

Look for the beauty in the mess

The light bounced its way around the trailer as the water splashed against the aluminum. Small rainbows and spectrums of color and light flickered through the drops of moisture all around me. It was hot and I was covered in smelly, sticky crap as I watched the fading light play games with the water.

Hosing out the cattle truck which had just returned from a long, hot day of hauling pairs to the mountains has never been a favorite chore of anyone in our family. And somehow, on the eve of summer, I was the lucky one to draw the short stick.

The high pressure hose pushed the waste out the rear of the trailer as I maneuvered the nozzle back and forth from one end to the other — pulling the heavy hose behind me. It was a dirty job, but in some marvelous sort of way it was beautiful just the same.

Light bounced, water washed away the stench, and it was transforming in every sort of way. It was keeping me from housework and folding laundry, and even fixing dinner at a decent time.

It was slow and steady, and everything I hadn't allowed myself to experience in months. It was me — chasing light with water and allowing myself to rest in the midst of it all — with no comparison, no competition, and no desire for approval. I climbed from one deck to another, washing away the filth, stomping ever so softly as I made my way through the puddles left behind.



Photo by Lindsay Murdock
Cleaning out a cattle truck can offer its own kind of beauty.

I was soaking wet, splattered and strangely happy about it. Hosing out cattle trucks isn't something everyone gets to experience. In fact, I'm sure that most people are thankful they don't have to. And, in all honesty, I don't know if many people these days truly appreciate what that sort of work can do for the soul. Often they pay someone else to do it for them.

Whether the mess is a garage that is piled high, or a carpet that's stained, or a car that needs detailed, most of the time to do the job well you have to be willing to slow down and sort through the stuff that's been piling all around you as you've traveled through your days, weeks and months.

You have to draw the short stick and make a choice to look for the beautiful inside the mess — and not just look for it, but truly see it. You have to want to chase light with whatever is in front of you and uncover the gifts that have been there all along.

We don't all have cattle trucks that need cleaned out or even high pressured hoses to get the job done, but I think it's safe to say that we do all have our own messes that need cleaning up. We're exhausted by the season we've found ourselves in, we're scared of change, and we don't always know how to fit in.

We have secrets and problems and things that embarrass us. We're human, which means we have a life that's real and true, and yet, most of the time, it's something we don't let others fully see until the mess is completely gone. We want them to be impressed with the truck that's done all the traveling, not the crap that's accumulated along the way.

As I climbed out the back of the trailer, I stopped for once last glance. It wasn't sparkling, but it sure was pretty. The light flickered as the sun started to set and I sighed. The mess that had been carried for miles was washed away. The stench was gone.

And although my arms ached from holding the high pressure hose as tightly as I could while guiding the water in the right directions, I was completely at peace. At peace knowing that the cattle trucks in my life are just as prone to comparison, competition, and exhaustion as I am, but with a whole bunch of water, a sacrificial attitude, and a willingness to work at the mess inside, their life can be marked not just by their beauty or flashy, sparkling exterior,

