



From stars to slopes for 2016

Happy 2016, all you good people. My holiday spirit was kicked into high gear this season when I learned from a friend over in Portland about a covert operation to bring some high-velocity Christmas cheer. A single mom had recently moved into a new apartment with her two youngsters and, circumstances being on the tight side, Christmas morning this year was looking to be fairly low-key. Some friends of theirs deputized themselves as elves to fill in around the Christmas tree, then other folks heard about it and pretty soon the posse of elves grew to 26 strong. This Santa Claus network got together a bona fide heap of toys, warm clothes, winter boots, food for the pantry and other gifts. I saw the video — taken by the lead elf — of these kids laying eyes on the eye-widening pile of thoughtfulness and exclaiming, “Santa came!” The thermostat on my heart valves jumped right up.

I almost pulled the plug on going to see my family on the west side because of grim forecasts warning of terrible road conditions. The thought of hanging my stocking from my rear-view mirror while



AND FURTHERMORE

Jon Rombach

spending Christmas in a ditch beside I-84 didn't sound great. Thankfully, my amigo Todd Kruger has no interest at all in computers — doesn't even have an email address — so he wasn't bothered at all by online fretting over winter travel. Todd was headed to see his family, just 10 miles from mine, so I hitched a ride. For some reason it seemed like if Todd wasn't worried, riding shotgun should be fine.

Glad I did. My nephew Jack just turned 3 and seems to approve of this Christmas thing. I have not seen such efficient unwrapping of gifts since the last time I saw a 3-year-old tear wrapping paper from their collection of presents. I think he might have peeled the Sheetrock off the walls to see if Santa brought any 2-by-4s if we hadn't distracted him.

I don't want to ruin “Star Wars” for you, but I went to a late-night 3D showing with my other nephews, Jacob and Joe, and can't keep this story twist to myself, so skip ahead if you don't want to hear that Princess Leia has a new hairdo in this one. Why would she ever get away from the two buns over her ears? Classic look.

Todd and I stopped over to see our river guide pal Brian Murphy on the way home. Murphy is a ski patroller at Mount Hood Meadows and fixed us up with ski passes, which cost one zillion dollars a day. And I can see why. It's a high-tech operation. Lift tickets are now little programmed cards you put in your pocket. Some robot scans your coat and a green light comes on and lets you through the gate. Todd and I couldn't figure out what to do with these science fiction lift tickets and had to ask a stranger in a strange land for guidance.

We skied miles of trails. Caught chair lifts to other chair lifts to ski more miles of trails.

See ROMBACH, Page A5

Let's play ‘Name that medication’

What would you call an “ideal” medication that is as effective in reducing the risk of a heart attack as it is for stopping smoking or reducing cholesterol and high blood pressure?

In addition, this “medication” can significantly reduce the incidence of many diseases such as kidney stones, gallbladder disease, constipation, urinary track infections and venous blood clots.

Would you be tempted to call it a “Miracle Drug?”

How about just plain water?

A study from the American Journal of Epidemiology (Vol. 176, No. 4, Aug. 15, 2012) showed that those who drink more than five glasses of water a day had a much lower risk of dying from a heart attack than those drinking less than 2 cups a day. We're talking about water — not other liquids such as coffee, juices or carbonated drinks. Jacqueline Chan, DrPH, author of the study goes on to say, “Basically, not drinking enough water can be as harmful to your



GUEST COLUMN

Dr. Kenneth D. Rose

heart as smoking.”

Drinking more than 5 cups of water per day can cut the risk of coronary artery disease by 50 percent.

The question is often asked, “How much water should I be drinking?”

While some simply rely on their “thirst buds” to determine their body's need for water, in actuality by the time they are thirsty, their bodies are well behind in their water needs.

Others rely on the standard answer of eight 8 oz. glasses a day. But in reality, the amount of water our bodies' need can vary tremendously depending upon our age,

gender, level of activity, medications and environmental conditions. A good starting point to determine our bodies' need for water each day is to take our weight and divide it by two. That number will give you the number of ounces we should be drinking each day.

However, an even more accurate way to determine our bodies' need for water is by looking at the color of our urine. For people not taking a water pill, the color of their urine should be a light straw-colored yellow. If it's too dark, then they are not getting enough water. If it's clear, then they are adequately hydrated.

As with our cars, which like water in the radiator to cool the engine, our bodies love to be well hydrated to function properly. After all, our bodies are nearly 75 percent water. So, keep well hydrated in order to keep all our body's functions running smoothly.

Kenneth D. Rose, MD, is a general surgeon at Mountain View Medical Group in Enterprise.



USPS No. 665-100

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

Wallowa County's Newspaper Since 1884
Enterprise, Oregon

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
editor@wallowa.com
NEWSROOM ASSISTANT Jennifer Powell, jpowell@wallowa.com
AD SALES CONSULTANT Robby Day, rday@wallowa.com
GRAPHIC DESIGNER Cheryl Jenkins, cjenkins@wallowa.com
OFFICE MANAGER

PUBLISHED EVERY WEDNESDAY BY:
EO Media Group

Periodical Postage Paid at Enterprise and additional mailing offices

Subscription rates (includes online access)	1 Year
Wallowa County	\$40.00
Out-of-County	\$57.00

Subscriptions must be paid prior to delivery

See the Wallowa County Chieftain on the Internet
www.wallowa.com
facebook.com/Wallowa | twitter.com/wcchieftain

POSTMASTER — Send address changes to
Wallowa County Chieftain
P.O. Box 338
Enterprise, OR 97828

Contents copyright © 2015. All rights reserved. Reproduction without permission is prohibited.

