

Opinion / Local

— LETTERS TO THE EDITOR —

Thank you, Greater Bowen RFPD Valley volunteers!

To the Editor:
Greater Bowen Valley RFPD is a volunteer fire station. All the volunteers devote a lot of time and effort to make sure they are properly trained and ready for action. To achieve Firefighter I, a volunteer puts in over 120 hours of time the first year. This includes the five-weekend academy and all the in house training that is done at the station. Greater Bowen Valley RFPD has nine certified firefighters.

Not only are our firefighters trained for structure fires, they are also trained for wildland fires.

These volunteers, just like you, all have busy schedules, families, and careers, yet they find the time to devote to the station and district to be prepared to come to district member's aid. The volunteers are not paid for their services; they have a passion for helping people. Without volunteers there would probably be very few rural fire departments.

I want to give a big thank you to Greater Bowen Valley RFPD volunteers—without them my job would be impossible to do. Chief: Jim Devlin; Asst. Chief: Keith Jensen; Training Officer LT: Chris Galiszewski; Prevention Officer, Tabitha Jensen; Firefighters: Rick (Badge) Badgley, Allen Jensen, Don Copley, Cal Foster, and Brent Kragness. The Board Members are President: Cal Foster, David Downing, Janet Jensen, Penny Devlin, and Steve Ritch. Please, when you run into one of these volunteers, **thank** them.

Jim Devlin,
Fire Chief

Conscience should say no on 1-63

To the Editor:
I have already voted no on 1-63, so this is for the last-minute voter—the ones who are Republicans, the ones who are changing their spots like in the last commissioner election, the ones who look like a deer caught in the headlights, the ones who listen to a silver-haired, silver-tongued New Age activist liberal progressive orator.

The Communist Party tried to take over labor in the 1920s. Then we had the McCarthy hearings and a littler later Nikita Khrushchev came to town and pounded on the podium with his shoe and said, "We will bury you from within." Then Ronald Reagan came along and said, "Tear down this wall." Then Mikhail Gorbachev moved to California and is, or was, clear up to his ears in the Green movement, Rewilding of America, and Agenda 21.

So come on. Vote right. Let your heart and conscience be your guide. Vote no on 1-63. We do not want a one-party system. This socialist way is bad. Bad for you and me. Bad for the county. Bad for the state. And bad for the United States of America.

Ed Hardt,
Baker City

It's official: birds like music

To the Editor:
In the months of February and March of 2015 I was a lucky guy for someone who studies birds. As I drove off the ranch one morning, who was perched in the elm tree right next to the road—not one, but two bald eagles.

At first they would fly a short distance, but came right back to the same branch in the same tree. Each time I passed, driving slowly, they began to trust me and finally they did not fly off and watched me as I drove by. I could see their yellow eyes from the car.

So one day as I listened to a CD, "Music of India," I rolled down my window and stopped next to the majestic birds. They both turned their heads and as I stopped, they were intensely listening to the beautiful sitar instrumental. They remained unmoving until the song ended.

Wow.
In the next few days I tried this out on the local ravens who are indeed very smart birds. As I drove down the road with the music playing with the window down, three ravens paralleled me out some 100 yards and flew right to the car. They followed another half-mile, turning when I did, then finally broke off.

Wow again.
So I guess I've answered my own question—birds like sitar music for sure. What else they may enjoy is yet to be learned.

James Smeroglio,
Baker City

County banned pot for wrong reason

To the Editor:
Last week the Baker County Commissioners approved an Ordinance prohibiting marijuana dispensaries in unincorporated portions of Baker County.

Shamefully, that decision was based on the wrong reason. The Commissioners "found" that the state-approved measure was in violation of federal law, and therefore prohibited. If this "finding" is true, the people have something to worry about.

Our commissioners were elected, to a large degree, on their commitment to separate Baker County from unconstitutional federal and state regulatory burdens, and to allow local control over our own resources to create prosperity and self-reliance.

Federal authority and jurisdictional venue is clearly defined in the Constitution of the United States and other organic documents which created our lawful government. Is the law not clear to all? Constitutional federal "law" cannot and does not exist in Baker County, except over federal employees and federally-owned land.

Can the Commissioners supply admissible evidence of any lawful authority for federal laws to apply to the people of Baker County or to local marijuana dispensaries? We san no. But if such claimed federal authority actually exists within this county, it could only do so through past private treasonous contracts and agreements signed by local misguided officials, and must now be nullified and made right.

Local decisions which affect local health, safety, and welfare should be made by the county commissioners on local merits. They possess authority and power over federal regulations! Let us run our own county, for better or worse.

Justifying any local decision as a "conflict with federal law" is an irresponsible cop-out and should never be considered.

Jim & Peg Iler,
Baker City

— OBITUARIES —

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Marge Walters

Marge enjoyed cooking, camping and Grange projects. She enjoyed each season of the year, because it was always different. Marge was very generous and always compassionate to all; especially people in need. She always had an extra potato to put in the pot for dinner when company came by. Marge was very family oriented, never missed a birthday, anniversary or other holiday without a card, call, visit and/or carefully selected gift. She corresponded with dozens of friends she made over the years and enjoyed receiving mail back from them. She loved bird watching, even collecting feathers for the church youth group study project. Marge liked to sew and loved to remember that "I made Bonnie's baby clothes" (her youngest

sibling). She embroidered handkerchiefs, pillowcases and even patches with names, dates, etc, for family quilts. She enjoyed working jigsaw puzzles and was very good at finding the next piece. She nurtured dozens of plants including huge Christmas cactus.

