

OUR VIEW

Travel safely this holiday season

The Thanksgiving holiday is just around the corner and experts are projecting that travel will climb to pre-pandemic levels.

That's good news in many ways but it also presents a familiar problem that disappeared during the pandemic — safety.

The American Automobile Association predicts that more than 53 million people will travel for the Thanksgiving holiday, a 13% climb from 2020. In fact, the boost in travel is expected to be the biggest single-year increase since 2005.

That means there will be a lot of traffic on the roads and highways, and it also means motorists will need to be cautious and attentive.

No one sets out on a holiday trip to get into a serious car crash. We pack out things, get the family vehicle ready to go and then head down the highway with high expectations to meet family and friends for the holiday.

Yet every year during Thanksgiving, or Christmas or other major holidays — such as the Memorial Day weekend — serious or deadly crashes are reported.

The reason run the gamut from bad luck to carelessness, but either way a holiday for at least someone turns to tragedy.

Such accidents are not guaranteed. Drivers can avoid such disasters by completing a few simple tasks, and at the top of the list is to pay attention.

Sure, a driver doesn't have any control over someone else behind the wheel, but we can all take measures to avoid a terrible ending to a holiday weekend.

That means getting plenty of sleep before you get behind the wheel, and, if the journey is a long one, sharing driving duties. Tired drivers are apt to make poor judgements or have slow reaction times. Eight hours of good sleep is a small price to pay and one of the best ways to avoid ending in a serious crash.

While crashes on the highway seem to be inevitable, they are not. Driving defensively, paying close attention and sharing driving duties are easy and simple ways to avoid a tragedy.

The Thanksgiving and Christmas travel season should be one of joy and anticipation. Neither holiday should include a list of fatalities on the roadways.

Everyone wants to have a great time during the holidays. We want to visit our relatives and our friends but to do so we all need to make sure that as we travel to see our loved ones we take the necessary reactions to arrive safe.



My own private Metropol



ALEX HOBBS
PASTURES OF PLENTY

For the past year and a half, I have been roughly experiencing the same day — day in and day out.

The alarm nudges me from sleep around 6:30 a.m. This is promptly snoozed in order to initiate the hour of post-alarm slumber that, for some reason, feels more rest-imbuing than the entire night's attempt put together. I grind coffee beans, transfer them to the coffee maker, crack open a book while it drips into the carafe.

At the moment, it's Amor Towles' "Lincoln Highway." The pot finishes filling around three pages in. Thirty minutes is what I generally allow for this morning ritual. A cup of black coffee descends into drinkable temperatures after a single ice cube is plopped in. Time is of the essence.

Over the summer I happened upon another book by Mr. Towles: "A Gentleman in Moscow." On initial consideration, a lovely story filled with surprisingly poignant insight, but almost saccharine in detail. Over time, as it usually happens, the reader begins to empathize with our nuanced hero Count Rostov (a surname that is perhaps a nod to one of my other favorite literary characters, Natasha Rostova of the Tolstoy pantheon).

In it, the count, as part of the Bolshevik purge, is sentenced to live out the rest of his days confined to the filigreed foyers of the Hotel Metropol in Moscow.

By force of circumstance, what seems daunting at first glance morphs into a life full of intention. Rather than let himself become fortune's fool, the count realizes it is necessary then to embrace the change. Or rather, embrace the tedium.

Towles writes, "If a man does not master his circumstances then he is bound to be mastered by them."

For a while, it was easy to focus this column on external goings-on. Turning inward, confined to my own headspace, day in and day out, has proven to be something more difficult to master. This was an intentional pivot, however. One has only so much bandwidth to divvy up, after all. It is part and parcel of a mother with young children who has doggedly decided to craft every minute detail of their homeschool journey.

Among life's other circumstantial tribulations. For example, I was recently possessed by a demon who, out of all the things a malignant spirit might influence, convinced me to join the board of my Homeowner's association. The learning curve has been steep.

So as the count calls upon the Boyarsky each evening, looking forward to his bottle of vin, so too must I call upon the quiet moment with my cup of black coffee. A granular, intentional moment afforded solely to me.

