

Students still discovering journalism

The future of journalism is in good hands. I spent a class period last week with Cameron Livermore's journalism students at Elgin High School.

I discovered their publication back in December when I picked up a copy at an Elgin bank. I was impressed a school the size of Elgin would have a school newspaper. On top of that, it held my interest from front to back. The class also produces a nifty website and is just beginning to venture into video.



WAHL TO WALL
Paul Wahl

The students even raised funds online to purchase a high-quality camera to shoot photos for their publication.

Cameron is an English teacher at Elgin and has some professional journalism background. He's a native of Beaver-creek, Ore., and on Facebook describes himself as a "teacher, writer, reader, motorcyclist, board rider, dog walker, cat herder." I contacted him, and he invited me to stop by and check in with his students.

In addition, I wanted to pick his brain on a project I've been noodling since I arrived in Wallowa County almost a year ago.

I have talked with all three of our school districts about creating a community journalism program that would publish a combined school newspaper and website in the county. The idea received a good reception.

Then time caught up with me. My new plan was to organize something for Jan. 1, which has now come and gone. So Plan C is for debut next fall.

The idea is to expose high school students to writing, editing, photography, page layout, websites, video and everything else that's part of the journalism world today.

There's a bit of a selfish motive behind it for me. If I can develop one highly qualified sports reporter from each school, I will be more than thrilled. If we can help even one student find a career in journalism, I will consider it a success. If one of them one day comes back and works for the Chieftain, that would be a win-win.

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In sharing the vision for Wallowa County, Cameron said he would like to have his students participate as well. So the concept is growing before it has really reached the drawing board. I guess that's a good sign.

We are not short on community resources for journalism in the county, so the plan is to put some of the "formers" and "retireds" to work. There's nothing like spending a few hours a week with high schoolers to give you a new outlook on life.

You can check out Elgin's work at huskytracksjournalism.com or pick up a hard copy of the student newspaper at several spots in Elgin.

THIS WEEK'S cartoon on this page is by an artist you have never seen before in the Chieftain.

Some weeks back, Heidi Muller called to my attention a cartoon she had found online that promoted the idea of why we need libraries. Heidi has been a worker bee in the effort to see a library district formed in Wallowa County.

