

## EDITORIAL

# Pressure on to decide on detective

**B**aker City Police Chief Ty Duby told the Herald recently that the city can't keep Detective Shannon Regan on paid administrative leave "indefinitely."

Obviously.

But city residents could hardly be blamed for wondering just how long this period, when the city is paying Regan \$6,000 per month but not allowing her to work, will turn out to be.

Duby placed Regan on leave in July 2021. He had little choice but to do so after La Grande defense attorney Jim A. Schaeffer alleged that Regan, the lead detective in the fatal shooting of Angela Parrish in Baker City in January 2020, listened to five phone calls between Schaeffer and his client, suspect Shawn Quentin Greenwood, in 2020. Schaeffer argued in court that Regan violated Greenwood's rights, and the attorney sought to dismiss all charges against Greenwood.

Judge Matt Shirtcliff declined to do so, but he did rule that Greg Baxter, Baker County district attorney, couldn't use at trial any evidence that Regan collected after Sept. 14, 2020, the day her computer was used to access and listen to the phone calls, according to an investigation by the Oregon Department of Justice. Greenwood later pleaded no contest to three lesser charges and was sentenced to 90 months in prison.

Two issues have a direct bearing on Regan's employment situation. First, the Department of Justice is investigating whether Regan broke any laws (official misconduct is probably the most likely charge, if so). Duby said he hasn't heard any results from the investigation. The second issue is whether the district attorney could use Regan as a trial witness in the future. If not, it's difficult to imagine how the city could continue to employ her as a police officer, as testifying is a vital part of the job, particularly for a detective.

Duby and City Manager Jon Cannon need answers to both those questions. And then they need to make a prompt decision about Regan's status.

Prolonging this situation is a misuse of city dollars, and it deprives Regan of the ability to plan for the future.

— Jayson Jacoby, Baker City Herald editor



## YOUR VIEWS

### Vote no on the Baker Rural Fire District tax levy

I was a member of this Fire District for several years until the board pulled several stunts to the detriment of the department as a whole.

The present management and the majority of the board have practiced bad management to the extent that the vast majority of the firefighters have resigned. This department has not been able to respond to emergencies with qualified personnel for the last several years.

The board has mismanaged the budget by purchasing dilapidated equipment from acquaintance's (tenders) and depleted the budget enough to now require these additional funds to operate.

The new station that was just purchased is in a physical location that eliminated several properties up Salmon Creek to be covered by the insurance companies, the ISO (insurance services organization) requires a station within five miles of the property. This station does benefit the city fire department, for which he is the newest Chief and is also the Chief Baker Rural Dept. and is paid by both departments, this arrangement has obligated the Baker Rural department to all of sudden be required to pay state PERS. He also uses a Baker Rural vehicle to commute daily to and from the city department which costs the Rural more funds.

The department has failed to follow

state law and does not publish or post its budget for the taxpayers to read or comment on.

These factors along with other examples of bad management requires additional funds to keep to the same amateurish path during these inflationary times.

Please do not enable this department to increase the amount of taxes it mis-spends. It's time to stop this local government's negligent behavior!

**Addison Johnson**  
Baker City

### Extended administrative leave unfair to employee, citizens

I wanted to take a moment and comment on the article titled, "Baker City Police detective remains on paid leave." I first want to clarify that I have neither heard nor seen any evidence, from either side of this situation, other than what the DA was quoted as saying during the early stages of the investigation. What I do want to talk about is administrative leave and what it is intended for.

I too find it a travesty that the citizens of Baker City are paying for an employee to not do their job for this length of time. What I find is a bigger travesty is having any employee, much less one with over 20 years of dedicated service to the citizens of Baker City, sitting at home each day for the past 7 months not knowing what decisions are going to be made about their future.

I was taught that administrative leave was intended as a tool that could be employed to protect the city and the employee while a prompt, thorough investigation was completed to determine if policy and/or criminal violation(s) were committed by an employee. What it was not intended for is a means of placing an employee on leave for an indefinite amount of time while a bureaucracy tries to figure out how to settle a matter. That isn't fair to the city, the department, the citizens or the employee.

