

Hermiston-grown author finds humor in farm life

Brianna Walker writes collection 'High Heels & Tractor Wheels'

By ANGEL CARPENTER
EO Media Group

Whether she's writing about bipolar balers, zucchini advice or country road etiquette, Brianna Renée Walker has a knack for making people laugh out loud.

Walker, who writes the weekly column "Farmer's Fate," has published a new book titled "High Heels & Tractor Wheels."

"One of my college professors said to write what you know best, and for me that is farm life," Walker said. "I like to think that my writing is like the 'farm version' of Erma Bombeck — just a humorous look at regular, everyday-life experiences that hopefully people can relate to."

Walker lives in the Walla Walla Valley with her husband and their two boys, and they farm 600 acres of corn, wheat and alfalfa.

She grew up in Hermiston where her parents have been growing watermelon since 1934.

"It keeps me busy running between the two farms, but I love it," Walker said. "We also have a



Brianna Walker grew up in Hermiston and writes a weekly column called "Farmer's Fate." Her new book is "High Heels & Tractor Wheels."

few sheep and goats — basically just enough to qualify for old McDonald's farm!"

Writing stories since she was little, her grandma gave her an opportunity to publish her first book when she was a teen.

Walker said she was thrilled when she received it, "so thrilled that my teenage self got into my car to go show the book to friends and family, and I backed right into my grandparents' car!"

She said writing the "Farmer's Fate" column has been a type of therapy for her.

"Ripping the hydraulic hoses off the tractor, or blowing a tire with a full load of melons is never fun, but by having a column to write, I am forced to ask myself, 'Is this a bad day? Or is this a bad five minutes?' and 'Will this be funny later? And if it will be, let's see what we can do to make it funny now,'" she said.

She said thinking this way helps her adjust her attitude.

"No one wants to read about toil, misery and despair all the time," she said.

Walker offered an example. "So, instead of 'Honey, the hydraulic hoses just blew, looks like we're gonna be out \$500 and half a day of work,' my phone call is more like 'Honey, want to

go out for lunch today? Maybe do a little shopping afterward? Like maybe some new hydraulic hoses for the rake? I know I'm an expensive date, but I'm worth it."

She added, "Because of this constant change in thought, I really do value it as my therapy, which makes me especially thankful for my readers, because without them, I might not be writing so much."

Walker said her grandma, who could quote a poem for nearly any situation, had a big influence on her.

"I included several of her poems in my book with topics ranging from zucchinis to cancer," she said.

Walker's own advice for an overabundance of zucchini from the garden?

Just look up "The Ford Zucchini 350" in her book.

"Go to a busy feed store. Drive around until you find a pickup without a dog. Put the zucchini in the back and drive away fast!" she writes.

Most of Walker's stories are about a page and a half long, the same length as her columns, and the book is available at some local stores, and can be ordered at bookstores and through amazon.

WHAT TO DO

Festivals

Harvest Festival

•Saturday, Oct. 7; 9 a.m.-5 p.m.

•SAGE Center, 101 Olson Road, Boardman
Free. Family fun event featured kids' activities, beer/wine tasting, a photo booth, vendors, mule-drawn wagon rides and more.

Project Community Connect & Umatilla/Morrow Veterans Stand Down

•Saturday, Oct. 7; 10 a.m.-2 p.m.

•Pendleton Convention Center, 1601 Westgate

Free. For veterans, the homeless and those at risk of homelessness. Offers a hot meal, health screenings and exams, information booths for community resources interactive displays, pet care, haircuts, hygiene supplies, clothing and more. For info, call 800-752-1139 or 541-276-1926. Free transportation on Kayak.

Frenchtown Rendezvous

•Saturday, Oct. 7; 2-6 p.m.
•Assumption Church Parish Hall, 2098 E. Alder St., Walla Walla

\$35/admission. \$5/raffle tickets. Historical presentations about Frenchtown, silent auction items, historic displays, a raffle and hands-on family history workshop.

