officials said this is the norm.

photo courtesy of Rhonda Juergens

by ANASTASIA TIETJE
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LYNDEN - As reported two weeks ago in the *Whatcom Independent*, the kids involved in

This coincides with Bob Radke's findings during an investigation into the auction and unpaid children. Rightmire also said the auction rules for a non-profit organization, like the FFA,

"It's not like we're making money on this."

— Todd Rightmire, Future Farmers of America supervisor

the Northwest Washington Fair auction still haven't been paid for the animals they raised. This, however, is completely normal, according to Todd Rightmire, Future Farmers of America supervisor, vocational director and teacher at Mount Baker High School.

"Kids sell the animal during auction," Rightmire said. "The bill is sent out the next day. The first billing cycle is at the end of September."

are different than those of a for-profit organization. There is a longer grace period for the businesses to turn in the money - usually a month or two, he said. Radke, an investigative supervisor with the Washington Department of Agriculture, said he looked at an invoice from Sept. 23 and at that time all the companies had received bills, and many of the businesses had paid for their animals.

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The China Communique

by LARRY KLEPINGER
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BRIEF INTRODUCTION

Hello Whatcom Independent readers. My name is Larry Klepinger. In 2004, I ran for Congress and narrowly lost in the primary. After that, I had planned to continue my job as a local real estate agent, but a funny thing happened to me on the way to the office.

Out of the blue I got an employment offer – one that I couldn't refuse – to teach in Fujian Province, People's Republic of China. The WI found out I was leaving and invited me to write a series of articles about what is really happening in this part of the world – through the eyes of a casual observer – without the spin of the major media outlets.

Everything in the ensuing articles is my own opinion and not that of the WI. Any comments, ideas or criticisms should be sent directly to me via e-mail: larry@larryklepinger.com and I will send a personal reply as soon as time permits. Let's go!

SOME BASIC FACTS ABOUT CHINA AND FUJIAN PROVINCE

- October 1, 1949, People's Republic of China (PRC) founded.
- Chief of State: President Hu Jintao (since 15 March 2003)
- Head of Government: Premier Wen Jiabao (since 16 March 2003)
- Population: 1,306,313,812 (July 2005 est.).
- Geographic Size: World's fourth largest country (after Russia, Canada, and the USA)
- Suffrage: 18 years of age; universal.
- Source: The World Factbook, at: <http://www.cia.gov/cia/publications/factbook/geos/ch.html>
- Fujian Province is located on the eastern seaboard of China, opposite Taiwan. NOTE: Do not confuse the People's Republic of China (PRC) with the Republic of China (ROC), which is Taiwan.
- Economic Development Zones (EDZ), are areas specifically designated to receive massive amounts of government funding as so-called test areas for China's continuous process of social and economic reform.

FUJIAN PROVINCE, CHINA - After being picked up at the airport, my wife Akiko and I were whisked into darkness on an open highway heading toward our destination of Fuzhou (Fu-Joe) University, Software College Campus. Much to my astonishment electricity is still not a constant in this part of China. Many of the buildings were dark or dimly lit, with candles or power generators.

People on the streets were traveling by every means available, some on foot, or clinging tenaciously to motor scooters, many in cars and trucks that appeared to be in conditions ranging from dilapidated pushcarts held together with bailing wire, to sleek, black Mercedes Benz sedans honking their way through the ever present traffic.

Once at the university we were shown to our dorm/living quarters, a double room with the basic essentials of one miniature refrigerator, one hotplate for cooking, various kitchen utensils, an air-conditioner, a TV, desk, and wardrobe.

After settling in, the electricity abruptly went off and Akiko and I found ourselves sitting in total darkness. "Welcome to China," I said, as we both started to laugh.

The next day I received my orientation, then proceeded to the cafeteria where I was literally shocked at how much food the students wasted. Military style stainless steel trays lay strewn on the tables with food still on them. When I was a child my father would always make me clean up my plate by saying, "Be thankful

for college."

The kids in who sign up for the program get their animals June 1, unless they are raising a steer, which they get by April 15, Rightmire said. The pigs and sheep can only be sold if they meet certain weight requirements, meaning the kids have to monitor their animals, and feed them accordingly. It teaches the teens great responsibility skills, Rightmire said.

"It's not like we're hanging on to the money and gathering a lot of interest," Rightmire said. "It's not like we're making money on this." ♦WI

AUCTION

(from page 1)

"This is not an area of concern at this point," Radke said. "We will continue to monitor the situation until the kids are paid."

There is no cause for alarm in this case, according to Radke and Rightmire. The money comes in, is held in a bank account without collecting interest, then distributed to the kids when it's all in. Rightmire said it's been handled this way for 20 years.

"They have collected 90 percent of the money from the sales of the animals," Radke said. "They are on the point of dispersing it."

"They work hard to get the money," Rightmire said. "Kids can do whatever they want with it. Some kids reinvest and do it again next year. Some kids hang on to it

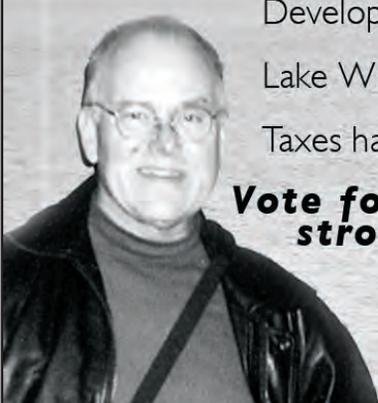
for the food you have to eat. Think of all those poor, starving Chinese." It made an indelible impression on me. To this day I still don't waste food. But apparently, the Chinese do – and have no compunction about doing so. I am fully cognizant of the fact that, in Asia, it is considered a sign of wealth to leave food on your plate to show others that you are not poor. But I had no idea how much food was actually wasted in this country. Funny how physically being in a country can alter one's academically preconceived ideas and concepts in very rapid succession. But all the books I read about China didn't prepare Akiko and me for our first walk downtown. ♦WI

Next Article: *Economic development zones – and the gap*

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