

Remembering Bruce and his knowledge of our forests

It was with heavy heart that I learned of the death of Wallowa County Commissioner-elect Bruce Dunn last Tuesday.

We were wrapping up the last page of the Aug. 22 edition at the time. I was so taken back my journalistic instincts took a back seat.

We were able to get the sad news onto the front page.

When you are fairly new to a community, you don't often know personally folks who die. I feel so blessed at having gotten to know Bruce through the course of the campaign. I grew to appreciate his insights and willingness to educate the "new guy."

In fact, we had tentatively set up a date to meet Thursday morning to catch up and talk forest plan revision. Bruce sent me an email Monday letting me know it was a busy week for him, but he gave me several windows during which we could get together.



WAHL TO WALL
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Paul Wahl

That's the kind of person he was.

Bruce was a bit wary of me when we first met. When we finished conversations, he'd always say, "now can I ask you something?" That would usually be followed by an insightful question about how the Chieftain operated and often the media in general.

We both agreed there were people in the media who needed their butts kicked. He told me several time he was genuinely appreciative of the work we did.

Likewise, I had never met anyone who had the knowledge of forest, trees and forest issues Bruce possessed.

Born and raised in North Dakota where the state tree is a telephone pole, forests were not in my native bank of knowledge.

Yet, Bruce often said, "I really don't know that much more than the next guy, I've just been around longer than most of them."

I remember the first time Bruce shared his idea to create an NRAC-type organization to deal with issues other than natural resources in the county. I was impressed and told him we would support it as strongly as we were able.

I believe in people gathering around a table and reasoning together. It sure beats shooting at each other from the weeds.

I am quite sure that his vision will be implemented in the county, and I will offer whatever resources at my disposal to see that it does.

Our condolences to Bruce's family and all his friends and colleagues. I didn't get to know him as well as I would have liked.

Heaven's forests are in good hands.

THIS WEEK, we will be on short deadline due to the Labor Day holiday on Monday. That means changes in when certain need to be submitted in time to make the next edition.

We try our best to accommodate everyone because we know it's a bit difficult to keep track such things. Think of it this way: Almost everything that will run in the Sept. 5 edition will need to be into us by noon on Friday, Aug. 31.

It's seems like most holiday deadline weeks we end up leaving something out. If it happens to be you, my apologies in advance. It's not intentional.

If you have questions, you can always call or email.



Different standards for different people

Let's talk.

Let's talk about important issues facing our country. But let's base our conversation on facts, logic and historical examples.

No more yelling epithets, hurling character assassinations and promoting imagined results of a political philosophy without citing real world examples of success.

Our nation is in peril from all the present animosity and we need to be able to have an adult conversation about where we go from here. Let's start it here in Wallowa County.

So here is a fun fact. Our Constitution has guided our nation for longer than any other written document in the history of mankind. No other nation even comes close.

Italy's current Constitution was established in 1948, Germany's in 1949 and France's in 1958. After World War II, we helped Japan design a new system of government based on free elections instead of an emperor.

Britain, our closest cultural kin, does not have a written constitution at all but relies on its storied tradition for its government structure. Most nations today, as has been true for much of human history, are ruled by kings or dictators who have unlimited, unchecked powers.

A king can take away a peasant's property, his daughter, and even his life by a simple command. "Off with his head!"



LET'S ROLL
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Anita VanGrunsven

Our nation was founded in 1776 on equality. Our Declaration of Independence, which is a statement of the guiding principles for our new nation, says, "We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty, and the pursuit of Happiness."

In America, no king could arise to take these rights away because our Constitution and laws protect them. At least, they used to.

Today, our nation is facing a grave threat to this basic principle of our founding. Today, powerful people appear to be above the law just as the kings of old were.

Today, a Secretary of State can be "extremely careless" with lots of top secret documents and face no legal consequences while an ordinary sailor, who took a picture in his submarine to share with his family, can be charged and prosecuted under the same national security laws, be convicted and sent to jail.

What about this?

On June 28, 2012, Eric Holder, Obama's Attorney General, became

the first sitting cabinet member in our nation's history to be held in criminal contempt of Congress. It was a bi-partisan vote taken after proof that he had lied to Congress in his testimony about the "Fast and Furious" gun running operation.

An ordinary person could spend up to five years in jail for lying to Congress. What happened to Eric Holder? Nothing. There was no prosecution and he kept his job as Attorney General, our nation's top lawyer. Ironic, don't you think?

The important issue here is not the details of each case. There are many examples we can discuss. What is important is that our laws now appear to be applied using different standards for different people.

If you are rich and powerful, you can flout the laws like a king, but if you are an ordinary Joe, you will go to jail. hat directly undermines the very foundation on which our nation is built!

We should all be encouraging our Congressmen and the courts to honor our historic commitment to equality. We the People need to see justice applied fairly to all to restore faith in our constitutional republic.

Please note this article was based on facts, logic and verifiable history. Conclusion: Lock Her Up!

