

Thankfulness for another fall

Dear Fall of 2017, There is something to be said about your beauty. The colors you radiate, the light you shine, the freshness of a season that is usually the calm before the storm — it's truly something I've grown to love.

I grabbed my camera a couple of weeks ago with the intention of writing about the images I captured on a morning spent soaking in all you had to offer, but life happened. Time went by, more bales were fed, more twine was cut, and somehow the day was forgotten. Forgotten until now.

You see, life has a way of happening so fast sometimes, that the ordinary days are often overlooked because they fall into place one right after another. One feeding after the next, and the next, and the next. One sunrise after another, followed by the starry, moon-lit skies. Life happens, and suddenly it's a new season and you almost forget what you were taking pictures of a month ago. Almost, but not quite.

They say that looking at people's pictures tell a lot about their heart and soul. It gives a glimpse into what they hold nearest to their being, and it also portrays that which they feel is worthy of sharing. I don't sort through my pictures much — posting only the good is almost as bad as telling a lie in my

world. What you see is what life is around here — very full, very busy, very diverse and very us. This life is what we hold near, even though in reality, it is temporary.

I've never been one to mask what is really happening. If you see a frown, it's because it's there. If you see a smile, it's because

I'm a die-hard promoter of turning frowns upside down ... even when it's easier not to. If you see something that leads you to believe that we're the "wonder family" ... that's God at work — not our own strength fooling you.

That day with my camera and my journal — not so long ago — was full of color, a bit of wind, cows, creative minds and some frustration, too. There was some death, and there was a whole lot of life. It was real. Nothing was made up or disguised. There were no capes or superhero masks. And as ridiculous as it may sound, it was ordinary — but ordinary life is just as important as extraordinary around here. Don't let anyone tell you otherwise.

It's what you do with the ordinary that changes and transforms it into extraordinary. It's the choices you make each hour, each minute, and each second to say: "I want to live this one life well."

It's the determination to seek God in the midst of the struggle. It's stooping down and crying out when help is needed most.

Life has a way of happening so fast.

It's looking for and recognizing life in the sparkling eyes, the snotty noses, the dirty boots and tattered phone books. It's holding onto the blue and orange twine, the beloved hats, and the flakes of hay that make our life just that — ours.

I wish that everyone could come spend the day with us — just to see that we really are tired most of the time, we're totally human, and we're completely overwhelmed almost every day of the year. I know it would make them feel better about their own lives and see our life in a whole new light as well. They would see that we're just like the rest of the "herd" — waiting for the next paycheck to arrive, battling homework, digging through the fridge trying to put something decent together for dinner, raising our voices, and often rolling our eyes as we attempt to load and unload the dishwasher and fold another pile of laundry.

