Worst winter in ... forever

WAHL TO WALL

Paul Wahl

So exactly how bad was the winter of 2016-17? Depends upon whom you ask.

I have heard anywhere from the worst in 20 to the worst in 30 years, and a couple folks willing to go even further back. We haven't done an in-depth comparison of weather conditions for the season, but if someone has, it would be great to see the results.

The prevailing idea seems to be that Wallowa County residents had been spoiled by unusually nice winters over the past few years. When a more normal season reared its head, everyone had forgotten the more arctic winters of yore.

I read recently that there is a general belief that climate trends in North America are moving north. Therefore, the weather that was once typical of far northern Nevada, for instance, now is closer to the normal for Wallowa County. You see evidence of it in the Midwest where the summer heat and humidity that once was typical of Kansas and Iowa is often manifest today in Minnesota and North Dakota.

A quick comparison reveals that Wallowa County and Winnemucca, Nev., do have some weather traits in common, and they are at around the same elevation. So is Las Vegas weather next for us?

If it comes in January, that would be fine. Otherwise, pass.

DARYL THOMPSON, a reader from Milton Freewater sent me a note about an article published in 2014 in Air and Space Magazine about Enterprise.

William Bennett wrote the piece, which provides the account of a Consolidated B-24 Liberator making an unscheduled landing at the golf course. That was in 1944 at the tail end of World War II.

I read "The Bombers on the Golf Course" and found it fascinating. I think you will too. Find it here: goo.gl/l2wvkH.

The event caused quite a stir. "Lost bomber lands here after harrowing experience" was the headline in the Chieftain.

Bennett's piece reveals a great deal about our community in that period with slightly more than a year before Germany would surrender. While the military contemplated how to get the plane back in the air, locals visited the site of the crash daily, he wrote, especially young women.

"... With so many men from this farming, ranching and logging community having been sent off to war, all these young men were a welcome sight," Bennett wrote. There was even a marriage as a result — Phyllis Zolman and Sgt. Bradford Botts, the top gunner on the plane's crew. Botts was a native of Flora.

Interestingly the Chieftain bound volumes for 1944-45 are much smaller than the years before and after. The reason? The war was on, and newsprint and ink were in short supply.

STEPHEN KLIEWER was addressing the Wallowa County Rotary Club last week regarding the opening of a new pain clinic in Enterprise. He happened to mention that women suffer disproportionately from chronic pain.

"That's because they're married to men," one wag in the audience chimed in.

Could be, I suppose.

Wahl is editor of the Chieftain and a student of World War II history.

On libraries and hospitals

MAIN STREET

Rich Wandschneider

I guess libraries entered my life about 10. We had moved to California, and my first new fifth-grade friend took me to the Oceanside City Library and prodded me to take out books in the Landmark series — "The Monitor and the Merrimac" — about the big Civil War naval battle and Lewis and Clark and other historical tales.

When my friend wasn't looking or I slipped into the library on my own, I went straight to sports books — "The Kid Who Batted a Thousand" and "The Rookie of the Year." John Tunis, who wrote many of them, was almost as big a hero as Yogi Berra, the catcher I imagined myself following into the major leagues.

Libraries are about dreams. In a small town, a kid can imagine him or herself a professional athlete or an astronaut; in cramped urban neighborhoods, kids can breathe open air and think cowboy.

But libraries aren't just for kids. Ray Bradbury read stories and then wrote his own, his first, the classic "Fahrenheit 451," on a library rental typewriter at 25 cents an hour. Take the tour of the Seattle Public Library or stand on the steps of the Multnomah County Downtown Library for an hour and watch the dreamers go by. Watch humanity go by.

Some dreams, of course, are more realistic than others, but libraries have, from the beginning in this country, rigorously allowed library card-holders and not librarians to determine the quality of dreams and dreamers.

It is why the stereotypical little old lady librarian is often the fiercest defender of the First Amendment. She took the job — and the unstated oath to serve the public ... all the public.

At one point on the Seattle Library tour you look down on a room full of computers and the mishmash of people pecking away at them, Googling lost relatives or their way out of poverty, backpacks and bedrolls at their side.

