

A Christmas story, minus the branding

By Rich Wandschneider
For The Chieftain



MAIN STREET
Rich Wandschneider

When I was young — about junior high I think — the holidays were dominated by signs that said “Merry Xmas” and “Xmas Sale” and “get your Xmas trees here.” The preacher in our church and those on TV railed against “taking Christ out of Christmas.”

The preachers won, I guess. I don’t remember the last time I saw an Xmas sign. But merchants and the advertising industry (which wasn’t yet an industry when I was in junior high) probably caved easily on this one, because they were not in the business of defining Christmas, but of selling it. And I guess now, in “late” middle age, the thing that disturbs me most is the selling of just about everything.

Business shows and papers debate the efficacy of “Black Friday” sales, and consultants analyze the growing shares and impacts of online sales. Politicians package and sell “fear” in

their plays for votes — immigrants, Muslims, liberals, guns and terrorists of all stripes are the reasons for our fears, and “I know how to handle these threats to your safety and the lives of your children.”

One of the pitches that bothers me most is “branding.” I don’t know where and how it started — maybe with the Nike swoosh — but now everything from a small business on Main Street to a Fortune 500 company, from state agencies to states, has to be carefully branded. In other words, its story — the company’s or the do-good organization’s — has to be distilled to logos and catch phrases. Pictures and words that can fit in a magazine and lodge in a mind.

Yes, I know that we in Wallowa County have benefited financially

from the State Tourism Department’s “Seven Wonders of Oregon” campaign. Maybe I have. But part of me gags at the amount of time and energy and money we — county, state, or the places we work or volunteer — spend selling ourselves. I’ll take the story told in long-hand.

On Thursday night at Nick and Angie Lunde’s house in Joseph, their daughter Erin, now “Dr. Erin,” greeted a group of her friends and family friends (Erin went to Joseph schools and graduated from Joseph High), a new baby on her hip, with a story and a plea for help with a small project that she and some friends had grown from a village in Ecuador to villages in other places around the world.

When Erin was in med school she took off for a year and worked in a very rural health clinic in this small and remote Ecuadorian village. There were some Germans involved, and other young American anthropologists and medical students. The young Americans solicited donations

from family members and friends as they helped the villagers pave their own way to sustained health care with their own government and larger multinational organizations.

The friends stayed in touch with the village and with each other, and now they’ve formed an organization to help plant seeds to health in other villages. Their gifts are not large — maybe \$5,000 or \$10,000 — but they are targeted to people who have missed the regular boats to health and prosperity and found the gumpation to begin building their own. In Mali they are helping drill wells, and in a remote Brazilian village of former slaves they are looking to help with basic sanitation.

In each case the 10 friends’ organization — they now call it “Minga” — knows that it cannot solve a village’s problems, cannot dig enough wells or hire enough health care workers, but it knows how to lend a hand, to encourage — give courage — to the people who live there to

build a better place.

I listened to Erin tell her story — the long version with episodes in Ecuador and Mali and a description of the annual meeting of friends — and was taken back to places in my own past. And I felt good. It was good to see and hear young people with heart cutting through the garbage of salesmanship, taking into account but not being dissuaded by stories of gangs and drugs and international terrorism.

It was a Christmas story. I know it’s corny, but remember those refugees looking for a place to stay, depending on the good graces of an innkeeper, bedding down among animals. It’s sometimes hard to scratch through the guff to get to the humility of it all. But Erin and her friends (what is it? “to those who have been given much, much is expected”) have found and are sharing their own Christmas story.

Columnist Rich Wandschneider lives in Joseph.

FOR THE RECORD

Dispatch log:

Monday, Dec. 14

8:31 p.m.: Dog found in rural Enterprise.
10:55 p.m.: Report of suspicious person in Enterprise.

Tuesday, Dec. 15

9:38 a.m.: Single-vehicle rollover in rural Wallowa.
10:12 a.m.: Theft complaint in Enterprise.
11:50 a.m.: Enterprise police arrested Truman Lloyd Chamberlin, 19, of Enterprise for probation violation. Transported to Union County jail.
1:38 p.m.: Statewide detainer issued for David Dean Killion, 56, of Joseph for probation violation.
4:25 p.m.: Disturbance in Enterprise.
6:24 p.m.: Disturbance in Enterprise.
9:20 p.m.: 911 call reporting kids knocking on residential doors and running away in Enterprise.

Wednesday, Dec. 16

7:17 a.m.: 911 call reporting trespassing in rural Joseph.
7:34 a.m.: Dead animal blocking lane of traffic on Highway 82 in rural Enterprise.
8:09 a.m.: Traffic stop in

Enterprise.
8:19 a.m.: Road hazard in Enterprise.
8:33 a.m.: Disturbance in Enterprise.
1:30 p.m.: Enterprise police arrested Deborah Marie Curtis, 46, of Enterprise for violation of a stalking order. Cited and released.
3:24 p.m.: Cattle on Highway 82.
3:30 p.m.: Report of lost dog in Enterprise. Located and reunited with owner.

Thursday, Dec. 17

10:53 a.m.: Theft complaint in Enterprise.
4:08 p.m.: Report of lost red-dish-gold dog in Enterprise.
4:32 p.m.: Statewide misdemeanor warrant issued for Tari Jenbar Delyria, 29, of Weston, Ore., for probation violation.
5:26 p.m.: Single-vehicle accident in rural Wallowa.
5:35 p.m.: White Pyrenees dog found on Highway 82 just outside of Enterprise.

