

Holidays are a time for reflection

My wife and I made it to a performance of “A Murder is Announced” on Friday evening. It was a wonderful event, and we enjoyed ourselves thoroughly — including snuggling in a warm blanket.

Kudos to director Kate Loftus, her cast and crew and everyone who had a part in this MidValley Theatre Co. production. I was a bit irked that I didn’t choose the correct villain, but the possibilities were endless.

I had considered searching on Google for the plot earlier in the day and impressing my wife with my grand skills of deduction. Alas, I forgot until we were on the way to Lostine.

I know everyone is hoping the next production will be announced soon. What a plum in the Wallowa County pudding to have such a group of talented players.



WAHL TO WALL
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Paul Wahl

THE HOLIDAYS are upon us once again, and that means busy times between now and the end of the year. Each year about this time I pledge to myself and anyone who will listen that the hustle and bustle will not get the best of me, and I will spent at least as much time contemplating the reason for the season as anything else.

I’ll admit I’m not much of a gift shopper. I tend to ask my wife what she wants and then take her along to make sure I get it right. Most of our family is a long way off so we have mostly abandoned gift-giving.

Friends and neighbors usually get plates full of my wife’s holiday cookie assortment, which seems to get better each year. Having recently adopted a mostly gluten-free diet for health reasons, eating baked goods is going to be more of a challenge.

Be sure to keep abreast of all of the community activities coming up in the next few weeks. Wallowa County citizens do a terrific job of entertaining themselves.

The weather will be pleasant. That’s my prediction anyway.

Here’s why. We recently opted to put studded tires on our Subaru. Given our luck, that means we will never need them between now and the deadline to remove them. Remember, you heard it here first.

ONE OF those above-mentioned events is the Del McCoury Band at the OK Theatre on Nov. 30. It’s not every day you have the opportunity to hear this quality of a concert without traveling to Portland or Spokane.

My wife and I are hard-core Blue Grass fans. The music is upbeat, yet lonesome. It’s a unique sound. There’s really nothing else like it — and it’s uniquely American.

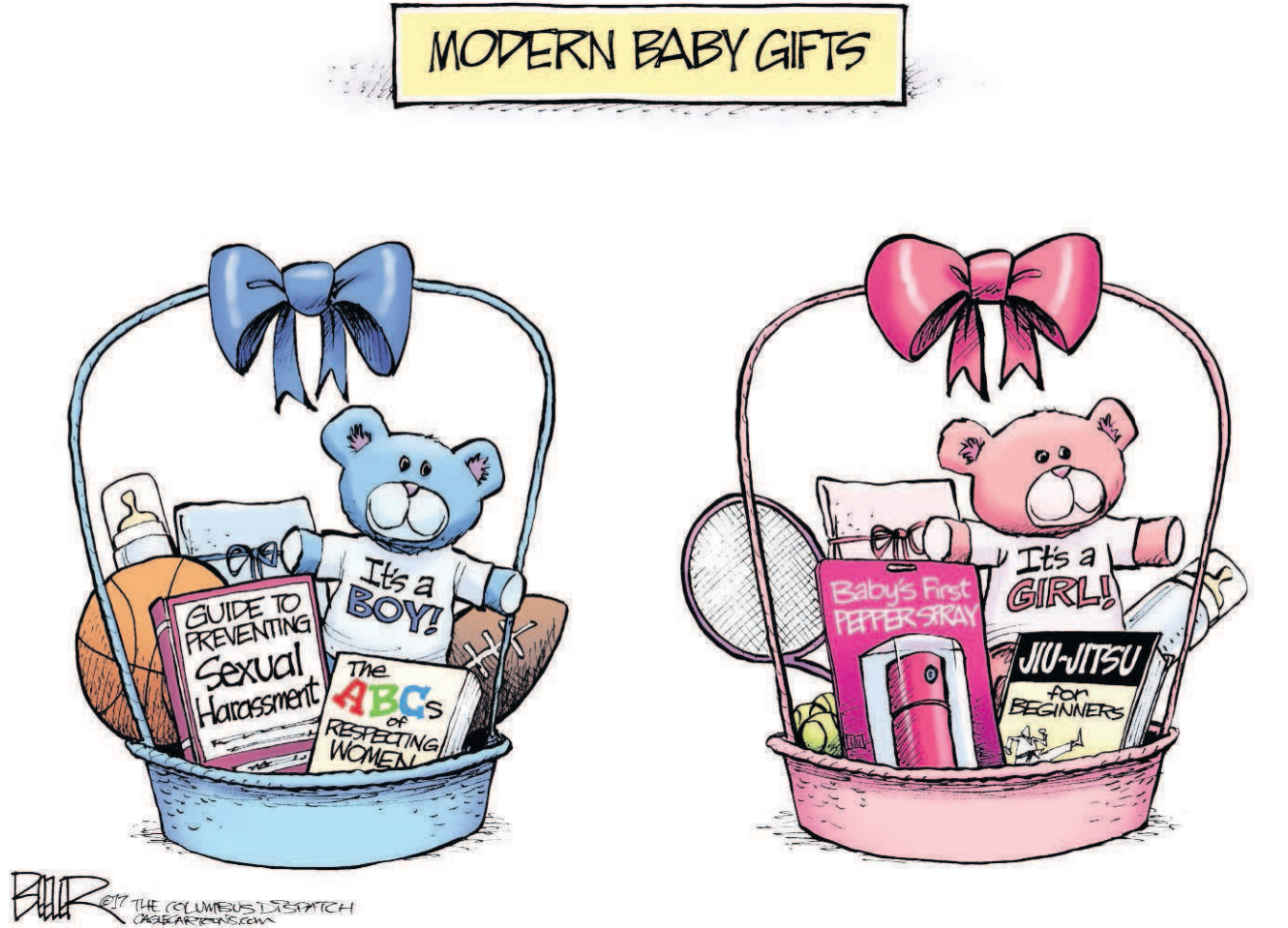
Unless you’ve been sleeping under a rock the past year or so, you are well aware of the efforts to bring the OK Theatre back to its previous glory. A lot of time and heart has already gone into the project with more to come.

