

Holiday reminds us to come together

In this bipartisan time, we rarely have opportunities to truly come together.

There's Christmas, but apparently there's a war raging around it. We all watch the Super Bowl, but only half are satisfied with the outcome. Thanks to the never-ending political calendar, this country finds itself divided on a daily basis.

Memorial Day is an opportunity to step back from this division — to unite in remembrance and respect for those who gave the ultimate sacrifice for this country. It is also an opportunity to remember why they gave that sacrifice. What about this country and its principles makes it worth fighting for?

No one gives their life for the Democratic or Republican party, or for their favorite sports team, or for a single law or politician. Those who join the military defend all Americans — our lives, our land, our culture and our traditions.

It can be easy to forget, so far from the battlefield, what that sacrifice means. That there are nearly 7,000 young men and women who have been killed in combat since 2001. And it was for their hometown as well as ours, for their family and yours.

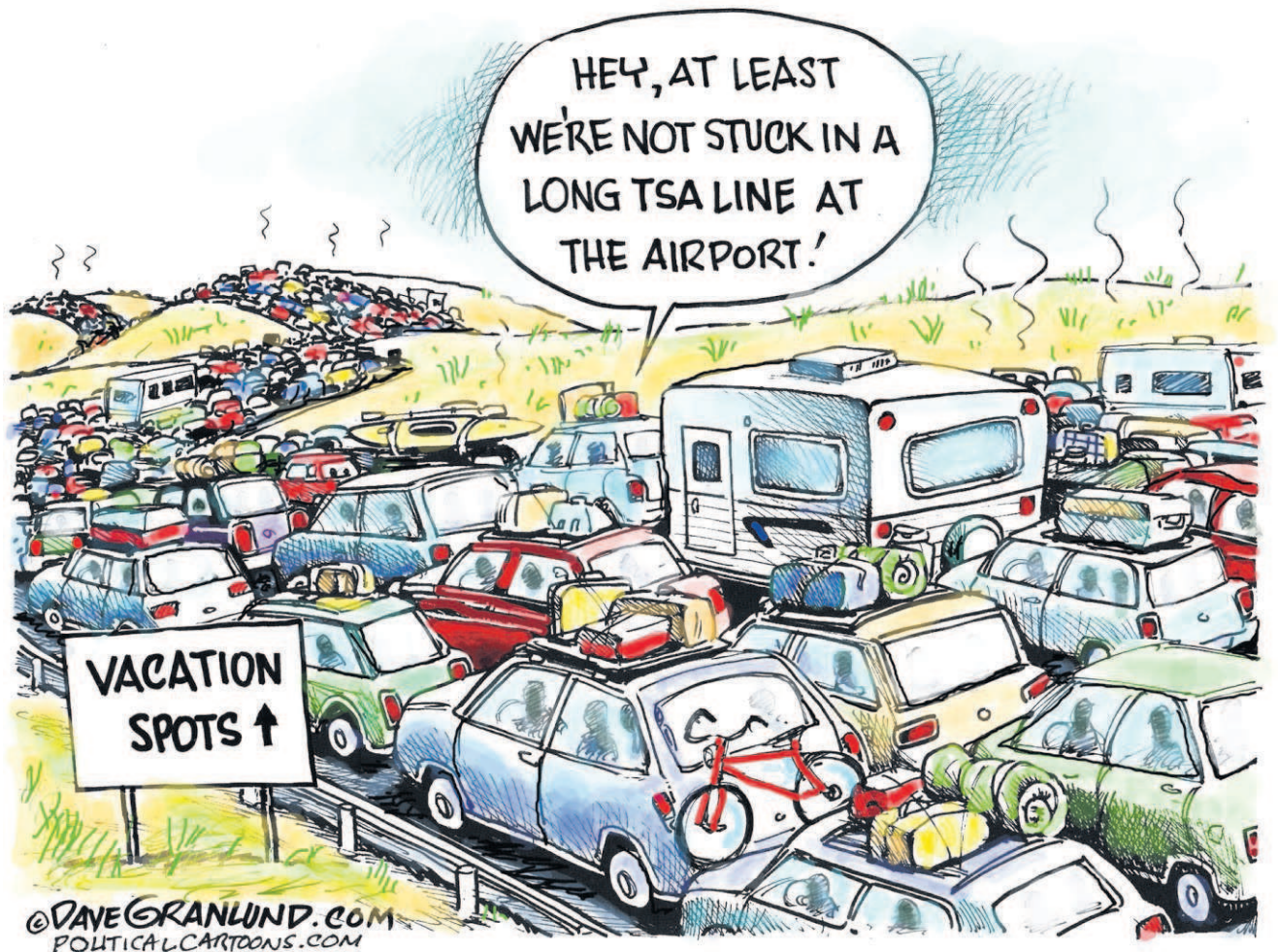
We understand the impulse to spend the long weekend at the barbecue, car sale, camping or waiting in endless TSA checkpoints at the airport. And we hope you did enjoy the day off work.

