

EDITORIAL

Balancing protection

The coronavirus pandemic has forced Baker County Sheriff Travis Ash and other administrators at the County Jail to make difficult decisions since March. Ash, along with Lt. Ben Wray, who supervises the Jail, and Undersheriff Jef Van Arsdall, have to use discretion when deciding which suspects stay in custody and which are released after being arrested. Generally, people accused of serious crimes against people remain in jail. Since the pandemic began, the Jail, which has a capacity of 45 inmates, has generally incarcerated 15 or fewer. Having fewer inmates makes it easier to reduce the risk of spreading COVID-19 in the building, which was constructed in 1991 and also houses the sheriff’s office and emergency dispatch center.

A situation earlier this week illustrates the dilemma that officials face.

Forrest Lee Entermille, 41, of Baker City, was arrested Sunday night in Haines after allegedly breaking beer bottles during an argument and throwing an object at a pickup truck. Baker County Circuit Court Judge Matt Shirtcliff granted Entermille a conditional release from the Jail the next day, Monday.

Later that day Entermille was arrested for allegedly entering a Baker City man’s home, hitting him in the head and, accompanied by Margaret Samantha Lacey, 33, stealing the man’s wallet and two phones. Shirtcliff revoked the release agreement, and Entermille remained in jail Friday.

The precautions at the Jail are reasonable, to be sure. And only with the benefit of hindsight does the release of Entermille clearly seem a mistake. But county officials, and judges, need to consider the potential benefits in protecting the public by holding inmates such as Entermille, even though that might slightly increase the risk inside the Jail. Entermille has a criminal history in Baker County dating to 2013, including convictions for fourth-degree assault and disorderly conduct. That background, combined with his arrest on Sunday in Haines, justified keeping him in custody.

— Jayson Jacoby, Baker City Herald editor



OTHER VIEWS

Rethinking Edward Snowden pardon

Editorial from The Pittsburgh Post-Gazette:

President Donald Trump has put Edward Snowden back in the news. Asked if he would consider pardoning the former National Security Agency contractor, Trump said “I am going to take a very good look at it.”

Snowden faces criminal charges after he leaked classified documents revealing the scope of the NSA’s surveillance apparatus in 2013. He has been living in exile in Russia ever since.

From the beginning, most young Americans believed Snowden acted with the public’s interest in mind. The passage of time has revealed a broader shift in sympathy for Snowden, including from Trump, who once called the exiled American a “spy who should be executed.” His leaks are now being seen for what they were intended: a much-needed reckoning of government overreach.

Trump loves cutting deals, and it’s time to cut one with Snowden. Short of a pardon, Snowden can admit wrongdoing in exchange for a probation sentence. Seven years in exile has been enough; he should be allowed to return home without going to prison.

Snowden revealed that under the auspices of the Patriot Act, the NSA

secretly and indiscriminately collected the telephone records of tens of millions of Americans. Also exposed were the lies that came from the very top of the U.S. national security establishment. The Obama administration’s director of national intelligence, James Clapper, lied to Congress in denying the collection of data.

There are competing interpretations of Snowden’s actions. For his critics, it is simple and straightforward. Rep. Liz Cheney, R-Wyo., daughter of former Vice President Dick Cheney — a vociferous defender of the NSA spying that he helped facilitate — called Snowden a “traitor,” adding that a pardon would be “unconscionable.” This was echoed by Reps. Adam Smith, D-Wash., and Mac Thornberry, R-Texas, who said it would be a “serious mistake” to consider clemency.

On the other hand, Sen. Rand Paul,

R-Ky, and Reps. Thomas Massie, R-Ky, and Justin Amash, I-Mich., all support a presidential pardon. Sen. Paul, who called Snowden’s leak “an act of civil disobedience” said, “Mr. Clapper lied in Congress in the name of security. Mr. Snowden told the truth in the name of privacy.” The former committed perjury and got a sweet book deal; the latter told the truth and potentially faces life in prison.

Snowden was not selling secrets to the Russians or the Chinese. He simply revealed that the privacy of American citizens was being violated on a massive scale, with no demonstrable gain in security. Furthermore, members of Congress knew almost nothing about what the NSA was really doing, and this included members of the committees who were in oversight of intelligence gathering.

Former U.S. Attorney General Eric Holder called Snowden’s act a “public service” for good reason. There has always been a robust debate in America about the balance between security and liberty, and the extent to which government should be spying on its citizens, but regardless of anyone’s views on surveillance and privacy, who among us would say that we are better off remaining ignorant about all the things our government is doing to us?

Letters to the editor

We welcome letters on any issue of public interest. Writers must sign their letter and include an address and phone number (for verification only). Email letters to news@bakercityherald.com.

Following in the boots of a legendary hiker

I probably wouldn’t have detoured from the trail except that my son, Max, insisted.

I’m glad his power to persuade is considerable for a kid who’s celebrated just nine birthdays.

Because without Max’s cajoling I likely would have plodded ahead, as though I were on a schedule, and in my stubbornness I would have missed one of those serendipitous and joyful moments that happily interrupt the humdrum passage of our days.

But that’s not quite what happened.