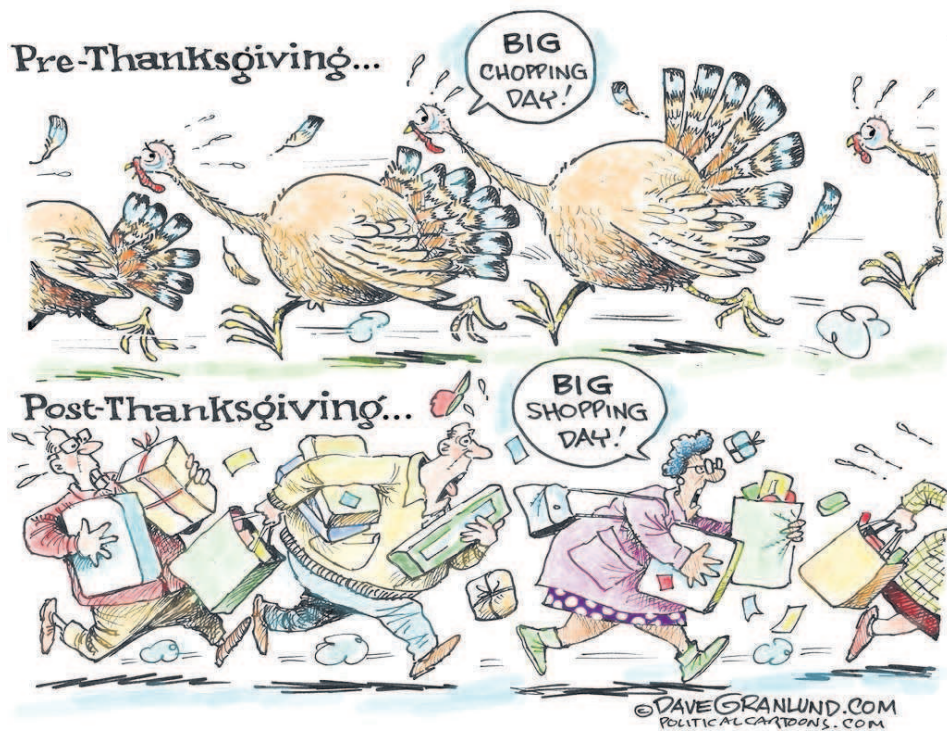
This season is coming to an end. The birds are flying south and the geese are honking their way through our world. And the four of us — well, we're going to continue growing tall against the odds, thriving with color and life, and soaking in the light that only God can offer. So until next year sweet fall, know that you were good to us. You were full, you were busy, and you were an opportunity to see God around every corner, through every pasture, and in every set of eyes we found ourselves looking at. The key is not necessarily



LINDSAY MURDOCK FROM SUN UP TO SUN DOWN

knowing where to look, but how to look. Yes, how to look, and at the same time, how to truly see.

Lindsay Murdock lives in Echo and teaches in Hermiston.



Nuclear watchdog playing a vital role at Hanford

By PATRICIA HOOVER Women's Action for New Directions

Where did you grow up? The answer to that question has been the most significant information in my medical history.

I spent the first 18 years of my life downriver and downwind from the Hanford Nuclear Reservation in southeast Washington State. Beginning in the mid-1940s, when Hanford's eight nuclear reactors went on line, my family, neighbors and those around us found with growing alarm and confusion that our formerly healthy lives were deteriorating. My community was struck with high rates of thyroid cancers, miscarriages, birth defects and many other anomalous medical conditions.

It took more than 40 years to verify our suspicion that the federal government had contaminated the air, water and food chain throughout the Northwest. In 1986, thousands of activists were finally granted a Freedom of Information Act request. Despite repeated government denial, 19,000 pages of operating documents confirmed that hundreds of thousands of curies of radiation were released from Hanford over years of operation. The revelation finally explained numerous medical events that took place early in my life. It answered why men in lab coats came to my junior high health class to palpate the throat of every student as if it were part of the curriculum. I understood why my thyroid gland had quit functioning at age 11 and developed a tumor the size of a grapefruit 18 years later. I no longer considered my mysteriously fractured ankle and my classmates' numerous broken bones to be normal childhood mishaps.

If you lived anywhere near one of America's eight nuclear facilities — Richland, Wash.; Los Alamos, N.M.; Oak Ridge, Tenn.; Savannah River, S.C.; Paducah, Ky.; Denver, Colo.; Idaho Falls, Idaho; or Amarillo, Texas — you may well have had similar experiences.

One of the few agencies that monitor and hold these nuclear sites accountable for rule-abiding operations is under attack internally. In a recently exposed secret letter, Sean Sullivan, director of the Defense Nuclear Facilities Safety Board, urged the Trump administration to disband the board or drastically slash its budget.

This independent board has acted as an important watchdog over the nuclear weapons complex since Congress chartered it in 1988, and it is a transparent, public source of information.

It provides weekly reports including

contractors' mistakes that may jeopardize the safety of 40,000 workers and nearby communities. It functions as an essential check and balance between the government and the nuclear industry.

Sullivan's action, undertaken without the knowledge of the four DNFSB members, reflects the dangerous pattern of secrecy by which our nuclear weapons facilities have always operated.