At Multnomah on 10th Street in Portland, you share the restroom sink with a homeless man washing up for the day or a lawyer poking into the past, and you walk through an exhibit of old manuscripts with a group of middle school students.

You talk to Jim Carmin in the rare books room. He assembles the exhibits and tells you about a man who gave him thousands of dollars to form a collection of books by Native American writers — he has the first in French dating to the 17th century.

In Oregon, Wallowa County libraries aren't the only ones in trouble. Roseburg made the New York Times this weekend. They talked to "Terry Bean, 54, a construction manager who was working on his daughter's house on a recent morning in Roseburg, [who] voted for the library tax, and said that 'no' voters just saw another tax, not an institution at risk.

"There is conservative," said Mr. Bean, flicking a cigarette butt into the bed of his pickup truck, "and then there is community. And people got them confused."

The library, he said, was something a person could use — for computers, if not for books — even if that person didn't have a dime.

In a listserv of Oregon librarians that I follow, the current discussion is about handling children whose parents won't or can't sign them up for a library card. According to librarians, these kids are often homeless or home-alone, and the library is home.

Libraries and hospitals might be the most democratic of American institutions. Hospitals don't turn people away. The current health care brouhaha is more about whether hospitals get paid by insurance for the less fortunate or by writing off the visits and spreading the costs out in other ways than about who gets served. At Oregon libraries, the best solution so far to children without library parents: a "one-book" library card, which allows them to take out books and return them, one at a time. These librarians are ready to take the occasional one book loss for the opportunity it provides to the many.

Not so many years ago, in the '80s, Wallowa County's health care system was limping, to be nice about it. Drs. Siebe and Euhus were doing it all, although time and high insurance rates meant they were sending routine child birthing patients to La Grande.

In the early '90s, the Oregon State Health University stepped up. Family practice residents would be required to do a "rural rotation," and Enterprise would be the first outpost. Docs would learn to want to serve in rural areas.

The county stepped up with an elected governing board separate from the County Court, and then with a hospital foundation that has become a conduit for major gifts and the host of the most popular fundraising event in the territory, the annual hospital dinner-auction.

Is health care a right or a privilege? I put it right up there with libraries, which were established as citizens' rights long ago and just possibly might be the reason that enough readers became doctors and researchers to bring health care to a state where it makes sense for it to be a right for all Americans.

Rich Wandschneider lives in Joseph and writes a monthly column for the Chieftain.

Single payer only way to go

GUEST COLUMN

Rick Bombaci

I attended the town hall meeting with U.S. Rep. Greg Walden in Wallowa May 8. A few incidents stand out in my mind.

Walden was adept at answering questions by reeling off mind-numbing statistics. He was also adept at not answering direct questions, such as "Do you believe affordable health care is a privilege or a right?" And he had no recourse but to agree with the veteran who pointed out that Medicare — a single payer system — works very well.

Walden referred to the health care "market" several times. He talked about his earnest desire to determine why health care is so expensive and becoming more so all the time. With all due respect, I don't believe it takes a rocket scientist to figure it out.

Health care is expensive because it is not a free market. It is a captive market. Walden's efforts, and those of his like-minded colleagues, to solve the health care crisis through market mechanisms is doomed.

In a free market, all players — buyers and sellers alike — have equal access to information, have access to other willing sellers and buyers and are free not to participate. This is obviously not the case with health care.

Patients know far less about health care options than professionals do, and that knowledge is difficult to obtain. In a word, we trust our health care providers to help us make decisions.

Also, the demand for health care is highly inelastic. When your appendix has ruptured, you are in no position to negotiate or go find a different "willing seller."

Finally, look at the players. On the one hand, millions of little people with highly inelastic health needs, and on the other, a handful of very large corporations that control the purse strings. This is not a recipe to drive down costs. It is a recipe to gouge the customer.

This is why, imperfect as it may be, a single-payer system providing universal health care is the only reasonable approach to the health care crisis, in a democracy, anyway. What civil society is content to let its members suffer and die on the crucifix of corporate profit?

In my working life, I have taught accounting and economics, started and ran a business for 20 years and have advised many other business owners and entrepreneurs. I know that the free market has a valuable role to play in a free society.

