

Opinion

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EDITORIAL

Walmart, guns and violence

Tuesday's announcement was guaranteed to generate considerable publicity because it came from Walmart, which is to retailing what McDonald's is to burgers and fries, and because it involved firearms.

Walmart said it will stop selling ammunition for handguns and some short-barrel rifles. The company is also asking customers not to carry guns in its stores, even in states that allow that.

This is interesting, but not likely to be significant in terms of reducing gun violence.

There's no reason to believe Walmart's decision will affect Americans' demand for

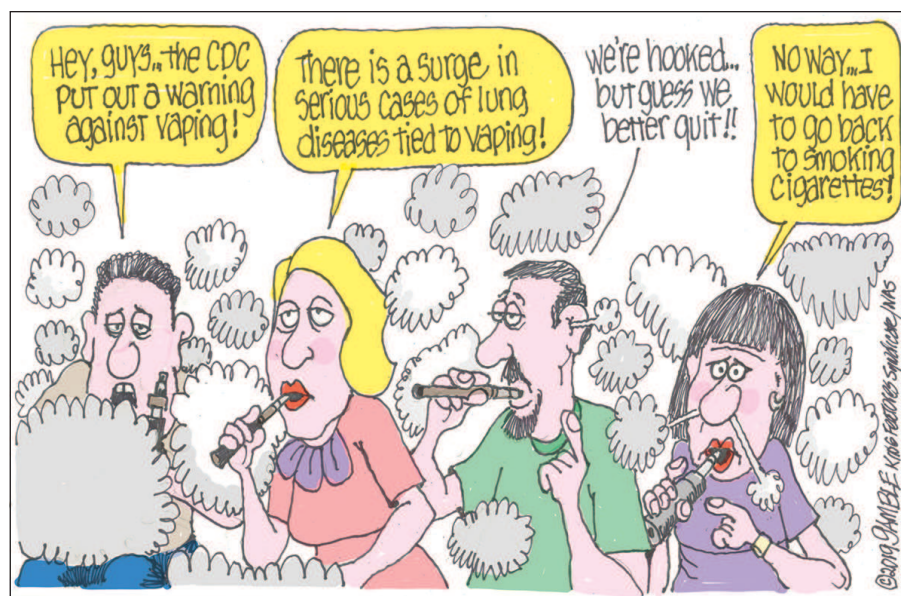
these products, which remain legal.

Other sellers, undoubtedly including some small, locally owned stores, will make available the ammunition Walmart chooses not to put on its shelves.

Those who accuse Walmart officials of pandering to gun control advocates should remember that this is a free market, and that businesses aren't required to stock a particular product.

Law-abiding customers might well comply with Walmart's request not to bring guns into its stores, but this is not likely to dissuade a disturbed person from carrying out a mass attack.

—Jayson Jacoby, Baker City Herald editor



Letters to the editor

- We welcome letters on any issue of public interest. Customer complaints about specific businesses will not be printed.
- The Baker City Herald will not knowingly print false or misleading claims. However, we cannot verify the accuracy of all statements in letters to the editor.
- Letters are limited to 350 words; longer letters will be edited for length.

Writers are limited to one letter every 15 days.

- The writer must sign the letter and include an address and phone number (for verification only). Letters that do not include this information cannot be published.
 - Letters will be edited for brevity, grammar, taste and legal reasons.
- Mail:** To the Editor, Baker City Herald, P.O. Box 807, Baker City, OR 97814
Email: news@bakercityherald.com

Never forget missing warriors and their families

Friday, Sept. 20, is POW/MIA Recognition Day. This special day and the POW/MIA flag are symbolic of our nation's resolve to never leave our warriors behind. Our armed forces will look for the missing until they are accounted for.

Sunday, Sept. 29, is Gold Star Mother's Day. A Gold Star Mother is one who lost a son or daughter while serving their nation in times of war or conflict. These two special days have a great deal in common.

On Sept. 20, and Sept. 29, we should all stop and ponder the losses of our American families through the years. After all, these losses and sacrifices were made to protect our nation. Through the years, about 1 million brave warriors lost their American Dream so that we could live ours.