Anita VanGrunsven is a grandmother who lives in rural Wallowa with time to think.

Pay it forward: Folks in Wallowa County are the best

A generous trail of transmission fluid followed us for a quarter mile up the rough road to Two Pan Trailhead. Running out of transmission fluid brought an inopportune end to hauling our four horses and gear up to the trailhead where seven of us planned to meet Aug. 12 for a five-day wilderness horse-packing trip.

"Okay, Lord, now what?" Two Pan is 18 miles south of Lostine in the Wallowa Mountains. At 5 p.m. on a Sunday evening with no cell service, no obvious help was to be had.

Then God sent two most unlikely angels.

Our jaw dropped when Maria Belknap pulled up in her truck. Looking like a cross between a Wallowa cowgirl and the Beverly Hills business woman that she is in the winter season, she quickly assessed the situation and headed down to the closest ranches to try to find us five gallons of transmission fluid.

Why would she go out of her way to help complete strangers? "Because that's what we do for each other here in Wallowa County," she explained.

Fifteen phone calls later, Maria contacted a second unlikely angel, John Nesemann, a retired school superintendent. He had just come in from a long day of building and had settled down for the evening in his comfy pajama pants.

Without hesitation, John jammed his bare feet into his boots. Laces flapping, he shoved on his cowboy hat, jumped into his Dodge flat-bed truck and rattled over miles of washboard to come to our rescue.

Upon arrival, he pulled our broken-down Ford F-350 off the road and promised to call a reputable mechanic in the morning to tow the truck and repair the transmission. Then, insisting that we should not have our vacation ruined, he

LETTERS to the EDITOR

hooked up to our horse trailer and roared up the rugged road, all the while regaling us with colorful stories.

Backing into an open site in the horse camp at the crowded trailhead, he unhooked the trailer. Waving off any offers of gas money and thanks, he told us to pay it forward and sped off into the gathering darkness.

Five days later, when we rode and hiked out of the wilderness, we stared in disbelief at our truck sitting next to the horse trailer looking like it had been there all along.

Bemused, we eased our way down the bumpy road to Lostine, then wound our way out a country road looking for SPS Repair. We needed to pay our bill and wanted to give our thanks in person. Leonard, the mechanic, is an entertaining character, but he lost his angel status when I asked why he would trust us to come pay him.

"I didn't," he declared waving an \$850 check John had written to cover the towing and repair bill — just in case we weren't the people John judged us to be.

When we called John to thank him, he filled in another piece of the story. When he was a young teacher new to the area, his truck broke down on the road to Two Pan. Another kind soul not only helped him out, but when he finished a challenging day of teaching, his repaired truck was waiting for him.

Again, waving off our thanks he reminded us to pay it forward.

We did not have long to wait for an opportu-

WHY WOULD SHE GO OUT OF HER WAY TO HELP COMPLETE STRANGERS? "BECAUSE THAT'S WHAT WE DO FOR EACH OTHER HERE IN WALLOWA COUNTY," SHE EXPLAINED.

nity. Three days later, on Kyle's way home from visiting his mother who had been hospitalized a hundred miles north of our home, he noticed a broken-down truck with a loaded horse trailer along I-5 just south of Curtain, Ore.

Kyle immediately turned around and hooked up to the stranded California woman's horse trailer. After reassuring her that he wasn't planning to steal her five ponies, he hauled her horses 85 miles north to their destination near Lacombe.

No need for thanks, just pay it forward.

Carol Lovegren Miller
Oakland, Ore.

Newspapers encourage exchange of ideas

In the Aug. 15 edition of The Chieftain, the editor reminded us that the press in rural America has a critical role to play; namely, the public has access to its editor and the newspaper pays attention to its various constituencies.

Anyone can see that this is a diverse county

with wide-ranging viewpoints exercised through letters to the editor, columnists and stories on any topic you might imagine.

I value the opportunity to stop by The Chieftain office and bend the ear of its editor, to raise questions about subjects I don't understand but wish to understand because I wasn't raised on a farm or a ranch.

Virtually all of us who came here since the 1880s were once "outsiders" but want to be considered a part of this community. We rely heavily on our local newspaper, and the good will of friends and neighbors, to give us the necessary information to grasp the ways of life here.

Our newspaper reports the good and the bad, the colorful and the less colorful events of our lives. It reports about the county fair, its deficiencies as well as its benefits to the young and old alike who reside in our county. I get inspired to attend concerts or to look for a species of bird that hasn't crossed my path before.

The Chieftain, along with newspapers across the country, provides ample opportunity for citizens to express themselves on topics of current interest or controversy. Otherwise it would be too easy to keep our heads in the sand, to forget the very reasons our country was founded.

For those of us who may have forgotten this part of our high school history lessons, I offer an excerpt from our Constitution:

Amendment I. Congress shall make no law ... prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; ...

These are vital freedoms that protect us, as citizens, from losing our voices in the larger din of the crowd.

Judy Allen
Joseph