

EDITORIAL

The heroes
who show
up to help

The scenario sounds like a scene from a Hollywood blockbuster that also features helicopter crashes and the miraculous, last-second deft deployment of a multitool or a cellphone to prevent a catastrophic explosion.

But the situation in the Wallowa Mountains of eastern Baker County was utterly real.

No scripts.

And the snow and the rain and the wind were real, not contrived on a soundstage.

The weather that confronted members of the Baker County Sheriff's Office Search and Rescue team on Sunday, Oct. 24 were sufficiently savage to impress even Sheriff Travis Ash, an experienced outdoorsman who has spent much time in the mountains during winter.

Trying to reach Robert Borders, a 67-year-old Baker City man who was stranded in the storm at an elevation of 7,400 in the Eagle Cap Wilderness, the team, all of them volunteers except Ash, slogged through slushy, knee-deep snow while rain, driven by gale-force winds, defeated even high-quality rain gear. Gusts knocked down trees.

"Those were the worst conditions I've ever faced in the mountains," Ash said.

Yet he and the other rescuers, when summoned, answered the call to potentially save a life. That included members of Union County's Search and Rescue team, and U.S. Forest Service employees.

Fortunately Borders, despite spending two nights in the appalling conditions, didn't need medical treatment and was able to ride his horse back to safety on Monday, Oct. 25, escorted by the rescuers.

The episode also illustrates the importance of back-country travelers having the ability to communicate even if, as was the case here, there's no cell service. Borders had a handheld satellite device that allowed him to send text messages to friends, who then alerted police about his predicament. Moreover, the unit pinpointed his location, so crews didn't have to search for Borders but could focus on rescuing him.

We're fortunate to have places such as the Eagle Cap Wilderness to visit. But we're luckier still that some of our neighbors will risk their own lives to come to our aid if we get into trouble.

—Jayson Jacoby, Baker City Herald editor

Anthony Lakes president
explains proposal withdrawal

By JOHN WILSON

As the president of the board of directors and representing Anthony Lakes Outdoor Recreation Association (ALORA), we felt it would help clarify confusion by addressing the withdrawal of our proposal for the Baker County Visitor Services contract. Multiple county residents have contacted us over the past couple of weeks expressing their disappointment with our decision to withdraw the application. Our decision was based on the reality that, even with our best laid plans for Baker County visitors and businesses, being awarded the Visitors Center contract would require us to work with certain elected officials from the County and City governments who are at great odds over many elements of the contract and what a Visitors Center purpose should be.

Over the past two years, the focus of this discussion has never been on the actual contents of the proposals and the services contained within each proposal, nor how they complement the Baker County Marketing Strategic plan. Instead, the County and City officials focused on turning a simple proposal process and contract award into a confusing combination of procrastination, turf fighting and political agendas. With a less than ideal (and much delayed) RFP (Request For Proposals) process, the County and City have demonstrated lack of trust in the people they've appointed to perform the tasks at hand. As stated

above, there continued to be little to no discussion on the actual plans in the applications or the County's strategic tourism plan. These actions do not align with ALORA's mission, values, or way of conducting business. As a nonprofit, all our enterprises (the ski area, campgrounds, bike/ski shop, and golf course management) strive to work with the community and its businesses with the end result of making a better Baker County. We finally reached our choke level with the infighting that is taking place between certain County and City elected officials more worried about political turf than about the best interest of businesses in Baker County.

While we would have enjoyed working to expand the role ALORA plays in this community, we don't feel like we need to continually defend our mission and our business model. In the past five years, ALORA has grown the number of full-time employees working primarily in Baker County from one person to 14. We've also grown from 30 part-time winter employees to 55 part-time winter and 20 part-time summer employees. ALORA's payroll package in Baker County last year was almost \$1.5 million. The total dollars in goods and services ALORA spent last year was \$2.4 million with an estimated 75% of that being with local merchants. Based on the County Factor for Visitor Spending, out-of-town guests at Anthony Lakes Mountain Resort spent over \$450,000 with local merchants and out-of-town guests at Quail Ridge

Golf Course spent \$175,000 with local merchants. These figures do not include monies spent by guests from the campgrounds we manage. After 10 years of managing the ski hill, season ticket prices are the same for local residents as they were in 2011. Quail Ridge golf passes have not been raised since we began management and there is no intention of needing to anytime soon.