Marge was an avid reader. She had several hundred books in her personal library and studied her Bible daily. She loved animals and had several dachshund, one at a time, over the years. In cold weather they sported winter coats and went on car rides with her. They slept on the foot of her bed or in her chair with her when she was napping. Marge loved collecting things. She had a nice collection of black glass she displayed. She collect stamps, buttons and numerous other things for her personal enjoyment. Above all she will be remembered

most for being a very kind, loving person and will be missed very much by her family and all who had the pleasure to of known her.

She was preceded in death by her husband Ed, all 4 of her siblings and one half sister, her parents, and two grandchildren.

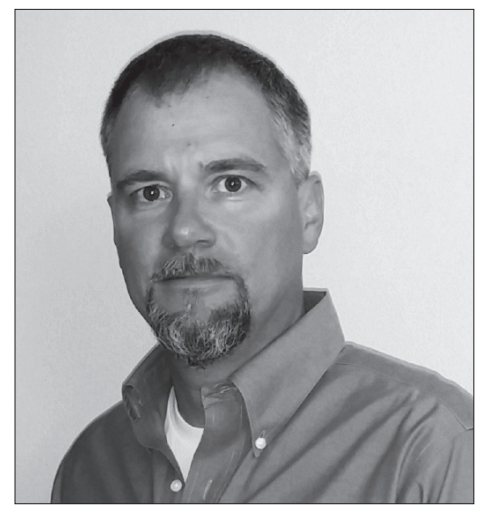
Marge is survived by daughters Janet Richards of Pasco, Washington, Cindy Headley of Central Point, Oregon, Yvonne(Bill)Wilson of Trail, Oregon, Sandy (Jerry) Stowell of Central Point; son Bill Walter of Central Point; 8 grandchildren: 10 great grandchildren, 1 great-great granddaughter; numerous nieces and nephews.

Those who wish to make a memorial donation in memory of Marge may do so to the Baker City Seventh-day Adventist Church through Tami's Pine Valley Funeral Home PO Box 543 Halfway, Oregon 97834.

— GUEST OPINION —

Partisanship and civil disagreement are healthy

By David Spaugh
Special to The Baker County Press



Submitted Photo

David Spaugh is a husband, father, and neighbor who has served three years as a school board member for Baker Charter Schools. He is also an occasional writer here in Baker County.

Partisanship is an essential element of multi-party political systems. Civilized disagreement between parties with opposing views promotes compromise, resulting in a balanced form of democratic government that is most acceptable to a majority its constituents. Until such time that all citizens share identical values and beliefs, partisanship is the pathway to stability and balance in representative government.

Partisanship is transparent. The political philosophies of partisan candidates are recognizable and require minimal investigation by individual voters to know where candidates should stand on major issues.

Political partisanship is a beneficial core element of the American democratic republic. It is unwise to construe elimination of partisanship as a justification for changes to our basic form of government, and it is naive to presume that the decisions of "non-partisan" officials will be made in a vacuum, unaffected by personal political views.

In Baker County, registered Democrats were recently prevented from voting in a primary election for County Commissioner seats because Oregon has a closed (partisan) primary election system and because no Democratic candidates filed for a seat. A number of Baker citizens who rightly resent voter exclusion policies have proposed to fix the problem by making the County Commissioner offices non-partisan. Their solution intends to "open up" the primaries to all voters by eliminating partisanship and transparency in county government. This is a step in the wrong direction. It ignores the actual problem inherent to closed primaries while attempting to paint over it with two new problems: removal of the partisan balance mechanism and removal of transparency.

A better solution would be to leave the Commissioner seats partisan and instead devote effort to making the primary elections non-partisan.

Oregon statewide Measures 65 (2008) and 90 (2014) attempted to do just that. They proposed an open blanket non-partisan primary election system where all candidates and party affiliations are listed on one ballot, and all citizens are eligible to vote on that ballot. Many elected officials

from all major parties supported these measures, but the measures were poorly understood by Oregon voters and heavily opposed by Oregon political parties. They failed.

In a closed primary election system like the one we have now, political parties gain an element of control over how their party members vote because members are not allowed to vote outside party lines. This improves the party's odds of placing a winning candidate, but it does so at the cost of removing the members' freedom to vote for whomever they please.

In an open primary system, political parties lose control over how citizens vote while citizens lose a restriction on how they vote. Open primaries restore the citizens' ability to tell their parties they do not like the candidates the party is fielding. This is a step in the direction of eliminating the peculiar American convention of "voting for the lesser of two evils because there is no other choice."

It wrests influence from the parties and returns it to the citizens.

Baker County has arrived at a moment in time where it can choose whether to gloss over the inherent problems associated with closed primary elections by reducing transparency in government. The better choice would be to reject 1-63 and instead encourage its authors and supporters to redirect their efforts to the more intelligent solution of converting Oregon to an open blanket non-partisan primary election system.

For readers who struggle with this decision, it may be informative to read the Constitution of the United States of America in an effort to determine how many times political parties are mentioned in that document.

Vote no on 1-63. The next time you see a statewide measure to convert Oregon to an open primary system, vote yes!

EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS FAIR

May 30, 2015 from 9 to 5

At the National Guard Armory, 1640 Campbell Street, Baker City

BE informed. MAKE a plan. BUILD a kit. GET involved.

This FREE fair will help you and your family start to prepare for disasters.

Preparedness Kits

Fire Starting Station

Weather Spotter

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Immunizations

First-Aid Kits

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Baker County Emergency Management at 541-523-9669

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