

Opinion

— GUEST OPINION —

Hackneyed attacks on ranching getting old

By Fred Kelly Grant
Special to The Baker County Press

“When you talk, you are only repeating what you already know. But if you listen, you may learn something new.”
—Dalai Lama.

Would that the anti-grazing radicals pay heed to the Dalai Lama, and listen to facts once in great while, instead of constantly spewing their canned virulence.

Attacks on ranchers by anti-grazing foes get so old and hackneyed they deserve to be ignored. But, it seems to me to ignore them does not do justice to the men and women ancestors to those who made these western lands home—for them and for us.

They did it with the same kind of hard work their heirs continue to this day—pre-dawn to dark, caring for the land, the livestock and their families through coldest winter nights and hottest summer days.

Carrying on the historic grazing industry, they not only produce beef for us and the nation, they provide land and water enhancements that vitalize habitat for game animals and birds. Their hard work is the best prevention of the types of desecrating wildfires that destroyed millions of acres of rangelands during the summer past.

On Friday, February 18, *The Idaho Statesman* carried a letter that accused ranchers of feeling “entitled to use and abuse our land forever like their fathers did.” The writer is a Boisean who obviously knows little of the reality of ranching or of livestock grazing. He also contends that the “public deserves their land back,” for one reason “we pay for its management.”

I replied to his letter in the 200-word limit which is the policy of the Statesman:

“It gets so old—attacks on Idaho ranchers by grazing foes stubbornly denying obvious value of Idaho’s historic industry. Friday last, in this space, an attacker said ranchers feel ‘entitled to use and abuse our land forever like their fathers did.’

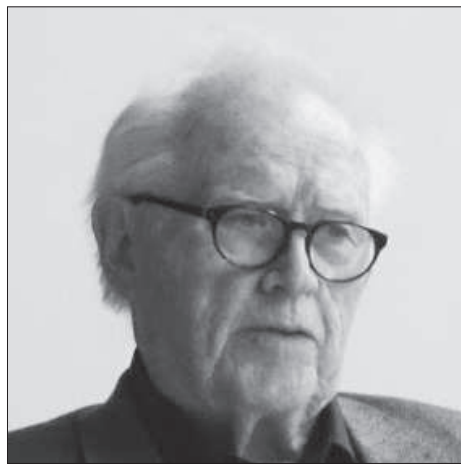
“For decades, I have worked with Owyhee County ranchers and have not met one who does not respect the land. Stop to think—why would a rancher, dependent on the land, intentionally hurt his family by abusing land, reducing his chance for profit.

“The attacker said grazing decreases numbers and habitat of deer and elk, fish and riparian ‘fauna and flora.’ To the contrary, a robust game animal population depends on ranch improvements. During winter, deer and elk are sustained by the rancher’s alfalfa fields and water developments.

“The attacker said ‘the public deserves their land back.’ Would the public revive the million acres of Owyhee County desecrated last summer by raging wildfire fueled by excess grasses where BLM denied grazing. Ranchers will. Will the public restore habitat for game, fish and ‘fauna and flora?’ Ranchers will.

“Next time you read accusation of abuse of land, take a drive to Owyhee County and see the results of denying grazing.”

Much of the frustration that leads to confrontations between ranchers and



Submitted Photo

Attorney Fred Kelly Grant of the Stand and Fight Club has fought for the rights of farmers, ranchers, loggers, miners, and those who use the great outdoors for recreation.

the federal and state agencies stems from the near constant attacks from and by radical anti-grazing organizations. Those same organizations represent so much determined buying power that they have covered corporate sponsors into donating millions of dollars for their assaults. Through use of those dollars they have lobbied and manhandled bureaucrats to the point where they issue regulations that strangle all natural resource industries.

Their advertising and public relations campaigns influence political votes that should by nature favor our western industries.

Their background campaign has been so well financed and so successful that all the “anti grazing” groups have to do is submit a simple 200-word letter setting forth the trigger words—“abuse of the land,” “welfare ranchers,” “welfare farmers,” “erosion”—and their destructive message is effective.

When a response is made, the 200-word limit prevents the full story because for a generation ranchers have not been in the public relations business. Their story is not well known. The public does not know that the rancher’s efforts provide winter and summer sustenance to game animals and birds of all shapes and sizes. It does not know that grazing keeps grasses low enough to avoid disastrous fires, that cows leave hoof prints in hard soil that are used as nesting places by sensitive species of frogs and tortoises.

When a radical environmentalist likens the rancher to a “welfare rancher,” the public does not know that a rancher, and his family, start the day in the pre-dawn darkness and end it in the post-sunset darkness. The public does not think about the icy cold in which the rancher and his family, help a distressed mother cow deliver a calf in the dead of night. This industry is not your everyday living room familiar industry, the details of which are well known to city dwellers.