Oktoberfest Pendleton

•Saturday, Oct. 14; noon-9 p.m.

•Pendleton Round-Up Grounds

\$12/round-up beer bug and drink ticket. \$5/non-drinkers. Live music, kids activities, food and, of course, beer.

Altrusa Oktoberfest

•Saturday, Oct. 14; 4 p.m.
•Hermiston Conference Center, 415 S. Highway 395

www.facebook.com/AltrusaInternationalOfHermiston \$30. Festive fun with authentic German meal catered by Diner Thyme (5-7 p.m.), silent/live auctions, raffle for \$2,000 VISA card.

Art, Museums & Authors

"Places to Thrive"

•Monday-Thursdays 9:30 a.m.-1:30 p.m.

•Betty Feves Memorial Gallery, BMCC, 2411 N.W. Carden Ave., Pendleton.

Free. Features professional and emerging Pacific Northwest artists. The annual invitational art exhibit is organized by the Oregon State University College of Agricultural Sciences through its Art About Agriculture program. Gallery also open by appointment by calling 541-278-5952. The exhibit runs through Oct. 26.



Former Helix residents Tylor Bushman Ketchum, left, plays music with his brother, Jason Bushman, in 2016 in Pendleton. The Boise-based band Tylor & The Train Robbers will play a trio of upcoming shows in Pendleton.

Tylor brings the band to town

PENDLETON — Tylor Bushman Ketchum is coming 'round the bend — the Helix native is bringing his band to town for several area performances.

Tylor & The Train Robbers, a Boise-based band, will be rockin' a trio of local shows:

•Friday, Oct. 13 at 9 p.m. at Hamley Steakhouse & Saloon, 8 S.E. Court Ave., Pendleton. There is no cover charge.

•Saturday, Oct. 14 during Oktoberfest Pendleton (noon to 9 p.m.) at the Round-Up Grounds, 1205 S.W. Court Ave. Admission is \$12, which includes a glass mug and one beer ticket. Non-drinkers and minors are \$5.

•Monday, Oct. 16 at 7 p.m. at Great Pacific Wine & Coffee Co., 403 S. Main St., Pendleton There is no cover charge for the all-ages event.

The group, which has created a unique blend of gritty Americana and outlaw honky tonk, recently released "Gravel." The album is said to be inviting with honest confessions and memorable guitar shreds.

"Stochastic Resonance"

•Monday-Fridays, 11 a.m.-4 p.m.

•Nightingale Gallery, Eastern Oregon University, La Grande
Free. John Whitten, a Portland-based artist and art instructor at Oregon State University, explores the philosophical significance of what it means to wander. Runs through Nov. 3.

"Bookworks: Recent Excavations"

•Tuesday-Fridays, 10 a.m.-4 p.m.; Saturdays, noon-4 p.m.

•Pendleton Center for the Arts, 214 N. Main St.
Free. James Allen creates compositions with pages of dis-

carded books and fragments of images. Also, local artist featured in Lorenzen Board Room Gallery. Runs through Oct. 31.

A Kaleidoscope of Color: American Indian Trade Blankets

•Monday-Saturdays, 10 a.m.-5 p.m.

•Tamašlikt Cultural Institute, near Wildhorse Resort & Casino. \$10/adults, \$9/senior citizens, \$6/youths, free/5 and under or \$25/family of four. Showcases pre-1925 Indian trade blankets from historic manufacturers, including Pendleton Woolen Mills. Runs through Oct. 14.

Inland chorale sets fall performances

Fall Fantasia, an eight-piece performance by the Inland Northwest Chorale, will feature such familiar tunes as "Shenandoah," an American folk song, and "Goin' Home" from the Largo of the New World Symphony by Anton Dvorak.

An ensemble of the Inland Northwest Musicians, a pair of free shows are Saturday, Oct. 14 at 4 p.m. at Umatilla High School and Sunday, Oct. 15 at 4 p.m. at Pilot Rock Elementary School. Receptions follow each of the concerts.

