

# Opinion

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## EDITORIAL

# Pharmacy problem

Picking up a prescription these days is primarily an exercise in patience.

The three Baker City stores that include a pharmacy — Rite Aid, Safeway and Albertsons — might consider putting a line of comfortable chairs leading from their pharmacy counters.

They'll need a lot of chairs, though.

Lines stretching across the stores have been common over the past several weeks. Customers have reported waiting for two or three hours.

Helen Loennig, pharmacist and pharmacy manager at the Bi-Mart store in Baker City, which closed its pharmacy this week, described the situation as a crisis. Nancy Staten, director of the Baker County Health Department, used the same word.

Their choice of that word is apt.

For some people, standing in a line for a couple hours to pick up medications is merely annoying. For others it's much more problematic.

What about workers who can't be away from their job for that long?

What about people whose medical condition makes it painful, if not impossible, for them to stand so long?

This crisis has multiple causes.

The closure of the Bi-Mart pharmacy, which Loennig said processed about 1,500 prescriptions per week, has moved much of that workload to the three remaining pharmacies. Oregon Gov. Kate Brown's vaccination mandate, which includes pharmacy workers, has led some employees to quit. Pharmacies, like almost every type of business, are struggling to find workers. Officials from the companies that operate Baker City's three pharmacies haven't responded to multiple requests from the Herald about the primary sources of the local problems.

The Pharmacy Workforce Center reported 11,356 pharmacist job postings nationally in the third quarter of 2021 — up 13% for the same period last year.

Baker County officials have been talking with their state counterparts about possible solutions, including the state providing temporary pharmacy workers.

Any help would be beneficial. Pharmacies are always vital, but perhaps never so much as they are now, with demand not only for medications that keep people healthy but for COVID-19, flu and other vaccines.

— Jayson Jacoby, Baker City Herald editor

## Your views

### Advice: Live and let live

I just finished reading about a local citizen's recent trip to Hawaii. He said it was like heaven over there including the air travel. I had to do some soul searching. Turns out that I am selfish, whining, idiotic, disrespectful, noncompliant, and mostly unhappy. I am also prone to participate in meaningless unfruitful rallies and overly obsessed with fabricated constitutional and personal rights. Sadly, I even pump my fists while shouting about things I don't like and am often even red-faced.

With some chagrin, I even admit to thinking that Donald Trump had the best interests of our country at heart while sometimes being crass about it. Wow, who knew? Having looked into my behaviors, it's clear some changes are overdue. From now on, I will try to better accept the culture and politics of where I call home. I will not be so condescending and quick to judge my fellow men. Finally, I resolve to do as my grandmother always told me ... live and let live.

If I fail, and it turns out that I am simply not a good fit for my community, I will just have to move to Hawaii. Sounds like heaven. Anybody care to join me?

