

Opinion / Politics

So I was thinking ...

Carrying the weight

By Jimmy Ingram
Special to The Baker County Press

I usually don't like to get personal with these columns, nor do I like them to be particularly serious. After all, there's enough serious in the world as it is.

But everyone has personal frustrations or even "issues" if you will, that we're sensitive about.

Here's mine.

I've been a "stocky" guy for the better part of my life. My youth was spent fitting awkwardly into clothes and being one of the slowest kids on sports teams.

Unfortunately, like many overweight kids, I was teased about it. I tried to ignore it (as kids are told to do) but it was tough to.

Kids don't deserve to be teased about anything, but everyone has experienced it.

Throughout my teenage years I discovered weight-lifting and traded my awkward adolescent build for that of an 82 chevy suburban—that is to say, big, square and blocky.

Being strong was nice, but let's be honest, it's hard to feel good about yourself buying 38" waist pants and XXL shirts. Your 400-pound bench press doesn't mean much if you run out of breath walking across the street. And adult sports are awkward when you're big.

Skiing? I felt like a high-speed wrecking ball. Basketball? The quickness and agility of a tortoise. Golf? I hope flexibility isn't required. Hiking? Do the stairs in my home count as a hike?

So one day I decided there needed to be less of me—somehow. And what better way than the one thing I'd always dreaded the most: running. After all, if I hated it so much it must be good for me, right?

So I ran. I ate salad. I choked down dry chicken and egg whites. I was determined.

Well, I sort of ran. More like lumbered.

But after several months of running and eating right, not only had I dropped weight, I was lighter, quicker, and felt better. It was a win/win/win situation (apart from the actual running, which I still loathed).

But I did it anyway.

After a year of running 150+ miles a month, my once blocky 245-pound frame was down to 170 pounds. It was the least I had weighed since I was probably 10 years old, and it took me until I was 30. I felt like I'd earned it. I felt good.

I was able to continue this pattern for several years until—cue the *Jaws* music—I got married and had kids.

Funny thing about having a family—all the time you previously spent outside your job focusing on whatever-the-hell-you-like just disappears. The excuses start to flow like water in the spring.

"I'm too busy to exercise."

"I don't have time to cook, we'll just eat out."

"I'm a 38 year-old dad, who cares?"

So like many other people in the world I found myself putting on weight and shrugging it off, particularly because of my heavy-set past.

I still thought of myself as the "big guy." You know, the one who friends call when they need help moving things like pianos or pool tables. The guy who could single-handedly put "all-you-can-eat" buffets out of business.

I continued to be painfully aware of my weight gain, but made only half-hearted attempts to stop it.



Submitted Photo

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

"I weighed this much in college," I'd say to myself. No big deal. And then Thanksgiving of 2016 rolled around. I stepped on the scales and weighed 250 pounds, which meant I had gained 80 pounds since the day I got married. 80 pounds.

I had to say it to myself a couple times to believe it. I had gained the weight of my five year-old son and my two-and-a-half year-old daughter *put together*. It was time for a wake-up call. No more excuses, no more *laissez faire* attitude. No more justification. I'd done this before, I could do it again.

And so I ran. I ate salad. I choked down dry chicken and egg whites. I was determined.

Well, I tried to run. It took a month or so and it came back slowly, but it came back. I had to keep in mind that I am now a 38 year-old man, not the 20-something kid I was years ago. I knew this would be even more difficult that it was then.

And it has been.

But as of now I have lost 70 pounds since last Thanksgiving. The positive feedback from friends and family has helped. A regimented, seemingly draconian, low-calorie diet has helped.

Running over 650 miles and wearing out three pairs of shoes in five months has helped. But no one can say I didn't earn it.

"What do I care?" you might ask.

Maybe you don't, and that's fine.

Maybe you're already in shape, or perfectly happy with where you are health-wise. I applaud you.

But maybe you're one of the millions of people out there in the world who is saying to yourself, "I really need to lose a few pounds" and do care.

I realize I'm lucky that in terms of "struggle," I've got it good. Being overweight is peanuts compared to what some others deal with in life. But still, it's been one of my lifelong personal struggles.

I've felt the embarrassment of buying 40" cut-to-fit belts that I didn't have to cut and I've felt the joy of trimming eight inches of that same belt.

I've made the walk of shame to my basement to dig out my "fat pants" and the walk of pride down those same stairs to dig my "skinny jeans" out of storage. One feels awful. One feels like accomplishment. And no one but me can take it away.