Our point is that ALORA has been and will continue to be committed to Baker County and its citizens. We have a strategic vision, the resources, and the will to execute this vision. We believe that we helped raise awareness and raise the bar by which the Visitors Center should be measured. We hope that this process has alerted Baker County and the TLTC to institute Key Performance Indicators for the Visitors Center contractor that are more relevant to how visitors gather travel information today. Over the past decade, a lot has changed with how people travel, and we hope that the County and City will use this opportunity to capture, educate and retain more visitor dollars for Baker County businesses.

We have offered all the help we have available to the Chamber and are happy to assist in any way we can. ALORA will continue to further our efforts to promote Baker County, manage tourism sustainably and create family wage jobs for local residents. In the end, we simply determined that we could be far more effective by staying independent from the local politics.

Laying bare the realities of splatters in the kitchen

An email that starts with the word "nudists" is likely to stop my right hand before it can click on the delete icon.

An email that starts with the word "nudists" and also includes, in the same sentence, the phrase "splatter-free meals" is certain to do so.

I'm not much of a cook.

(Although I am something of a maestro of the microwave.)

But that doesn't mean I don't appreciate the absence of splatters during the preparation of a meal.

I've felt the brief but sharp pains on one hand, rather like being stung simultaneously by a swarm of wasps, when I clumsily flipped a strip of bacon and spawned a shower of hot fat.

Probably other parts of my body were also pelted with the scalding dollops.

But they, unlike my hand, were clothed.

I shudder to imagine the effects of a similar greasy geyser had I been preparing bacon in the nude.

(I shudder even more to imag-

ine my family's reaction to such a scene. Traumatized is the word that comes readily to mind. Also, shuddering is one of the actions that, when linked to nudity, suggests unpleasant views involving an abundance of, well, jiggling.)

Bacon is among the foods that make chewing something like ecstasy rather than toil.

But I'm not sure even the rich and meaty euphoria that a mouthful of bacon induces is worth skin grafts.

Particularly if the grafting happens in certain sensitive areas which most of the time are protected by fabric.

The danger is of course quite a lot more acute for people who prepare their meals while naked.

Which, apparently, they do.

Actually, nudists seem to be rather more clubby than I expected them to be.

The email I mentioned was sent by the American Association for Nude Recreation.

This is, lest you wonder, an actual organization. And a venerable one, at 90 years old.

I checked its website. For



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purely research purposes.

(There were pictures, although of course I was interested only in the text. I happened to notice, though, in my cursory look, that all the photos were taken with a wide angle lens so the level of detail, as it were, was lacking. Very wide angle.)

The email notes that "nudists, like most of us, love to cook."

I thought this sounded a trifle defensive.

Although I suppose I can understand such an attitude.

Most Americans, after all, spend most of their time at least marginally clothed, which leaves nudists out in the cold, figuratively speaking (and, potentially, literally).

But however far out of the mainstream nudists might be given their disdain for donning garments, I doubt many people would assume that nudists don't have a normal affinity for cooking.

They have to eat, after all.

(And I suspect they would run into trouble if they had to rely on restaurants for most of their meals, what with those pesky "no shoes, shirt, service" policies. Especially the shirt.)

As for the issue of splatters, the email bore this headline: "Nudists' Favorite Kitchen Aid: Slow Cooker."

The email notes that "according to the majority of the American Association for Nude Recreation (www.aanr.com) members, they have a major incentive to avoid hot splatters."

Indeed.

The email contends that with winter approaching, and hot meals such as stews and soups more popular, slow cookers, being less prone to splattering than, say, a frying pan, are especially favored among nudists.

The email doesn't delve any further into this topic.

In fact the message seemed to me almost a non sequitur, intended not so much to educate journalists about the cooking preference of nudists — a topic which, I'll admit, has never piqued my curiosity — but rather to get the word out about

the American Association for Nude Recreation.

(And obviously it worked.)

I did learn much about this organization — most notably that it actually exists.

Its purpose, according to the email, is to protect "the freedoms and rights of those who participate in wholesome, family-style nude recreation."

The group also "supports 180 chartered clubs, resorts, and campgrounds" and sponsors an annual event, "International Skinny Dip Day."

I consulted the maps on the website — again, for completely scholarly reasons — and I confirmed that I had never camped at any of the places listed.

I'm pretty sure that, had it been otherwise, I would have remembered the experience.

Never mind splatters.

The sight of nude barbecuing, in addition to posing a risk of permanent scarring, is one likely to lodge deeply in the fissures of memory.

Jayson Jacoby is editor of the Baker City Herald.