The performance also features "Great Day," featuring soloists Ra Niel Dunn of Hermiston and Phil Rudd and Harvey Foreman, both of Pendleton;

"Soon-a Will Be Done," with soloists Becky Henshaw of Pendleton and Salli Ketchersid of Hermiston; and "The Heavens Are Telling," with Arlene Thompson of Pendleton and Phil Hector and Dean Mason, both of Hermiston.

Ensembles of the Inland Northwest Musicians provide free live performances throughout Eastern Oregon and southeast Washington. The group is open to all interested musicians and doesn't hold auditions.

For more information, contact 541-289-4696, inwm@machmedia.net or visit www.inlandnorthwestmusicians.com.

"Fall Colors"

•Tuesday-Sundays, 10 a.m.-6 p.m.

•Peterson's Gallery and Chocolatier, 1925 Main St., Baker City

Free. Features a collection of artwork by regional artists depicting the fall season in Eastern Oregon. Runs through Oct. 31.

"Parts of a Life"

•Thursday, Oct. 12, 5-7 p.m.

opening reception

•Monday-Saturdays 10 a.m.-5 p.m.

•Pendleton Art + Frame, 36 S.W. Court Ave., Pendleton

Free. Lorie Baxter will be on hand Oct. 12 to discuss her newest works; refreshments. Runs through Nov. 18.

First Draft Writers' Series

•Thursday, Oct. 19; 7 p.m.

•Pendleton Center for the Arts, 214 N. Main St.

Free. Features Ki Russell and Matt Schumacher. Also, short open mic readings from the audience.

Music

Brass Fire

•Saturday, Oct. 7; 7-10 p.m.

•Red Lion, 304 S.E. Nye Ave., Pendleton

No cover. Features regional horn band, playing the music of Santana, Chicago, Elvis, Earth Wind & Fire.

Oldies Night in Milton-Freewater

•Saturday, Oct. 7; 7 p.m.

•Wesley Methodist Church, 816 S. Main St., Milton-Freewater.

Free. BJ the DJ, along with guest DJ Dalena Norton, spins Cajun and Zydeco tunes of southwestern Louisiana. Snacks available.

RockNRoll Cowboys

•Saturday, Oct. 7; 8 p.m. No cover

Wildhorse Sports Bar, Wildhorse Resort & Casino, off I-84 Exit 216, Mission

•Saturday, Oct. 7; 8 p.m.

•Rivers Event Center, Wildhorse Resort & Casino, off I-84 Exit 216, Mission

\$89-\$99. All tickets for the 21-and-older show are standing/dancing room only. Ticket price includes barbecue from 6-8 p.m.. No-host bar available.

Liberty Quartet

•Sunday, Oct. 8; 6 p.m.

•Stanfield Baptist Church, 310 E. Wheeler Ave.

Free, love offering taken. The Southern gospel quartet provides ministry in music.

Live Music Thursday

•Thursday, Oct. 12; 7-9 p.m.

No cover

•40 Taps, 337 S.W. Emigrant Ave., Pendleton

Acoustic Kings Wasteland Strippedown

•Friday, Oct. 13; 6:30-9:30 p.m. No cover.

•Nookie's/Hermiston Brewing Co., 125 N. First St., Hermiston

RockBot

•Friday, Oct. 13; Saturday, Oct. 14; 8 p.m. No cover

•Wildhorse Sports Bar, Wildhorse Resort & Casino, off I-84 Exit 216, Mission

Cale Moon

•Saturday, Oct. 14; 9 p.m. No cover

•Midway Tavern, 1750 N. First St., Hermiston

J.D. Kindle & the Eastern Oregon Playboys

•Wednesday, Oct. 18; 7-9 p.m.

•Great Pacific Wine & Coffee Co., 403 S. Main St., Pendleton

No cover. All ages.