A second attack on the work of the board came from Frank Klotz, an undersecretary for the Department of Energy. He proposed eliminating public access to those written safety reports. As administrator of the National Nuclear Security Administration, Klotz contended that media coverage of safety lapses was counterproductive to the mission of the NNSA.

A former deputy assistant secretary at that same Department of Energy, Bob Alvarez, exposed the ongoing culture of secrecy when he observed: "The logic behind this is that what the public doesn't know can't hurt us, and there's nothing to be gained by the public knowing what we're doing."

We live under a president who wants to see drastic growth in our nuclear stockpile; on top of his regular issuance of bombastic threats, the president has unilateral discretion over the arsenal's use. We are at the most critical moment in nuclear history since the Cuban Missile Crisis — and now is prime time to strengthen, rather than abolish or curtail, agencies such as the DNFSB.

My downriver medical history, and that of thousands of other Americans who grew up near nuclear plants, is evidence of the debilitating health effects of radiation. My experiences speak clearly to the absolute need to keep the DNFSB engaged in its significant role insisting on transparency and regulating safe operations at all eight U.S. nuclear weapons facilities.

In recognition of this necessity, I encourage citizens to call Sen. Ron Wyden, Sen. Jeff Merkley and Rep. Peter DeFazio to urge them to speak up in Congress and oppose disbanding the Defense Nuclear Facilities Safety Board. This independent nuclear watchdog must continue its vital work.

Patricia Hoover of Eugene, formerly of Hermiston, has been an anti-nuclear and environmental activist for 27 years. She is a member of Women's Action for New Directions and a Hanford downriver. She wrote this essay with Susan Cundiff of Eugene, who serves on the national board of WAND and leads Oregon WAND. This op-ed first appeared in the (Eugene) Register-Guard.

China's role in North Korea

Will Chinese pressure bring North Korea to the negotiating table and help stop its ambitious missile and nuclear program, maybe even letting the ruthless and sassy Kim Jong Un fall by the wayside? The U.S. is confident that newly powerful Chinese President Xi Jinping could stop North Korea's destabilizing program, as President Donald Trump has urged him to do. Xi has, in fact, just sent a special envoy to Pyongyang but the results have yet to surface. Below we look at the background.

Vassal: Since China has for centuries viewed the Korean Peninsula as a vassal state, it is not likely to have deliberately encouraged North Korea to go nuclear. Communist North Korea reportedly pursued nuclear weapon development independently, starting in the 1980s with help particularly from Pakistan. China and Russia both turned a blind eye to this development, however, and their companies have certainly provided components in that nuclear buildup. They may even have secretly enjoyed having North Korea as a surrogate menace to the United States, South Korea and Japan as long as it didn't get out of hand.

Escalation: But now North Korea has gotten out of hand under Kim Jong Un. Since he became leader six years ago he has tested 84 missiles, and on July 4 of this year he launched an intercontinental missile powerful enough to reach the U.S. In September he conducted an underground test of a yet more powerful nuclear weapon.

The rhetoric between North Korea and the United States has consequently gotten hot enough to provoke fear in the region of a dangerous miscalculation and a horrific war.

Soviets/Chinese: Initially, the Soviet Union was Communist North Korea's primary economic supporter until the Soviet collapse in 1989, throwing North Korea into severe economic crisis, including famine. China then became North Korea's economic lifeline, a factor judged to give China great leverage today.

Chinese Relations: Unlike his ruling grandfather and father, Kim Jong Un has never been to Beijing. Unusually, Xi has visited South Korea but not North Korea. He seems to view Kim with disdain. When the young Kim came to power six years ago at age 27, China probably expected that Kim's uncle, who worked well with China, would be the real leader. But, acting like a medieval monarch, Kim quickly had his uncle and other possible rivals killed.

Then in early 2017, Kim staged the spectacular killing of his older half-brother with a VX nerve agent at the Kuala Lumpur airport in Malaysia.



HARRIET ISOM Comment

China, a protector of the exiled half-brother, had to be surprised and shocked. Kim has further infuriated China with taunts and with missile and bomb tests brazenly launched during summit meetings in Beijing (but not the recent party congress).

