

OPINION

VOICE of the CHIEFTAIN

Dickenson leaves behind a legacy worth following

Unless you open up to the Opinion page first upon reading the Chieftain (or click on that tab first on the website), you've likely read the piece on the front of today's edition about former longtime reporter Elane Dickenson, who died in early November.

That she dedicated nearly 36 years of her life to the Chieftain is an amazing feat. That she did so while raising her two children, Jenny and Matt, is even more impressive, especially when you stop to consider the nonstop work that parenthood is and the daily grind that is journalism.

Trying to navigate one of those on its own is a challenge. The two together — especially as a single parent — feels like it would be an impossibility. There are not enough words for even the most talented wordsmith to express what she did.

Yet she did it, and, as many who spoke to the Chieftain for the article shared, did it with accuracy, integrity, kindness and without complaint.

The last one of those is, perhaps, the most impressive. Anyone knows the difficulty of doing something you don't like to do, and, admittedly, that happens from time to time in any job, including journalism. Even if it is your dream job — as it seemed to be for Dickenson — challenges and difficulties in the newsroom or what you are covering arise. Gut-wrenching stories of a car wreck that takes a life unexpectedly, reports on crimes when they happen, or an article on a fire that burns a home to the ground are not easy to write — even though necessary — and to grumble about those is easy to do.

But none of that reportedly came from Dickenson, even though she covered every topic imaginable in 3½ decades.

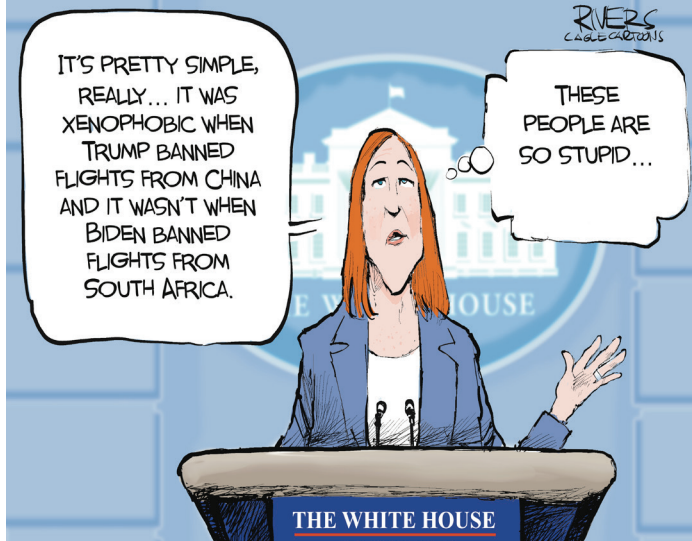
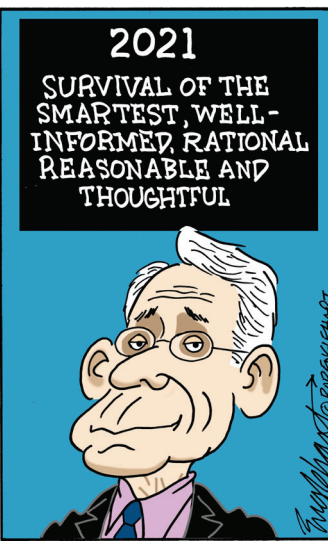
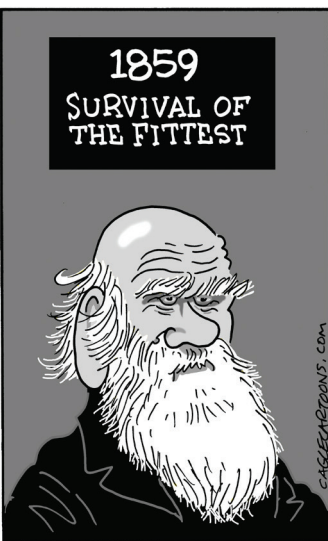
She also attained a standard journalists strive to be known for: accurate and fair.

In a day where there is so much swirling about journalists who have an agenda or can get nothing right, it is refreshing to hear so many comments about Dickenson that she rarely got anything wrong — and if she did, was quick to correct it.

The standard she brought to the Chieftain is the standard we hope to reach here each week. We aren't perfect, but if we are striving for accuracy and fairness and doing our due diligence, we'll be on the right track.

That is what Elane Dickenson did, notepad and camera in hand, for nearly 36 years.

She leaves a legacy her children and grandchildren and the Wallowa County community can look on with fondness, and leaves big shoes for those who follow her at the Chieftain — not only now, but in the years to come.



LETTER to the EDITOR

Republicans only now care about the national debt

Well, here we are again: a battle over the debt ceiling and funding to keep the federal government operating that will bring us to the brink of a government shutdown, or over the edge into a full-blown catastrophe. After four years of profligate spending and tax breaks for extremely wealthy individuals and big corporations, suddenly Republicans are horrified by the size of the national debt. Here are some facts, as outlined in a Pro Publica piece recently:

The national debt rose by almost \$7.8 trillion during Trump's time in office. That's nearly twice as much as what Americans owe on student loans, car loans, credit cards and every other type of debt other than mortgages. Candi-

date Trump promised to pay down the national debt in eight years. Instead, he presided over a 40% rise in just four years.

The growth in the annual deficit under Trump ranks as the third-biggest increase, relative to the size of the economy, of any U.S. presidential administration, according to a calculation by Eugene Steuerle, co-founder of the Urban-Brookings Tax Policy Center. Two other presidents, George W. Bush and Abraham Lincoln, had larger growth rates, both due to war spending. Trump? He just shoved money out of our pockets (by "our" we mean residents of this county) into the pockets of hedge fund managers, CEOs of financial institutions, and insurance companies.

Arguing over the debt limit legislation will bring Medicare payments,

Social Security payments and infrastructure spending to a grinding halt. Of course, that's their objective! Here's the thing: If the Republicans retake Congress in 2022, be prepared for whiplash as these same spending hawks pass bills cutting taxes even more for those least in need. It won't help the national debt any, but it will sure gut the Build Back Better Act, with good things like protection for families with children, affordable day care, help with their hearing for Medicare recipients, paid family leave, and addressing the climate needs (many times greater than the help included in the Build Back Better Act, but it's a beginning). So have at it, newly-minted deficit hawks. Just keep fiddling while the USA — and the entire earth — burns.

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infringe on the rights of private citizens. Letters must be signed by the author and include the city of residence and a daytime phone number. The phone number will not be published. Unsigned letters will not be published.

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