

Grant County sets example in face of danger

Watching wildfires devastate parts of Grant County is not just heart-wrenching. It should serve as a harsh reminder of what could happen here.

The fire danger remains high in the Wallowa-Whitman National Forest with extremely dry conditions continuing for some time. The Eagle Complex fire near Medical Springs already has prompted evacuations in that area.

Making matters worse is a shortage of firefighting resources. With nearly 100 wildfires raging over 1 million acres in seven Western states, crews and tankers are stretched thin. More than 200 active-duty military troops have been called in to help exhausted state, local and U.S. Forest Service fire crews.

The smoke lingering over Wallowa County should prompt all of us to revisit family and business emergency plans. In the event of an evacuation, what would we take with us? How quickly could we gather it up? What are the escape routes? Where would we stay?

The Chieftain's sister newspaper in John Day is in the heart of that catastrophe. As they work to save their own homes and belongings from the Canyon Creek Fire, the Eagle staff is reporting on the scene: the intense heat, stiff winds and stifling smoke. The cost to that small community to date is staggering. Some 26 homes burned beyond recognition, leaving families displaced with few or no possessions.

Amid the wreckage, however, is the enduring spirit of a small community. As the Eagle wrote in an editorial this week:

"We can take heart that this is a community noted for its caring and resilience. It is proving that with an immediate and growing outpouring of goodwill. Fund-raising efforts are multiplying online to help those left homeless. Local businesses are collecting donations of goods and money. The Fairgrounds has set up "shop" to provide free goods for fire victims to help patch them through an unbearably tough time.

"People not touched by the fire are looking at their homes and realizing they have much to share: clothing, furnishings, even school supplies for children facing a new school year amid bewildering loss. Individuals are stepping up with everything from pop bottle collections to art auctions, and the credit union is working on a plan for a fund that will be locally run and locally targeted to help all the fire victims, without the overhead that marks some large organizations' efforts.

"Animals also are sharing the love: The veterinary clinic and area ranchers have offered hay and pasture for livestock, and animal advocates here and as far as Pendleton and Baker City have offered food and supplies to help displaced pets.

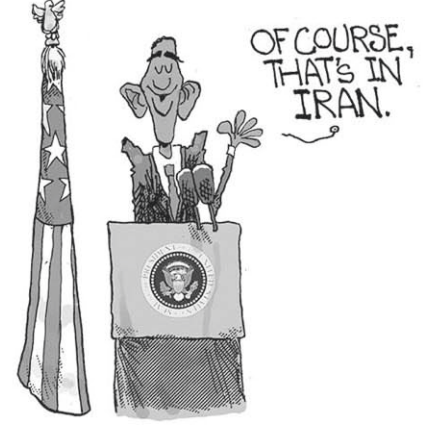
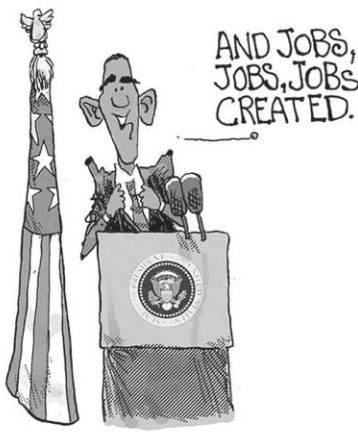
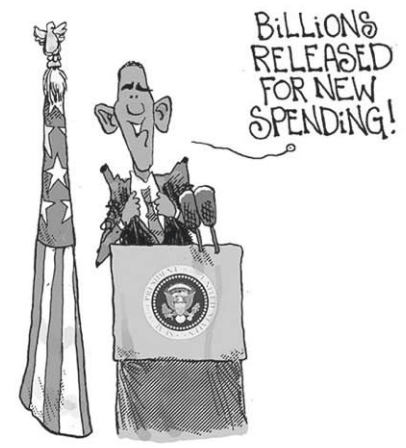
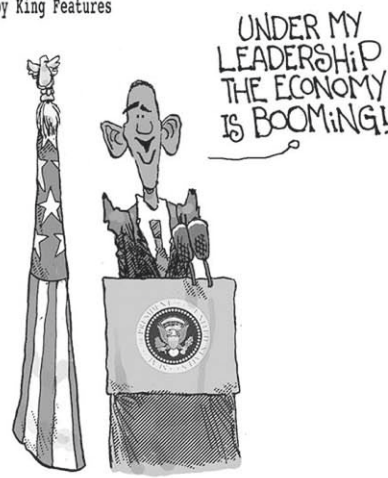
"As we write this, the fire continues to flare and spread in the hills outside Canyon City. Across the county, signs are popping up to give thanks to the firefighters risking their lives to battle the blaze. Some of those firefighters and contractors are our neighbors, relatives and friends; they labor even as their own homes and property may be at risk or lost."

