

# Opinion

— GUEST OPINION —

## Experiencing the Lime Hill Fire

The town of Huntington is nestled in a natural bowl surrounded by gently rolling hills.

You can stand anywhere in town, slowly turn in a complete circle and look in awe at the beautiful green, brown or white, depending on the season, hills alive with nature all around you.

Those hills are what make Huntington feel insulated and protected from the outside world. They give us a sense of warm and cozy intimacy that feels like home to locals and visitors alike.

But for about eight hours in the latter part of the day on Wednesday, August 5th, they became more threatening than comforting.

On that day if you stood and made that 360 degree turn you would have felt more trapped than protected. The hills were alive but with fire and devastation rather than nature.

I fell in love with the town of Huntington when I used to come here on vacation every summer to go catfishing. When I moved here 15 years ago that feeling only deepened over time. On that Wednesday morning I was working on my laptop in my home when my husband came in from outside and told me that there was lots of smoke in the air from the direction of Lime.

As I am currently honored to be Acting Mayor of Huntington, I immediately called City Hall to see if they had been informed of any fires burning or if our Fire Department had been called out. When the answer was yes they had, I was not worried but relieved that the professionals were on the way and I thought it would be out soon. But as they day continued and the wind picked up, I realized that as hard as I knew they were fighting, that this time the fire might win before they had the chance to tame it.

As the air became filled with smoke, my husband and I drove to the top of Malheur Reservoir Road where I-84 is the closest to our town and we stood in awe as fire fighters, sher fs, helicopters, planes and tankers descended on our town and rushed to try and save it.

As I watched the fire slowly creep down that hill, ever closer to the freeway that was the only thing between us and the fire I can honestly say that I have never felt more scared or helpless in my life.

It is strange the thoughts you have when faced with a grim reality. I have always thought that fire was very beautiful with all it's dancing colors, but I learned that day that it can also be very destructive.

I also learned a deeper respect for the men and women that fearlessly, so it appears, work so hard to fight it.



Submitted Photo

Eileen Driver is a reporter for The Baker County Press as well as the interim mayor of the City of Huntington.

When I was informed by Councilwoman and volunteer Firefighter Rhonda Bro - son that the Fire Department was issuing a Level 1 Alert it became imperative that we make sure the townspeople were prepared for the worst.

The Baker County Sheriff's Department let every one living on Highway 30, the closest to the fire line, know to start watering down their back yards and prepare to evacuate.

My husband and I drove through town to let everyone we could know to be prepared to leave an a moment's notice.

Then we returned to the fire line and coordinated with our fire fighters on ho we would go door to door if the evacuation became a reality.

With all plans in motion all we could do was listen for and hope we would not hear the words we dreaded the most, that the fire had jumped the freeway and was headed straight for us.

We prayed that no one would be hurt, that our town would be spared and that the winds would still. The town gathered their families around them, made sure their pets were within arms reach and tried to decide what they just couldn't live without if worst came to worst.

We made plans on where to go if they told us we had to leave our homes behind. We wavered between wanting to stay and protect our homes and wanting to get our families far away from the danger.

We listened with hope as the helicopters flew over our heads countless times to scoop water out of the river and drop it on the fire.

We cheered with happiness and relief when we were finally told we were out of danger and continued to pray for the men and women still fighting the fire

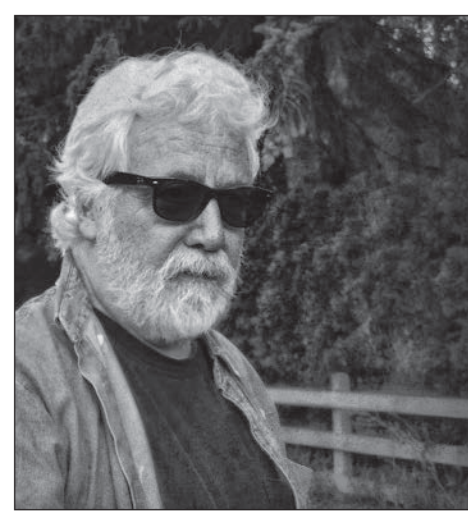
Those eight hours where the longest eight hours of our lives and we hope that no one ever has to live through hours like those again.

But we want you to know that Huntington is still here and it will take more than a fire to bring us down.

