



Wallowa County Voices



Annette Bernier
Lostine

County is simple, home, quiet to her

ENTERPRISE — Annette Bernier has lived in Lostine for nearly 32 years and wouldn't live anywhere else.

"I have six kids. Three were born here and three weren't," she said of her family. "They all went to Wallowa (schools)."

Retired from homemaking and raising her kids, she also worked with kids in Head Start and preschool.

Although she's been here more than three decades, she still has ties to the Central Washington area, where siblings live.

"I only have one kid who lives in the county," she said, adding that she has four grandchildren.

She recently shared her thoughts about living in Wallowa County.

What's your favorite thing about Wallowa County?

It's simple. It's home. The nature here is beautiful. I don't care if it's slow. That's the way I like it. I like the outdoors, the people, collecting rocks for gardens. It's a beautiful county and I wish more people would appreciate it.

What are you looking forward to in 2022?

I'm just wait to get through the snow — and it's still coming in for a while.

Are you getting cabin fever yet?

Just the normal thing. I get bored. I plan on eventually going to visit my family. I have lots of brothers and sisters in the Yakima, Washington, area.

Do you have plans for Valentine's Day?

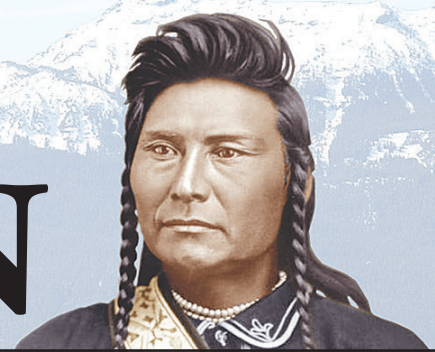
All I know is my second-youngest son was born a few days after that, but I don't plan on doing anything. I did have a chocolate-covered candy with salted caramel in the middle the other day that my roommate came home with.

What's your advice for people who are thinking about moving here?

Patience. Mellow. A little bit of silence and some adventure. There's a lot out there.

— Bill Bradshaw,
Wallowa County Chieftain

WALLOWA COUNTY CHIEFTAIN



FROSTY FRIDAY



Bill Bradshaw/Wallowa County Chieftain
ABOVE: The freezing fog advisory that has loomed over the Enterprise area recently did not come without its benefits, as seen Friday, Jan. 28, 2022, in this frost-covered tree along Northwest First Street. Such trees and shrubs were all over the area. INSET: Freezing fog made for a frosty windmill Jan. 28 at the Wagner Street home of Jake and Kathy Wolfe of Enterprise.



Paul Pelley/Contributed Photo

Meat of the Matter

By JAYSON JACOBY
Baker City Herald

BAKER CITY — Curtis Martin doesn't expect a problem that was decades in the making to be solved by a single announcement from the White House, even one that comes with a billion-dollar pledge.

But Martin, a North Powder cattle rancher and a past president of the Oregon Cattlemen's Association, is nonetheless encouraged by the Biden administration's effort to increase competition in the meat-packing industry, which is dominated by four corporations.

"I think it's wonderful," Martin said of the administration's recent announcement that it would divert \$1 billion from the 2021 American Rescue Plan Act to address problems in the meat-processing system and try to encourage the construction of smaller, regional meat-processing operations and, potentially, curb a recent rise in beef, pork and poultry prices at the retail level.

"It's really a positive report, and I think the best thing ranchers can do is engage in it and help Tom Vilsack," Martin said.

Vilsack is the U.S. agriculture secretary, and one of the federal officials who met with Biden recently in a virtual meeting to discuss the situation.

The resulting plan, which was announced Jan. 3, has among its

goals enforcing existing competition laws and making the machinations of the cattle markets more transparent.

That new federal focus is welcome news for Martin, who has been concerned for many years about what he considers an unfair

"IT'S SOMETHING WE IN THE INDUSTRY HAVE BEEN TALKING ABOUT FOR A LONG TIME, THE NEED TO HAVE A MORE VIBRANT AND COMPETITIVE INDUSTRY."

— Matt McElligott,
Baker County cattle rancher

manipulation of beef markets by the four companies that control about 85% of the country's cattle processing — Cargill, Tyson Foods, JBS and National Beef Packing.

While retail beef prices have risen by 21% over the past year, according to the U.S. Department of Agriculture, that trend hasn't been reflected in what ranchers are receiving for their cattle, Martin said.

