

Thank you Laura Ingalls Wilder

I used to dream of what it might be like to be a mom of boys. And now that I am, it’s funny how reality and dreams are usually nothing close to the same.

My dreams didn’t include cow trucks or burning tumbleweeds along fence lines. They didn’t include railroad tracks or cows or even rising rivers. I didn’t even know what muck boots were, and I never would have guessed that I’d have a mud room full of every size and color of them known to man.

My dreams did include farmland and shade trees, but they also had soccer games and campouts. There were riverbanks and wild flowers and fishing poles. There were trees to climb, porches to sit on, forts to build and pipe to change. They were dreams made from the beautiful life I’d spent years reading about each time I made a visit to the library or book store or while watching countless episodes of “Bonanza” and “Big Valley.”

And now, twenty-plus years after reading all those books and watching all of those westerns, I see and know that I actually am living a lot of those pieces of my dreams —

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just not in the way I had ever imagined. Not at all. And honestly, I think that was God’s plan all along. Go figure.

I think all of the Christian historical fiction/western romances I spent years turning the pages of gave me a false sense of reality. But then again, maybe not.

Because here’s the thing: The trilogies I would read into the early mornings had beautiful families experiencing hard times and difficult seasons surrounded by celebrations and love just like those my family is truly living right now. The part that’s different though, is that with each turn of the page, I lived and survived those seasons with them. I saw what was on the other side of the trials. I got to the last page, wishing for more, but I knew how it all turned out. There was no wondering or guessing ... it had all happened. And I knew, as the reader and watcher of their lives, that they made it. I knew they were better because of it. I knew that their stories were complete.

Right now in 2017, I’m somewhere between the beginning and the middle of this “book” about us. The western romance/

historical fiction piece that’s being lived along the banks and hillsides above the Umatilla River is being written even as I write, and as much as I wish I knew what was coming next, I’m thankful I don’t.

I’ve come to realize that life’s not supposed to be like a dream — where things turn out just the way you have had them imagined or where problems are solved in one chapter or by the end of the season. It’s supposed to be real and full, and compiled of days, weeks and even months worth writing about, worth waking up for, worth fighting for, and worth living for — even on the longest and hardest of days.

Our days are numbered, just like our cows and calves. They hold a purpose worth sorting through. They’re meant to be shuffled and mixed up. They’re meant to push us out of “comfortable” and into a place where we trust what’s guiding us and who’s guiding us, even when the climb is a bit hard and seems to be never-ending.

So when we get to that place at the end where we wish more was coming, we realize we’ve made it. We’re to that place we never thought we’d get to, and we’re looking back at where we just came from — whispering to ourselves “That was a great ride. A really great ride.”

So for now, I think I’ll keep dreaming, but more than that, I’ll keep doing. I’ll keep living each chapter of the life I’ve been given well — because that’s what makes a story

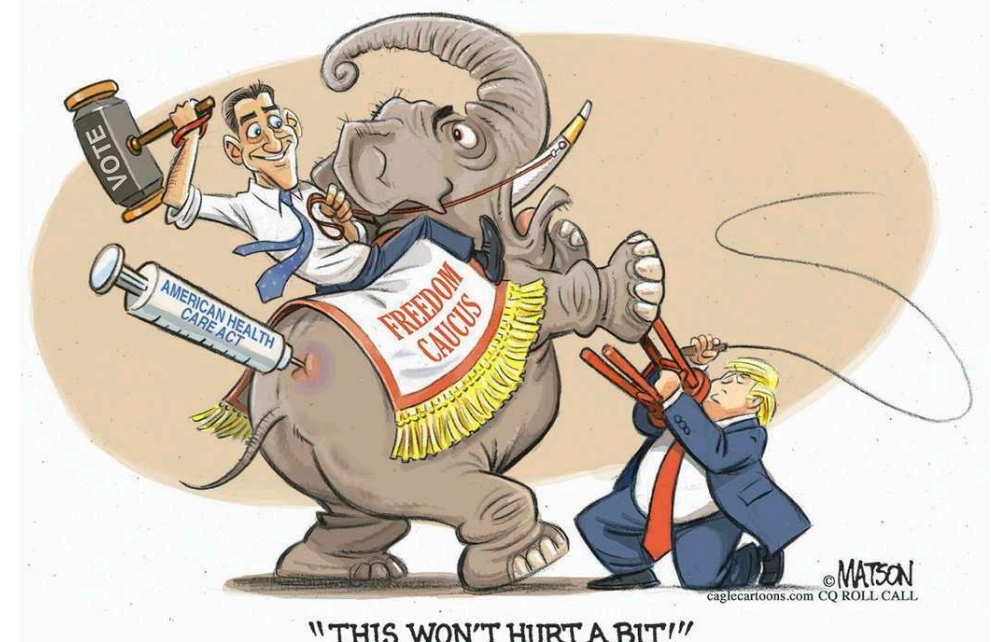
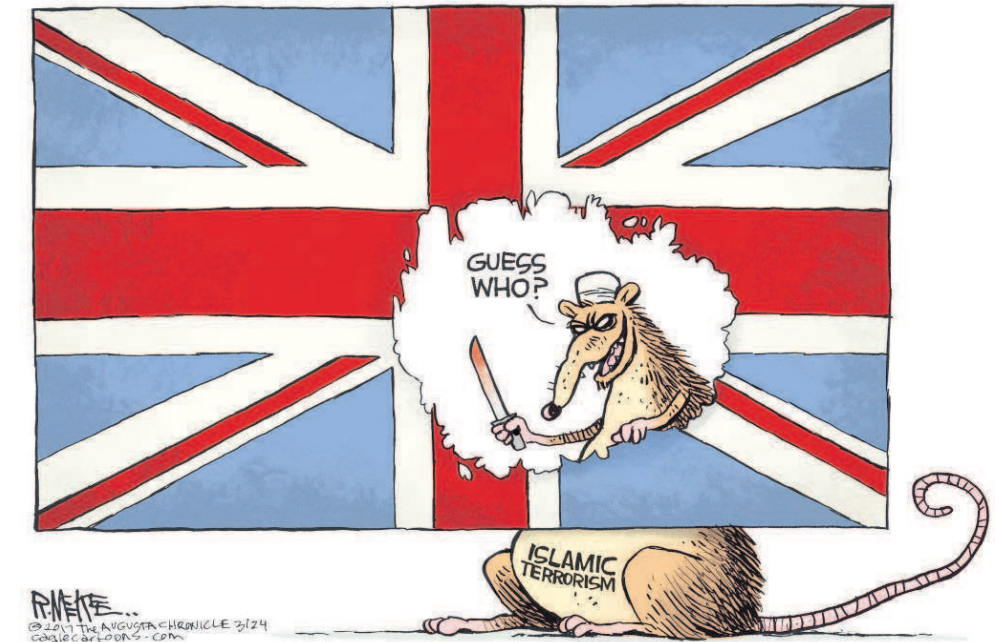


