

Getting to know you is my goal

If you're a longtime reader of the *Wallowa County Chieftain*, you know that editors come and go. One has gone and another has arrived. That would be me.

It is my distinct pleasure to sit in the editor's desk. To say that one has printer's ink running through his veins is cliché but nevertheless true in my case. I began my first newspaper job as a photographer and typesetter for my hometown weekly newspaper in central North Dakota.



WAHL TO WALL

Paul Wahl

Those were the days before electronic gadgetry. It wasn't for the faint of heart. But it was an honorable profession and still is today.

After college, I began working for a series of weeklies in North Dakota, eventually made my way to Southern California (where I met my wife), then back to the Midwest and most recently in western Colorado.

I was thinking about all of the changes community journalism has undergone over three decades when I saw the information for the Enterprise School centennial celebration. Like education, journalism was changed indelibly, for good or bad, with the arrival of technology. We can now disseminate information quicker and with fewer bodies, but that has meant more people writing about subjects that were once the sole purview of weekly newspapers.

The key is reporting the news in a straight-forward manner and attempting to tell stories that engage and enlighten readers.

In some ways, the progress in journalism has mirrored the progress in education. I am old enough to remember those old wooden desks with the desktop and chair attached at the bottom and yes — heaven help us — ink wells neatly embedded. I've never actually used bulk ink, and the ink wells served more as drink holders for my generation.

I am the result of an education system that boasted 200 students in grades K-12. Even though we were small in size, one thing that most of our teachers figured out, to one degree or another, was that a big part of their job was to instill in us the love for learning, teaching us to become lifelong learners.

That was supplemented by parents who valued education above all else. Death was the only excuse for missing a day of school.

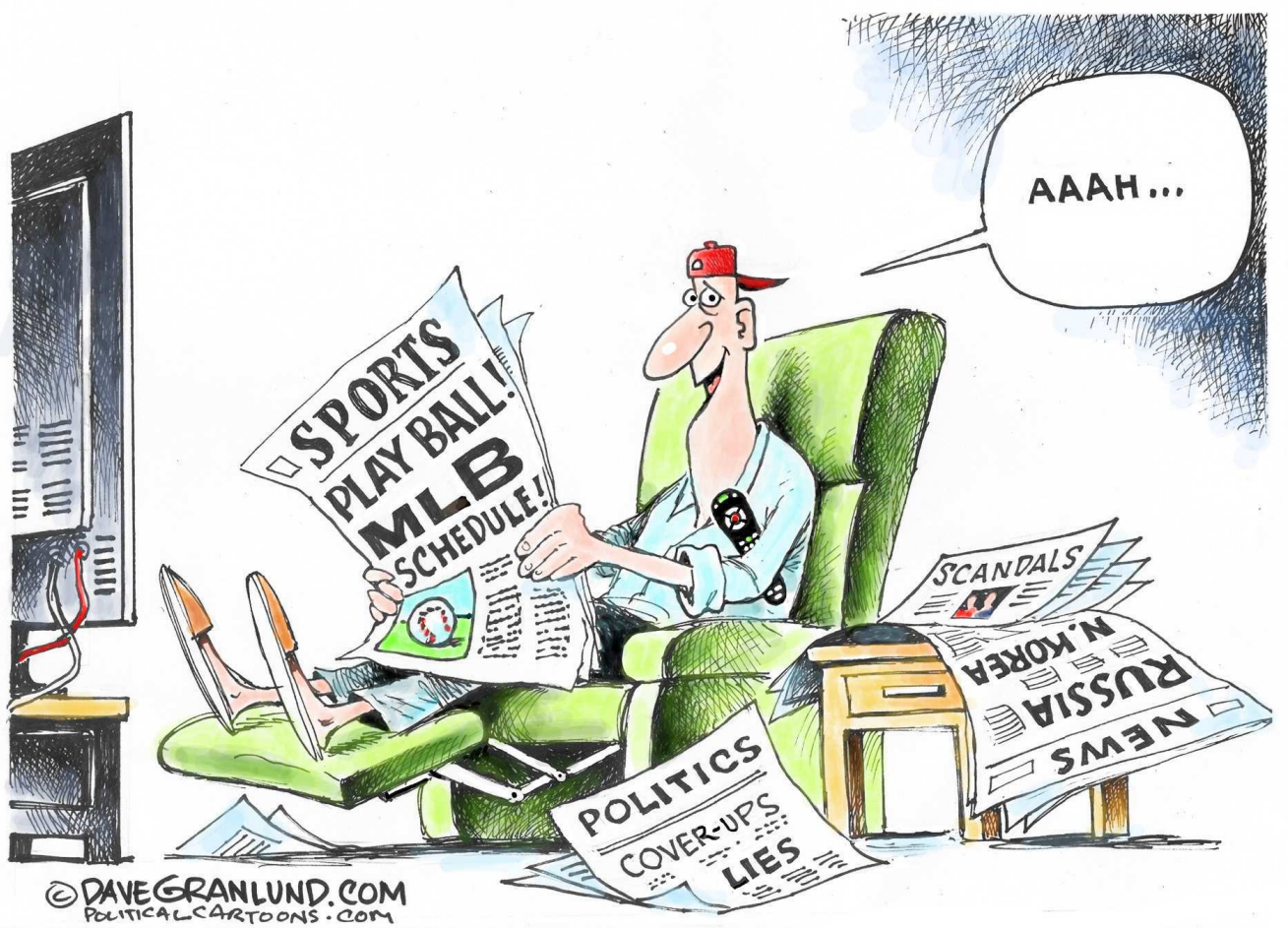
Although I didn't think so at the time, nothing could have prepared me better for a career in journalism. That constant drive to ask questions, to delve deeper into a topic and uncover all that is there has served me well.