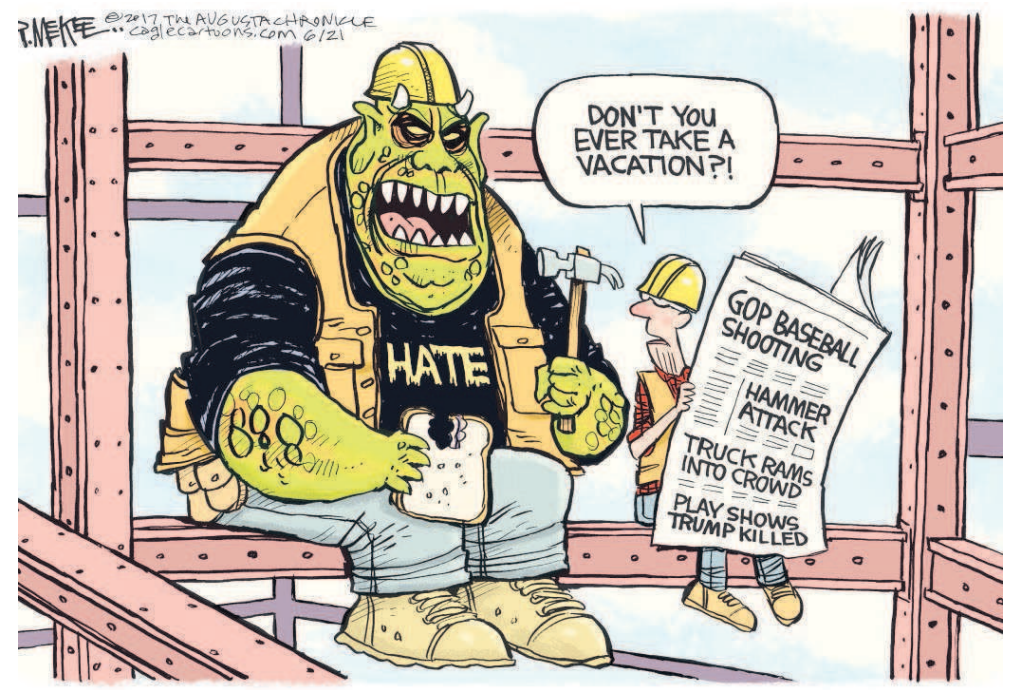


LINDSAY MURDOCK
FROM SUN UP TO SUN DOWN

but by their ability to get a job done even on the hardest and hottest of days.

Thanks, God, for a life that is present and connected and grounded deeply in your love, even in the midst of the crap. Most of the days of my life have been spent chasing light and counting gifts. And thankfully, my evening in the cattle truck was no different.

Lindsay Murdock lives in Echo and teaches in the Hermiston School District.



Learn from, welcome the Rainbow

By REV. DAVID SEACORD
For EO Media Group

Grant County has evolved significantly from the time of my arrival in 1967 as an 18-year-old local pastor's son. Since that time, it has been increasingly impossible to remain isolated in a world where we are all now interconnected with instant worldwide feedback.

While the county obviously remains dominantly conservative in a political sense, socially and economically it has become broadly established here that a toleration of differences is a better way to get along, and also that it makes more money for everyone. We can all observe the positive economic benefit to our communities from the current steady summer-long flow of pedal-powered and motorized two wheeled tourists, as well as RV-based visitors.

And by word of mouth I understand that the piggy-banks of the county are already fat and swollen with the deposits of our future August 21 eclipse visitors. Some of these transient visitors may talk, look, and dress strange, but they are still viewed positively, and that toleration is well and good.

Now the natural beauty of our land has attracted another large influx of temporary visitors, but the reaction to this news, that Grant County shall be hosting The 2017 National Rainbow Gathering, is cautious. Unfortunately, government and media are in part culpable parties in creating this view, for the historical propaganda spin over the years has been one emphasizing the problematic conundrums of dealing with the less responsible elements attracted to this annual event.

However, wisdom has always taught that there is no such thing as a problem without a blessing being contained within it. Therefore, as I have considerable positive personal experience with it, please allow me to share with you how The Rainbow Gathering is such a blessing... both for the attendees, and the hosting communities.

In my own experience and speaking only for myself based upon attending about 10 Gatherings over the years, the Rainbow Gathering is a highly idealistic social experiment. At it's best it's a portal to an exalted state of large-group selfless cooperation rarely experienced within even the best institutions of mainstream society.

First called into being as a week-long Colorado Rocky Mountain-sited gathering of 30,000 people to pray for world peace in 1972, in this 45th gathering it continues the ethics and traditions that I witnessed created at that first gathering.

The gathering is a truly awesome and joyous celebration. Day and night, there is so much homegrown acoustic music, singing, drumming, so much camaraderie, so much open-heartedness among the thousands of beautiful people everywhere that it is hard to believe you are not in a kind of heaven, especially since the gathering site is always held in a natural and beautiful national forest environment.

And, on the dawn of the Fourth of July, hours of prayerful silence and then thousands upon thousands of souls circling in mass as one people together to pray — each in our own ways — for the Peace of Love to enter this war-torn world, and for the survival of the at-risk future of the human race. So... as a temporary but annually recurring utopian social experiment, the Rainbow Gathering has much to offer to all people, including to the witnessing and economically benefiting communities nearby it, in terms of demonstrating the inherent best possibilities of a fully open-hearted human life. And for the ripe and mature soul desiring to contribute back, The Rainbow Gathering contains within itself a highly concentrated volunteer community service curriculum of personal spiritual development: the opportunity to wake up, grow up, clean up, show up, and walk the talk.

