

EDITORIAL

Rethinking
fentanyl
punishment

We can feel relieved that the car Darren Glenn Yeater was driving when he was arrested in Baker City on June 1 has been impounded, and along with it the 40.2 grams of fentanyl powder, nearly 16,000 fentanyl pills and quantities of other drugs police found inside while doing a warrant search the next day.

But that relief doesn't completely assuage the frightening prospect of those drugs, and in particular the frequently lethal fentanyl, being so near. The synthetic opioid, which is much more powerful than heroin, is responsible for a significant number of overdose deaths in Oregon and nationwide. Officials blame fentanyl for contributing to Oregon's 41% increase in overdose deaths in 2021, according to the National Center for Health Statistics.

Baker City Police Chief Ty Duby said on June 7 that although Baker County once was "pretty insulated" from some of the greatest dangers of the illicit drug trade, that's not the case with fentanyl. It's cheap and easy to transport. And it's deadly — in many cases because the person who took it didn't know it was fentanyl.

The day after Yeater's car was searched, an Oregon State Police trooper cited two Washington men, on Interstate 84 near Farewell Bend, for possession of much smaller — less than 5 grams each — of fentanyl. Due to Measure 110, which Oregon voters approved in November 2020 (though about 62% of Baker County voters were opposed), the two men were given what amounts to a traffic ticket because the amount of fentanyl they had was under the 5-gram threshold.

Yet according to the Drug Enforcement Administration, even 2 milligrams of fentanyl can kill a person. In other words, having 4.9 grams of fentanyl — approximately 2,450 lethal doses — would net you a \$100 fine.

Yeater, who had substantially larger quantities, is facing much more serious punishment, of course.

But for a drug as dangerous as fentanyl, Oregonians might wish to reconsider whether we ought to treat people who have any amount as though they had failed to make a complete stop at a sign, or exceeded the posted speed limit by 10 mph.

— Jayson Jacoby, Baker City Herald editor

YOUR VIEWS

City's quiet zone effort is
misguided and costly

I am against the misguided and costly effort by the city council and manager to bow to the complaints by a handful of new residents to establish quiet zones for all Union Pacific trains passing through our city for numerous reasons:

First is the lengthy process and cost associated with complying legally with such efforts which are detailed in an email that I requested from the Union Pacific's Regional Office in Portland sent to me by Aaron Hunt.

According to a Union Pacific document dealing with quiet zones: "Union Pacific believes quiet zones compromise the safety of railroad employees, customers, and the general public. While the railroad does not endorse quiet zones, it does comply with provisions outlined in the federal law."

The document also states: "In order to maintain high public safety standards, it is critical and beneficial to have the perspective gained from the railroad's experience and expertise concerning quiet zones. Union Pacific representatives will participate in diagnostic meetings and provide the necessary railroad information for quiet zone projects on Union Pacific lines, as required in the Final Rule."

The Union Pacific document also mentions the potential cost to taxpayers in jurisdictions that establish a quiet zone.

"Establishing quiet zones not only creates a public safety risk but also is a potential cost burden to taxpayers," the Union Pacific document states. "Public authorities are responsible for the cost of preliminary engineering, construction, maintenance and replacement of active warning devices or their components, including wayside horn systems installed at crossings to meet quiet zone standards."

"Public authorities are required to execute a preliminary engineering agreement with Union Pacific to reimburse the railroad for all costs related to quiet zone meetings, diagnostics and notice reviews. If it is determined that railroad work is required, public authorities are required to enter into a separate construction and maintenance agreement to guarantee reimbursement to the railroad for all actual costs associated with the installation and maintenance of the railroad improvements."