So now you know a bit about me, but I don't know much about you. Over the next weeks and months, I will be about the business of getting to know you. I can't write that without humming bars of "Getting to Know You" from "The King and I."

I plan to be out and about in the communities of Wallowa County as much as time permits. If you see me, stop and introduce yourself. Shortly we will be hosting a "meet the editor" event. Stay tuned for details.

Many thanks to those who have already stopped by to chat and extend a welcoming hand.

Paul Wahl is the editor of the *Wallowa County Chieftain* and an avid coffee drinker.



Tip a canoe: that's the easy part

Let's say you have a tree tipped over next to a river and you're ready to begin removing wood to build yourself a snazzy new dugout canoe. Now, which end of the log becomes the front of the boat? You've got a fifty-fifty chance here.

Do you make the tapered end, which used to be toward the top of the tree, the bow of your canoe? That was my guess.

Wrong! The butt of a log is heavier, not just because it's wider than the rest of the tree, but I also recently learned the wood fibers down by the base are more dense. Makes sense. Gotta support all those branches and whatnot swaying around up top.

Bob Chenoweth, curator for the Nez Perce National Historical Park, was recently at the Josephy Center explaining how dugout canoes handle better with more weight up front. I had a quick trip down memory lane back to when I was learning to be a river guide and was instructed to load my raft nose-heavy, weight distributed about 60-40 toward the front.

I thought, "Well, that's silly," ignored the advice and packed my raft evenly like any rational person would do. But not for very long. I've never paddled a dugout, but have rowed heavy rafts through Hells Canyon and can say with surety that more weight toward the bow is your friend. Smashes through waves, for one thing. Also just pivots and turns better.

Then Chenoweth began showing old photos of Nez Perce canoes in action and Number 91-116 depicts a guy in a canoe, in shallow water, just holding his canoe in place with the end of his



AND FURTHERMORE

Jon Rombach

paddle. No big deal, but I perked right up, leaned forward and stared because the posture and bracing to hold your boat like that is something I've seen and done I don't know how many hundreds of times. If you photoshopped this Nez Perce boatman onto a modern Hypalon inflatable raft in the same situation, it would be a carbon copy.

Yeah, I know, holding a wooden canoe with a wooden paddle the same way a fiberglass oar holds a rubber boat probably isn't a gigantic revelation. But it was to me, darn it.

This canoe talk was fascinating. My favorite anecdote was when Allen Pinkham Sr. related how the dugout canoes Lewis and Clark made were replicated for the bicentennial. Ol' Clark and Lewis were in a hurry to get down the river, so they cut a few corners on construction specs. Their canoes didn't handle so well, and folks ended up in the water. The replicas followed the original hasty design, and the reenactors also ended up in the water. So it was a successful reenactment.

I don't trust canoes, myself. Had a very unfortunate tipping over incident on a lake when a buddy was sure he could stand up just fine in a canoe. He was not right about that and hundreds of dollars of fishing gear is probably still on the bottom of Clear Lake over by Florence, if you wanna go scuba diving

and look for it.

Good luck, I already tried. Only thing I recovered was an old teapot, and I have no idea what the deuce that thing was doing out in the middle of a lake. The swim to shore after upsetting the canoe was long and cold enough, I had ample time to make firm plans never to get in a canoe again.