We were, it turned out, two days too late for what would have been a memorable encounter for me and for my wife, Lisa.

Max would have remembered it, too, albeit for different reasons.

The person we missed meeting is not a celebrity on the level of, say, Paul McCartney.

But William L. Sullivan is, I daresay, famous among many of us who think one of the better ways to appreciate Oregon’s beauty and variety of landscapes is to get our boots dusty tramping its trails (or muddy, or snowy, as the season and the situation dictate).

Sullivan is to Oregon hiking guidebooks what Stephen King is to horror novels.

Not that I mean to typecast either of these fine writers.

King, as anyone knows who is more than slightly familiar with his work, has authored many compelling tales which feature no monsters and carry nary a whiff of



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the supernatural.

Sullivan, though he is best known for his series of “100 Hikes” books that divide Oregon into five regions, has also penned many other books. These include “Cabin Fever,” a memoir about building a log cabin with his wife near the Oregon Coast, a history of the state’s greatest natural disasters, and six novels, including ones that feature such iconic (and real) Oregon characters as skyjacker D.B. Cooper and guru Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh.

But Sullivan’s first book has always been my favorite, and I suspect it will retain that title no matter what subject he turns his prodigious talent to.

“Listening For Coyote” is Sullivan’s story about the 1,361-mile solo backpacking trip he made in 1985 from Oregon’s westernmost point, at Cape Blanco, to its eastern extremity in Hells Canyon.

As someone who relishes hiking but rarely stays out for more than a couple nights in a row, or covers more than 30 miles in one excursion, I have long been drawn to accounts of truly epic journeys such as Sullivan’s.

I own several books describing hikes on long-distance routes such as the Pacific Crest and Appala-

chian trails, and I can while away hours following in the authors’ footsteps while I relax on a sofa or a reclining lounge chair in the backyard.

But none of these accounts has ever endured itself so thoroughly as “Listening For Coyote.”

I suspect this is due in some small part to my age when I first read it. I was in high school, an era when I think many of us are susceptible to the lure of an adventure story in a way that we never are later, as our own experiences accumulate and our sense of wonder at new things atrophies. It’s a sad, but I think also inevitable, transition.

But for me the most powerful attraction of “Listening For Coyote” is that it’s simply a cracking good story, and Sullivan tells it with deft and piquant prose. I have probably read the book a dozen times, and never does the scent of Sullivan’s campfires fail to reach my nose, never do I not shiver when he’s trudging through snow after an early blizzard in the Blue Mountains.

That snowbound trail where Sullivan left his tracks is the very one that Max, Lisa and I walked earlier this summer, the path that follows the North Fork John Day River through its wilderness canyon west of Baker City.

The conditions could scarcely have been different on the day of our trip. The mid-July afternoon was that rare sort when the old chestnut about there not being a cloud in the sky happened to be true.

We couldn’t, at any rate, see so much as a scrap of cumulus or tendrill of cirrus in the somewhat abbreviated scope of sky visible from our vantage point in the depths of the densely forested canyon.

We bought Max his first real backpack a couple of years ago and just lately he’s been nudging us, like a frisky horse too long stabled, to get out in the woods. Lisa and I picked the North Fork trail, which we had hiked before, albeit without children in tow. We chose the path largely because, as riverside routes often are, it lacks the lung-straining climbs that can quickly sap a young hiker’s enthusiasm.

(And, if I must be honest, a somewhat older hiker’s.)

When Max spied the cabin’s metal roof glinting among the lodgepole pines he darted onto the spur path leading toward the structure.

Guy Hafer of Cove, who died in 2007, built the cabin on his mining claim. It stands on public land and the cabin is left unlocked. There were a few rodent droppings inside but it appears the people who use the cabin respect it, and Hafer’s legacy, and try to ensure it remains usable.

I noticed a notebook ensconced in a plastic bag on a table. It looked to be a sort of guest book. I pulled it out and was shocked by the most recent entry. It was signed “William L. Sullivan.” The date was July 16, just two days earlier. He was doing research for an updated version of his “100 Hikes In Eastern Oregon” book.

I hollered at Lisa, who was outside.

We were both thrilled, albeit a trifle disappointed to have come so close to having met Sullivan.

I interviewed him in 2006 when he made a presentation at the Oregon Trail Interpretive Center.

But meeting him on the North Fork trail would be another matter altogether. And the reason is that one of the most memorable chapters in “Listening For Coyote” is the one in which Sullivan, hiking through a rainstorm that soon turned to snow, was spared from having to pitch his tent in inclement weather when he came across another old mining cabin about a mile or so downriver from Hafer’s.

This other cabin, nicknamed the “Bigfoot Hilton” by someone who visited it before Sullivan, has become something of a shrine for hikers due to its inclusion in “Listening For Coyote.”

Not to belabor my earlier reference to Paul McCartney, but for me, coming across Bill Sullivan in a cabin on the North Fork John Day would be comparable to bumping into the ex-Beatle while taking the requisite photo in the most famous crosswalk on London’s Abbey Road.

It was not to be.

But I was pleased just the same to have shared a trail, in a manner of speaking, with the man who must be Oregon’s most famous hiker.

Jayson Jacoby is editor of the Baker City Herald.