Yet despite the high intentions and motivations, there are also notable failures, and this is where I believe the negative conversations about the Gatherings come from. The Gathering attracts more than it fair share of unconscious and unscrupulous and con-artist type people. Since (just like in any local church) it is free and open to all, there is no filter that prevents this, and scammers are known to be attracted to easy pickings.

Further, much of the negative conversation about the Gathering

stems from reactions to the true reports of the widespread drug usage there. There is no denying that consciousness altering (or, in law enforcement language — impairing) substances are widely available, and that many people at the Gathering do use them, some in much more irresponsible and self damaging ways than others.

In summation, as within the world of ocean surfing, there are real surfers out in the waves, and there are posers looking good but staying on the beach. It's the same within the Rainbow Family. Some can walk the love everybody talk, some are very much unhealed and wounded, and can only lip sync it. The deep spiritual beauty of the Gathering is that many who arrive wounded receive great greatly needed love, and therefore healing, and then are able to begin practicing how to walk the talk.

Therefore, let us welcome this Rainbow Gathering, recognizing that as we all love both freedom and its spirit, The Gathering's true intention reverberates within each of us also. Although the form may be different and unfamiliar to us, and there may be some issues to be addressed, the Gathering has chosen to be here for the same reason we have: love of this beautiful land.

It is not here to destroy, but rather to respect the land and have prayerful communion with it and each other, as brothers and sisters and as children of the one maker.

As any local pastor would certainly do, inviting anyone interested to attend their congregation's worship services, I also invite you to consider attending or at least visiting this Gathering — to share yourself with others there, perhaps even discovering newly who you are as a result, and then to bring that personal renewedness back with you to share with us. This is the unexpected blessing and benefit fortuitously available to a member of a nearby community.

David Seacord is a reverend and painter who lives in Prairie City. This column was edited from its initial submission to our sister paper, the Blue Mountain Eagle in John Day.

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Sting of sporting losses lessen over time

By RON LINN
For the East Oregonian

My family was at Cheney, Washington over the Memorial Day Weekend in 2008 for the Washington State track and field competition. I had a granddaughter participating in her last high school track meet.

I was sitting in the stands watching the award presentations when I noticed a beautiful young girl, in track warmups, with her school name and mascot displayed.

She was walking up the steps right next to where I was seated. A beautifully built young woman with brown hair braided up tight to her head and wrapped around. She was a few steps below me and approaching my eye level. She was looking up the steps at someone not yet in my field of vision. She stopped and stood there looking up.

I glanced at her again and saw her chin get all puckered up as her face dissolve into tears. She stood there, unmoving, with her hands open and slightly extended upwards and outwards. Her body wracked with silent sobs. Whomever she was waiting for was not yet where I could see them.

I watched her face and body language; such a beautiful young athlete in complete meltdown.

The object of her attention came into my view and it was a copy of her, only 50 years older. It was her grandmother, I think. They silently locked into an embrace and both were in high states of emotion. The young lady's hands gestured, with open palms, behind grandmother, as if searching for an answer. I knew the question, but I have not the answer either.

This was the end of her high school track career. Maybe she looked at the back of a jersey, from another school, for laps around the track, and couldn't do anything about it. To be that close and not be able to do a pass. Maybe everything in four years came to that moment and she couldn't do it. This day will live with her forever.

Time will change her perspective. Other experiences, both winning and losing, will give her another view. But right now she is in meltdown in her grandmother's embrace, with not a word spoken. She has tried so hard and now — win, lose or draw — it is over.

The whole scene blurred to my eyes and I had to look away. They stood there in the walkway for quite some time. People flowed around them up and down the steps. One man looked at them with irritation but most understood what was happening there. Lost in my reverie I had to look for shapes in the clouds overhead, so as not to be too obvious. One generation met with another, each traveling different ways, and stopped right in front of me. Grandmother and granddaughter, years apart yet close together, this is what and why we are.

I recall being that age, when my world was simpler than now. I know now it was simpler, but then, I lived with what I knew. If I could have gotten an escape and a takedown, it would have been different for me, but it was not to be. I watched that jersey for the allotted time and came up unable.

Young lady! Play your music the best you can. We won't expect you to be perfect. We want you to be part of the village that makes this world work. Remember this day, remember this embrace and from it become stronger.

Ron Linn lives in Stanfield.