To this end, I often find myself feel-

ing stuck inside of my own private Metropol.

How simple it is to let the frustrations of the moment take precedence over all else. It's only when those small frustrations have laid a foundation, erected walls, and brought in furnishings that we realize we've become the architect of our own anguish. Happily, however, it is never too late to plot our escape: To gather around us friends, confidants, and comrades who might aid us in such an endeavor. To let intentional gratitude of simple pleasures accrue instead: A son who declares he's "making waffles for dinner," a cocktail with my sister at a restaurant whose roof is inhabited by goats, a phone call to my Grams.

In other words, when we cannot change our circumstances, it then behooves us to lend them moments of gratitude. Big or small — it makes little difference. It just takes courage to initiate the Rube Goldberg machinations which will eventually lead to this epiphany. That we can leave our own Metropol. The pulling of a lever that topples a teacup thus starting a chain of events that ultimately end in us finding our very own "willow woman."

In other words, master or be mastered.

Alex Hobbs is a former educator turned full-time homeschooling mom. She has a degree in political science from Oregon State University.

YOUR VIEWS

Name calling drives a deeper wedge

I am writing in response to a column by Matt Henry titled "So tell me: What's it going to be?" (Oct. 7, 2021).

Mr. Henry speaks of the "uber-self-centeredness" and "selfishness of anti-vaxxers" and implies that they have a death wish for others and want to "sacrifice everyone else on earth" due to "childish obstinacy." Mr. Henry even goes so far as to suggest that unvaccinated people cannot be "bona fide Christians."

A key fact that Mr. Henry ignores is that vaccinated people can and do get COVID-19 and spread it to others. I also know a number of people who have made a choice to not get the COVID-19 vaccine. None of these people made that choice because they are self-centered or selfish. Quite the opposite. Some chose to not get vaccinated because they do not feel comfortable with the vaccine, others for personal reasons. And many others due to their own deeply held religious beliefs.

Calling people names because they have a different view is not what is needed during these challenging times. Even Grande Ronde Hospital, La Grande, has stated it respects "our employees' right to make the choice whether to vaccinate or not."

Let's tone down the rhetoric, be kind to each other and remember that divisive name-calling encourages fear and drives

a deeper wedge in our community. I encourage Mr. Henry to review the advice from Jesus found in Matthew 7:1: "Do not judge, or you too will be judged."

Mathew Miles
La Grande

The more things change, the more they stay the same

Pendleton's city management has become over reliant on volunteers in an effort to supplement paid employees to maintain city functions. This was readily apparent during a Housing and Neighborhood Improvement Committee meeting Nov. 2, when the discussion turned to blight elimination. Several previous programs were mentioned, some successful, some not.

The recurring theme was that even though some programs were quite successful they were basically one-time events using city resources whereas other efforts were long-term relying on volunteers. The issue there being long-term volunteers are few and far between; they burn out quickly, find new causes to support or, just plain pass away. Lack of sustainability becomes the major issue and programs simply fade away. If you'd have attended this committee's meetings in the past where blight elimination was the major topic, you'd say the discussion in this most recent meeting pretty much mirrored those in the past.

As a former volunteer working code enforcement, I can see not much has changed. The city council has an insatiable appetite for approving city ordinances to address blight, but no appetite to approve the resources for adequate enforcement. As the Pendleton Police Department chief explained, the code enforcement officer has the duty and responsibilities of three people. The committee and the mayor can only advise, lacking any real authority to order the use of city resources to address the issue. That authority rests with the city manager who has chosen not to act, content to maintain the status quo. The blighted conditions visible in the Edwards Apartments, and the infamous residence on Southwest Eighth Street (briefly discussed at the meeting) are prime examples of their reluctance to act.

So, what ended my status as a code enforcement volunteer? The full-time enforcement officer at the time put it pretty plain when I signed up for the job, "You'll find this one of the most frustrating jobs you'll ever have because of the lack of support from city hall," and that sums up my experience. It's pretty obvious things really haven't changed. If you've visited the city of Portland lately, it's readily apparent that when city officials fail to act, the situation just gets worse — much worse.

Rick Rohde
Pendleton

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