Sanctions: These events may be what prompted China to change its previously very lax enforcement of UN sanctions on North Korea. This year, it not only voted for tougher UN sanctions, including on key trade items such as coal, but to be better in implementing them.

It has given hope to U.S. officials that China might take the really drastic step of bringing North Korea to its knees by cutting off the oil pipeline that keeps North Korea's military and industry functioning. But will it?

Chinese Interests: If you examine what China says repeatedly, it's entirely up to the U.S. and North Korea, not China, to settle their differences on the Korean Peninsula. China and Russia are pushing the "freeze for freeze plan" whereby North Korea would freeze its nuclear missiles program and the U.S. would freeze its joint military exercises with South Korea.

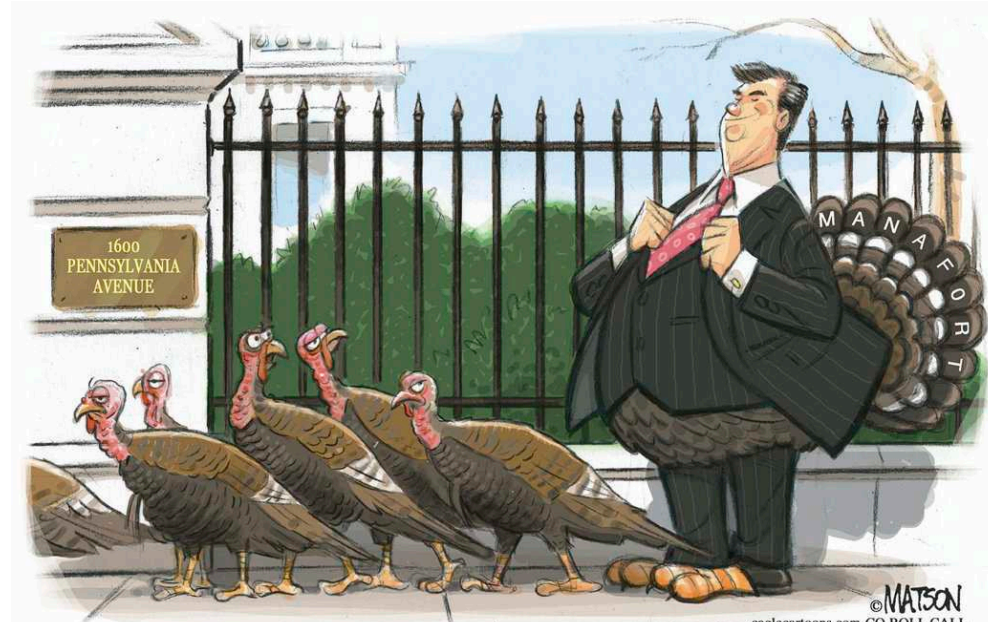
But promoting regime change in cooperation with the U.S. is something else. Anathema to China is having a united Korea with U.S. troops and U.S. influence up to its border. Plus, Xi wants a Communist party ruling in Pyongyang, not a democracy.

Pyongyang: Kim Jong Un is busy developing a nuclear tip missile and a nuclear submarine and has shunned peace talks. While some analysts see a hopeful sign that he has not conducted any tests since Sept. 15, others attribute this to the normal fall/winter cycle when the military help with harvest and have training. The outcome of the Chinese envoy's visit will be of interest in revealing any change in Kim's position.

Comment: The U.S. and western countries have long put the onus on China to stop the North Korean nuclear buildup. It hasn't worked. But even with new Chinese cooperation on sanctions and re-starting talks, there is a significant disconnect between our future interests and those of the Chinese on the Korean Peninsula — and in Asia.

Rather than leaving it to the Chinese, we are better advised to have our own strong agenda for handling North Korea. It should involve sanctions, augmented defense measures, alliances, deterrence, containment and always pursuit of negotiations — but not disastrous war.

Ambassador Harriet Isom grew up in Pendleton and has retired to the family ranch. She was a career diplomat serving in Asia and Africa from 1961 to 1996.



"EVERYBODY WANTS A PARDON!"