

GRAMMAR

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Jovin isn't selling anything. And although she's passionate, she's no proselytizer.

Mainly Jovin just wants to meet people, to share with them a few minutes and, ideally, a few laughs.

If these chance encounters also allow her to indulge in her enthusiasm for language, and in the process help one of her newfound friends bypass some pratfall of punctuation, so much the better.

Jovin's journey started almost a year ago, on Sept. 21, 2018, also on a sidewalk.

This one was in front of her apartment on Manhattan's Upper West Side.

Jovin, who earned a master's degree in comparative literature from UCLA and started a language-learning website called Words, wanted a way to discuss her favorite topic — language and how we use it — in a forum more personal than the internet.

She was also tired of the nastiness that online anonymity can nurture.

"I want people to take joy in language and not use it as a weapon to hurt people with," Jovin said Monday as she sat on the east side of Main, in front of the Geiser Grand Hotel.

So on that day last September

"I want people to take joy in language and not use it as a weapon to hurt people with."

— **Ellen Jovin**

she set up a folding table in front of her apartment, taped on the "Grammar Table" sign, sat back and waited.

She didn't wait long. (About 1.7 million people live in Manhattan, after all.)

Within 30 seconds someone stopped to chat.

"Pretty quickly it became apparent to me that it can be an anchor for community building," she said of the Grammar Table experiment.

Since then Jovin has put up her table in many places in New York City.

And in late July she embarked on a national tour with her husband, Brandt Johnson, who is making a documentary tentatively titled "Grammar Table: The Movie."

Jovin also is writing a book about her adventures for Houghton Mifflin Harcourt. She hopes it will be published in 2021.

Over the past month Jovin has visited Buffalo, Toledo, Detroit, Milwaukee, Chicago, Minneapolis, Fargo and Spokane, among other cities.

She picked Baker City, which is considerably smaller than those

cities, on not quite a whim.

Jovin, who grew up in Los Angeles, said she wanted to stop in at least one town in Oregon.

But she had already visited Portland — this was long before Grammar Table — so she pondered other places.

"I looked (Baker City) up and it looked like a cool town," Jovin said. It exceeded her expectations.

"I'm so happy we came here," she said. "There are lots of really beautiful buildings here. And now it's not just a dot on the map. It's a place I know something about."

A trifle more, perhaps, than she expected.

Jovin initially set up her table Sunday evening on the east side of Main near Court Avenue, and in 90 minutes or so she met several local residents and a handful of visitors from, among other places, Canada, Texas and California.

And although the conversations delved into grammatical matters, that was, Jovin said, just "a place to start."

"I learned about someone's medical history, and how a couple met and fell in love," she said.

Jovin said that mixture of personal anecdote and discussion of grammar and language has been typical during her hours sitting behind the Grammar Table.

"It's very broadly human," she said.

And quite often amusing.

"I cracked up about 30 times doing the course of the conversation," Jovin said of her brief time in Baker City Sunday evening.

She also watched a covey of quail, complete with cute chicks, scamper past.

A common sight in Baker City, but not so in New York City.

"To me that was a big deal," Jovin said.

It was also a chance to indulge in her favorite topic.

Jovin said the wildlife encounter prompted her to tweet about the plural of quail.

(As with elk and deer, the plural version is the same as the singular.)

Jovin said she'd like to take Grammar Table to every state, but she admits that's probably an overly ambitious goal.

In the meantime she's eager to continue seeing new towns and meeting new people.

And although she treasures the personal stories that sometimes result, Jovin said she's especially excited when someone simply walks up and, without even making an introduction, launches into a question or comment about grammar or language.

"As if this," she says, gesturing to her table stacked with grammar guides, "is a natural thing to find on a sidewalk."

Missing hunter found safe

By Chris Collins
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As it turns out, Benjamin Owens wasn't ever really lost.

The 27-year-old Eugene-area man had just returned from a day of hunting when he found a flier on his pickup truck announcing that searchers were looking for him, said Chris Galiszewski, coordinator of the Baker County Sheriff's Search and Rescue Team.

Owens was the subject of a half-day search that started about 10:30 a.m. and ended at 3 p.m. Monday. Searchers drove about 350 road miles looking for Owens' pickup.

The hunter was well-equipped for the outing and simply had become focused on his hunting and had neglected to call his wife, Jamie, to report in as he usually did, Galiszewski said. Jamie had last heard from her husband by phone from Sumpter on Saturday. She called the Baker County Sheriff's Office Monday morning to report that her husband was overdue in contacting her.

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Grant County Sheriff Glenn Palmer withdraws retirement

■ Sheriff who is the subject of an ethics complaint says he will seek a sixth term

By Emily Cureton
Oregon Public Broadcasting

JOHN DAY — A sheriff in Eastern Oregon who announced he would resign the day after being notified of an ethics complaint against him now says he will stay on the job and seek re-election for a sixth term.

Grant County Sheriff Glenn Palmer told county officials at a public meeting last week he would quit. But he wrote in a Facebook post Tuesday, "I am withdrawing my resignation."

A former Oregon State Po-

lice officer filed the latest ethics complaint with the Oregon Department of Public Safety Standards and Training, or DPSST, a state agency that enforces minimum standards for peace officers.

The complaint alleges Palmer failed to return lost property — in this case, a fishing pole with the owner's name engraved on it. The complaint alleges Palmer kept the pole out of personal animosity toward a retired OSP officer Gordon Larson.

Larson filed the ethics com-

plaint. He said the lost fishing pole "is a small piece of a much larger issue that talks about a sheriff willing to use all resources under his direction to try and damage a citizen."

In 2018, Larson ran against and lost to Palmer's younger brother, Sam Palmer, for a Grant County Commission seat. Larson claims the sheriff has repeatedly used his position to damage political opponents.

Sheriff Palmer's politics were a flashpoint during the 2016 occupation of the Mal-

heur National Wildlife Refuge, when he publicly sympathized with armed militia members who took over the refuge for 41 days.

"Local officials, primarily the sheriff and those acting under his control, [are] trying to damage me and my family because of my political posture against the Malheur occupation, because I opposed his brother in a political race, and more importantly because we've called him out for his tactics," Larson said.

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Thomas Boyd/The Oregonian file photo

Gov. Kate Brown hugs Grant County Sheriff Glenn Palmer as they enter a meeting with homeowners in Canyon City after the Canyon Creek fire in August 2015.



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