

Don't miss out on the extras

Most of you are reading this column from the paper and ink version of the Chieftain. It's our mainstay, our pièce de résistance.

This week I wanted to make sure that all of our readers are aware that we also have a vibrant website and lively Facebook page. The website contains the bulk of the copy found in the print edition plus a few extras each week.

Many times, our photographers will shoot dozens — even hundreds — of photos. There's no way to use all of them in the print version. You can generally find up to a dozen additional photos of most events covered in the print edition on the website.



WAHL TO WALL

Paul Wahl

Another feature of the website is the ability to leave comments on stories we've published. Not everyone wants to take the time to write a formal letter to the editor.

On the website, you can comment with very little effort. That doesn't mean you shouldn't put thought into your comments.

Since this feature was introduced, most everyone has been responsible with their comments. Occasionally, someone will cross the boundary, usually spouting profanity. These comments aren't posted.

Facebook is currently the home of most of our video efforts here at the Chieftain. If you have not stopped by, you are missing some terrific posts.

A couple weeks back, Lisa Anderson from Blue Mountain Divers shared a video shot along the bottom of Wallowa Lake. It holds the all-time record for number of hits on Chieftain Facebook with more than 36,000 views. It had nearly 400 "likes" as well.

We have also posted video from the Oregon Mountain Cruise, Blue Mountain Old Time Fiddler's Fiddle Show and most recently, a video of the Wallowa Lake Tram Party with some pretty spectacular footage of the breath-taking view on Mt. Howard. That video has had 6,500 views.

It's difficult to judge where members of our Facebook audience reside, but clearly the reach is far beyond Wallowa County.

We've relaunched the Chieftain's YouTube page as well.

Several exciting new features will roll out on Facebook later this summer.

One thing you won't find on our Facebook page is the unsubstantiated garbage that to me seems far too prevalent in social media. I chuckle at the posts alerting me McDonald's is coming to Wallowa County, but I also realize how much stuff like that damages the credibility of legitimate news services. Can you say "fake news?"

The Chieftain also has a Twitter account, but it's a work in progress at this point. The hardest part is condensing everything we have to say to 140 characters.

Last year, photos, videos, GIFs, polls and quote tweets were exempted from the character count. You still only get 140 characters towards text messages and links. For most of the writing done here at the Chieftain, 140 characters is the opening sentence.