LINDSAY MURDOCK
FROM SUN UP TO SUN DOWN

more than just a story. That’s what makes a story a bestseller worth calling your own.

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Lindsay Murdock lives in Echo and teaches in the Hermiston School District.



May bond rescues fire station in dire trouble

By JACK REMILLARD

I have been associated with Pendleton Fire and Ambulance for more than 35 years, either as a volunteer or employee, and I know the struggles the current station has had over the years.

Since beginning my career as a volunteer in 1981, I began to notice things around the station that were in need of improving. Chief Richard Hopper, with his limited budget, did all he could to improve the conditions at the station, which at that time was only 21 years old. Yes the roof leaked then, too.

When I began my career as a paid firefighter in 1985, the condition of the building was much more evident. I recall the dorm room during the winter was cold enough to require extra electric heaters to be placed strategically to ward off winter’s chill. At one time I placed a sign above the door that read “Webb’s Cold Storage.”

In the mid 1990s a new kitchen and public restroom was added. These improvements helped somewhat with living conditions, but did little to improve the overall condition of the station. It lessened the workspace for employees, and in my opinion, separated the employees from one another, causing the feeling of “brotherhood” to fade somewhat. There was little, if any, private space.

Proper storage of sensitive reports, fire inspection records, fire investigation records, office supplies, etc., has never been adequate. The constant overload of requirements just for patient reports has now taken over at least one of the bedrooms built for sleeper accommodations.

The trucks and ambulances get bigger, and the equipment used on them gets bigger also. Much of the equipment must be backed up with additional stock due to its

importance in providing for your safety. A five-inch water supply line, 100 feet long, takes up a lot of space, and there are thousands of feet of this hose in Station 1.

Training for firefighters is essential. Firefighters die due to lack of proper and scheduled training. Station 1 has never, in my opinion, had an adequate training area. The drill tower was built for just such training, but quickly became a partial storage area due to the lack of space. The upper decks of the tower are used for training, but since it is built of wood, it can’t be utilized for live fire training, which is paramount. Safety of firefighters, and the public, has always been a concern of mine due to the fact the station is located right next to the traveling public, on three sides.

Court Street is directly in front of Station 1, which causes concern when the weekly apparatus tests are performed, usually on

Sunday. I recall a time when I was performing the test on the 100-foot ladder truck, when the nozzle, weighing around 40 pounds, came crashing down on to the engine compartment of the truck. It was extremely hazardous for someone walking on the sidewalk. Luckily no one was hurt.

The training room inside the station will only accommodate around 30 people, which makes holding a regional training session difficult. Specialized training is usually held at another facility. With everything firefighters are tasked with; Fire, EMS, HAZMAT, rescue, flood fight, etc., there will never be enough training. For me, this was always my biggest concern.

Since I retired from Pendleton Fire in 2004, times have changed and I have little concept of the needs of the electronic age, as it was just beginning in earnest when I left. Of course, I like “the good

‘ol days,” when firefighting and EMS wasn’t as complicated as they are now, but those days are not to be held onto if we are to advance in those endeavors.

Station 1 is in need of replacing. It was built with good intentions for the time, but that was 58 years ago. As a fire marshal, I would not allow many of the activities currently taking place in the station. And I have always felt the city should be the poster child, not the problem child.