But we also hope you took a few minutes to look out at your cemetery, over to your neighbors, to the less fortunate, at the incredibly blessed, onto our bountiful lands.

They are what we all have in common.

EDITORIAL

Voice of the Chieftain



Tragedy averted, but burned into memory

Be careful what you wish for. The wish list last week had rain and fire on it. There was a good-sized pile of dry ponderosa branches ready to burn. This was really going to crank once it got going, and there was enough stuff around that wasn't supposed to burn that we crossed our fingers hoping for rain. We got it, sure enough. It poured like two cows whizzing on a flat rock for two days. Now it looked like we'd have to wring out each branch individually and hang them on the clothesline first to get this to light.

My burning cohort Jacob and I figured it was a long shot to get this soggy pile to go. I favor the hotspot approach to burnpile ignition. Build a little campfire, pretty much, and concentrate on getting that good and hot so it spreads. Some folks swear by gas, or diesel, or an old secret family recipe of diesel-gas mix. We used all the tricks on this one and the sense of accomplishment was no small thing when that big, wet pile finally took hold. We could hear the determined roar pick up in volume as the center of all those branches started glowing orange. We did a pitchfork and shovel high-five. And that's when we heard the kittens mewling.

What is that? We held our ears down by the bottom of the burning pile and listened. *Sacre bleu*, that is definitely tiny kittens trapped inside a giant burning



AND FURTHERMORE

Jon Rombach

pile of sticks we just lit on fire. Jack and I stared at each other. Our eyes were the size of volleyballs and we held a long and detailed two-second conversation without saying a word, then both started tearing the burnpile apart. Or trying to tear the burnpile apart. You ever try to dismantle a 10-foot pile of twisty branches by pulling out limbs from the base? It's like a master's course in Jenga. Also, this one was on fire, let's not forget. We had a hose going, so we jammed that in there to try and slow the flames. But this was beyond the garden hose stage. The fire was ripping and closing in on the increasingly frantic mews.

I'll save you the suspense. Jack reached both kittens and got them out. Somehow. I couldn't believe it. Their barncat mother had really tucked them back in there where nothing could get to them. That feeling of not being able to stop something you put in motion was desperation mixed with gas, diesel, adrenaline and horror. Oh, and terror. Just awful. I thought for sure we weren't go-

ing to be able to save them and my hair would turn white right there on the spot.

First one out was white. Tiny. Eyes barely open. The fire got so close to the second one its black fur was singed. We figured two kittens was an awfully small litter, so kept going in to listen and look for more. But it was just the two.

There was a moment where Jacob had already rescued the white kitten and was back in the pile, just his legs sticking out, a hose running on his head, clawing at burning branches trying to reach the second kitten and he said, "I don't even really like cats." Me either. But the rest of the day cats is all we could talk about. We were like a couple of cat ladies.

They're both alive and well, reunited with their mom. Fuego and Nomex were the first names we tried out on them. Then Marshmallow. Kingsford. Lots of possibilities for these two. That was the most intense burnpile I hope to ever be involved with. Hoo-wee.

One last animal-related thing. I thought up a joke the other day. Was listening to the news talk about transgender bathrooms, then looked outside and saw a deer hanging out in my yard. OK, what do you call a transgender deer?

John Doe.

Jon Rombach is a local columnist for *The Chieftain*.