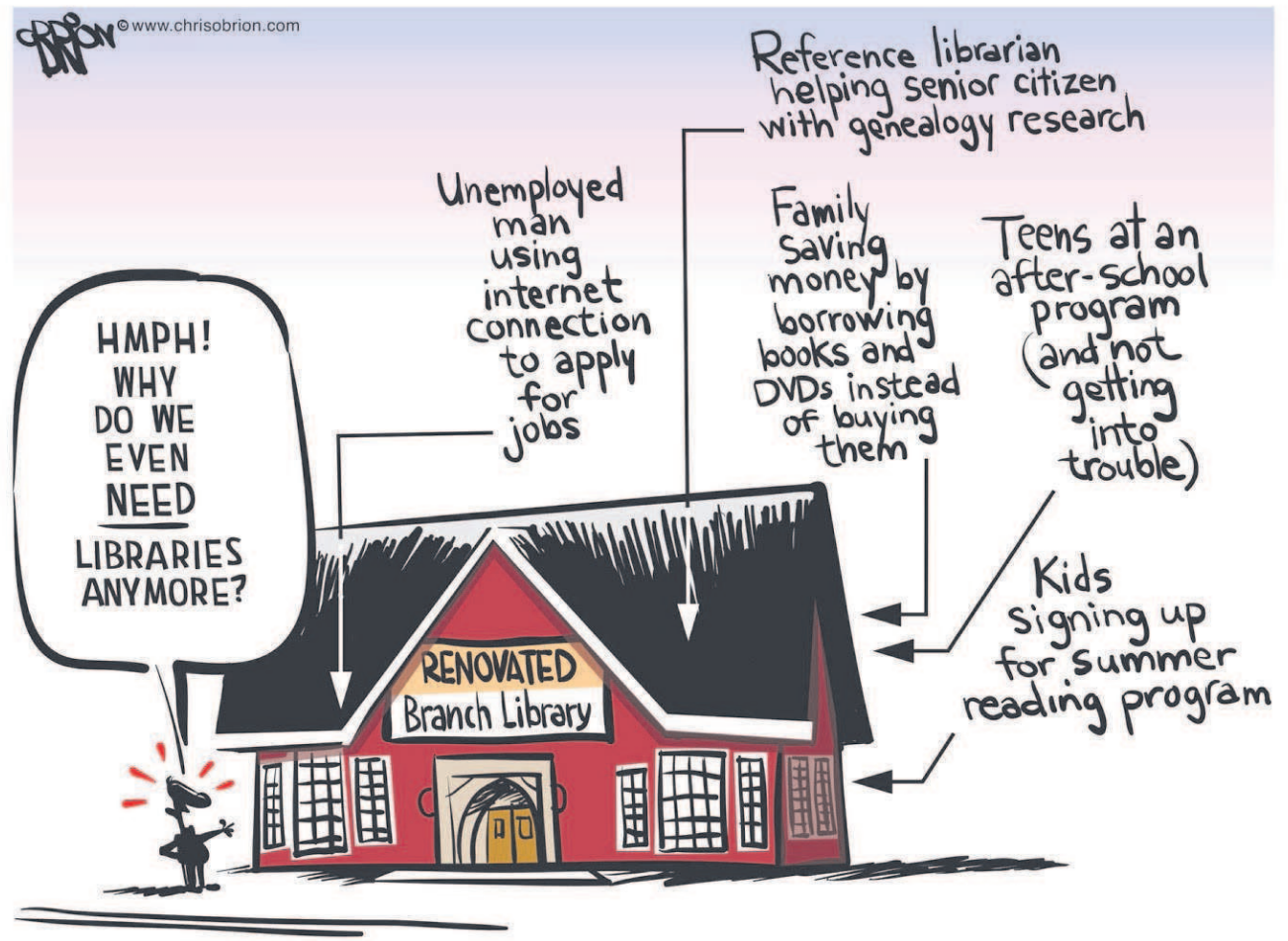
She wondered if we could reprint the cartoon. They're usually fairly heavily copyrighted, so I didn't hold out much hope.

Heidi put on her Sherlock Holmes hat and did some sleuthing. She found Chris O'Brien on Facebook and sent me the details.

I contacted Chris, who graciously allowed us to reproduce the cartoon. He says of all the cartoons he's drawn in his career, this one receives the most requests for reprint.

Chris has drawn a weekly freelance editorial cartoon for the Roanoke (Va.) Times since 2007. He has been staff cartoonist at three newspapers on the East Coast.

Our thanks to Chris for his generosity. I hope you enjoy the cartoon.



A board is a bummer for balance

Huddle up, Wallowa County. Bring it in. We need to have a quick chat about handshakes.

The other day I saw a guy I know and right off he informs me he's not going to shake my hand. So I automatically get into my fighting stance. I grew up on the mean cul-de-sacs of Pleasant Hill, Ore., where a refusal to shake hands means it's two seconds from go time.

So I got my elbows in, feet little more than shoulder width apart, ready to initiate the Cloudburst Technique, which is a move where you rain blows out of a clear blue sky. But the guy is like, Whoah, whoah, hey ... I just don't want to get the flu, so I'm not shaking hands until winter is over.

Well, OK then. I approve this plan. Makes good sense.

I'm going to adopt this. No more hand-shaking for me until we're in the clear on colds and flu. So far I have avoided being sick all winter, and I'd like to finish out the season undefeated.

I have been less lucky in the winter hazard department of slipping and falling. Took a spectacular faceplant last week. Just a full body crater into the snow.

I was jogging across the frozen tundra of my yard at the time. Had a six-foot eight-inch board under one arm and a cordless drill in the other hand. It was dark. I had my toolbelt on.

Jogging in a toolbelt with pouches full of nails, screws, framing hammer, tape measure and other sharp pointy jangly things is not a natural movement.

The board under my arm was about to become the new shelf above the desk in my office. I'm looking up at it right now. Gorgeous plank of wood. Old red fir rough-sawn beauty. One inch thick, solid



AND FURTHERMORE

Jon Rombach

So I began jogging with four pounds of decking screws jangling around in my tool pouches, the shelf tilting further from kilter with every step and right then the toe of my clunky insulated winter boot kicked a frozen gopher mound cleverly disguised by snow and moonlight shadows.

twelve inches wide. Grain standing out like a raised relief topo map.