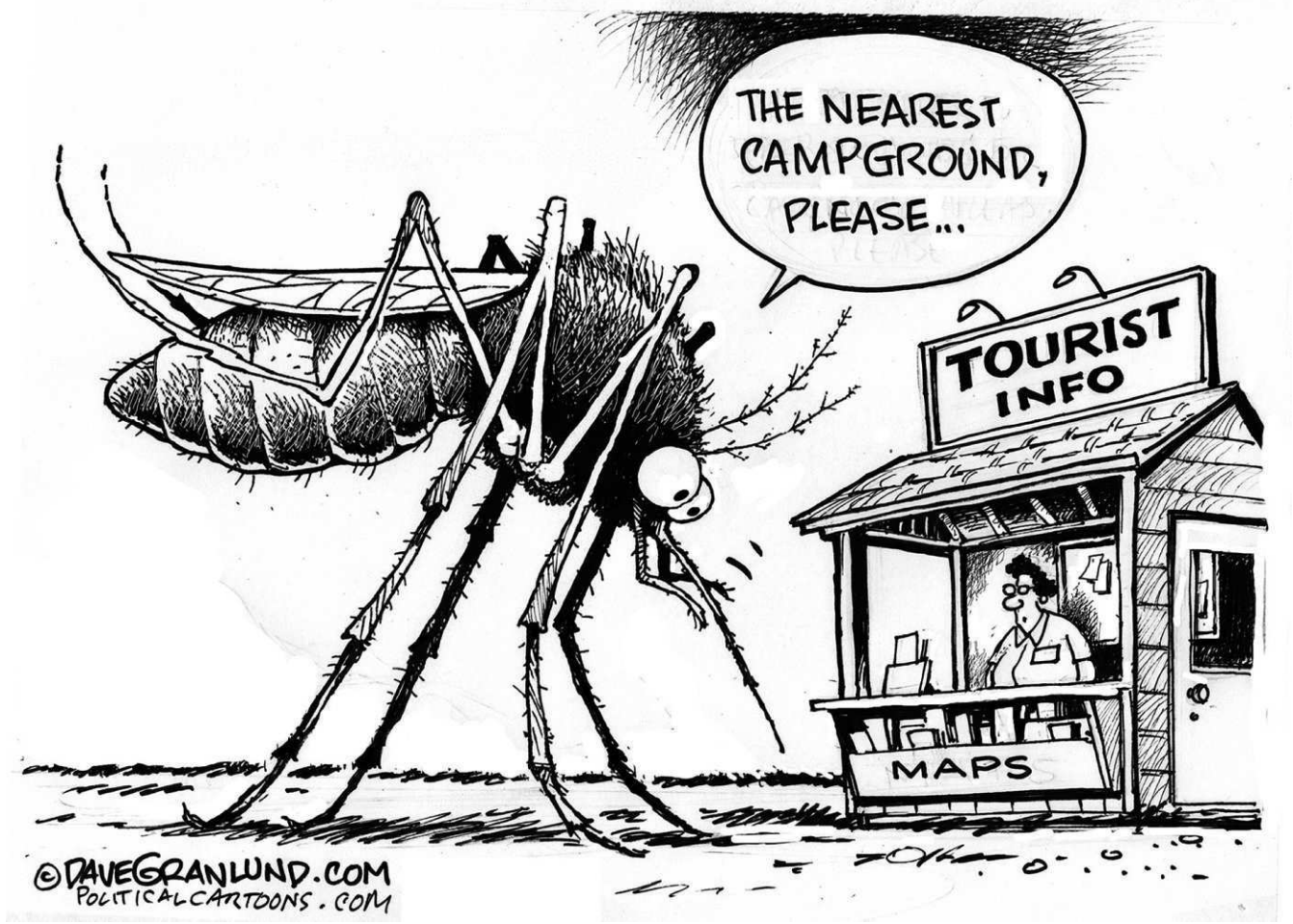
More efforts to connect with our audience on Twitter will be coming this fall.

Instagram, Pinterest and Snapchat are on the radar.

Our goal in all of this is to make people aware of the beautiful and awesome place we live and also introduce them to the Chieftain and its content.

We're easy to find on Facebook. Use facebook.com/Wallowa to join the fun. Our web address is wallowa.com. The website includes a link to the .pdf version of the print edition.

Wahl is the editor of the Chieftain and a fan of social media as a way to communicate a message, most of the time.



We need a traffic reporter

Wallowa County doesn't have a single stoplight, but that's not going to stop me from appointing myself traffic reporter for the Chieftain, starting right now.

There are a few regional peculiarities to driving in and around the Wallawas. So, in the interest of safe travels during this busy season, let's review some of the unwritten rules of the road specific to our little corner pocket of Oregon.

There are no rules at all on the Loop Road at the present time. It's a knife fight out there. Forest Service Road 39, known to friends and travel brochures as the Wallowa Mountain Loop, takes you to and from Joseph and Halfway via miles of tight curves, beautiful country, several world-class pothole gauntlets and views of straight drop-offs down to timbered canyons below, unobstructed by guardrails.

It's a gorgeous, memorable drive enjoyed by all manner of people on wheels. We got packs of bicyclists churning up those hills. Hells Attorneys and Hells Accountants motorcycle gangs are fond of the 39.

You got your regular cars. Trucks brimming with firewood. Trucks pulling stock trailers. Then there's motor homes, some of which aren't much bigger than regular homes that don't move.

I drive the Loop Road every work day, down to the fish weir on the Imnaha River. The majority of drivers so far this year are being good about sharing the road — if the ditch counts as part of the road. "I'll take my half out of the middle" is the best description I've heard for



AND FURTHERMORE

Jon Rombach

how most RV captains portion out available asphalt on the 39 Road.

Meeting an RV on a corner is a lot like a bear encounter. RVs behave similar to a mother bear and instinctively protect their cubs.

The cubs in this case being the entire road. Getting between an RV and the whole road on a corner often results in a "bluff charge," where the mama motor home tries to establish its territory by initially swinging toward you rather than veering away.

It's important to stand your ground. Survival experts advise making yourself appear large, and the best way to do this is just not drive off the road. Fleeing may trigger a prey response and pursuit by the enraged RV.