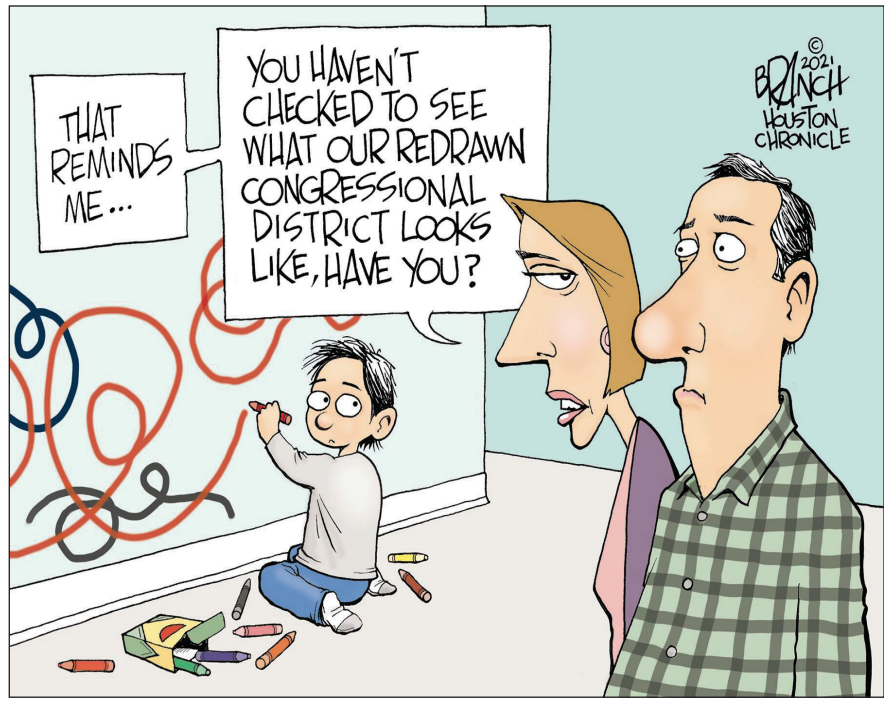
Vic Cagie  
Baker City

### Appoint Randy Daugherty

As former business owners, a former budget board member and councilor and lifetime residents of Baker County, my wife and myself are very concerned about the way the current city council is behaving in regards to performing the necessary duties of running our beautiful city.

In light of recent activities, namely the process of trying to replace councilor Lynette Perry, we would like to make known our support of Mr. Daugherty to take her place. We have known Randy both personally and professionally for many years and his integrity is unquestionable. He loves Baker City and the surrounding county and only wants to see Baker City to be at its best.

Unfortunately, three members of the council apparently do not feel the same way or they would do what is best for the community not their personal feelings. My feelings are these: What is it that you are afraid of? What is your reasoning for not bringing in an individual



with experience, history, and knowledge of the community and finances? Is it only because of his comments that you are an inexperienced council? Well, only being involved in the city management for 10 months is inexperienced in my opinion. With the current mayor wanting to be involved in running for governor of the state, and traveling a lot, you will definitely be in need of someone with experience, knowledge and history of city government.

Your inability to come to an agreement regarding Mr. Daugherty is very discouraging. If you can't come to an agreement that will help the city of Baker City by putting in an experienced member of the community then you will not accomplish anything during your tenure.

Baker City councilors, please put aside your personal feelings and do what is right for the city by installing Mr. Daugherty to take Ms. Perry's place.

Roger Coles  
Baker City

### 3 lanes are safer than 4

I live outside the Baker City limits but drive 10th Street five days a week getting to and from work. For the last 12+ years I've considered Baker City my town. As a professional civil engineer I'd like to offer my opinion on the 3-lane vs. 4-lane planning consideration for 10th Street. Regarding local credentials other than growing up in Baker County, prior to working for the Forest Service I was a consulting engineer for 31 years. Although based in Bend, I was on the team that prepared the transportation

master plan update for Baker City in the 1990s and I was the design engineer for the water and wastewater systems, roads, and parking lots for the Oregon Trail Interpretive Center, also in the '90s.

It is my professional opinion that a 3-lane section should be adopted for 10th Street for the reasons of safety and efficiency. A 4-lane configuration is dangerous because traffic backs up in the inside lanes waiting for vehicles to make left turns. A waiting driver can get frustrated, switch to the right-hand lane to get past the waiting vehicle(s), and get "T-boned" by a passing vehicle. A 3-lane layout eliminates this risk. With fewer lanes, it is also safer for pedestrians to cross. Because traffic flows more freely, it can be as efficient, even with half the number of active lanes. Aside from Baker City's Campbell Street being switched from a 4-lane to 3-lane section successfully, another example involving a highway on a city street was when the city of Prineville and ODOT changed 3rd Street/Highway 26 from a 4-lane to 3-lane layout. Accidents were greatly reduced and traffic flow greatly improved.

If there is a desire to maintain a 4-lane section but improve safety, an alternative is to eliminate left turns. This alternative is typically unpopular because the out-of-direction travel to go another block, turn right, and go around the block adds driving time, fuel consumption, and frustration. I do not recommend it.

Jim Carnahan  
Baker City

### 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.

- 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.

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# Stroll around home town provokes nostalgia

The man was stepping out the front door of the home where I grew up, and as I walked past on the sidewalk I felt a twinge, a slightly painful vestige of possessiveness.