Volume 134

LETTERS to the EDITOR

Water decisions require balance

Concerning your (Dec. 30) editorial about the water issue going to the U.S. Supreme Court, I would like to add some thoughts. Water is likely to continue to be the subject of conflict for some time, unless the Supreme Court is able to come up with the magic solution. You are right to say, “For farmers, ranchers and other landowners, the stakes are high.” The regulations are sure to limit property owners' rights to the water they want to use.

However, to be fair, you should also recognize that for populations in cities and towns downstream from the “property owners” there are millions of people who also need water, clean water, to physically survive. I do not believe it is too extreme to point out this conflict of interest. Before we become angry with our fellow citizens for wanting to drink clean water, or for wanting to use the water that passes near their own ranches, we should recognize the dichotomy between individual rights and needs of our fellow country-

men downstream.

Understandably, the threat to one's right to use whatever water one wants is seen as a threat to one's economic existence. At the same time, the threat of not having clean water for the population downstream (or in the aquifers) is a threat to the survival of many more. I hope the Supreme Court will have the wisdom to consider our interdependence and come up with solutions.

Evelyn Swart
Joseph

Support Sockeye salmon runs

I was really surprised when I read the (Dec. 16) article about the demise of the dam owned by the Associated Ditch Company on the Wallowa River. This dam has blocked Sockeye salmon runs for almost 100 years, and not one word was mentioned about the

See LETTERS, Page A5

63-mile trail in need of one bold step

For several years now the people of Wallowa and Union counties have been hearing of a plan to build a pedestrian/bike trail along 63 miles of railroad from Joseph to Elgin. We've reached the point where that talk must either make room for action or slowly diminish as another fine idea that just couldn't take shape.

EDITORIAL
Voice of the Chieftain

The concept is called Rail with Trail. It calls for keeping the railroad active for use by excursion and other trains and accentuating the corridor with a trail at a safe distance on adjacent land. Both the rail and the land is owned by the Wallowa Union Rail Authority (WURA) and the fate of the project now rests with the eight-member WURA board, which is considering allowing the use of its land but has been clear about its reluctance to assume any financial burden associated with the project.

During its most recent meeting Dec. 15 in Wallowa, the WURA board, a public governing body, heard presentations from trail advocates as well as the two key people behind the Concept Plan — Eastern Oregon University MBA candidate Dana Kurtz and Oregon Parks and Recreation State Trails Coordinator Rocky Houston. Those presentations were followed by a public discussion, during which emerged the evening's lone voices of dissent — from a few residents who own land adjacent to the rail corridor in the Lostine/Wallowa area.

It's doubtful that those who oppose the project were adequately represented at that meeting. However, surveys conducted by Kurtz and Houston do suggest that a significant majority of the general public supports the Rail with Trail proposal in its entirety. Kurtz and Houston also claim that at least a slim majority of adjacent landowners supports the completion of at least some of the six-segment plan.

Kurtz and Houston also stressed that the Concept Plan is not a blueprint. It's merely intended to show what is possible, to identify critical obstacles while leaving a bevy of design questions to those who would help fund and create the individual trail segments.

You can view the plan online at <http://tinyurl.com/hfluaab>.

The price tag is far from insignificant. Both the Concept Plan and the primary group taking up the task of securing funding — the Joseph Branch Trail Consortium — estimate a grand total of \$20 million to complete the entire 63-mile trail. And those initial cost estimates have a way of climbing with projects of this magnitude. However, this proposal is uniquely suited to draw funding from a variety of federal, state and foundation sources as it simultaneously supports tourism, transportation, historic preservation and healthy living.

While the cost is high, this project would take years, if not decades, to complete. It wouldn't be necessary to secure all money up front. Funding sources would be secured incrementally over time as the project progressed.

And this isn't just a shiny, new toy. The Concept Plan cites a range of \$85,000 to \$425,000 going back into the economy annually upon completion of the trail. The trail's construction also will require contracts with local companies and the use of local labor — a short-term boost to the job market, to be sure, but nothing to scoff at. Economic benefits aside, there are potential quality-of-life improvements for our communities to consider as well — healthy transportation alternatives and a safer route for local pedestrians and cyclists that helps keep them off of the highways.

And for those who tend to focus on the big picture, there's another important term — legacy. Several of those who spoke in support of the project on Dec. 15 mentioned how important it would be for them to give this gift to their children and grandchildren, all the future generations that would most benefit from our present endeavors.

The WARU board next convenes at 5 p.m. Jan. 12 at Elgin City Hall, at which point the members may or may not issue their decision on allowing the Rail with Trail project to proceed.

We understand and take quite seriously the concerns of the adjacent landowners. Critical issues of privacy and liability must be addressed. And we urge the project's supporters to pay close attention to those concerns and seek out creative ways to alleviate them.

If the WARU board signs off on the project, the first segments likely to be developed would be those on either end — from Joseph to Enterprise and from Elgin to Lookingglass. Those segments have garnered the most public support and represent the most immediate economic impact.

If all that comes of the years of conceptual planning to date, and subsequent years of securing funding, design and construction, is a trail connecting Joseph and Enterprise, we'll gladly declare the project a success. How great would it be to jump on a bike on a beautiful day and make that trek with the Wallowa Mountains as a backdrop and no motorized vehicles competing for space?

However, this project holds much more potential and it would be irresponsible to turn our backs on that potential without at least giving it the chance to grow.

We urge the WARU board members to give their blessing to this bold idea with confidence that future generations will thank you for doing so.

— Scot Heisel