We're confident that Wallowa County would rise to the occasion should — God forbid — we face disaster of that scale.

In the meantime, we can help our neighbors in John Day by contributing to the fund established by Old West Federal Credit Union.

EDITORIAL
The voice of the Chieftain

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Wages not making folks rich

My brother's an economist; I didn't take a college class in the subject. What I learned started with two-bits (or maybe a nickel) per gopher for trapping them when I was 6, getting paid the outrageous sum of a dollar an hour when I was 12 to walk dogs, getting \$.95 for nine-hour days on a flower farm at 16, etc. I read Adam Smith and bits of Marx and Ricardo for the required Western Civilization class 50 years ago, but coming of age in the Sixties had its own twist on economics. Money — discussing it; having it — was often an embarrassment among my peers.

I came to Wallowa County in 1971 to do economic and job development, and running an employment office out of my County Extension seat on the second floor of the courthouse was part of my job. So I learned: In 1971, the federal minimum was \$1.60; Oregon's was \$1.25. State minimums have never been in line with the federal minimum. In the past, they were often "less than" — and complying with the federal law depended on how many employees a business had. I don't remember the numbers, but do remember that the good thing about getting a federal job, or a job with some federal money in it, was that buck-sixty. With gas at 40 cents a gallon, that was the difference between three and four gallons of gas you could buy with an hour's work.



MAIN STREET
Rich Wandschneider

Back to early lessons in economics, I took a pay cut of \$600 from my Peace Corps staff job to my Extensions Service job — \$11,000 a year to \$10,400. Friends said I would never catch up or be able to move back to the city. But I was happy to be here and making more than my dad had ever made in his radio shops and gas stations. It did stick in the craw some that getting the best raises given by the agency each year — usually 3 percent — did not keep me up with new hires, as OSU kept upping starting salaries 4 or 5 percent to compete in the job market. But I never moved back to the city.

The biggest lesson I've learned on wages and income over the years is that the relationship between work done and pay received is almost accidental — or plumbers would be making more. I've also learned that "wealth" doesn't relate much to work.

I was teaching a class on Pacific Northwest Tribes in La Grande a couple of years ago, and a wonderful essay on "People of the Salmon" by anthropologist Richard Daugherty outlined the economic and social situations of the tribes at the time of Columbus, about 1500.

The Tlingit and Makah and other coastal tribes had economies rich in salmon, berries, roots, fish, and whales. Whale oil could be stored and help store other foods, held over from season to season, and traded with other tribes. These people were "rich," and they had canoe builders, priests, artists, and slaves, divisions of labor and wealth. The Paiutes took salmon, too, but their economy was year-to-year and day-to-day. They were more democratic than the Tlingit, and much poorer.

I called my brother: I think I get it now; wealth means surplus, having more than you need to get by today. And if you grow up with surplus, whether a Tlingit in 1500 or a Buffet today, your chances of staying on top of the economic heap are pretty good.

A couple of years ago a new book, "Capital in the Twenty-First Century," by French economist Thomas Piketty, used extensive data to show that the free market, left to its own devices, inevitably widens the gap between rich and poor, and that only some kind of intervention can restore any kind of equilibrium. The New Deal programs of the '30s had done this; the post-WWII GI Bill created America's middle class.

