

Opinion

Baker County Sheriff candidates—in their own words

— GUEST OPINIONS —

By Travis Ash
Special to The Baker County Press

I am running for Sheriff to keep Baker County a safe and peaceful place to live, work, visit, and raise families. I am honored to have spent my career committing myself to the safety of the public I serve through the law enforcement profession. I work hard to protect our county and I have the experience, training, integrity, and dedication critical to maintaining the professionalism and effectiveness of the Baker County Sheriff's Office.

I am a law enforcement veteran with over 20 years of practical experience. Rising through the ranks at the Sheriff's Office, I've served as Deputy, Detective, Sergeant, Lieutenant, and now Sheriff – a position I was unanimously appointed to by all three county commissioners in 2015. As Sheriff, I'm responsible for overall operations including: Parole/Probation, Patrol, Jail, Search and Rescue, and management of an over 2 million dollar budget.

I've served as supervisor/lead investigator on several important cases, represented the Sheriff's Office on the Interagency Major Crime Team, and testified as an expert witness on multiple occasions. I have conducted active shooter preparedness training for county employees and drug awareness training for local community members. During the past two summers, I successfully coordinated evacuation efforts for three major wildfires. Deputies know I am both willing and able to work alongside them in any situation.

I am a 1993 graduate of Pine Eagle High School in Halfway. Last year I was proud to complete my Bachelor of Science degree from Eastern Oregon University. I began my career in 1995 as an OSP Cadet and Reserve Deputy in Wallowa County. I served the City of Prineville from 1998-2005 in a variety of capacities including: Patrol Officer, Detective, School Resource Officer, Armorer, Defensive Tactics Instructor, Mounted Patrol Unit, Presidential Security Detail, SWAT, and Field Training Officer.

I hold DPSST Management Certification, have completed over 2100 law enforcement training hours, and am a certified Drug Recognition Expert. I've received advanced training in: Firearms, Incident Command Systems, Executive Leadership, Sexual Assault Investigations, Working with Trauma Victims, Child Abuse, Forensic Interviewing, and High Risk Situations.

Since taking office I re-instituted the Community Corrections Work Crew, increased efficiency through employee cross-training, and added jobs to the Sheriff's Office at no additional cost to Baker County. I've standardized our employee evaluation process and increased training opportunities for professional development of personnel. I maintain a fiscally



Submitted Photo
Travis Ash is the incumbent Baker County Sheriff.

conservative approach to managing the budget, using grant monies and leveraging resources when available to supplement county funds.

I believe community partnerships, relationships built on mutual trust, and teamwork within the organization of the Sheriff's Office are essential to providing a high level of public safety service. I'm proud to have a good working relationship with local citizens and organizations, as well as the other law enforcement agencies who operate in our area. It is my belief that we must work together for the peace and safety of our county.

I've been active in outreach with area schools as a job shadow and senior project mentor, guest speaker, drug awareness educator, and emergency preparedness advisor. I have been an instructor for the Reserve Academy and a guest speaker for NRA classes. I serve on the board for New Directions Northwest, Baker County's mental health provider. In my personal life I am a parent-volunteer for my children's schools and other activities and a member of the local Lions Club. I am an avid outdoorsman and dedicated family man. My wife, Katie, and I have been married 20 years and have two school-age children.

My commitment to the people of Baker County is to provide the best law enforcement and public safety service possible while being responsive to community needs. The Baker County Sheriff's position is non-partisan. I am not affiliated with any political party and I will not be persuaded by anyone representing a particular political agenda to change the way I will deliver the most fair and equitable services of law enforcement.

I support the Constitution of the United States of America and the Constitution of the State of Oregon.

I respect the rights of all people while upholding the law with firmness and integrity.

I'm honored to serve as your Sheriff and I'm asking for your vote on November 8th.

By John Hoopes
Special to The Baker County Press

I love Baker County.

I was born and raised here—it is where my ancestors set root and the place where I raised my own children. It is my heritage, my home.

I turned 50 years old this year. It seems like when you mature, you start to get a bit more reflective on your life.

As I look back at my 16 years of law enforcement, I can honestly say, the opportunity to serve the people of Baker County as a Sheriff's Deputy has been one of the most rewarding experiences of my life.

Of course, my endeavor wasn't an easy one; but I persevered, and after several application attempts to various law enforcement agencies, Sheriff Terry Speelman provided me the opportunity to join the Sheriff's Reserve Program.

Because of Sheriff Speelman's generosity and trust in me to do my best, my volunteer efforts enabled me to gain experience as a temporary parole and probation officer, a corrections deputy, and eventually a Sheriff's Patrol Deputy.

Today, looking at all those yellow signs adorning the properties of so many Baker County residents, I can honestly say, the reason I want to be Sheriff—is for the people.

Between 1986 and 1991, I served my country as United States Marine, reporting to 2nd Battalion 5th Marine Division. Upon arrival at the most decorated battalion in the United States Marine Corps, I was invited to serve in S-2, Surveillance and Target Acquisition Platoon (STA Platoon), which was the reconnaissance of the Battalion. S-2, STA Platoon, was military intelligence requiring a secret clearance.

During my time in the military, I was trained to complete my mission, to do the best job I could do without complaint, never losing sight of my goal.

I learned to cooperate and work together as a team, paying close attention to detail as one small mistake could cost someone their life.

As Marines, we worked together as a team and were trained leaders who earned respect and rank through motivation and intuitiveness.

Throughout my life, I have held tight to that deep sense of responsibility and integrity that was taught to me in the military.

To this day, I work with pride knowing that what ever the work conditions or pressures are; I face them with commitment, determination and strength to complete the task with honor.

I am honest and respectful with those I encounter and I am not afraid to share my thoughts when I feel changes need to be made.

