

A new chapter begins

As the annual pageant of autumn colors hits its stride and we head into the season of thanks and giving, we'd like to pause for a moment and thank you, our loyal readers, for allowing the Wallowa County Chieftain into your lives and homes. We're working hard every day to serve you, but that's only possible if you allow us to do so and, in many cases, give us a helping hand along the way.

EDITORIAL
Voice of the Chieftain

This week brings a new chapter in your local newspaper's history as a new editor takes the helm. We can say with certainty that new editorial leadership will lead to a variety of changes in how, when and where your local news is presented. And we can say with equal certainty that such changes will require time to implement.

Regardless, our most crucial priorities remain:

- To deliver essential information about our county and region in as objective and timely a manner as possible.
- To show as best we can the way the world works
- To discern the truth of what your government tells you
- To inform about pending laws and policies as well as the efficacy of those that already exist

In doing so, we will strive to include as many relevant voices as possible and to serve all members of our community equally. We take these responsibilities seriously and will work each day to improve our ability to fulfill them.

But we think you'll agree that we bring so much more to the table. We also promote community interaction and facilitate our coming together. We frequently shine a light on interesting sides of our fellow citizens we might not otherwise see. We promote local commerce and charitable activity. We bring attention to the accomplishments of our youngest generation, who will shape the future of Wallowa County, and we often provide a glimpse back in time to illuminate how we arrived where we are today.

If you feel that you've been wronged by the Chieftain in the past — whether it's six weeks ago or 16 years — or have been turned away by our past coverage, we ask that you give us another chance as we embark on this new chapter (Even if you don't admit to your friends and family that you're doing so).

If you've stuck by us through thick and thin, please know that we greatly appreciate your loyalty. We vow to reward that loyalty by finding ways to better serve your needs.

The Chieftain does not operate in a vacuum. We rely on constant public interaction, and we have made it another of our priorities to vastly improve that interaction. We encourage you to tell us what's going on, to point out stories we're missing, to tell us when you think we've done something wrong and occasionally to offer us a pat on the back when you think it's warranted.

At its best a newspaper is a tool for fostering robust communities. At the same time, a dedicated, involved community is essential in the production of quality journalism.

Arm in arm, we step forward together.

Correction

An Oct. 21 article about Wallowa Lake Lodge reported an incorrect date for the upcoming Almost Thanksgiving Dinner, which is scheduled for Nov. 21.



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P.O. Box 338 • Enterprise, OR 97828
Office: 209 NW First St., Enterprise, Ore.
Phone: 541-426-4567 • Fax: 541-426-3921

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MEMBER OREGON NEWSPAPER PUBLISHERS ASSOCIATION

PUBLISHER Marissa Williams, marissa@bmeagle.com
EDITOR Scot Heisel, editor@wallowa.com
REPORTER Stephen Tool, stool@wallowa.com
REPORTER Kathleen Ellyn, kellyn@wallowa.com
NEWSROOM ASSISTANT editor@wallowa.com
AD SALES CONSULTANT Jennifer Powell, jpowell@wallowa.com
GRAPHIC DESIGNER Robby Day, rday@wallowa.com
OFFICE MANAGER Cheryl Jenkins, cjenkins@wallowa.com

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Pope reveals needed path

If I have said it once, I must have said it a thousand times: I love Pope Francis.

You might say he had me at "hello." I love that he has broken the mold from the beginning, as the first non-European pope in more than 1,200 years, the first pope from South America, the first Jesuit and the first to choose the name Francis. Like Francis of Assisi, this Francis has been an advocate and a servant of the poor, a man with enormous popular appeal and one who has not been afraid to take on the powers entrenched within the Vatican and the rest of the Catholic hierarchy.

Even as some of Pope Francis' earliest decisions enchanted the public, they probably ruffled a few feathers inside Vatican City. He chose to remain in a modest hostel immediately after his election, and he paid his bill just like any other guest would have been expected to do. He purchased and has driven around Rome in a second-hand car. He has preferred simple, white vestments, dressing in a color more typical of Dominicans than Jesuits or Franciscans.

Yet even while he was establishing an unassuming tone, Francis began challenging church insiders from the start of his papacy. He has instituted reforms to in-



POLITICAL PHILOSOPHY

John McColgan

crease transparency within the Curia, the very powerful and secretive inner circle that runs the Vatican. He also has demanded long overdue changes to the Vatican Bank, which has operated for decades and probably even centuries without many of the safeguards that other banking institutions typically require.

Prior to his recent visit to the United States, the pope made a stop in Cuba, a communist nation whose diplomatic relations with the U.S. recently were restored partly due to negotiations that Pope Francis helped to broker. Francis has chosen a less confrontational approach toward the Cuban authorities than Pope John Paul II, perhaps further encouraging the greater religious freedom that has developed during the term of Raul Castro.

