

GULCH

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We stopped there so my son, Max, who's 11, could soak the towel he recently acquired. The fabric, or so the package it came in promised, would, once saturated, remain cool for many hours. Max draped the clammy brown thing around his neck, a sort of summer scarf designed to cool rather than warm.

There is nothing outstanding about Buck Gulch, as I mentioned. It is not notably different from any of many dozens of streams that drain the Blue Mountains, its fringe of alder and red osier dogwood instantly familiar.

The road, which is open to vehicles, although better suited to four-wheel drives or ATVs, is typical of its type as well — narrow, but without deep ruts or boulders or other significant impediments.

We hiked about a mile and a half, gaining around 500 feet of elevation. It was, as I had hoped, a fine place for a walk on a hot and sunny day. Buck Gulch is narrow enough, and the forest dense enough, that sunlight is, if not blocked altogether, then at least nicely filtered in most places.

And although it was warm even in the shade, the road never strays far from the stream — the topography doesn't allow otherwise —

"Yet even though Buck Gulch almost certainly will never grace the cover of a calendar or the pages of a coffee table book, it is a pretty wonderful place."

and we paused a few times to let Max refresh his nifty new towel. I wrapped it around my neck for a while and it was as advertised, blessedly chilly.

For almost the entire hike we saw no one. Although the road is never more than half a mile or so from the comparatively well-traveled highway, once we had gone a quarter mile or so I never heard the hum of engines on the pavement above.

We turned around at the Buck Gulch mine, where a travel trailer was parked and a pickup truck, laden with firewood, was just leaving.

(The truck took a different route, a wider road that connects to the highway near Blue Springs, on the divide at the boundary between Baker and Grant counties.)

As with every gulch around Sumpter, gold miners, dating to the 19th century, gave Buck Gulch a thorough going over.

We passed the remains of a log cabin and another structure, possibly a small mill. Although all the land along the road and in the gulch is public, part of the Wallowa-Whitman National Forest, there are active mining claims

throughout, so it's illegal to pan for gold or do any other sort of prospecting.

I must have driven past Buck Gulch close to a hundred times over the past 30 years or so — you can't avoid it if you're driving from Sumpter to Granite and points beyond.

Yet it wasn't until August 2022 that I actually visited the gulch and hiked its road.

I find this rather amazing, and deeply gratifying.

Not every hike can be an epic, multi-day backpacking trip through the Eagle Cap Wilderness or some other landscape that, unlike Buck Gulch, leads photographers to use their memory card's every megabyte and prompts visitors with no literary pretensions to discover a latent affinity for poetry.

But Buck Gulch, and the dozens of places like it in the Blues, enrich our region too.

I hope never to become so complacent, so accustomed to the grandeur around us, that I fail to appreciate the simple pleasure of a shady road beside a cool mountain stream.

■ Jayson Jacoby is editor of the Baker City Herald.



Forest Road 7300-990 in Buck Gulch, near Sumpter.

Jayson Jacoby/Baker City Herald

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Take Your Pick

The classifieds are ripe with opportunity. Have a look at the employment listings today.

SATURDAY, AUGUST 20, 2022

CROSSWORD PUZZLER

- ACROSS**
- Lose feathers
 - Typewriter type
 - Harmful
 - Jug
 - Sandler or West
 - Had some hash
 - Appoint
 - Succeeded
 - Identify, slangily
 - Mild, as weather
 - Ohio city
 - Ziploc competitor
 - Were rivals
 - Maude
 - portrayer
 - Jolts of electricity
 - Mischievous one
 - Building site
 - Fetches
- DOWN**
- Avg. size
 - Be in debt
 - Orchestra leader — Baxter
 - Camera stand
 - Twinge

Answer to Previous Puzzle

K	I	T	H	B	A	H	C	A	L	L
N	O	R	A	I	V	E	O	L	E	O
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- Contradict
- Mil. rank
- Woodworking tool
- Assert positively
- Metric pound
- TKO officials
- Crystal-filled rock
- Better than never?
- Be indiscreet
- Seaweed extract
- Skin opening
- Galaxy unit
- Rainbow
- Painter's need
- Camel halts
- Stiller of "Zoolander"
- Two semesters
- Karachi language
- Instance
- Leia Organa's brother
- Magnon
- Well output
- Narrow inlet
- Foot-pound relative
- "Annabel —"

