

Brace yourself, winter is coming

We woke up last Thursday morning, looked out the window and beheld snow on the mountains around Wallowa County. I call it the first sure sign that winter will come again.

After the 100-degree plus days of August, I welcome winter. I function at optimal output when the daytime high is around 50 degrees. So I'm headed into one of my most promising biorhythm cycles.

For most people, a new year begins Jan. 1. My "new year" begins right about now. Suddenly, my desire to get things done and start new projects blossoms.

This cycle is a bit out of sync with the natural flow of things here in Wallowa County. Summer is extremely busy. But covering those events is a chore in the heat.

Then when the weather cools enough for me to have real energy, drive and creativity, the busy season fades, the events end and people begin to hunker down for the winter.

Some even bug out for warmer climates, particularly Arizona. We spent a week in Mesa in the middle of winter a couple years ago. I thought it was miserably hot — well above my optimum 50-degree daytime high.



WAHL TO WALL

Paul Wahl

Wallowa County's winters are by most comparisons mild, cool enough to feel like winter yet not so cold and snowy that you want to hibernate on the couch for six months.

Who knows what Mother Nature has in store for us this winter. She's always one for surprises.

WE ORDERED propane for our tank that runs our gas fireplace insert and pulled the studded snow tires from the back of the storage shed to the front.

If you're on the fence regarding studded snow tires, I can't recommend them enough. We traveled a fair amount last winter and when other cars were slipping and sliding into the ditches, we were safe and secure.

We drove back from Boise around Christmas in a full-blown blizzard and never missed a beat, passed everything on the road. I sometimes get frustrated with people who drive 20 miles an hour on snowy highways. When you finally get to go around them, you realize why. Their tires are bald.

That would have to make for a wretched winter experience.

FALL IS my favorite time for a vacation as well, and in a couple weeks, we will be heading out for a week on the Oregon coast. Second to Wallowa County, it's our favorite place to travel — summer or winter.

This year, our plan is to explore south of Lincoln City as far as Coos Bay. If you have any must-see recommendations for that part of the coast, be sure to share them.

We're always up for new adventures.

DON'T FORGET Oregon's Alpenfest, that celebration of all things Swiss and Bavarian is coming Sept. 27-30.

This is the 40th year for the event, and a number of special activities are planned. Even the bratwursts are new this year, and the early reviews speak highly of their taste and quality.

Even if your heritage isn't Swiss or Bavarian, you will enjoy the music, food and fun of Oregon's Alpenfest. See you there.

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— 516 Hart Senate Office Building, Washington D.C. 20510. Phone: 202-224-5244. E-mail: wayne_kinney@wyden.senate.gov Web site: http://wyden.senate.gov Fax: 202-228-2717.

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— Room H-384, State Capitol, 900 Court St. N.E., Salem OR 97301. Phone: 503-986-1458. E-mail: rep.gregbarreto@state.or.us. Web site: http://www.oregonlegislature.gov/barreto

State Sen. Bill Hansell, R (District 29)

— Room S-423, State Capitol, Salem 97301. Phone: 503-986-1729. E-mail: Sen.BillHansell@state.or.us. Web site: www.oregonlegislature.gov/hansell.

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Health care can be economic development

Health care eats up more and more of our thought, political debate, money and time.

Maybe its because medical technology has advanced so rapidly, or because the cost of health care keeps rising; maybe we are getting older and need more health services; maybe because of birth control — we no longer have six, eight or 11 children, and we are naturally insistent that one or two we have are very well taken care of.

In Wallowa County, there has been an absolute revolution in health care services in the past 30 years. No criticism here — it was part of the times — but sometime in the early '70s Wallowa Memorial Hospital Director Lester Palmer bragged to me that we had the lowest hospital room rates in the state.

From 1971, when I moved here, until sometime in the '80s, we had at least four active doctors (all men, by the way; another sign of the times). But in the '80s, doctors and many others joined the parade of people dancing disco in cities and suburbs. "Yuppie" stood for "young urban professionals."

Dr. Scott Siebe and Dr. Lowell Euhus practiced herculean medicine here in the '80s, the twosome covering all clinic calls and all ER visits. Scott says it meant 110-120 hour weeks.

But this is not a column about how we got to where we are now: a new hospital with multiple E-rooms and oncology stations; several family physicians (many of them women), a full-time surgeon and frequent cardiologist visits and more.

What I would like to do instead is take a lesson from my long-ago experience as a Peace Corps Volunteer in Turkey and see



MAIN STREET

Rich Wandschneider

if we can make a case for making Wallowa County a model for a different kind of medical and demographic policy in America. Let's not talk about present-day Turkey — the past decade or so has seen the growth of autocracy and religious influence on what was a secular and mostly democratic state when I was there 1965-70.

My Peace Corps group arrived just 27 years after Ataturk, the founder of modern Turkey, died. Ataturk had rescued a defeated Ottoman Empire from the ashes of WW I and fashioned a modern European-style nation-state out of the ashes.