What you are seeing is the result of a lack of leadership. There is absolutely no rational reason for this investigation to have lasted for 7 months and counting. During my career I placed numerous employees on administrative leave. Although I don't remember the exact timeframes, you'd be hard pressed to find an employee who was on leave for more than 1 or 2 weeks at the most, whether it was an in-house investigation or outsourced to another agency. I will bet that you could contact Ontario, La Grande and Pendleton Police departments and find similar timeframes for personnel investigations.

It's past time for Chief Duby and City Manager Cannon to start rattling cages, whether it be at the Department of Justice or the District Attorney's Office and get this matter settled. You owe it to the citizens of Baker City and especially to your employee.

**Wyn Lohner**  
Retired Baker City Police chief

## CONTACT YOUR PUBLIC OFFICIALS

**President Joe Biden:** The White House, 1600 Pennsylvania Ave., Washington, D.C. 20500; 202-456-1111; to send comments, go to [www.whitehouse.gov](http://www.whitehouse.gov).

**U.S. Sen. Jeff Merkley:** D.C. office: 313 Hart Senate Office Building, U.S. Senate, Washington, D.C., 20510; 202-224-3753; fax 202-228-3997. Portland office: One World Trade Center, 121 S.W. Salmon St. Suite 1250, Portland, OR 97204; 503-326-3386; fax 503-326-2900. Baker City office, 1705 Main St., Suite 504, 541-278-1129; [merkley.senate.gov](mailto:merkley.senate.gov).

**U.S. Sen. Ron Wyden:** D.C. office: 221 Dirksen Senate Office Building, Washington, D.C., 20510; 202-224-5244; fax 202-228-2717. La Grande office: 105 Fir St., No. 210, La Grande, OR 97850; 541-962-7691; fax, 541-963-0885; [wyden.senate.gov](mailto:wyden.senate.gov).

**U.S. Rep. Cliff Bentz (2nd District):** D.C. office: 1239 Longworth House Office Building, Washington, D.C., 20515, 202-225-6730; fax 202-225-5774. Medford office: 14 N. Central Avenue Suite 112, Medford, OR 97504; Phone: 541-776-4646; fax: 541-779-0204; Ontario office: 2430 S.W. Fourth Ave., No. 2, Ontario,

OR 97914; Phone: 541-709-2040. [bentz.house.gov](mailto:bentz.house.gov).

**Oregon Gov. Kate Brown:** 254 State Capitol, Salem, OR 97310; 503-378-3111; [www.governor.oregon.gov](http://www.governor.oregon.gov).

**Oregon State Treasurer Tobias Read:** oregon.treasurer@ost.state.or.us; 350 Winter St. NE, Suite 100, Salem OR 97301-3896; 503-378-4000.

**Oregon Attorney General Ellen F. Rosenblum:** Justice Building, Salem, OR 97301-4096; 503-378-4400.

## COLUMN

# A sordid but little-known piece of Oregon history

**T**hat someone went to an Oregon state park on a summer night and attacked two young women with an ax, inflicting nearly fatal wounds on one and leaving the other permanently scarred, is terrible.

But this story is even worse than that single sentence, horrific as it surely is, suggests.

The ax-wielder, who preceded the flurry of bloody blows by driving his pickup truck over the tent where the women were sleeping, leaving tire marks on one of them, was never arrested.

Yet even if this man presented himself today at the headquarters of the Oregon State Police and admitted that he had done the deed, he could then walk back out the door and the cops would have no legal authority to impede, much less to arrest, him.

That's the basic outline of a story that seems to me ought to be better known than it is.

I have what I think is a fairly thorough knowledge, for a layperson with neither law enforcement nor legal experience, of Oregon's sordid criminal history.

I've read all of the late Ann Rule's books about killers who prowled the state in the 1960s, '70s and '80s.

I also read widely about more recent, heavily publicized cases.

In researching a series of stories for the Baker City Herald in 2004, I listened to the audio recording of a man who confessed to killing his pregnant wife and their three children the year before.

(I see no need in naming any of

these cretins; it's unfortunate that killers' names are more prominent than those of their victims.)

But the story of the women who were run over and hacked with an implement normally used to chop kindling is not widely known, so far as I can tell, except perhaps in Central Oregon.

That's where it happened. It happened a long time ago, to be sure, in 1977. I suspect the duration partially explains this episode's relatively modest legacy.

