

WALLOWA

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From my home in Baker City, the lake seems more distant than it is, mainly, I think, because the immense bulk of the Wallowa is in the way.

But the reality, of course, is that the lake is an easy, and quite beautiful, two-hour drive away.

I made that drive on Saturday, Jan. 23, with my wife, Lisa, and our kids, Olivia and Max.

Being prone to unfounded optimism as well as irrationality, I brought along our snowshoes. I had a vague notion of hiking a section of the Chief Joseph Mountain Trail at the south end of the lake.

I should have packed crampons.

Although this would have posed a problem seeing as we don't own any.

Those overshoes of sharp steel spikes would have been the most welcome of appendages, though, as we crept along the trail.

The snow was scanty.

The ice, however, was plentiful.

I ought to have suspected that the January thaw would have melted much of the snow, and that the meltwater, unable to soak into the frozen soil, would have filled the trail's shallow trench.

Appropriate, I suppose, given the role glaciers have played in sculpting the Wallowas we see today.

We made our tentative, shuffling way to the footbridge over the West Fork of the Wallowa and started up the switchbacks. But after a couple of near falls we turned back, fear of potential fractures outweighing the prospect of a view across the lake.

Disappointed, I suggested we try the East Fork trail, but it was, if anything, more deficient in friction.

The day was far too beautiful to call a forfeit, though,



Jayson Jacoby/Baker City Herald

The view of Wallowa Lake from the Iwetemlaykin State Heritage Site near Joseph.

nearly cloudless, appropriately chilly for midwinter and with only a moderate breeze from the north.

We explored the sprawling Wallowa Lake State Park, including a short stroll on the nature trail. I had hoped to use this path to connect to the Chief Joseph Mountain Trail but we were yet again foiled by ice.

Next we drove back to the north end of the lake and parked at the Iwetemlaykin State Heritage Site, a place I had not visited (and can't pronounce, even with the aid of a state park pamphlet).

The Oregon Parks and Recreation Department opened the 62-acre site in 2009. The state paid \$4.1 million for the property, using \$3.2 million from the Lottery and \$300,000 in donations

from three tribes, the Nez Perce (the site being part of its traditional homeland), Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation and Confederated Tribes of the Colville Reservation.

The park has a fine network of trails totaling about a mile, most of which meander along the Wallowa Lake glacier's terminal moraine. It's a distinctive landscape, most notably the scattered granitic boulders known as "erratics" that were rafted here by ice from miles away.

After hiking the trails we took a short detour to Old Chief Joseph's grave, a national historic landmark managed by the National Park Service.

Here I felt the same emotion that I have at other places which commemorate

in some way the rich, inspirational but also unspeakably sad legacy of the Nez Perce.

Old Chief Joseph, who died in 1871, was the father of the chief, also named Joseph, who led the Nez Perce on their tragic trail from the Wallowa country in 1877, pursued by U.S. Army soldiers across the mountains of Idaho and Montana.

In 2010 I walked through the Big Hole National Battlefield in Montana, site of one of the skirmishes between the Army and the Nez Perce.

About 90 members of the tribe, including many women and children, died in the battle on Aug. 9-10 of 1877. The death toll among the soldiers was 31.

That terrible trail ended near the Canadian border,

If You Go ...

WALLOWA LAKE STATE PARK

Park is at the south end of Wallowa Lake. Follow paved highway from Joseph about 5 miles.

IWETEMYLAKIN STATE HERITAGE AREA

Park is just south of Joseph. www.stateparks.oregon.gov

OLD CHIEF JOSEPH GRAVESITE

A few hundred feet south of Iwetemylakin Heritage Area.

where Young Chief Joseph uttered words so noble they should never be associated with the word "surrender."

"Hear me, my chiefs, I am tired; my heart is sick and sad. From where the sun now stands, I will fight no more forever."

I thought of those words as I stood beside his father's grave. It's on a knoll with a view of Wallowa Lake, and the grand mountains beyond, that Joseph himself, twi-teqis, must surely have reveled in often.

And I thought of another brief speech.

A speech that defines this place with a power and an eloquence that no photograph could ever capture, that no description of peak or glacier or lake could express half so well.