When Mustafa Kemal, later named Ataturk, or "Father of the Turks," pushed the European powers intent on dividing Turkey up to the seas, he carefully crafted the new nation on principles of division of powers, egalitarianism, empowerment of women, and, maybe most importantly, the dispersion of services broadly across the country.

Istanbul was the major metropolis; Ataturk chose a Central Anatolian village as his capitol, Ankara. He then built sugar and cement factories and educational institutes across the rural landscape of Turkey and began building roads to connect them.

The lesson here, I think, is in putting important industry and service in rural places. (It's what we did in America with the Land Grant College program.) And I think Wallowa County's booming health

care system can be a model for dispensing health care, for changing the demographics that are creating unaffordable cities in some areas and leaving others behind and for creating vital rural areas across the country.

Our new hospital opened in 2007. We had advanced from two docs in the in part because Dr. Euhus went to a regional health care meeting to tell people that rural health docs and health care were dying. The head of family medicine at Oregon Health Sciences said he could fix that: from that day forward, a family practice residency would include a rural rotation and he would start with Enterprise.

Thank Euhus and Siebe for keeping us alive in dark times, and Larry Davy for having the new hospital vision. Although Larry skipped a few years as hospital director, he was there with the vision before it happened and is back presiding over the new developments.

And we now have nine family docs, a general surgeon and an emergency room director/physician along with a passel of specialists making regular visits. We have fine birthing suits and physical therapy facilities and an oncology outpatient treatment set-up that keeps local patients local.

Health Care is our new wheat ranch or lumber mill, and it makes the survival of agriculture and lumbering possible.

The cost of the new hospital was \$23 million. Not much in big government dollars. What if we spotted new rural hospitals in Dufur and Toledo and Lake County? What if there were new good hospitals in dozens of towns and counties with fewer than 10,000 residents across the country? Build it and they will come.

See, you really can learn mathematics

Hooray for Pastor Tim Barton's essay in last week's Chieftain on how perseverance and hard work brought him success in his studies of mathematics.

It is surprising that mathematics is such an emotional subject. In school, one student may feel the joy of success and another may feel the pain of failure in their encounters with the subject, and this happens K-12.

It is not easy to understand why this is so, but we can see how it affects a person's attitude about their own ability to do mathematics.

In the light of the current studies in which infant human beings exhibit logic and number sense, I am suspicious of the claims that some people can't learn mathematics. The simple-minded notion ascribing math skills vs artistic skills to the discredited left-right brain mythology is misleading.

Let us take a look at the way mathematics is taught. In your first 20 years, you have developed a definite almost unshakable, attitude of what you can do in art or science. This clearly defines your preferences for one path or another in your life.

Undoubtedly, the decision you have made about your talents are genuine and provide you with your "comfort zone." Whether you would want to read a book that has the word mathematics in its title would be determined by this personal vision of yourself.



GUEST COLUMN

Clem Falbo

But is this vision accurate? Are you just being prejudiced against your own ability? I have known cases in which a student's angst about their own ability to do mathematics is totally unfounded, a consequence of having an extremely unmindful teacher who was either too good or too bad at mathematics.

If they were too good, then they might not acknowledge that a problem is difficult. A less trained or less secure teacher may impart some of his or her own feelings of inadequacy to students.

Fortunately, mathematics teachers do not fall into these two categories; they are usually competent and empathetic. One difficulty I sometimes see in teaching secondary school and higher mathematics is the requirement of cramming too much material into a course.

It is the "depth vs. breadth" argument. I opt for more depth and less breadth. We try to teach 3000 years of mathematics in one or two semesters; how dumb is that?

In my opinion, the best way to teach mathematics is to let the students have a stake in the learning. If the students themselves present solutions in the class-

room, other students can see how a person struggles with a problem, tries and re-tries various approaches before finally getting it.

And the presenter is learning even more. This slower approach might mean that the teacher cannot "cover all of the material." But, you have to ask yourself, "Who has covered it?" Only the teacher.

I have taught mathematics to African children in both rural and urban Zimbabwe, and I taught a college credit mathematics class at Wallowa High School.

In the city school in Zimbabwe, I was asked, "Can those pupils out in rural districts learn mathematics?" Then, back in the USA I have been asked, "Can those African kids learn mathematics?"

Here in Wallowa, I have heard people ignorantly ask, "Can those farm kids you taught at Wallowa High really learn mathematics?"

In my nearly 60 years of teaching mathematics, I have been asked, "Can girls learn mathematics?"

The answers are yes, yes, yes and yes. I would love to get society to abandon its ignorance about the ability of human beings everywhere to learn mathematics.

I am also hoping you all, of any age, will abandon your own prejudicial opinion that you cannot learn mathematics. Thanks, Pastor Barton.

Clem Falbo of Joseph is a Mathematics Professor Emeritus at Sonoma State University.

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P.O. Box 338 • Enterprise, OR 97828
Office: 209 NW First St., Enterprise, Ore.
Phone: 541-426-4567 • Fax: 541-426-3921

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Newsroom assistant editor@wallowa.com
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