Where Past Meets Present
By Dennis Powers

After my retirement from SOU, I was first at a loss on how to use my free time. I then discovered our regional history and its richness. I decided that my volunteering (although also serving on different boards) could be in researching and writing about our area's history.

Starting out on Jefferson Public Radio's "As It Was"—and guided by its long-time fine editor, Kernan Turner—I started writing historical script for that show and ended up with over 200 being aired. (All kudos are to Kernan Turner, Shirley Patton (the wonderful narrator), and Raymond Scully (the production genius), for their great job over the years.) This was combined with over 200 historical treatises for a KMED weekly radio program called "Past and Present," that is now in its fifth year.

I have always believed that history should be entertaining, as well as informative, and that we can see the past in our present lives. When I first arrived here some 25 years ago, I remember wondering what was the "State of Jefferson," the "flood" (being the 1964 Rogue River flood), who was Ben Hur Lampman (as well as his poetry), or how different towns became named. Why is "Sasquatch" part of our lore—and a race track inside our first airport?

Over 1-1/2 years ago, I began putting together a 470-page historical book--*Where Past Meets Present*--that Ashland-based Hellgate Press (see www.hellgatepress.com) is publishing with books available after July 10th. ***I am donating all of my profits from this book to area nonprofits (i.e., Dogs for the Deaf and Hospice), as well as historical societies***. I'm looking also for institutions that might match this. And you can help by buying this book direct from Hellgate Press and getting a price discount. If you think of a matching entity, please contact me through my website, www.dennispowersbooks.com.

With many thanks to Jeff LaLande, I offer the following story that's in the book:

Two-Bits: The World War II Hero

A determined fox terrier by the name of "Two-Bits" became a canine war hero during World War II. This wasn't due to his feats in combat under fire, but instead due to surviving his station on Whiskey Peak Lookout in Josephine County during the home war efforts. The term "Two-Bits" meant then 25 cents, or a quarter, and usually described something that wasn't expensive.

Whiskey Peak Lookout was an isolated U.S. Forest Service fire-spotting point used during World War II to spot and warn about incoming Japanese aircraft. This was before radar could be developed or even installed at such places. A 14- by 14-foot, sparse structure with a pitched roof had been constructed on top of 6,497-foot-high Whiskey Peak, located in the remote wilderness of the Rogue River National Forest in southeastern Josephine County. It overlooked a 600-foot plunge to the valley below.

During the winter of 1942-1943, Bill Ziegler--the terrier's owner, along with a partner, worked for the Army Air Corps and used a cranked telephone to report every aircraft that they spotted. Forest Service men skied to the lookout each two weeks to bring in food and supplies. The men watched for enemy planes in 12-hour shifts during the tough winter conditions due to the lookout's high elevation.

Scampering around the heavy snows and winter ice that surrounded the nearby cliff, Two-Bits loved to chase the chipmunks that begged for food. In January 1943, the fox terrier ran after one with too much enthusiasm and slid across the ice to disappear over the cliff. Bill Zeigler watched in horror and assumed his dog couldn't have survived the plunge. He sadly went about his duties.

One week later, Bill headed down the trail to cut a pole. He had navigated around the first snowed-in curve when--to his amazement--he watched Two-Bits climbing slowly up towards him, head down and tongue out, but with a happily wagging tail. It turned out that the terrier had fallen into a deep snowdrift that had cushioned the fall; after digging himself out, the dog then worked his way back up the snow-covered, 2-1/2 mile trail to his master.

After a meal and some rest, Two-Bits returned to his normal habits. A few weeks later, the fox terrier again slid over the cliff and disappeared once more from view. If that wasn't enough, the little dog again reappeared later at the top of Whiskey Peak to the men's amazement.

Once their duties were completed, Two-Bits and Bill Zeigler left the mountain in the summer of 1943 and returned to their Jacksonville home. The news of the canine surviving not only one great plunge, but two, and "without physical impairment or loss of morale," came to the attention of the *Medford Mail Tribune* that broke the story. This news went national and became a symbol of the home front efforts' dedication and "winning ways," as newspapers across the country and even *Life* magazine ran it.

Two-Bits lived a good life and died a few years after the war ended. The Whisky Peak Lookout was abandoned in the mid-1970s, fell into disrepair, and was dismantled later to be reassembled at another location. The story of Two-Bits, however, lives on.

Sources (Among Others): Jeff LaLande, *Oregon Encyclopedia*: "Two-Bits, the World War II Lookout Dog" at https://oregonencyclopedia.org/ (key word: Two-Bits).