These words were spoken by Old Chief Joseph, just before his death. He was speaking to his son, who

would become the leader of the Nez Perce.

"My son, never forget my dying words, this country holds your father's body. Never sell the bones of your father and mother."

Young Chief Joseph heeded his father's call.

But it did not matter.

Old Chief Joseph's remains, originally interred between the forks of the Wallowa and Lostine rivers (fitting, as the Nez Perce called the Wallowa Valley the "land of winding waters"), were reburied at the foot of the lake in 1926.

Wallowa Lake would be magical even if its history was solely of the geologic sort — fascinating, but as cold and insensate as the stony mountains.

Its human history, a tale of bravery and stoicism that warms the heart as thoroughly as glacial ice chills the bones, elevates this place to a realm loftier than the highest peak.





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CROSSWORD PUZZLER

- ACROSS
- 1 Pool cover

5 Ruin, with "up"

8 Tasty tuber

11 Gourmet cook — Child

12 Smog monitor

13 Keogh relative

14 Just right

15 Make progress

17 A great many

18 Bog

20 Ore hauler

22 Hangar occupant

23 Camel's back

27 Little Rock's st.

29 Rookie socialite

31 Old French coin

32 Pasture

35 TV deletion

37 Unmatched

38 Farm structure

41 Two, in combos

42 El —, Texas

44 Pleased sigh
- 46 Stoic founder

50 Shrink back in fear

53 Reed or Ferrigno

54 Halftime motivator (2 wds.)

57 Hocus-pocus

59 Poetically above

60 Unhatched fish

61 Coffee or stew

62 Arid

63 Previous to

64 Very little
- DOWN
- 1 Henry VIII's house

2 Queen of the Misty Isles

3 Estuary

4 Coconut boater

5 — up (got ready)

6 Make current

Answer to Previous Puzzle



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- 7 Dallas cagers

8 Feminine product

9 Orbit segment

10 Sultry — West

11 Forsake a lover

16 Pale gray

19 Fla. citrus

21 — de mer

24 Not waste

25 Stooge with bangs

26 Small dog

28 Hwys.

30 Consumer protection org.

32 Fussy dresser

33 Boise's st.

34 Koch and Wynn

36 Designer Claiborne

39 Custom-make

40 Union man

43 World Series mo.

45 Mercury, in the lab

47 Baylor of the NBA

48 Deafening

49 "That hurts!"

51 Red inside

52 Give off, as rays

54 Okra morsel

55 Poet's always

56 Snoop

58 Uris hero
- 18 Hwys.

20 Consumer protection org.

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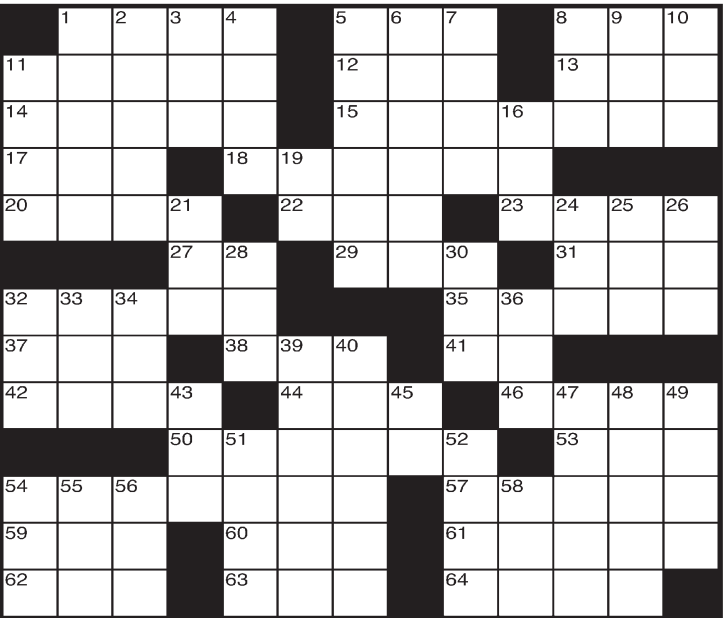
46 Give off, as rays

48 Okra morsel

49 Poet's always

51 Snoop

53 Uris hero



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