Approximately five years ago, I made a decision to run for Sheriff in the 2016



Submitted Photo
Deputy John Hoopes is challenging Ash for the Sheriff's position.

election.

Back then; I was discouraged by the management practices and spending of the past administration.

Today, my opinion still holds true.

As an employee and President of the Law Enforcement Association, I can see how department drive and morale has depleted, how many of our employees lacked necessary training and how the office structure was in dire need of security updates and maintenance.

I have watched how the Sheriff's Office has been operated by a Sheriff with a passive approach to the public, whose management system provided "specialized" training for only a select few.

The idea that our Deputies were only trained and educated to meet State standards and not exceed them meant that our citizens were not getting the law enforcement or protection they were paying for.

I believe the Sheriff is a representative of the people he serves and should work "with and for" the citizens of Baker County and his employees, not just hold title and collect a paycheck.

I also believe in respect for position.

The Sheriff should inspire and encourage his employees and those around him to better themselves, to reach for a higher plane and seek promotion; not inhibit or mock their desire for self-improvement.

In my career, I have made it a priority to treat people with respect and to communicate with and listen to each person, openly and honestly, regardless of the situation or time of day.

As Sheriff, I will continue this practice to be sincere, open minded and approachable to those I work with and to the public I serve.

My goal is to serve Baker County with honor and respect, to work side by side with those who live and work here—to lead by example, to create more leaders.

I hope you will join me in my endeavor; I look forward to working with you in 2017.

I humbly ask for your vote on November 8th.

— LETTERS TO THE EDITOR —

1-74 proponent made false statement

To the Editor:

Michele Kaseberg, technically one of the three chief petitioners who put this measure back on the ballot for the second year in a row; stated on the Baker County Republican Parties' Facebook page, "this measure is important to the livelihood of our county." She made this statement on a post which hosts one of the educational videos about the nonpartisan issue. When Ms. Kaseberg was asked what she meant by this statement, there was no answer? I am wondering why this statement was made? What does she mean? Or is this just scare tactic wording aimed at the uninformed voter?

Whether measure 1-74 passes or fails this time around, this measure does not affect the "livelihood" of the county. It does affect the transparency of county government and the transparency of our elected County Commissioners. Again, why would any voter want to know less about who they are voting for? Measure 1-74, if passed will cloak the core beliefs of the candidates and mess up our replacement process in the case of resignation or death of a commissioner.

The Baker County Republican Party voted unanimously to oppose Measure 1-74, just as they did last year when it came before the voters in May of 2015, and it failed then. Please join me in putting down this measure for the second year in a row. Please vote no on Measure 1-74.

Keith Jones
Bridgeport

I disagree with Hoopes supporters

To the Editor:

Reading some of the letters written by those supporting Hoopes for Sheriff I am concerned that some of their statements and implications regarding Sheriff Ash are false. In particular, some seem to think that the Sheriff

has supported what the writers infer is "illegal" actions on the part of the federal government.

Sheriff Ash, like all law enforcement officers, is obligated through his oath of office to support and defend the Constitution of the United States, laws, and the decisions of the Courts. The failure of any law enforcement officer to do so is grounds for removal from office and, potentially, criminal prosecution. Sheriff Ash has at no time violated his oath of office and I have no concerns that he will ever do so.

Some have criticized Sheriff Ash for the assistance the Baker County Sheriff's Office (BCSO) provided to the Sheriff of Harney County during the incident at the Malheur Wildlife Refuge. That assistance was provided under mutual aid agreements in place involving law enforcement throughout the State. It is worthy of note that BCSO's primary role in that incident was to protect the residents of Burns, Oregon. Those uninvolved citizens had in many cases been threatened by those who came in from out of the area. BCSO's presence was in the City of Burns, not at the Refuge.

Some seem to believe that they, and the person they support for Sheriff, can selectively interpret the law to suit their own political philosophy. Under our form of government that is a false belief. Sheriff Ash understands that, and that is why his track record is one of supporting the Constitution, not someone's erroneous beliefs regarding it. Sheriff Ash is the most qualified candidate for the Office of Sheriff and deserves your vote.

Jerry Boyd
Baker City

I worked with Travis Ash

To the Editor:

Sheriff Travis Ash is a selfless leader whose character and commitment to others helped shape me not only as a police officer, but also as a person. Travis' integrity, ser-

vice, and proven leadership are second to none and below are just a few of the many ways he has had a profound effect on my life.

Mentor: I am currently a Detective with the Bend Police Department and have known Sheriff Ash since 2002, where I was quite fortunate to have him as my first training officer after being hired as a new police officer. It was there that Travis instilled in me the importance of truly serving a community and keeping it safe.

Whether it was a domestic violence or abuse victim, or a hardened criminal, Travis taught me how to really treat people with dignity, compassion, respect, and professionalism.

A Dedicated Servant: Sheriff Ash is a public servant who will put the community's well-being ahead of all else.

I remember being on vacation and seeing that Travis, along with the Oregon State Police Senior Trooper Chris Hawkins, had literally rescued Doris Anderson from the Wallowa Mountains, saving her life after locating her even after the official search had been called off. This was not an outlier of Travis' service oriented mentality, but really a continuance of his innate mission to help others.

Leadership / Integrity: Sheriff Ash has always been a role model to me. Throughout my career, I have spoken to Travis many times to seek his trusted advice.

Travis has the ability to lead during times of chaos, be a part of the solution and not the problem, and set the example for others to follow. Observing Travis lead from the front, coupled with his historical and current focus on community and family surely molded my view of what a leader in law enforcement should be.

I can't thank you enough, Travis. I could not support a better person to be your Sheriff.

Pat Hartley
Bend