I haven't lived there for 33 years. And my parents sold the place 29 years ago.

But nostalgia, like certain other sensations, tends to temporarily override the impersonal realities of property deeds and names stenciled on mailboxes.

And among emotions, the ones provoked by the sight of your childhood home are apt to be unusually powerful.

Particularly when, as is the case for me, there is only one such home.

Technically there were two.

But since I hadn't even celebrated my second birthday before we moved into the house on North Fern Avenue in Stayton, that ranch-style home, where I lived until I went to college just before I turned 18, stands alone in my memories.

That I was strolling by just when the man opened the door was pure happenstance.

He noticed me looking and said hello.

I returned the greeting.

I paused, mid-stride, and glanced back.

The man was looking elsewhere.

If our eyes had again met I might have spoken, although I'm not sure what I would have said.

I don't think I could have mustered the courage to actually ask the man if I might have a look around, even though I don't think, given the circumstances, that such a request would constitute an egregious imposition.

I'm sure most of us have heard of such a case, and even if some of the stories are apocryphal a goodly percentage, I suspect, are true.

I imagine most people wouldn't be offended by such a query.

Many probably would be pleased to let someone relive his childhood, this being a gift most of us will never have a chance to bestow.

But even if I weren't capable of basically inviting myself in, I might well have told the man why I came to be walking by his house. I might have told him that once it was my house, and that I happened to be in town and was curious to see what changes a few decades had wrought.

Perhaps that would softened him up, so to speak. Maybe he would have extended the invitation to come in, an offer I would have accepted with gratitude.

I thought about that brief encoun-



JAYSON JACOBY

ter as I continued my hour-long walk around Stayton on the late morning of Oct. 16.

This stroll down many lanes, each of them provoking memories, was impromptu.

I didn't drive most of the way across the state to kick around in my childhood, figuratively speaking. I made the trip to to watch my nephew, Jon Pennick, play in his homecoming football game at Santiam High School in Mill City. My parents moved to that town, up the North Santiam River about 17 miles from Stayton, in 2016, after they sold their home in Salem.

As I turned the corner at the south end of North Fern I was chastising myself. I felt chagrined at passing up what was, after all, a coincidental chance.

Graced with the good fortune to walk past my old home right when the man was leaving, I had botched it — had, with my instinctive tentativeness, squandered what might have been a joyful experience.

Yet my attitude changed gradually as the blocks passed, and I took

in several other parts of Stayton, all of them familiar in the slightly less distinct way of places that you once passed almost every day but have seen just a few times since the Reagan administration.

I convinced myself that walking through the rooms and hallways of my old house might not have been quite the poignant tour I had at first believed.

It wouldn't be the same place.

Not in the ways that matter most.

Just as the town had been altered, with a supermarket standing where once only stunted grass and Queen Anne's lace grew, and buildings housing businesses whose names I did not know, so too would my childhood home have been altered by the accumulation of years.

The shag carpet I once raked surely would have been replaced by a more contemporary style.

The furniture would be unfamiliar, the walls probably painted in a color I didn't recall, the art on the walls and the other decorations having backstories of which I am entirely ignorant.

Even from outside I could see how different the place is.

The strip of lawn on the shady north side of the house, across which I pushed dozens of wheelbarrow loads

of firewood and where I tossed many baseballs, footballs and frisbees, is gone, replaced by a concrete pad on which was parked a motor home.

The basketball hoop in the driveway, the scene of many epic contests between me and my much more talented older brother, Michael, was likewise eliminated from the scene.

The white siding had given way to brown, the window shutters, once black, now slathered in white.

I suspect that touring the inside, however intriguing as a concept, would have been both jarring and not a little disappointing.

Perhaps it's better that my memories of the place remain as they are, protected, as though in amber, by the distance of so many years.

To intrude on those memories by actually standing in the rooms where so much happened would have reminded me, I think, that whatever magic might have existed there left the place when I did. The experience might well have spurred in me not the pleasant sort of nostalgia but its opposite, the kind that leaves you feeling hollow and bereft, mourning a time, and a place, and people, who can never be what they once were.

Jayson Jacoby is editor of the Baker City Herald.