I'm no motivational speaker but I'm here to tell you this: if you want to lose weight and get in shape then do it—now.

It doesn't take special diet plans, fitness gadgets, "magical" green diet shakes, super-foods, pills, or whatever health-related pyramid marketing scheme your friends on Facebook are subtly trying to sell you.

It takes effort, will power, and support from people around you.

Go for a walk, avoid the big slice of cake, ditch the soda and drink water. Get on the scales and be horrified at what you see. Then pat yourself on the back a month later when you get on that same scales and say to yourself, "Holy (insert expletive)! I've lost 12 pounds!"

I'm no better person than anyone else. But at least now I'm a better version of myself. I intend to stay there. And if you're still here, still reading, good luck. No excuses. Get after it.

— LETTERS TO THE EDITOR —

Practice what you preach

To the Editor:

Being a citizen and tax-payer in Grant County, Oregon. I request Ms. Judy Schuette pay the bill for the time charged and travel expenses incurred for the Grant County Attorney to travel to facilitate the recent hearing called by Brenda Percy regarding the Residency of John D. George of Austin, Oregon.

Ms. Schuette filed a complaint against Mr. George, (my nephew) and Ms. Schuette needs to pay this bill not the citizens of Grant County. Ms. Schuette has continued to berate and belittle Julie Carr for her recent attempt to recall Commissioner, Britton so if the shoe fits, maybe Ms. Schuette should wear it.

Ms. Schuette brought this expense on the people of Grant County, the cost should be laid directly at her feet. Because his Residency was not withdrawn and there was no need or reason to have the hearing because Ms. Percy made a favorable determination earlier on this exact situation.

I find it sad that the County Court will not put money toward an investigation of the Canyon Creek Fire but they will pay the bill for Ms. Schuette's complaints about my nephew, in an obvious attempt to silence his questioning of the Blue Mountains Forest Partners and the Grant County Court.

Anyone want to bet what Ms. Schuette's response will be? Only when Julie Carr pays for the recall? The difference is, 500 plus residents participated in a democratic process to attempt to remove an ineffective Commissioner in Mr. Britton. However, in Ms. Schuette's case, you have a vindictive tyrant trying to punish a man that does nothing more than ask questions and share information with the people of Grant County.

The lesson learned here is, if you don't go along to get along, be prepared to incur the wrath of Ms. Judy Schuette, and we (all the residence of Grant County) get to pay the bill.

Frances Preston
Prairie City

Politicians applaud timber tariffs

Reps. Peter DeFazio (OR-04), Greg Walden (OR-02), Rick Larsen (WA-02) and Jaime Herrera Beutler (WA-03) released the following statement in response to the Commerce Department's announcement of preliminary countervailing duties on softwood lumber imports from Canada:

"Today's announcement from the Commerce Department gives us hope the U.S. lumber industry may finally see relief from decades of trade abuses. For years, American communities who depend on the softwood lumber industry have had their livelihoods threatened by heavily-subsidized Canadian lumber increasingly imported into the U.S.

"Our workers have faced high unemployment, and domestic companies have struggled to compete with

a highly-subsidized Canadian industry. Thanks to a lack of protection for the lumber industry, Canadian softwood lumber now accounts for one-third of the U.S. market.

"The countervailing duties announced yesterday will give the U.S. lumber industry the ability to invest and grow without the constraints of unfairly imported Canadian lumber.

"Since the expiration of the Softwood Lumber Trade Agreement in 2015, we have been fighting stop the growing influx of Canadian lumber into our market.

"Today's action by the Commerce Department confirms what we've known all along—Canadian subsidies have severely harmed U.S. manufacturers and workers.

"We applaud these tariffs as a step in the right direc-

tion, yet remain hopeful that a new agreement which allows the U.S. timber industry to grow and compete on a level playing field can be reached."

In September 2016 Reps. DeFazio, Walden, Larsen, and Herrera Beutler, along with 37 other House Members sent a letter to then-United States Trade Representative Michael Froman supporting efforts to negotiate a new Softwood Lumber Agreement that would put U.S. lumber on a level playing field.

Since no new agreement has been reached, the U.S. lumber industry was forced to exercise its rights under U.S. trade laws and file antidumping and countervailing duties cases against Canadian lumber in order to protect American workers, manufacturers, and communities.

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Baker City, Ore. 97814

Open Monday-Thursday for calls
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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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