Upon his arrival in the United States, Pope Francis remained true to character by riding in a Fiat and dining at a homeless

shelter instead of with political dignitaries. When he spoke to Congress, he chose not to emphasize the church's continued opposition to abortion, but rather highlighted the need for more compassionate immigration policies and better long-term environmental practices. He pointed to Dorothy Day, the founder of the Catholic Worker movement, and Thomas Merton, the ascetic Trappist monk who lived in a monastery in Kentucky, as shining lights of American spirituality.

Shortly after the pope's trip, some consternation was caused when Kim Davis -- the Kentucky county clerk who refused to grant licenses for same-sex marriages -- claimed that she had "met" with the pope. While Vatican spokesmen initially appeared to have been perhaps naively ignorant that Davis had even been among two dozen guests at one of the pope's audiences, clearly someone inside the American Vatican embassy must have given their blessing for her inclusion. However, church officials in Rome were obviously uncomfortable that Davis had used the occasion as a portrayal of papal approval of her position.

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Justice not served in arson case

By any measure, the five-year sentence given to Eastern Oregon rancher Dwight Hammond and his son Steven was excessive.

That's probably the one point on which all sides of the case can agree.

Beyond that, opinions vary on what level of punishment would have been fair in a case that illustrates the shortcomings of a skewed legal system and a federal agency whose employees — at least one of them — use government resources to reveal their biases and criticize the Hammonds.

The case grew out of an ongoing dispute between the Hammonds and the U.S. Bureau of Land Management.

Let's back up a few years, to 2001, to be exact. That's when the 139-acre blaze called the Hardie-Hammond Fire was set on the Steens Mountain Cooperative Management and Protection Area, according to court documents.

In 2006, the Krumbo Butte Fire was set, burning 1 acre of public land, according to court documents.

In each case, the Hammonds had leased the land to graze their cattle. Fire is an oft-used tool to clear land of weeds, juniper and other invasive plants, but the Hammonds had no permission to set fires on public land.

In 2012, the Hammonds were taken to court. After a two-week trial, Dwight Hammond was convicted of setting the first fire and sentenced to three months in prison. His son Steven was convicted of setting the second fire and sentenced

GUEST COLUMN

From the Capital Press

to one year in prison. Both also received three years of supervised release.

The Pendleton, Ore., jury acquitted the father and son of setting two other fires and the government dismissed those charges.

At the sentencing, U.S. District Judge Michael Hogan opted for the lighter sentences, but the prosecutor appealed to the 9th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals, which agreed with him that a mandatory sentence can't be ignored.

Two weeks ago, U.S. District Judge Ann Aiken resentenced the Hammonds to five years in prison.

Though legally correct, the sentence is patently unfair.

The Hammonds were charged with violating a federal law that carried with it a minimum sentence of five years in prison. The law is aimed at crimes in which terrorists or others destroy federal property through bomb blasts or arson.

Though exercising extraordinarily poor judgment in starting field burns on federal land without permission, the Hammonds are not terrorists.

Other federal laws that carry five-year minimum sentences address treason, child pornography, using a gun while committing a violent crime or importing drugs.

Burning 140 acres of back country hardly compares with any of those crimes.

Article about new business offends

To the editor:

A couple of weeks ago (Sept. 16) the Chieftain saw fit to honor a new business venture on Main Street in Joseph. That business was a "pipe shop." No matter what you choose to call it, it sells objects used in the process of smoking. The main impetus of the shop and the article was on the smoking of dope.

The Chieftain obviously is quite enamored with the objects so widely displayed in the larger-than-usual photo on the front page of Wallowa County's only newspaper. The fact that this new business made the front page says a lot about the leadership of the Chieftain.

According to the Chieftain's own statis-

LETTERS to the EDITOR

tics, 61 percent of Wallowa County voted with me against the legalization of marijuana. The question is: Is the Chieftain Wallowa County's newspaper, or just another Oregonian?

I find promoting smoking of any kind outdated and mindless. I find the glorifying of smoking of dope on your front page sickening.

The Chieftain has a right, within limits, to print what they want. I defended those rights and I believe in them. However legal this article was, the fact remains that it was

in very poor taste. There have been many new businesses that have opened in the last year. How many were on the front page of the Chieftain? A new bakery opened in Enterprise last week. What was the front-page story promoting cinnamon rolls and other delights? The last time I checked, donuts have never been illegal in Oregon.

The Chieftain staff's obvious infatuation with "amazing hookahs" should be kept to itself. The article was not news and not appropriate in any way.

In closing: effective immediately, I am canceling all my future advertising with and my subscription to the Chieftain.

Jim Russell
Joseph