(Although D.B. Cooper's 1971 caper, to cite only one even older crime, seems to have lost little of its ability to obsess self-appointed sleuths.)

But I think too that the case failed to lodge itself into the state's collective memory in part because the story isn't as awful as it easily could have been.

Both women survived. Such is the perverse nature of publicity.

Just as murderers' infamy surpasses the public's knowledge of their victims, crimes that involve the infliction of horrible, but not quite fatal, injuries tend not to inspire books and documentaries and movies.

Still and all, it strikes me as passing strange that this episode, which happened on the night of June 22, 1977, at Cline Falls State Park, along the Deschutes River a few miles west of Redmond, is not especially notorious.

It's unsolved, for one thing, and those mysteries which lack resolution tend to captivate us with a particular power.

Moreover, though it's not implausi-



**Jayson Jacoby**

ble that the attacker might some day be identified, the unfortunate history of Oregon's statute of limitations for attempted murder ensures that the man will never stand before a judge or jury to answer for the crimes.

I knew nothing of the Cline Falls attack until several years ago — I don't recall the precise period — when I came across a book in the true crime section at the Baker County Public Library.

The book, "Strange Piece of Paradise," was published in 2006. The author, Terri Jentz, is one of the women who were attacked.

I recently re-read the book — the same copy from the same library — after listening to a podcast that featured the story.

Jentz is an immensely talented writer. Her prose, and in particular her ability to evoke the essence of the Central Oregon landscape, with its aromatic sage and juniper and its dusty expanses of high desert and its vistas of volcano and glacier, elevates what would be a compelling narrative even in the hands of a lesser writer.

The story started in mid June of 1997. Just a couple weeks earlier, the Portland Trail Blazers won their first, and only, NBA championship.

Jentz and her roommate at Yale, Shayna Weiss (a pseudonym), intended to ride their bicycles 4,200 miles across the U.S., from the Pacific to the Atlantic, on the BikeCenten-

nial route designated the year before, America's 200th birthday.

They were a week into their ride, which started in Astoria, when they camped at Cline Falls. They never pedaled another mile together.

Weiss, who was struck in the head with an ax (or possibly hatchet; the details of the weapon, which was never found, aren't absolute), nearly died. She has no memory of the attack. Her eyesight was diminished forever, although she became a doctor.

Jentz, however, vividly recalled the incident.

Her injuries were less life-threatening but still appalling. The ax blade sliced through the skin of her forearm and into the bone. A pickup tire cracked her collarbone and some ribs.

She had a distinct recollection of her attacker. Though she didn't see his face, she had a good look at his legs, clad in clean blue jeans, and a shirt tucked neatly into the pants. Jentz frequently describes the attacker's attire as "meticulous."

Jentz didn't return to Oregon until 1992.

That year she embarked on what would become an investigation extending over nearly a decade during which she learned that a Redmond man was widely suspected among local residents, though never formally charged, of being the attacker.

Jentz uses the pseudonym "Dirk Duran" for the suspect, who she comes to believe was indeed guilty. The man has a long list of criminal charges in Deschutes County, spanning more than 30 years. He was con-

victed of coercion and unlawful use of a firearm in a 1997 trial — which Jentz attended — and sentenced to five years in prison.

His most recent conviction, for an October 2016 incident, was for harassment.

Prior to that, however, Jentz learned, to her disgust, that the statute of limitations for attempted murder in Oregon was just three years. Which means that by June 22, 1980 — a dozen years before she returned to Oregon to revisit the place where her life had been irrevocably changed — Jentz's attacker was free from the fear of being prosecuted, and for the perverse reason that none of his blows was quite fatal.

Jentz testified in 1997 before the Oregon Legislature in support of a bill that eliminated the statute of limitations for attempted murder. The bill became law, but because it wasn't retroactive it had no effect on the Cline Falls attacker.

Which, in one sense, is the end of the story.

An unsatisfying ending, to be sure. Yet the absence of a neat conclusion is also part of what makes Jentz's book, and this episode, so fascinating, and frightening.

I can think of no better adjective than the second one, anyway, for the reality that a man got away with driving over a tent in which two people slept, and then attacking both with an ax.

Jayson Jacoby is editor of the Baker City Herald.