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).



Riding a wave of truth-telling

We live in a strange time.

National news is dominated by arguments over facts, half-facts and fake facts, social media condemnations and accusations while a growing chorus of serious speakers of all ages, religious and political persuasions, rises to speak truth.

The liberal movie mogul Harvey Weinstein was not the first person of note to be accused of sexual abuse and huge hush money payments.

Bill O’Reilly of Fox News beat him on that score, but the accusations against Weinstein have opened a dam of stories about major figures in entertainment, religion, sports and politics with sometimes bizarre accounts of power, control and sexual predation.

Diana Nyad, the greatest long-distance swimmer ever, wrote last week in the New York Times about a swimming coach who abused her and others when they were in high school, and how, after the girls told the school, the coach was quietly let go and then went on to coach in college and in the Olympics.

She’s been telling the story for decades; now people are listening. And listening to Olympic gymnast Aly Raisman, who joined the chorus with accusations against USA Gymnastics doctor Larry Nassar, who is already facing charges of abuse and child pornography. These stories and powerful organizations and a naive public are too late for scores of abused swimmers and gymnasts, but “late” is saving lives.

Last week also the Brooklyn Diocese of the Roman Catholic Church released the names of several priests who had been “laicized” for abusing young boys 30 and 40 years ago. One went on to an illustrious academic career, which Arizona State University terminated with the new revelations.

The comic Louis C.K. joins Kevin Spacey and Public Radio’s Senior Vice President of News Mike Oreskes in the parade. In the NPR case, as in most oth-



MAIN STREET
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Rich Wandschneider

ers, the women — and in Spacey’s case, men — who had been reluctant to come forward have found courage in the wake of Weinstein’s fall.

Even the U.S. Senate has decided that sexual harassment training should be required as Alabama Senate candidate Roy Moore fights off accusations of pursuing and abusing teenagers as a young lawyer. My favorite defense: the Bible has stories of older men happily marrying teenagers.

If you think this all happens somewhere else, talk to the folks at Safe Harbors, and comb old local newspapers for reports of men physically and sexually abusing girls, women and the occasional boy. The legions of famous victims who have stepped forward will embolden ordinary people in towns and cities across the country.

And listen for other stories too. Race has not been far behind gender in today’s truth-telling. Recent studies show that the tide of white Trump voters who swept him into office — despite evidence of questionable sexual and racial behaviors — was largely motivated by fear of immigrants and the fact of a sitting black American President.

In Wallowa County, we named the mascot at Wallowa High School “Amos” after an African-American named Amos Marsh, probably the most successful athlete who ever graduated there.

And we laugh at the story of our beloved county clerk, Marjorie Martin, who felt obliged to hide documents related to the massacre of Chinese gold miners on the Snake River while close relatives of the perpetrators were still alive.

Oregonian reporter Greg Nokes caught wind of the massacre story and doggedly pursued it, befriended Marjorie, and gained important information after she retired, and new clerk Charlotte McIver uncovered old documents stuffed away in the “wrong place.” A book, a monument on Snake River, and an Oregon Public Television documentary followed.

A recent showing of “Massacre at Hells Canyon” drew more than 100 people at the Josephy Center, and Joseph teacher Jason Crenshaw showed the film and taught the event in his U.S. History class in Joseph.