We are profoundly grateful to everyone who fought with and for us to save our town and we look forward to when we can once again make that 360 degree turn and see those beautiful rolling hills alive with nature and feel that feeling of home.

## SB 941's effects still in question

By Kevin Starrett  
Special to The Baker County Press



Submitted Photo

Kevin Starrett is the director of the Oregon Firearms Federation, fighting to preserve Second Amendment rights.

On August 9, SB 941's universal gun owner registration provisions took effect.

It is now illegal to lend, give, or sell a firearm to a friend or neighbor, or even a person with whom you have lived for twenty years, unless you first obtain permission of the police at a gun store.

Michael Bloomberg, the billionaire former mayor of New York, who bankrolled the bill's supporters, has reserved six figures in airtime for ads promoting the new restrictions.

Over 20 counties wrote resolutions opposing this bill and many sheriffs have publicly stated they will not enforce it. Others have made that statement in private communications.

Clearly, the Democrats in the Oregon legislature sold Oregonians a bill of goods claiming this was an "anti-crime bill." Only the most liberal, urban, ex-police supported it.

We always stated the bill was nothing more than an effort to harass and inconvenience law-abiding gun owners and expand the data base of privately owned firearms and who owns them.

This became even more obvious when it was revealed, a few days before the registration provisions kicked in, that the Oregon State Police were not only collecting data on the buyers of guns, but also the sellers. Nothing in the bill called for the collection of any data on sellers, but OSP is using the bill as a vehicle to collect that data.

Given the OSP's own admitted abysmal record of using background checks to stop criminals, Oregonians should be furious, offended and fearful of the intent and ramifications of this legislation.

Like so many other gun related bills in the 2015 session, this bill was the product of lies, exaggerations and misrepresentations. Even after being proven false, the proponents continued to make deceitful claims about the need for the bill.

Keep in mind, this is not a simple matter of limiting sales, this bill outlaws even the storage and safeguarding of firearms for friends or neighbors who may be leaving town or whose personal circumstance make

it wise for them to remove firearms from their home.

Furthermore, even though Oregon has long had a system for private parties to conduct background checks, this bill mandates that the check must be conducted by a dealer, at any cost he chooses to charge, if you can even find a dealer willing to take time away from selling his own merchandise to do it!

Given how often the OSP background check produces false delays and denials, it's no surprise that most dealers are expressing severe doubts about wanting anything to do with the process.

The consequences of this poorly drafted bill are not all yet known. We do know that it will now be illegal for a person under 21 to lawfully acquire a handgun from anyone other than some family members.

We do know that professionals conducting estate sales can no longer transfer firearms.

We do know that there will be new complications and expenses if the transfers are delayed by the State Police, as they often do with no justification. But countless questions remain unanswered.

It is evident that the chief elected law enforcement agents, our sheriffs, oppose this.

(Even the sheriff of Multnomah County, home of the most anti-gun city in the state, has said he has no budget for enforcement.)

Three counties and at least one city have expressed opposition to any enforcement and more are expected to do so.

Yet the supporters of the bill are still repeating that almost "90%" of Oregonians wanted this legislation.

February will be our first chance to repeal this dangerous counterproductive legislation. If that fails, remember this attack on your rights at the next election.

## — LETTERS TO THE EDITOR —

### Everyone should attend coordination seminar

To the Editor:

There is a meeting coming up on August 20, 21 and 22 at the Event Center, 2600 East Street, Baker City. It is probably one of the most important meetings on teaching Coordination you ever have had the chance to attend.

It gives you the tools to stop the over reach of the Forest Agencies. We need to stop their benign neglect of our forest, blaming everything on the off road users and other forest activities. We need to stop the shutting down our roads because of silt might get in a creek. Or a salmon that needs help or some other species in

distress.

I know \$150 for a three-day conference is a lot of money to come up with. But what we will lose if we don't stand up and be counted is much, much more. If you can't attend please donate to help offset the cost of the event. To attend or donate or for more information please call Lorrie at 541-519-5470, or stop by her office open Monday through Friday at 3370 10th St., Suite C here in Baker City.

We are running out of bullets, and this is the last stand to make a difference on our public forest lands, please help make a difference.

**Chuck Chase**  
Baker City

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