Friday, Dec. 18

10:33 a.m.: Enterprise police arrested Jacob Michael Ellis, 25, of Enterprise for PC meth and two Umatilla County warrants. Transported to Union County.
2:04 p.m.: Report of domestic assault in Lostine.
4:46 p.m.: Dead deer in the highway in rural Enterprise.
5:44 p.m.: Vehicle in the ditch on Highway 82.
11:18 p.m.: Vehicle off the

road in rural Wallowa.
Saturday, Dec. 19
8:32 a.m.: 911 call reporting TV cable line down in Lostine.
11:23 a.m.: Theft report in Enterprise.
12:35 p.m.: Lost black and white female dog with phone number on collar reported in Enterprise.
5:59 p.m.: Following disturbance report, Wallowa County sheriff’s deputies arrested James Randall Hart, Jr., 34, of Enterprise for burglary I, criminal mischief II and disorderly conduct. Transported to Union County jail.
9:41 p.m.: 911 call reporting a fire in Enterprise.

Sunday, Dec. 20

10:39 a.m.: Report of leaning tree, possible road hazard.
1:57 p.m.: Lost Cocker Spaniel in Joseph.

Shaw district forester for Central Oregon

Wallowa County Chieftain

Oregon Department of Forestry has selected Mike Shaw as the new District Forester for the Central Oregon District (COD).

Shaw replaces George Ponte, who recently retired after more than seven years as District Forester and 26 years with the Department. COD provides wildfire protection and administers the Forest Practices Act on approximately 2.2 million acres of private and non-federal public land throughout eleven counties in Oregon.

Shaw has been with ODF for sixteen years, starting as a Forest Practices Forester in the

Toledo Unit of the West Oregon District. He served in a similar position in Wallowa, prior to promoting to Unit Forester for the Wallowa Unit. In December 2014 Shaw left northeast Oregon to work as ODF’s Eastern

Oregon Assistant Area Director.

As District Forester, Shaw will manage 35 permanent employees and 90 seasonal firefighters in offices in Prineville, Sisters, The Dalles, John Day and Fossil.

Are you overwhelmed with the stress of the holidays?
Do you feel hopeless or has the joy gone out of your life?
Are you struggling to keep your family together?
I can help!
A few sessions can make a big difference.
Jeff Harman, MA., LPC
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MCCOLGAN

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Perhaps Bush’s head-on attacks will have some impact on that dynamic before voters in Iowa and New Hampshire weigh in. But I’m betting against that, so I think that Jeb will step aside, too, perhaps after South Carolina, leaving Christie as the last governor standing, but probably not for much longer either.

Turning to Sens. Rubio and Cruz, it is becoming increasingly clear, especially since CNN chose to let the two clash repeatedly, that each of these men is in the race for the long haul. They will continue to challenge each other rather than go after the outsiders for the time being because each probably has confidence that the Republican establishment really doesn’t want one of the outsiders to win after all. My money is on Rubio to prevail in that duel, because Cruz is not well liked by many of his colleagues of either party, and because it’s likely he will gradually lose his appeal among voters, too. Besides, will all those Republican birthers ultimately be able to ignore the fact that Ted Cruz was actually born in Canada?

This leaves our two remaining outsiders, who have already received far more attention from the media than either of them probably de-

serves based on their resumes for this job as leader of the free world. Dr. Ben Carson has a likable persona, but he is already fading in the polls, and he will not do well except in states with large contingents of evangelical voters. That leaves only Donald Trump (I held out for as long as I could), who has defied all conventional wisdom up to this point. I still am betting that he won’t get the nomination, so my prediction is Rubio. But Trump might prove me wrong, and God help us all if he does.

I will make my forecast for the Democratic race in next month’s column. It might not be what you would expect.

John McColgan writes from his home in Joseph.

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Robes, PJ’s, Slippers, Scarves, Hats, Gloves, Boots, Vests, Coats, Sweaters... and more
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ANNUAL WALLOWA COUNTY Food Bank Drive
SPONSORED BY THE WALLOWA COUNTY CHIEFTAIN
Donate and have a chance to WIN \$100!
The more you donate, the more chances you have to win.
We’re asking everyone to pitch in and help our local food banks by donating this month. This will help those in our community who are in need. Your donations can be in the form of unexpired, nonperishable food items or cash donations that will be used to purchase such items for the food bank. Your name will be entered in a \$100 prize drawing one time for every 10 items donated and/or \$10 donation increment.
Please bring donations to the Wallowa County Chieftain office by Wednesday, December 23rd at 5pm.
The drawing will be held December 24th and the WINNER will be notified that day. All participants will be highlighted in the December 30th issue of the Chieftain.
Thank you for supporting our community!
If you have any questions, please call Cheryl at 541-426-4567
WALLOWA COUNTY CHIEFTAIN

Public Meetings

Monday, Jan. 4: Enterprise school board in the Home Economics classroom at Enterprise High School. <http://enterprise-schooldistrict.com/>
Wednesday, Jan. 6: Lostine City Council, 7:30 p.m. at City Hall.
Jan. 14: Joseph City Council, 7 p.m. <http://www.josephoregon.org/>
Monday, Jan. 11: Joseph School Board, 5:30 p.m. at the school library. <http://www.joseph.k12.or.us/>
Wallowa School Board, 7 p.m. at the high school library.
Tuesday, Jan. 12: Wallowa Union Railroad Authority Board, 5 p.m. at the WURR Depot in Elgin. Agenda: Rail with Trail project.