Tom Sharp, former Oregon

Cattlemen's president, addressed the rise in beef prices in an October 2021 interview with the Pacific Northwest Ag Network when he still was president of the OCA.

"Those profits have largely gone solely to the major beef packing companies that dominate boxed beef production here in the United States," Sharp said. "There's really four multinational companies that produce 83% of the total boxed beef for retail consumption here in the United States."

Martin said he believes one way to reduce the dominance those four companies have is to encourage more local and regional processing of beef.

That would also give ranchers more options for marketing their cattle, and boost consumer choice, potentially affording them the option of buying beef raised, and butchered, in the same county where they live.

Martin said there is a sufficient number of beef cattle in Eastern Oregon and Western Idaho to support processing plants with a capacity to handle 250 to 500 head per day.

But now, he said, "we have absolutely no competition in the Northwest. There's no negotiation. You take what is given to you (in terms of prices)."

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Howe: Received lack of support

Wallowa principal leaving post March 8

By BILL BRADSHAW
Wallowa County Chieftain

WALLOWA — Another Wallowa County school administrator is leaving, and not under the best of circumstances; Wallowa High School Principal David Howe will leave March 8 after submitting his letter of resignation to the Wallowa School Board at its meeting Jan. 12.

In a telephone interview Thursday, Jan. 27, Howe said he is leaving because there is "a lack of support from the superintendent and the board. ... It is unfortunate that it has come to this. Despite my best efforts I can no longer protect my staff or students from those who are bent on tearing us apart. I am saddened that I can no longer promote Wallowa High School in which I have poured out my last six years and still care deeply for."



Howe

Accomplishments

Howe said much of his time at the school has been productive.

"We (the high school staff and I) have been able to accomplish some amazing things at Wallowa High School during my time. There are a few things I am most proud of that we were able to accomplish," he said. "First, we were able to come together as a staff and focus on doing what is best for students. For example, we increased college course selections for students resulting in savings of time and money during their college careers — a recent graduate was able to enter Boise State University with first-semester credits completed. Second, prior to the last year and a half, we were able to improve the school culture and spirit in the high school and we were able to return Wallowa basketball teams to competitiveness. We were able to increase the number of electives in the high school by building a business education

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Dean attorney disputes resignation

By BILL BRADSHAW
Wallowa County Chieftain

WALLOWA COUNTY — An attorney for the Bob Dean Oregon Ranches reached out Monday, Jan. 31, to dispute the circumstances by which former ranch manager B.J. Warnock left his job there, saying Warnock's departure was a "dismissal."

Attorney J. Logan Joseph, of the Joseph Law Firm in La Grande, confirmed in an email that Katie Romero, who comes from New Mexico according to her website, is the new manager "of all Dean family cattle operations in Wallowa County," and said that Warnock's "dismissal" was "on or about Jan. 17 of this year."

Warnock has not returned a request for clarification on the matter.

Romero has stated that her boss, Bob Dean's wife, Karen Dean, has forbidden her from speaking to the

press. Bob Dean is suffering mental trauma following a surgery in June, Karen Dean said in early January, so she is speaking for him.

Joseph said he knows nothing of Wallowa County Sheriff Joel Fish's investigation for possible animal neglect other than the investigation is ongoing.

Fish confirmed Jan. 31 that he is still investigating.

The case involves hundreds of cattle that were trapped in heavy snows in the Upper Imnaha area late last fall and the cows were unable to get themselves or their calves to safety. It is believed at least two dozen mother cows died, some of which "literally 'milked themselves to death,' in an attempt to provide for their calves," Wallowa County Stockgrowers President Tom Birkmaier said Jan. 19.

Numerous rescued calves were taken in by area ranchers and cared for. It is still uncertain how many cattle were involved, but Warnock

originally said there were more than 1,500 on summer pasture that they were trying to bring out last fall.

Birkmaier and others rallied fellow ranchers to try to rescue the cows and calves over the past month. The effort included taking hay to the animals by snowmobile or dropping it by helicopter. It also included bringing cattle out on a trailer pulled by a tracked vehicle that was able to get into the animals after private and public efforts to open backcountry roads.

Joseph added in his email the Dean family's appreciation for the help of locals in rescuing the cattle and calves.

"The Dean family would like to thank all of the local ranchers and any other persons that assisted in the location and retrieval of these cattle," Joseph wrote. "It is truly encouraging to see a community come together in such a fashion under such circumstances."