Salvaged this board from a barn years ago and been saving it because it's just too nice for any old project. I'd just attached two very custom supports on either end, fashioned from alder branches.

Same sticks Terminal Gravity tap handles are made of. Maroon bark with white flecks. Matter of fact, I went out and got these very branches with Todd Kruger, the TG tap handle-maker.

So these gangly sticks on either end make the shelf very tippy, I don't have a

proper center of gravity hold on it, and if it falls I'll probably break what I just finished carefully crafting.

The thing to do would have been make two trips, but I didn't have time. This board had languished in my shed for probably eight years, but suddenly it had to be installed right this instant.

So I began jogging with four pounds of decking screws jangling around in my tool pouches, the shelf tilting further from kilter with every step and right then the toe of my clunky insulated winter boot kicked a frozen gopher mound cleverly disguised by snow and moonlight shadows.

The mound of dirt did not yield and gravity took a sudden interest in the proceedings.

I could let go of the shelf, or the screw gun, or both, to catch myself. Or I could grip both with steely resolve and catch myself using my chin. I went with the chin.

It wasn't great. But some of the impact was dispersed through my left thigh as it landed on something not soft in my tool bags. On the bright side, I did manage to not break the delicate stick brackets or the shelf.

After making this very unfortunate snow angel in my yard, I limped slowly the rest of the way, installed the shelf, and it looks pretty good, if I do say so myself. The bruise on my leg doesn't look bad either.

Steady as she goes on the ice out there, folks. Cut back on the handshakes and we should coast through the rest of this winter just fine.

Jon Rombach is a curator of fine barnwood and a columnist for the Chieftain.

I realize now ... seeing is believing

This milder winter is certainly a blessing and a relief. More of my distress during last year's winter was due to not being prepared with proper supplies and adequate food. All is going well now.

Haven't had any real emergencies other than at this moment I'm staying with a friend because I have no heat in the house. Grain Growers will replace my propane stove soon.

Last summer, while bagging Imnaha country blackberries to freeze, I wondered if they would grow here in the valley. About four berries were placed in a glass dish next to the sink to let dry. I'd plant them soon.

As weeks passed I became worried about my eyesight. My eyes felt tired and weak from long hours on my laptop as I worked on the history book. I scheduled an eye appointment with an ophthalmologist.

In 2014 he had diagnosed a condition that would cause me to be blind in three years. Yet in 2015 that condition had left by following his vitamin regimen. That dilemma raised its head though. Is that why I was having trouble with my vision?



WALLOWA GAL

Katherine Stickroth

Cooler nights signaled snow was coming soon. As I pattered around the house I'd hear a bump in the kitchen that I assumed was Petey Pup and ignored it. My little garden plot in the back yard was already dug.

There was no sensibility in planting the seeds at this time of year ... it was more about holding on to my last chance to stick something in the ground.

I noticed tiny segments of the blackberries in the space behind my kitchen faucet and the wall. "How did those get there?" I questioned. But I dismissed them up, grabbed the dish holding the others and headed out the door.

"There now," I spoke, patting the dirt over the seeds. "Let's see how this turns out."

Within a few days, I found evidence that more were living with me than just Petey. Mice droppings were scattered in the cabinets and drawers under the sink. I

stared blankly at the wall, then burst out laughing.

"Oh, smart, Katherine. I think you planted mouse turds in your garden!"

I explained my diminishing vision (but not the turd planting) to the eye doctor.

"Your tests look good. In fact, your vision has improved," he looked at me. "Let me see your glasses."

He held them up to the light. "Do you ever clean these?"

Pause. "Whenever I think of it."

"How often is that?"

"Maybe once a week." I felt two inches tall.

"How about three times a day?" he instructed.

Laying my head on the car door before unlocking it, I bemoaned, "It's so hard being me!"

So now I cast a wary eye toward that bare patch of dirt by my fence.

Warming days coming and after the robins return, I will have to face the inevitable and examine last year's plantings.

If tiny noses with whiskers appear, and beady black eyes return my gaze, you'll be the first to know.

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

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