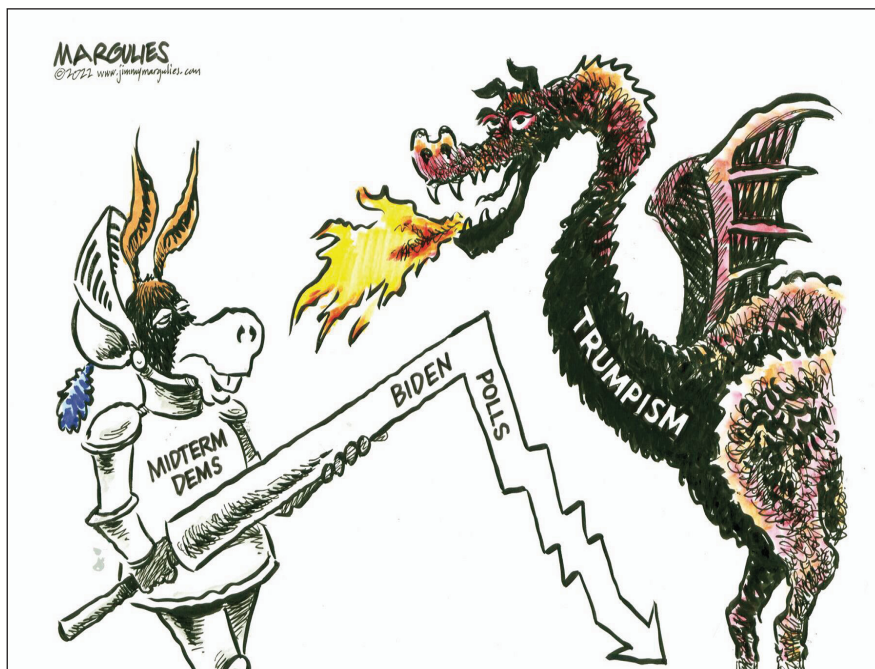
Second is the historic charm that Baker prides itself on. The chiming of the city clock, the ringing of church bells on Sundays, the blowing of the now defunct lumber mill horn at shift change and the sounding of warning horns by trains passing through Baker since 1884 are all the sounds that added to the history and ambiance of Baker.

Why a city council that wants to do away with ambulance service over a small annual deficit but incur the incredible cost of providing quiet zones is beyond my comprehension.

Harvey Haskell
Baker City

God in the U.S. Constitution?
Well, sort of

In the June 7, 2022, edition of the Herald, Neal Jacobson refutes another letter writer's assertion that God is not in the U.S. Constitution. Neal, a very nice guy,



thought otherwise. Surely God must be in that revered document.

So he searched and searched. He read through Article I, which sets up the Legislative powers of our government. Then Article II, which sets up the Judicial branch. Then Article III, which sets up the executive branch. There he ran across the proscribed President's Oath of Office. He must have thought surely I'll find God mentioned there.

Only disappointment did he find, for that oath reads: "Before he enter on the Execution of his Office, he shall take the following Oath or Affirmation: I do solemnly swear (or affirm) that I will faithfully execute the Office of the President of the United States, and will to the best of my Ability preserve, protect, and defend the Constitution of the United States." What, no "...so help me God"? How can that be?

So, Neal kept reading and reading. Through Articles IV, and V, and VI. Still no mention of God.

Then, voila!, there in Article VII about ratification of the just finished Constitution, the very last of the articles, Neal tells us in his letter to the editor, "[T]he Constitution mentions God."

Well, not quite. He fails to tell the readers what he found was only a date: "...done in Convention by Unanimous Consent of the States present the Seventeenth Day of September in the Year of our Lord one thousand seven hundred and Eighty seven..." Now, that's what I believe merchandisers call "bait and switch."

Naughty, naughty, Neal, you devil.
Gary Dielman
Baker City

In Idaho Power's realm,
everybody's gone surfing

Hear ye! Hear ye! Serfs and peasants! Thy principality of Idaho Power Corporation (IPC) speaks! Two and some score ago, the kingdom of IPC was created for the common good. Thus we were ordained as a monopoly, meaning whatever offensives we do be for your own goode. We assure thee, this be the present case.