We should remember that:



STEVE BATES

- All totaled, there were over 130,000 American military personnel who were prisoners of war in the 20th and 21st century wars, including 184 from Oregon.
 - About 7,500 warriors are missing from World War I — 19 from Oregon.
 - 72,676 warriors are missing from World War II — 886 from Oregon.
 - 7,634 warriors are missing from the Korean War — 56 from Oregon.
 - As of July 26, 2019, there are 1,587 still missing in Southeast Asia — 33 from Oregon.
- Let us all keep these sacrifices at the forefront. That is the purpose of the POW/MIA flag. That is the

reason there are monuments and memorials. The adage "Let us not forget" is appropriate.

We should support those who are working to help us not to forget. Yes, more monuments and memorials should be built. There is a shortage of memorials that specifically honor our Vietnam veterans.

In Salem, on state properties, one can find memorials and monuments that honor the veterans of every war except the Vietnam War and the Persian Gulf War of 1991. There are Vietnam War memorials in Portland, Canby, Newport and a new memorial is under construction in Medford. Many communities have established memorials and parks that honor veterans from all wars.

The community of Boring dedicated a Vietnam War memorial at its Boring Station Trailhead Park

on Sept. 21, 2018, which was POW/MIA Recognition Day. A portion of the dedication ceremony included the raising of the POW/MIA flag for the first time over Boring. The dedication ceremony also paid tribute to Gold Star Mothers and Gold Star Families as the community honored 41 Clackamas County warriors who gave the ultimate sacrifice in Vietnam.

A group of Oregon residents is proposing a Vietnam War memorial on the Oregon State Capitol Grounds. This proposed memorial will honor all who served during the Vietnam War era, regardless of their duty station. Special reverence for those who served in Vietnam and those Oregonians that perished in Vietnam will be included. Also, this memorial is planned to have tributes to all Gold Star Families, Oregon's Prisoners Of War and

those Missing In Action.

For more information on the project, visit www.vietnamwarmemorialfund.org.

Those of us who never wore a military uniform should give special consideration to POW/MIA Recognition Day and Gold Star Mother's Day with a resolve to honor all who served and sacrificed. We must also remember their families. These sacrifices were made so that we can live as a free people.

Let us never forget.

Steve Bates has lived in Boring for 42 years and is a life member of the Associates of Vietnam Veterans of America. He serves as chair of the committee on memorials & remembrance and president of the Vietnam War Memorial Fund. He can be reached by email at vietnamwarmem@aol.com.

Wonders of the Wallowas, big and (bug) small

I slapped my left ear, rendering myself temporarily half-deaf and possibly concussed, and it was at that moment that I surrendered to the bugs.

It was the only reasonable option.

The insects were omnipotent, and it was patently ridiculous to pretend otherwise.

They were scarcely dissuaded by our multiple chemical defenses even though we applied the various liquids so liberally that we all but glistened in the alpine sunshine, like basted turkeys.

Campfire smoke failed to dispel them, having instead the effect that alcohol tends to have on young and aggressive males.

(Although in this case the biters, at least among the mosquitoes, were females, as only that gender requires blood to nourish eggs.)

And swatting, as I mentioned, was more likely to harm the swatter than his ostensible target.

Mosquitoes, as they so often are, were both the most numerous and the most annoying interlopers at our camp in the Eagle Cap Wilderness during the first weekend of August.

But in their incessant sorties these bloodsucking insectile fighter planes were joined occasionally by the comparatively lumbering — but still much too quick and nimble for my flailing hands, hat, and nook and any other object I happened to grasp in my desperation — bombers in the form of horseflies and multiple types of bees, wasps and other venom-loaded fliers.

That bugs were abundant dur-



JAYSON JACOBY

ing the brief summer in the high mountains is hardly surprising, of course.

But their onslaught was distressing mainly because most of our previous annual trips, because they happened toward the end of August rather than its beginning, required mere ounces rather than gallons of DEET.

We had gotten soft.

We were a chastened group, though, as we packed up on the final morning.

And a very itchy one.