Ranchers, farmers, loggers, miners, and all those who support them are the protectors of the quality of our natural resources. But for them and their efforts, range fires and forest fires would be even more devastating. It gets old defending them in 200 words or less. They deserve better. They are the conservative conscience of America as it was meant to be. They are the Americans who are most closely linked to the ways of life of the Founders. We were settled as an agricultural nation, but today the moneyed class would have us forget that fact. The idea of the day is to eliminate the conservatism of rural America, and the way to do that is to eliminate the traditional industry of the rangelands and forest lands. God help us all if the effort to do so is not defeated.

If the anti-grazers, anti-farmers, anti-loggers, anti-miners have their way, the America of our ancestors will be lost.

Let it not be on our watch!

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— SPECIAL COLUMN —

So I was thinking ... On demand

By Jimmy Ingram
Special to The Baker County Press

On demand: It’s not just a convenience in this day and age, it’s a way of life we’ve all become accustomed to.

From the ability to bid on useless trinkets you didn’t know you needed on eBay mobile to downloading a 50-year-old Beatles album in less than a minute. It’s all right there at our fingertips.

Has it made life easier? Yes.

Has it made us lazy? Probably.

It has certainly has changed us and made us more impatient.

Over a month ago a tragedy of modern convenience struck my household: Our DirecTV DVR hard drive went bad. An accumulation of hours upon recorded hours of “Dora the Explorer” and “Power Rangers” was gone.

To me this meant little, but to my four-year-old son it was the equivalent of the US government misplacing the footage of Neil Armstrong setting foot on the moon.

Suddenly the 30 minutes of TV my son was allotted before bedtime had been reduced to the unfamiliar squealing of SpongeBob SquarePants.

He’d didn’t like it.

Neither did I.

Because also gone was the 30 minutes of daily reprieve my wife and I get from answering the endless questions of a curious four-year-old.

As most parents know, sometimes a half hour of peace can do wonders for your sanity. In a feeble attempt to put things in perspective for him, I explained that in my youth my favorite cartoon was on only once a week, and often times I didn’t get to see it if I wasn’t home, or if my mom and dad wanted to watch the news.

Needless to say, my son didn’t understand the concept.

“Why didn’t you just push the button and turn it on?” he asked.

At that moment something that probably should have been obvious hit me: Nearly everything in his life will be available to him in ways never imagined even 20 years ago.

He won’t ever have to search through index cards and wander around like a lost puppy to find a book in the library. He’ll download it to his e-reader.

He won’t have to experience the disappointment of spending \$15 for a CD or cassette tape only to find out that 14 out of 15 songs are terrible. He’ll preview and download a song from iTunes.

He won’t experience spending 30



Submitted Photo

Jimmy Ingram is a local farmer and father of two who enjoys people watching within our wonderful community and beyond.

minutes in the video store settling for an unfamiliar movie because the one he really wanted to see was checked out. It wasn’t bad back when we were younger, but things required more effort, time, and patience.

Generational gaps are part of life.

We’ve all heard stories from our parents or grandparents about how things were in their day.

But somewhere along the line, the world offered to bring everything right to us.

I did almost all my Christmas shopping from my couch. I chose to dodge the hordes of people on Black Friday and didn’t pay my shopping “dues” by having to park three miles from a mall entrance and lug five bags of overpriced merchandise back to the car.

The truth is, I’m spoiled by technology every bit as much as my kids are going to be.

The difference is that I got to experience life before the Information Age. When life’s moments weren’t displayed on a Facebook page, you had to ask someone how they were in person. When we didn’t communicate using 200 characters and emoticons. When “selfie” wasn’t a word, and Amazon was a rain-forest in South America. I’m not *that* old, but sometimes technology makes me feel that way.

Something tells me the phrase, “What do you mean I can’t have it now?” will be uttered far more in the next century than ever before.

We’ve grown accustomed to having so much of life’s needs and wants at our fingertips it’s easy to forget when it wasn’t. You’d think that in this more user-friendly modern world we’d have way more time to spare ... but we don’t seem to. Everyone you ask is busy, busy, busy.

It often reminds me of a comedy bit from the late, great Mitch Hedberg: “I get up in the morning and make myself a bowl of instant oatmeal and then I don’t do anything for an hour ... which makes me wonder why I need the instant oatmeal. I could get the regular oatmeal and feel productive.”

I guess getting everything instantly just makes us feel better.

It must.

— CONTACT US —

The Baker County Press

PO Box 567
Baker City, Ore. 97814

Open Monday-Thursday for calls
9 AM - 4 PM
Open 24/7 for emails

Phone: 541.519.0572

TheBakerCountyPress.com

Kerry McQuisten, Publisher
Editor@TheBakerCountyPress.com

Wendee Morrissey, Advertising and Sales
Wendee@TheBakerCountyPress.com

David Conn, Advertising and Sales
David@TheBakerCountyPress.com

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President Barack Obama

202.456.1414

202.456.2461 fax

Whitehouse.gov/contact

US Sen. Jeff Merkley

503.326.3386

503.326.2900 fax

Merkley.Senate.gov

US Sen. Ron Wyden

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US Rep. Greg Walden

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541.624.2402 fax

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541.490.6528

Baker County Commissioners Bill Harvey; Mark Bennett; Tim Kerns

541.523.8200

541.523.8201

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