From the far flung borders of our divinely blessed kingdom we hear grumblings from dissenting peasants — led by those in the forbidden Stop B2H. These are scurrilous rumors from the same ill-bred peasants who cooked up the bubonic plague and intend to take your crossbows away. Offensive rumors

say that yon Idaho Power CEO, Her Highness Queen Lisa A. Grow (LAG) is worth — thanks to our clever sharecropping arrangement — 5.5 million gold pieces in total compensation for being president and chief executive mucky muck of Idaho Power in 2022. Know that she labors for us all.

Hear ye! There's that offensive nonsense about the mere \$0.0 bond asked by ye olde fed and state agencies for most unlikely damages caused by building our awe-inspiring power line. Bull crape. Ye olde government agencies charge zero because they believe in our wizardry.

Hear ye! Further chin wags abound that the B2H likely will start fires as the gentle yon kingdom of PG&E did start a fire at the olde village of Paradise roasting 86 people. Serfs of low degree murmur that if the kingdom of PG&E would be a person, the penalty would put their head on a stake. This be gossip and be sorely hurtful: It was PG&E's right to sacrifice the town of Paradise for worthier peasants. Would such happen on the splendid B2H powerline in the far reaches of the IPC kingdom of eastern Oregon? Believe it not.

Hear ye! In order to condemn your garden plots to extend our beloved archaic electrical system Her Majesty Queen LAG will be sending out representatives this month. Treat them well. The traitorous Stop B2H claim they speak no truths. Rest easy, they be there to assuage ye.

Hear ye! Beware these scabrous rumors:

The kingdom of IPC will spread weeds building the power line. Best views of ye historic Oregon Trail will be destroyed.

B2H magnificent power lines will border many villages, but will provide no power to them.

The world is round. Hear ye! Anyone caught watering this heretical STOP B2H information — will, like those nasty folke, be hung, drawn, and quartered.

Hear ye! Royal regrets to the Smithe family for hanging your father for failing to bring his IPC power tithes in goode time. Ye olde bureaucratic SNAFU temporarily misplaced them.

Hear ye! Body pickup will resume at five bells every day until the plague subsides.

This royal pronouncement ends here due to parchment shortage.

Whit Deschner
Baker City

COLUMN

The eternal mystery of history's infamous crimes

I was listening to a podcast host describe in gruesome detail Jack the Ripper's various eviscerations, as a person does while pottering about in the yard on a fine April afternoon.

I find this a strangely satisfying diversion, despite the horrific topic.

A well-crafted podcast can transport me from a sunny day, my hands smudged with the good soil, to the dank, fog-draped alleys of London's East End in the dreadful late summer and autumn of 1888. This distracts me from the otherwise vexing task of trying to rid the place of both new weeds and old leaves, that stubborn detritus of spring.

The episode on this particular day happened to focus on that most infamous of serial killers.

But there is a wealth of other legendary mysteries that I find equally fascinating.

And as with most online matters, the volume of podcasts delving into every nasty nook and creepy cranny is prodigious indeed.

Their quality varies widely, to be sure.

I have occasionally deleted an episode after just a few minutes when it became clear that the host, who seemingly decided on a whim to start recording, knew less about the subject than I did — and I'm hardly an authority on any of the cases that intrigue me.

There is also an inevitable redundancy when dozens of podcasters delve into rather ancient stories — dating back 134 years, in Jack the

Ripper's case. The chances of any significant developments in these stories is slim. And when they happen they're likely to generate publicity in outlets far more prominent than the sort of podcast people produce in their garages.

(Or possibly their dungeons, based on the sound quality that some have. Or, rather, don't have.)

For all that, the lure of these tales is, of course, the attraction of the unknown.

Jack the Ripper is legendary in part — perhaps it's even the largest part, considering subsequent slayers have surpassed even his brutality — because we don't know who he was.