However, Allen Pinkham Jr. is planning on carving a full-size dugout at the Josephy Center, and when that bad boy hits the water, I'll be keen on trying to get a ride. The day after the canoe talk, there was a workshop on how to carve small model versions of dugouts at the Josephy Center. About three feet long, Kendrick Moholt and I teamed up and made a pretty decent version of a piece of firewood. Then Bruce Coutant stopped by and put on a clinic with an adze, transforming our lump of wood into kind of a fruit platter. We didn't give Bruce much to work with, so getting to platter stage is a testament to his woodworking chops.

I'm full-bore excited to see this full-size dugout canoe project take shape. These canoes are amazing in how sophisticated they are. This Chenoweth fella has done a fine job of work with his studies on these craft, and the level of nuance involved with a seemingly simple carved out chunk of wood is startling.

As Rat says in "Wind in the Willows," "there is nothing — absolutely nothing — half so much worth doing as simply messing about in boats."

Jon Rombach is a *Wallowa County* columnist for the *Chieftain*.

Caregiving: We need support, not advice

A friend called from another part of the state.

"How's spring coming along up there?" she asked.

"It depends on which 15 minutes we're talking about," I quipped.

Trying to plan a day's activities solely on sunshine, or on overcast skies, or on wind and rain will leave a person very disappointed, for one spring day in Wallowa County can hold all that and more.

It reminds me of the variables involved in being a full-time caregiver. When I invited my elderly aunt to live with me in 2010, I thought my love for her would be enough to meet all her needs. Three years later, after I moved up here, I attended the Wallowa County Caregivers support group where I learned that caregivers, whether they are family members or not, need special skills and support to provide full-time care.

It haunts me still how things unfolded with my aunt.

Since I had been widowed a few years, and had a nice house with plenty of room, I invited her to move in with me. It was an act of gratitude, for she had been a positive influence in my life.

At first things went well. I was working a part-time job. She had turned the master bedroom into a suite and seemed to adjust well to her new home. My intent was to provide a safe place for



WALLOWA GAL

Katherine Stickroth

her to live, to prepare meals, to share my pets and life.

I took her to all her doctor appointments. Because of her failing vision, I was added to her checking account and reported every penny spent. Occasionally we took rides to her old neighborhood to visit her friends. We watched the news, "The Waltons" and "Lawrence Welk" (which I enjoyed), and I heard countless stories of her childhood.

In a few months, however, she began to complain of how lonely she was. Incrementally, I responded by saying "no" to my favorite activities so that I could spend time with her. I questioned her medications. Her behavior was becoming a little erratic. When I expressed my concerns to my sister, she quizzed our aunt about it, who denied anything was wrong.

My aunt's belligerence worsened and she took her anger out on me. But when friends or family were visiting she could behave properly about three days. By day four she was irritable, and they would leave before the full-blown ver-

sion of how she acted with me became manifest.

I quit my job to be home with her. She accused me of stealing from her checking account. Never happened. She didn't hesitate to tell family members, and they believed her.

Without any breaks from constant problem-solving, mental fatigue set in. I couldn't sleep. I couldn't concentrate and easily became confused from all this stress.

I suspected I had a 98-year-old addict on my hands and reported this to the doctor. He immediately changed her meds. Her reaction to my meddling led to a big blow-up in the family. I had to call my son to get her into a facility. I realized her needs far outweighed my ability to meet them. When I tried to reason this with her, she announced to all who would listen that I had kicked her out on the street.

Perhaps this is a worst case scenario of caregiving, of what can happen when family members don't believe the caregiver or don't step in to relieve the caregiver. Giving advice is not helpful. Being present to get the facts and provide some respite is. I'm so grateful to the caregivers group for showing me that.

Katherine Stickroth is a freelance writer who blogs at awallowagal.com.

Trump sputters, Walden along for the ride

The U.S. House did not provide a lot of surprises this month. Two bills are particularly troubling and were fast-tracked to the president for signature to become law.

House Resolution 83 removes the requirement for employers to maintain accurate records of employee accidents and illness, relied on by insurance and Labor and Industry reports. Senate Resolution 34 removes privacy require-

LETTERS to the EDITOR

ments of internet usage allowing carriers to sell browser data with no approval. These are a detriment to the nation.

Congressman Greg Walden again voted the party line on these with no consideration of his constituents. So much for representation.

More notable are the actions that failed this month.

This embarrassing, minority president is an embarrassment to his party.

Twice his Muslim ban failed because our Constitution still provides freedom of religion. As a nation that welcomes diversity, religious prejudice is unacceptable.

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