

O P I N I O N

Letters to the Editor...

The Nugget welcomes contributions from its readers, which must include the writer’s name, address, and phone number. Letters to the Editor is an open forum for the community and contains unsolicited opinions not necessarily shared by the Editor. The Nugget reserves the right to edit, omit, respond, or ask for a response to letters submitted to the Editor. Letters should be no longer than 300 words. Unpublished items are not acknowledged or returned. The deadline for all letters is 10 a.m. Monday.

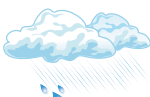
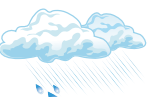
How we talk to each other

To the Editor:
Maret Pajutee’s wonderful story of Sisters’ Wild West history brought to mind how easily people can become angry and “lathered up” over issues.
Today, we do it in our letters to the editor

section of this fine newspaper. Maybe we should think about toning down the more personal in-print accusations of misrepresentation, so that something stupid doesn’t end up happening to someone.
As Maret’s story illustrates, tensions
See **LETTERS** on page 7

Sisters Weather Forecast

Courtesy of the National Weather Service, Pendleton, Oregon

Wednesday October 20 • Mostly Cloudy 56/37 	Thursday October 21 • Mostly Cloudy 69/45 	Friday October 22 • AM Showers 56/39 	Saturday October 23 • Showers 55/39 
Sunday October 24 • Showers 54/38 	Monday October 25 • Showers 49/35 	Tuesday October 26 • Showers 48/35 	

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442 E. Main Ave., P.O. Box 698, Sisters, OR 97759
Tel: 541-549-9941 | Email: editor@nuggetnews.com



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Cloud blanket...



The Cascades are a mighty barrier that often holds off the storm clouds.
Sisters is hoping they make it over the mountains this winter.

PHOTO BY SANDRA DOMAN

Losing our heads

By Jim Cornelius
Editor In Chief

No October is complete without a viewing of Tim Burton’s dreamlike “Sleepy Hollow.” It is Clan Cornelius’ favorite cinematic tale of the Halloween season — and the Headless Horseman has long been my favorite icon of spookiness.

In the original Washington Irving tale, “The Legend of Sleepy Hollow,” the Headless Horseman is the shade of a Hessian officer whose head was carried away by a cannonball “in some nameless battle” of the American Revolution. In the film, his corporeal demise was more ... intimate.

The Hessians were German mercenaries whose contract was purchased by the British from the Prince of Hessen-Kassel in 1776 when it became apparent that considerable manpower would be required to suppress the great rebellion in the American Colonies. Most of the Hessian units were line infantry, noted for discipline and battlefield effectiveness (except when caught by surprise at Trenton. We might have to revisit that at Christmastime...)

They also fielded rifle-armed light infantry. David Ross wrote a fine piece in the Journal of the American Revolution on the Hessian Jägerkorps.

“They were skilled shots, self-sufficient in battle, and swift, able to efficiently load and fire a rifle, a skill which took greater dexterity than firing the muskets of the day. Most importantly, they were valiant. Though the Jäger did not play a pivotal role in the American Revolution and suffered from the defeats of their regular counterparts, the actions of the Hessian Jägerkorps as a whole positively contributed to the British war effort. This was especially true in the campaigns in New York in 1776 and Pennsylvania in 1777.”

Hessian Jägerkorps operated in the “neutral land” of Westchester County (where Sleepy Hollow is located), which was haunted throughout the Revolutionary War by roving bands of guerrillas, partisans, and outlaws.

In a 1780 journal, James Thatcher wrote: “The country is rich and fertile...but it now has the marks of a country in ruins. A large proportion of the proprietors having abandoned their farms, the few that remain find it impossible to harvest their produce. Banditti, consisting of lawless villains...devote themselves to the most cruel

pillage and robbery among the defenseless inhabitants between the lines. These shameless marauders have received the names of Cowboys and Skinners. By their atrocious deeds they have become a scourge and terror to the people.”

The blog OldStyleTales.com posits that Irving’s yarn had a basis in historical events:

“(T)he remains of a decapitated Jäger were unceremoniously buried in the old graveyard in an unmarked plot in 1778 (today his body has finally been acknowledged with a simple brass tablet reading: HESSIAN SOLDIER). Suitably enough, the body is said to have been interred by the Van Tassel family as a surprising gesture of thanks. One winter night in 1777 a band of Tories captured the Van Tassel brothers Peter and Cornelius (ardent Patriots and leaders in the insurgent militia), torched their house, and left Elizabeth Van Tassel (Cornelius’ wife) stranded with their infant daughter Leah. Torn by pity, one of the Jägers in the party rushed into the burning house and brought back a feather mattress and blankets to keep the two from freezing, saving their lives.

“When a decapitated Jäger corpse was discovered on the side of the Post Road later that spring, Elizabeth paid for its burial. Whether the soldier was a foot soldier or a dragoon isn’t recorded, nor do we know if his ghost was ever reported stalking the shades of Sleepy Hollow. While it is difficult to find genuine folklore prior to 1820 attesting to a local belief in a Headless Horseman, Irving claims that the goblin was a genuine part of Tarrytown ghostlore.”

I may be putting more weight on this than the tale needs to carry, but I like it that the legacy of the Revolutionary War is a dark and forbidding presence. Especially in these fraught times, it is good to remember that American history has always been filled with disunity, contention, and strife — not to mention some scary folk.

We tend to look back on our founding through a gauzy veil of civic piety, forgetting that creating the American nation was quite a dirty and mean business. In the New York of “Sleepy Hollow,” as it was in the southern backcountry, the Revolution was a civil war, and it was a nasty affair. Surely there are many unlaid ghosts from those sanguinary days that haunt us still.

Views expressed in this column are solely those of the writer and are not necessarily shared by the Editor or The Nugget Newspaper.

Got a great photo of life in Sisters Country?
Send your high-resolution photo to editor@nuggetnews.com.