But not all the ills of society can or should be addressed by the "invisible hand." This country can afford to provide reasonable health care for all.

The one incident at that meeting that Walden should pay most attention to is that when he asked the question, "How many in the audience favor a single payer system?" Nearly every hand in the place went sky-high.

Rick Bombaci is a teacher and a business owner and lives in Enterprise.

Logging issues left undecided

GUEST COLUMN

Editor's note: Although it is our policy to issue corrections and clarifications in a more timely matter, this response to a story published March 29 on Page 16 of the Chieftain is being printed to correct an editing error, which erroneously termed Mr. Kelly's original comments "misguided" without attribution.

My comments for the news story about the Lower Joseph Creek project included a statement that the U.S. Forest Service has decided to "allow logging in remote forests located in wilderness-quality, un-roaded, canyon lands." My statement is based upon information provided by the Forest Service in their report for the project.

I am referring to 3,549 acres (5.5 square miles) of "other undeveloped lands" scheduled for "harvest."

The Forest Service report states that these forests "have no history of harvest activity, do not contain forest roads and are not designated as a wilderness area or inventoried as a potential wilderness area."

Additionally, the Forest Service did not consider most of the Joseph Canyon Inventoried Roadless Area to qualify as potential wilderness because parts of Joseph Canyon were "salvage" logged after a wildfire in the '80s. Therefore, "undeveloped lands" located next to most of Joseph Canyon were not considered to be potential wilderness and thus fair game for "harvest."

This logic creates a self-fulfilling prophecy of ever-increasing logging. Whether these lands are ever designated as wilderness is not the most important point. As more forests are logged, there are fewer remaining unlogged forests and unfragmented lands.

Science shows us that unfragmented and connected wild landscapes are becoming increasingly important as a changing climate affects our watersheds, our native forests and grasslands, and the habitats they provide for fish and wildlife. Unfortunately, these intact ecosystems are becoming increasingly rare.

There is a valid case to be made for active restoration of previously logged forests as part of an effort to repair the effects of past logging, fire management and road-building. The Lower Joseph Creek project area contains thousands of acres of these forests located within an extensive historic road system.

This is where forest and road treatments can provide positive benefits — ecological, economic and social.

See LOGGING, Page A5

Art Walks two separate events in Joseph

LETTERS to the EDITOR

In an effort to keep your readers informed about events taking place in Joseph, I need to point out an error in an ad that appeared in the May 10 Chieftain. The 10th Annual Joseph Gallery Art Walk will be held Saturday, June 3, this year.

Ten years ago, Kelly Wick, who at that time was owner of Kelly's Gallery on Main Street, and I organized the first citywide art walk.

For several years it was scheduled on various Saturdays in May, until it landed on the Saturday before Mother's Day about four years ago and underwent a name change to The Mother's Day Art Walk.

This date proved problematic, however, as people were showing up on Sunday (the day Mother's Day is celebrated) from as far away as La Grande, Pendleton and Boise.

A group of gallery owners and managers met Jan. 31, 2016, to discuss changing the date. It was decided we would have two events.

The Joseph Gallery Art Walk was permanently moved to the first Saturday in June since that date was being vacated by the Wallowa Valley Arts Festival, which moved to mid-September. The Saturday before Mother's Day would become the Joseph Unveiling with any business being able to join in order to feature a new product, whether it was a chocolate confection, a line of gifts or clothing, a new menu item or art.

One of the attendees volunteered to organize the Joseph Unveiling, while Malcolm Phinney of Phinney's Gallery and I volunteered to work on the Joseph Gallery Art Walk. Since the May 10 advertisement (and the posters) for the Joseph Unveiling call the event The Mother's Day Art Walk, I'm concerned that your readers might have thought this was the original and official Joseph Gallery Art Walk. An ad with details for that event will appear in the May 24 edition.

Catherine Matthias
co-owner of Stewart Jones Designs
Joseph

See LETTERS, Page A5

WALLOWA COUNTY CHIEFTAIN

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 **Paul Wahl, 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**
Office manager **Sheryl Watson, swatson@wallowa.com**

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 © 2017. All rights reserved. Reproduction without permission is prohibited.

Volume 134