Of course the choice is up to you. Do you feel you are getting the kind of response you would expect from an emergency service? Do you feel the firefighters and paramedics are working in a safe environment while at the station? They are in harm’s way every time they respond to an incident. Your safety depends on their safety.

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Jack Remillard is a retired assistant fire chief and fire marshal.

Quick takes

Essential Air subsidies in Trump budget crosshairs

It’s simple: If enough people want to fly from Pendleton to Portland they wouldn’t need government money to make it happen. This is what happens when the government gives you everything. Our society has come to expect it.

— Alan Nichols

Let’s slowly drive rural U.S. back to the Dust Bowl!

— Kelly Jo Farrell Hill

Oregon Senate votes to raise smoking age to 21

Do let me get this right, you can vote and you’re considered an adult, so if you get into trouble you are an adult, and you can fight for our country and die for our country but you can’t smoke? Stupid law.

— Patrice Graham

Raise it to 100. It would do just about as much good. Kids will smoke somehow.

— Virginia Adams Moffitt

Ah. Yes but smokers are declining and so is the tax revenue. So it makes sense to make it illegal for some so yeah, the fines, tickets, court fees will make up for that.

— John Ware

They lost control of one thing (marijuana), just to spitefully attack another.

— Mackenzie Sheffield

One of the great lessons of the Twitter age is that much can be summed up in just a few words. Here are some of this week’s takes. Email editor@eastoregonian.com to submit yours.

Our poop-prone dogs and us

By LUCIA HADELLA
Writers on the Range

When I’m 90, I’ll probably still be haunted by memories of bins overflowing with the remnants of hiking snacks and thinly wrapped dog turds, left to bake for a week in black plastic bags.

As a student employee at the McDonald Research Forest, seven miles from Corvallis and one of seven research forests run by Oregon State University, I was sometimes given the task of tugging such stinking bags from receptacles and heaving them into the bed of a pickup truck.

This was not pleasant, but I took solace in knowing that people cared enough to stick their trash in a designated container. In 2015, however, when I was involved in a public awareness campaign about dog behavior, I found the whole issue of dogs unleashed a lot of anger — some of it mine.

The reason for the campaign: As the number of visits to the McDonald Forest increased from an estimated 7,500 visits in 1980, to 105,000 when last surveyed in 2009, the number of dog-related incidents and complaints has also risen. About half of the visitors now bring dogs along on a typical visit, and this amounts to quite a few canines on the trails.

Dogs can scare horses and chase mountain bikes. They are allowed off leash on the forest as long as they respond well to voice commands and don’t stray from the owner’s sight. This, however, is

difficult to enforce. Sometimes dogs jump on strangers, and even when the dog isn’t covered in creek water, mud or poison oak, nobody wants someone else’s dog to jump on them. Dog fights with other dogs are another concern, and if the animals stray from the trails, which they often do, they occasionally traipse through a research plot and may distort someone’s data.

The real problem is that dogs poop, and sometimes humans refuse to pick it up. The poop becomes an unsightly addition to a well-loved trail, and it can make people and other dogs sick, as well as mess with what’s natural in a forest.

Dog feces is not a “natural fertilizer.” As cute as canines can be, they are not native to our forest environments, so nature lacks a seamless way of managing dog waste, especially when it’s deposited onto a trail in high quantities. Parvovirus, giardia and roundworms are just a few of the organisms you, your family and your pets probably don’t want to encounter on a hike, yet dog feces can carry such parasites and pathogens.

To gain a better sense of how much poop I’m talking about, consider the number 98. That is how many pounds of woof waste 25 volunteers and three staffers collected from the forest’s Oak Creek area in the course of just one Saturday. Altogether, they collected 231 pounds of poop from four locations on the forest in a single day.

News of this “Tails on Trails” cleanup campaign reached the Corvallis newspaper and then spread across the country through the Associated Press. The upshot? People

from near and far wrote nasty notes to my boss. One Oregon State University alumnus said he would not be returning for a while because of our anti-dog attitude. I probably would have written back: “Woo-hoo! One less person leaving a mess on the trails!” — which is why I will never be able to do my boss’ job.

As a natural resources graduate, I can recite the pep talk professors of my discipline share with their classes at least once a term: “It will be your job to decide what to do about the big environmental issues of your lifetime — global climate change, biodiversity loss, water scarcity, catastrophic fires. ...” Some professors admit, “My generation and the one before it screwed everything up. Sorry. Our bad. But now Mother Nature is counting on you.” A few even go so far as to insert a joke warning us not to expect to get paid a lot for saving the planet. Few students laugh.

It makes me angry that many dog owners fail to clean up their basic environmental messes, and then lash out when nudged to do so. Granted, many people had nothing but praise for the “Tails on Trails” campaign, which included not only the poop purge and educational signage, but also a community dog celebration called “Poocha-Paw-Looza.”

Still, I found the negative outcry disheartening, especially when it came from Corvallis folk who pride themselves on being nature lovers. If they’re unwilling to bend down with a baggie and bundle up a few dog turds, what hope is there that big problems will get fixed in my lifetime — or ever?

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