Gwen Trice has been uncovering the history of African-American loggers in Wallowa County with the Maxville Heritage project for several years, and Pearl Alice Marsh, younger sister of star athletes Amos and Frank, is compiling a written history with interviews of the first generation descendants of those loggers.

Last week Pearl Marsh told the Joseph student body, grades 7-12, what it was like to grow up black in Wallowa, how she couldn’t be a “Brownie,” but a kind 4-H leader recruited her, how famous Amos could dance with white girls, but not date them, how living in Maxville and Wallowa was tough, but a huge step up from the Jim Crow south.

When a student asked if she still experienced discrimination, Pearl said “yes, but we’re much better now than we were with the legal discrimination and the lynchings that haunted all black American lives just a few years ago.”

And we are all better for knowing the truth — even when the telling is hard.

Rich Wandschneider lives in Joseph and writes a monthly column for the Chieftain. Wandschneider’s column is coming up on its 50th year of publication in the Chieftain.

Pranks are the highest form of art

Over the years I have witnessed or been a party to a few pranks that have not always been appreciated by the object of the prank, hereafter referred to as the victim.

Last year at the Pendleton Roundup, someone pulled a good one. Several posters were posted around town offering free rides to or from Crabbies Bar for the duration of the roundup. The offer was good at any time of day or night from Crabbies to anywhere or to Crabbies from anywhere with a phone number in large bold print.

I noticed the posters at the roundup grounds, Hamley’s and other strategic locations like the Wild Horse Casino. The poster wasn’t anything fancy, more like a public notice.

I remember thinking how nice it was of someone to ferry drunks and keep them off the road. How like Pendleton to afford a service like this to roundup visitors. The only problem was that the phone number listed belonged to one of the pickup men working the rodeo.

After the first several calls for rides, he finally turned his phone off for the duration. The posters were no doubt the work of some bronc rider he had dropped while attempting to pick him off his bucking bronc.

Former world champion team roper Leo Camarillo always wanted to maintain a mental edge over other ropers and would taunt them a little just before they were readying to rope. He might plant a seed of doubt about a slick spot in the arena or tell them they had drawn a runner and don’t be late or you will never catch him.

One year on the Fourth of July run, one of the cowboys borrowed Leo’s pickup for



OPEN RANGE
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Barrie Qualle

a beer run, and while he had possession of the keys, he had a few extras made. He passed the keys out to a few other cowboys and when any of them saw Leo’s pickup parked they would move it a little but keep it in sight.

This began to worry Leo who couldn’t understand why his pickup was often not where he thought he parked it. Comments like “Leo, you are really losing it” didn’t help the mental edge advantage he had enjoyed in the past.

While working for the County Ag Department, I spent a lot of time cruising the county in a pickup with the county shield on the door. I heard that my veterinarian was building a commodity shed at his office. I knew Mike well and knew he had been in trouble with the county for not getting a building permit when he converted his barn into his office and treatment area.

I pulled into his yard with the county shield prominently displayed on the pickup. Mike was putting the finishing touches on the new shed. He climbed down the ladder and started walking toward me and being careful to hide part of my face I waited till he was close enough and said, “I hope you have a permit for this new building, doctor.”

He was sure he was caught until he heard me laughing.

He was quite relieved when he saw I wasn’t from the building department, and we had a nice visit. He confessed the

worst thing about when he was caught was dealing with the wrath of his fiery Hispanic wife.

About then I saw his wife driving down the hill from their house and decided I should be going. She pulled up and was talking to Mike while I made my u-turn. When I got abreast of them I leaned out the window and said, “You know Doctor Adian, it’s much cheaper to get your permit before building than to pay the penalties.”

I slowed just long enough to catch the look of rage on her face then drove off with Dr. Adian chasing me down the drive way.

One Halloween, I was dressed as a doctor with a lab coat and reflector on my forehead for a masquerade party. I also had a 50cc syringe with a long needle filled with a red fluid.

Kids kept coming to the door trick or treating and slowing down my departure for the masquerade party. A bunch of kids showed up, and I invited them in and had them line up by the door.

They assumed to receive candy. I picked up the syringe with the red fluid and long needle and informed them that this year Dr. Qualle was going to give free flu shots instead of candy. I started for the lead kid who immediately said, “I already got mine.”

The next kid got a horrified look on his face and bolted for the door followed by the others. They didn’t quit running till they were at the end of the block. Word must have gotten around, as we were not bothered by trick-or-treaters anymore.

Barrie Qualle is an all-around working ranch hand, author and ranch rodeo enthusiast. He lives in Wallowa County.

WALLOWA COUNTY CHIEFTAIN

USPS No. 665-100

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Wallowa County's Newspaper Since 1884
Enterprise, Oregon

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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
Wallowa.com
facebook.com/Wallowa | twitter.com/wcchieftain

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

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Volume 134