103 Announcements

PULL TABS ACCEPTED
AT THE FOLLOWING BAKER CITY LOCATIONS

- Baker City Herald
- Dollar Tree
- Black's Distributing
- Ryder Bros
- VFW
- Baker Elk's Lodge
- Main Event
- Baker City Fire Dept.
- Haines Sell-Rite
- Idle Hour
- Salvation Army

103 Announcements

WAGNERS MOVING INTO TOWN AUCTION!!
Saturday, August 20th:
11am, preview 9am
79509 Stage Gulch
Echo, OR 97826

Only two items have reserves: an 18' Caterman full setup and 10" new cabinet table stop saw with vacuum system brand new. Everything else will be sold. Many new and slightly used tools almost all items in sale are in great condition. 580C Case loader, Polaris ranger w/ full cab snow tracks and tires, 2006 aluminum trailer, Morgan gooseneck 24ft trailer, 2003 Ziemann 3 unit 4 wheeler trailer, 18ft catamaran raft fully setup, two horse trailer, 250lb anvil, small travel trailer, fifth wheel hitches, post hole digger, box scraper, pallet forks, hay forks, back blade, discs, plow, John Deere auger, John Deere drill, two grain silos, 16ft hill meat refer box, 30 old Moore theater seats, ranch & farm supplies, double combination vault door from bank w/ combo, two fridges, three glass door commercial cooler, large amount of data center trays new, reload hunting and fishing gear, hog feeders, pipe threaders and benders, various household items, sausage grinder, rock polishing and cutting machine, old cleaver, buck saws and knives, commercial pipe and steel cutting machine, workout equipment, two fat tire bikes, two saddles, two roll away tool boxes, hotdog and popcorn machine, new air compressor 80gal, Kirby vacuum, banquet chairs and tables in excellent condition, two large polar swamp coolers, three large shop fans, assorted telephone poles, 100's of decoys geese and ducks, Denver Bronco signed helmets Payton manning, vault door out of bank, new sawstop with vac system, lots of new tools battery and corded.

Check for pictures at www.facebook.com/FordsAuction
Bid online at hibid.com
Contact us for estate sales and consignments.
Licensed and bonded in Washington.
541-561-5798 Ford or 541-314-3153 Colby

104 Community Calendar

VFW POST 460
Every 1st and 3rd Thursday of the month at 7pm.
Corner of Main at Birch in Union

LA GRANDE LIONS CLUB
Meets 2nd & 4th Monday of each month @ 12 PM
Union County Senior Center
1504 N. Albany St., La Grande

PINOCHLE
Fridays at 6:30 p.m.
Senior Center
2810 Cedar St., Baker City
Public is welcome

Baker County United "freedom rallies"
3rd Thursday each month 6 p.m. at the Sunridge 1 Sunridge Lane.
The public is invited

ROTARY CLUB of Baker City
Meets every Monday Noon - 1 PM
Baker Towers Meeting Room

POWDER RIVER SPORTSMAN'S CLUB
Meets 1st Tuesday of every month
8th & Broadway, Baker City
6 PM - Pistolettes
7 PM - Regular Membership

114 Group Meetings

NARCOTICS ANONYMOUS
541-805-2229
neo-na.org

AA MEETINGS - La Grande
Wednesday Nights, 7-8:15pm.
Fort Union Grange Hall, corner of McAlister & Gekeler Lanes. For more info, call 541-786-1222

AL-ANON
Keep Coming Back Family Group
Mondays, 7 pm
at NKWest, 1208 Adams, La Grande, OR

CELEBRATE RECOVERY
Calvary Baptist Church
Third & Broadway
Baker City, OR
EVERY THURSDAY
6:15 - 8:00 PM

DO YOU HAVE.....HURTS, HABITS and/or HANG UPS?
12 Step Biblical Support
Harvest Church
3720 Birch St. Baker City
Thurs., 6:30 - 8:30 PM

LA GRANDE GAMBLERS ANONYMOUS
Every Friday Night @ 5pm, 2107 Gekeler Ln, LG, Church of Christ basement. For more info please call 971-219-8411

Someone's drinking a problem?
AL-ANON Meetings are available by phone
Info for Baker City Meetings
Call: 541-239-7323

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