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Issues aren't all black and white

To the Editor:
Hello?

Reading the Chieftain is always entertaining. Sometimes the articles and editorials touch on real-world issues. Climate change: That is no longer a question. Ninety-seven percent of scientists agree. I would strongly recommend county residents walk outdoors and look at the sky. If you don't believe your eyes, consult NASA, The BBC, or any other respected authority. Those white lines were not put there by God.

Water usage? Who's water is it? Does damming it make it yours?

Washington State has sued people (and businesses) for collecting rain water. They say all rain belongs to the state.

WOTUS editorial: "In the beginning, farm and ranch groups..." Really? I understand the first rule of business is, "Protect the money stream." Reporting a story opens the door to spin. Businesses spin every story to protect their interests. What about an honest discussion among equals? Every resident of Wallowa county breathes the same air; We all walk on the same ground; and we all get wet when it rains.

Sunlight creates shadows. That is a simple scientific fact. I strongly recommend coming out of the shadows — out of the black-and-white illusion, and viewing all the issues affecting county resident with the bright colors of the day.

David Hiatt
Enterprise

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

lance cameras. What a violation of the sacred lands of Wallowa County.

A letter dated 11.25.14 and signed by founder Ken Coreson is provided at the gate. It speaks of the decision to limit access based on "issues of insurance, public safety, construction equipment and materials, and security matters." It speaks of vandalism, building materials stolen, and graffiti. This is clearly unacceptable. However, it is ironic that given a mission enabling access, the organization is denying access. It is ironic that given a mission of creating memories, the organization is stealing memories.

In a Chieftain article dated 7.13.14 it was reported that Creating Memories signed a fifty-year lease with Blue Mountain Council of Boy Scouts a year ago. The article states the lease is rent-free with a stipulation that "all improvements made by Creating Memories to the property will revert to the Boy Scouts if the contract is not fulfilled."

Creating Memories needs to re-open access to the falls. And it needs to provide information on how this contract IS being fulfilled. May Coreson find solutions better aligned to the values of this county and the spirit of its lease.

Linda Robinson
Joseph

respond.

First, my family logged in Maxville and Wallowa from 1937 to 1958. I did not "discover" Maxville. My parents, grandparents, and friends lived there and I visited the location as a small child. My brothers graduated from Wallowa High School and my sister and I attended elementary school until we moved to California in 1958.

Second, I did not "answer the call" from Maxville Heritage Interpretive Center. As the Executive Director knows, I began my oral history project in 1993, long before MHIC was conceived. I agreed to serve as the MHIC president in hopes the oral history would be pursued. Since it chose to become a museum, I initiated the Memory Project based on collaborations with descendants of the loggers. Research is ongoing and descendant interviews recorded regularly.

Third, all of the photos in the exhibit were contributed to the Memory Project and used with permission by descendants of the loggers. I am proud that I was able to gather so many photos and give names to the men, women, and children who lived in Maxville. The only photo that was not "approved" is the photo of Lucky Trice that was obtained from the Internet. I included it at the last minute because I believed the spirit of the project would prevail. It has been removed from the exhibit.

Fourth, Maxville and Wallowa are not examples but the primary location for my research. It is the undocumented African American migration story from the 1920s to 1940s from the Deep South. More broadly, it is the story of the migration of African American loggers, their white co-loggers, the Bowman-Hicks Company, and logging in Wallowa, generally. It is my goal to inspire more research and documentation on this great Oregon story.

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Volume 133

Creating Memories' closure of falls ironic

To the Editor:

I am writing to add my voice to others regarding a policy forbidding access to "boy scout falls" by Creating Memories 501c3. As a third generation cabin owner at Wallowa Lake I also count the falls among the treasures of the county. It is shocking to discover the property fenced with multiple warnings of 24/7 surveil-

Marsh responds to project criticism

To the Editor:

I would be dishonest if I said I did not find Mr. Swarts letter in response to my Memory Project annoying. I may not be the sharpest knife in the drawer, but I sensed some disdain in the letter's tone. I am not sure what record he is setting straight, but let me