LETTERS POLICY

Letters to the Editor are subject to editing and should be limited to 275 words. Writers should also include a phone number with their signature so we can call to verify identity. The Chieftain does not run anonymous letters.

In terms of content, writers should refrain from personal attacks. It's acceptable, however, to attack (or support) another party's ideas.

We do not routinely run thank-you letters, a policy we'll consider waiving only in unusual situations where reason compels the exception.

You can submit a letter to the Wallowa County Chieftain in person; by mail to P.O. Box 338, Enterprise, OR 97828; by email to editor@wallowa.com; or via the submission form at the newspaper's website, located at wallowa.com. (Drop down the "Opinion" menu on the navigation bar to see the relevant link).

Don't let the need for health insurance stop you from leaving

Domestic violence is found across all socioeconomic groups — in fact, more than one in three women and one in four men have been victims of some form of physical violence by an intimate partner. However, women are often economically dependent on their abusers and are less able to leave and more likely to return to abusive partners. Many women are dependent on their spouses for insurance coverage.

Domestic abuse is something we don't like to talk about. The Department of Justice (DOJ) defines domestic violence as a pattern of abusive behavior in any relationship that is used by one partner to gain or maintain power and control over another intimate partner. Domestic violence can be physical, sexual, emotional, economic or psychological actions or threats of actions that influence another person. This includes any behaviors that intimidate, manipulate, humiliate, isolate, frighten, terrorize, coerce, threaten, blame, hurt, injure or wound someone.

For most of us, it's hard to fathom intentionally harming those we love. We see domestic violence on TV programs — or turn to another channel to avoid it.



GUEST COLUMN

Susan Johnson

We see domestic violence victims on the news. We like to think it couldn't happen to anyone we know, but it does.

We can't just bury our heads in the sand and pretend that domestic abuse doesn't exist. Awareness and education are integral to ending this cycle. Victims need appropriate community services. HHS and DOJ work extensively to eliminate domestic violence, as do state agencies, and nonprofit organizations. Getting Help with Domestic Violence from the HHS Family & Youth Services Bureau's website contains a collection of resources available to domestic abuse victims.

This issue has been addressed by a Special Enrollment Period (SEP) for victims of domestic abuse/violence or spousal abandonment. Dependents may be eligible, too.

Oregonians who would like to apply

using this SEP can contact HealthCare.gov at 1-800-318-2596 or get help enrolling from a local insurance agent or community organization. They can find local help by visiting OregonHealthCare.gov or by calling 1-855-268-3767. The SEP for victims of domestic abuse/violence or spousal abandonment lasts 60 days from the date of notification to HealthCare.gov.

Some items to note:

- Those who are married to the abuser/abandoner can answer on the Marketplace application that they are unmarried for purposes of receiving financial assistance, without fear of penalty for misstating marital status.

- Self-attestation is required on tax forms the following year if financial assistance was received.

So, if you (or someone you know) are currently a victim of domestic abuse, don't let the thought of losing your health insurance stop you from leaving an abusive relationship. Protect yourself and your children — you'll still have health insurance options available.

Susan Johnson is regional director for the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Region 10.

Way to go, Coach Johnny Roberts

Wow! What justice. That Johnny Roberts' girls track team from Joseph won the state title the other day is cool beyond words.

I remember, probably around my sophomore year at Wallowa High School, watching Johnny Roberts and Mike Southwick circling WHS's grass track in a torrential downpour after all other competitors had exited for warm showers and home. The only other people out there witnessing their efforts were their coach, my father Don Wilson, and me, the manager.

LETTERS to the EDITOR

They might have been working together to secure a new school record in the two mile, but more likely were intent on establishing qualifying times for another meet or meets.

Joseph's track coach for about 35 years, Roberts has bucked the consolidation trend that has seen Enterprise and Wallowa bond in track and Joseph, En-

terprise and Wallowa join forces in baseball and softball (the Joseph and Wallowa golf teams also have combined).

If you know Johnny Roberts, you know there's no doubt that he defiantly will direct all praise toward the members of the team who won the state title and accept none for himself.

That's certainly OK, but many of us take joy in the fact that he coached the team.

Rocky Wilson
Wallowa

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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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