James Dean Kindle

•Thursday, Oct. 19; 7-9 p.m.

•Great Pacific Wine & Coffee Co., 403 S. Main St., Pendleton

No cover. All ages.

Night life

Saturday Night with Diego

•Saturdays in Sept.; 9 p.m.

•The Pheasant, 149 E. Main St., Hermiston

No cover. Night with DJ Diego! Features music, videos, live mixing and fun.

Karaoke w/DJ David

•Saturdays; 8 p.m.

•Riverside Sports Bar, 1501 Sixth St., Umatilla

Digital Karaoke

•Thursdays and Fridays, 8 p.m.

•The Pheasant, 149 E. Main St., Hermiston

Wine tasting

•Fridays, 4-8 p.m.

•Sno Road Winery, 111 W. Main St., Echo.

Karaoke w/DJ David

•Fridays; 8 p.m.

•Riverside Sports Bar, 1501 Sixth St., Umatilla

DJ and dancing

•Fridays, 8 p.m.

•The Pheasant, 149 E. Main St., Hermiston

Cimmi's Late Night Martini Lounge

•Fridays; 9 p.m.-midnight

•Virgil's at Cimmiyotti's, 137 S. Main St., Pendleton

No cover. Features martinis, mixology and music.

Theater, stage, film & lectures

"Tomás & the Library Lady"

•Saturday, Oct. 7; 2 p.m.

•Pendleton Center for the Arts, 214 N. Main St.

www.octa.org

Free. Bilingual production that's based on the true story of Mexican-American author and educator Tomás Rivera.

Literary musician serves up an ace of a metaphorical record

In tennis, ad out is when the server is sitting at deuce serving what could be the winning shot to his opponent.

Using another sport as an analogy, it's the bottom of the ninth, two outs and a runner on second. The home team is down one run. The batter has a full count ...

Minneapolis

singer/songwriter and pianist Dylan Hicks' latest CD "Ad Out,"

available Oct. 20

on Soft Launch

Records, contains

audio-vignettes of 11 individuals

who are in ad out-like situations.

Hicks, a Minneapolis transplant

since his early teens, is a literary

author with two well-received

novels as well as pieces in the

Village Voice, The New York



Minneapolis-based musician Dylan Hicks, who was born in the bohemian sector of Austin, Texas, releases his fifth album Oct. 20.

Times, New England Review and numerous other publications.

During those teen years, Hicks started making his own cassettes

that led to three releases in the '90s

via No Alternative/TRG records showcasing his audio storytelling.

In the early 2000s, Hicks turned

his attention to more literary pursuits. To accompany his debut novel, "Boarded Windows" (2012), he released "Dylan Hicks Sings Bolling Greene," an album of material to accompany the novel, with most of the songs sung from the perspective of one of the book's secondary characters, bringing both of his worlds together.

Musically, the songs are all piano-based, but that's where the similarities end: lounge jazz, country folk, acoustic ballads and even a few tasty electric guitar licks — truly a little bit of everything.

And, as one might expect from an author of fiction, the sense of humor is firmly in place throughout. A standout is "A Chance in Hell," told from the viewpoint of a scorned lover who will eventually see that person in Hell. Name-dropping from eternal damnation, wow! It's a blast to see what Bon Scott has been up to.

"Ad Out" is a release that rewards repeated attention, because to get the most out of Dylan Hicks and artists like him, you have to pay attention to the lyrics. This album is being released on vinyl, which may be the best way to address this. Vinyl listeners tend to pay closer attention to music because they have to physically deal with the needle every 15 minutes or so.

"Ad Out" will probably not make Dylan Hicks a household name. Yet for those who are willing to give Hicks' characters some quality time, a multidimensional experience is available for the taking.

A retired educator, Johnny Vinyl spends his days with Lucifer, an 8-year-old German shepherd, reading and riding the vibe. His column, Ride the vibe, focuses on entertainment. Contact him via tmalgesini@astoregonian.com