And despite the library's worth of books whose authors claim they can answer that question — and with a smugness that only the prospect of rich royalties can induce — the reality is that none has done so.

This almost certainly will continue to be true, for eternity.

The odds of actually solving a case that predates by many decades even the basic practices of forensic science that we take for granted today are minuscule.

And that's being charitable.

Indeed, many in the field of Ripperology profess to not even concern themselves with suspects, preferring instead to investigate the many tangents.

(That this subject has a widely accepted, pseudoscientific name — Ripperology — illustrates the persistent fascination with the case, as



Jayson Jacoby

though its practitioners were studying rock formations or ancient civilizations or some similarly respectable field.)

These people, some of them authors and some podcasters, contend that they find it more compelling to study Jack the Ripper's era than to continue the quixotic pursuit of the murderer's identity.

I even believe some of these people.

But for me — and I think for other neophytes — this case and others in the genre beckon us with the power of that singular question — who did it?

(Or whodunit, if you prefer.)

Perhaps because I use these topics to stave off boredom, rather than pursue them as a serious academic researcher, the reality that a solution is all but unreachable isn't discouraging.

I simply appreciate that, while I'm trying to coax quackgrass roots to give up their powerful hold on the soil, I can let my mind wander, to know that somebody killed those women in 1888 and to ponder the great mystery of why we still can't put a name to him.

(A real name, that is, not that cruel, but undeniably catchy, nickname. Which, in a rare example of widespread consensus among Ripperologists, was almost certainly bestowed

not by the killer himself, but by an enterprising journalist who, I have to concede, had a knack.)

Among other well-known unsolved crimes, a couple that have rich deposits in the podcasting world also are known by monikers — the Zodiac killer, and D.B. Cooper.

Both have claimed considerable amounts of storage space on my phone, enlivened many hours of yardwork drudgery, and entertained me on hikes or long drives.

The Zodiac, in common with Jack the Ripper, is believed to have killed five people. The Zodiac committed his crimes in the San Francisco Bay Area during 1968 and 1969. He wrote many letters to area newspapers, taunting police and including, in some messages, cryptograms, one of which he claimed included his identity. Unlike Jack, the Zodiac coined his nickname without any assistance from the media.

As with Jack the Ripper, the Zodiac's legacy has spawned a considerable — though comparatively puny, by Ripper standards — collection of books. Many of those are also "suspect books" — in which the author fixates on a particular person and endeavors, with flights of logical fancy that are entertaining if not frequently ludicrous, to prove that he's the culprit.

D.B. Cooper is the name, almost certainly an alias, of the man who, on the day before Thanksgiving in 1971, hijacked a Northwest Orient 727 flying from Portland to Seattle.

(The hijacker actually gave his

name as Dan Cooper when he bought his \$20 ticket in Portland. A garbled phone conversation between police and a reporter resulted in Dan becoming D.B. And D.B., perhaps because it sounds cooler than Dan, it remains.)

Cooper let the passengers disembark in Seattle after receiving his ransom of \$200,000 in \$20 bills, along with four parachutes. He jumped out of the 727 — unusual among passenger jets, it has a retractable staircase in the bottom of the fuselage — in Western Washington, not far north of the Columbia River, and was never heard from again.

A boy digging in the sand along the Columbia found some of the ransom bills in 1980, a tantalizing clue that hasn't, however, solved the case.

The idea that we might come to know who Cooper or the Zodiac was remains somewhat plausible, if only because they happened comparatively recently, and there is rather more tangible evidence associated with each.

I suspect, though, that half a century from now, when both cases have passed their centennial, the identities of the Zodiac and D.B. Cooper will remain as elusive as Jack the Ripper's.

But I also imagine that, for people with obstinate vegetation to deal with or other, unstimulating tasks, the prospect of spending an hour or two pondering these spectres of the always fading past will remain enticing.

Jayson Jacoby is editor of the Baker City Herald.