Cayenne-based aerosol repellents are not effective when being charged on a corner by a motor home. You have to spray it out your window, so most of it just blows right back and burns the eyes something terrible.

In the event you are pursued into the ditch by an aggressive motor home, curl into a ball and protect your head and neck. In most cases the RV will cover you with dirt, branches and their insurance information to perhaps come back

and feed later.

Another popular trend this year is for bicycles and motorcycles to just stop right on the road. Sometimes on a corner. To rest, stretch, get a drink of water, turn my hair white.

I'm not exactly sure why standing in the road seems like a good idea — or would be an idea at all — but I know for sure that many two-wheeled vehicles seem to regard pullouts and road shoulders as if they were lava.

Gravel is the best theory I've heard for this otherwise baffling refusal to get off the road. Little rocks must be heck on narrow bike tires and apparently make for poor footing with a motorcycle kickstand.

I may go out there on my days off with a pushbroom and sweep some pullouts, if that's what it takes. Might have to lay carpet and pad down on the wide spots to convince some of these folks it's worth the trouble to get out of the way of oncoming traffic.

There's your traffic report for the Wallowa Mountain Loop Road. Take it slow and be ready to dodge and weave. Next time we'll discuss how holding an ice cream cone gives you magical powers to walk right into traffic on Main Street in Joseph, how it's OK to divide the speed limit by half when you're looking at pretty mountains and the fine art of waving at a rig going by that looks like somebody you know but isn't.

Everybody be safe out there.

Jon Rombach is a traffic reporter for the Chieftain.

Meditating with chicken yoga

In another part of the country at an aviation fundraiser, pilots each drop a chicken from their planes at low altitude and the one whose chicken hits the target circle painted on the ground wins. The idea is that when the chickens flap their wings, it prohibits a fatal landing, and it's funny to watch.

"That idea will never fly here," I grimaced.

My Wallowa County learning curve includes lessons on chickens. Before I arrived here, my closest association with poultry was chicken nuggets grabbed at a fast food restaurant.

The basic understanding of "where do chicken nuggets come from" was there, but it didn't really matter to me. Also in the picture, a huge chicken processing plant leased hundreds of chicken farms around my former home.

When the occasional Deep South heat wave killed thousands of chickens in the 300-foot long poultry houses, my only concern was to pinch my nose shut as I drove by. The smell was horrendous.

"Respect The Chicken" was not on my radar.

During my initial reconnaissance of Wallowa County, I visited the Joseph United Methodist Church. When sharing prayer requests and announcements, a woman on the front pew announced



WALLOWA GIRL

Katherine Stickroth

that Fred the Rooster was ready for the pot. She didn't have time to pluck it, so if anyone wanted it, let her know.

Coming from a Bible-Belt-fundamentalist-rigid-reverence background, I thought, "Wow. That's different" and decided to relocate here.

In Wallowa County, chickens are considered pets, with given names and unique personalities.

A friend introduced me to Frozen Toes, a motherly chicken whose feet had been injured from frostbite. Her coo-mate, Raspberry, was not interested in raising her chicks, so Frozen Toes took over and raised them as her own.

This endeared her to me, and when I received the call one morning that a fox had raided the chicken pen and Frozen Toes was not to be found, I sobbed.

"What has become of you?" the old me asked.

Another friend has a chicken house trailer, so that when she spends exten-

sive time at her cabin, she can bring her chickens with her.

At a recent barbecue, several women arrived with their eggs to compare the different colors and sizes as though speaking of their children.

While visiting another ranch woman one frigid day, she said, "Watch this."

Outside her kitchen window a hen and a young rooster were standing on a rail fence, their backs toward us.

"She's teaching him how to keep his feet warm."

It was like watching synchronized swimming at the Olympics. She slowly raised her right foot up to her feathers as snowflakes whirled about. Young Rooster did the same.

Or maybe it was chicken yoga, "Breathe in. Hold."

She eased the right foot down; he followed suit.

"Exhale."

She leaned a little to the right as she lifted her left leg. He copied. After five minutes of this back-and-forth business, I had to walk away from laughing so hard.

Perhaps owning chickens is in my future. I'll have to meditate on that.

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

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. You can submit a letter to the Wallowa County Chieftain in person; by mail, by email, or via the submission form at the newspaper's website, located at wallowa.com.

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