My daughter, Olivia, had a bite on her left eyelid that made her look a bit like Rocky Balboa after going a couple rounds with Clubber Lang.

Her cousin, Tyler, had so many bumps on his upper back that he could have modeled for one of those medical textbooks that specialize in the description of exotic and exceedingly rare tropical diseases.

My wife, Lisa, had a smattering of red welts on her arms that she attributed not to mosquitoes but to the truly evil variety of black gnats we encountered at the otherwise enchanting Tombstone Lake.

I felt comparatively unscathed, having only half a dozen places that required frequent scratching, and most of these were pretty accessible, anatomically speaking.

And my ear had long since

ceased ringing.

(The bite behind it, where the mosquito escaped harm during the slapping episode, itched something furious, however.)

But this being the Wallowas, perhaps the greatest natural treasure in a state hardly deficient in that category, not even a ferocious insectile invasion could diminish the bliss of being in the grand mountains.

I can't say whether our futile battle with bugs influenced me, but as we hiked back to the trailhead the scenes that played across my mental screen mainly involved things that, like insects, are quite small.

This struck me as passing strange.

The Wallowas are renowned, and rightly so, for their sheer scale. This is a land of big things — looming peaks of white granite and brownish-black basalt, high passes where the cool wind blows almost without pause, limpid lakes of unplumbed depths.

I feel something like awe whenever I reach a summit that affords an expansive view of the range — a vista of ridge and scree and canyon that the vantage point of Baker Valley, where the Wallowas seem to be a single ridge, scarcely hints at.

And familiarity hasn't chipped so much as a fragment from my appreciation for this place.

(Or for the generosity of my wife's parents, Howard and Sandee Britton, who make possible these trips.)

Yet as I tried to preserve my memories I kept returning to

moments when I was not craning my neck to take in the splendor extending over miles or thousands of feet, but rather focusing on something much smaller, and nearer.

And I realized that in this realm the Wallowas are equally rich, and sublime.

I thought, curiously enough, of another insect — the ant. I thought of how ubiquitous they are, and how vital their role in the mountains, and particularly the forests.

Ants create nutrient-rich soil that nurture trees, and they feed on bugs that can kill trees, among much else that's beneficial.

I noticed, in a way I hadn't before, how widespread ants are in the Wallowas. I saw them trundling across trails in their industrious way, climbing piles of their own sawdust at the bases of dead trees, and even bustling about on granite bedrock on the shores of lakes.

As we hiked I began to catalog, in a rather random fashion, how many little scenes of considerable beauty there are in the Wallowas.

The omnipresent summits command much of our attention (and megabytes) to be sure — the ramparts of Eagle Cap and Burger Butte and the dozens of other peaks that eclipse 8,000 feet.

But these are nothing like as numerous as the enchanting fragments strewn about the Wallowas like shards of semi-precious stones on a beach.

On our walk to Tombstone Lake I noticed that every time the switchbacking trail crossed a stream — and given the back-and-forth nature of such trails there

were quite a lot of these — there was a spray of wildflowers. These splashes of color were often but a few paces wide, but each made the sort of tableau that a talented painter can replicate in a scene of which the eye never tires.

As we paused at one crossing to whisk palmfuls of the frigid water over our sweaty brows I imagined that in the Wallowas there must be many hundreds of places quite like this, a wealth that seems to me beyond measure.

That evening, as I filtered water from the creek that frothed past our camp, I relished the perfect rock I had found to wedge against the intake tube, holding it in place while I worked the handle and filled my bottles in preparation for the next morning's steaming cup of coffee.

This is of course a minor thing, a tiny convenience that would hardly rate a notice in a more civilized setting where such things are expected, even demanded.

Yet at that moment it also seemed to me a sort of miracle. As I squatted there among the pink heather and the shooting stars, slopes of granite and basalt making the sort of backdrop to delight calendar photographers, I was enthralled by all that one place can provide in exchange for a bit of healthful exercise.

Indeed it might have been the perfect setting.

Except the mosquitoes apparently appreciate it as much as I did.

Jayson Jacoby is editor of the Baker City Herald.