

EDITORIAL

Thankful
for so much
normalcy

Normal. A simple word, and one that's easy to take for granted. At least until very little seems normal.

For more than two years, the concept of normal at times might have felt, to many of us, like a fondly remembered figment from the past.

A worldwide pandemic can have that effect.

COVID-19 arrived rather suddenly.

In the span of a couple weeks, schools and many businesses, all of which had been operating normally — there's that word — closed or were severely curtailed.

Our lives were dramatically altered.

The return to normal — there it is again — has been a more gradual process. So gradual, perhaps, that we didn't recognize it as acutely as we did the upheaval that made the spring of 2020 unique.

This week, which brings the holiday when we traditionally consider what we are thankful for, gives us a fine chance to reflect on, and celebrate, how much that once was strange no longer is.

Which is to say, normal.

We've not banished the virus, of course.

It remains a threat to our older friends and family, and those with certain medical conditions.

But the combination of vaccines and past infections and better treatments has rendered COVID-19 a notably lesser threat that it was.

As a result, this holiday season will be much more like what we were accustomed to before most of us had heard of a coronavirus.

Indeed, the past several months have been marked by much that is, well, normal.

For the first time since 2019, a school year started in the usual way, with fully in-person classes, and no mask mandates.

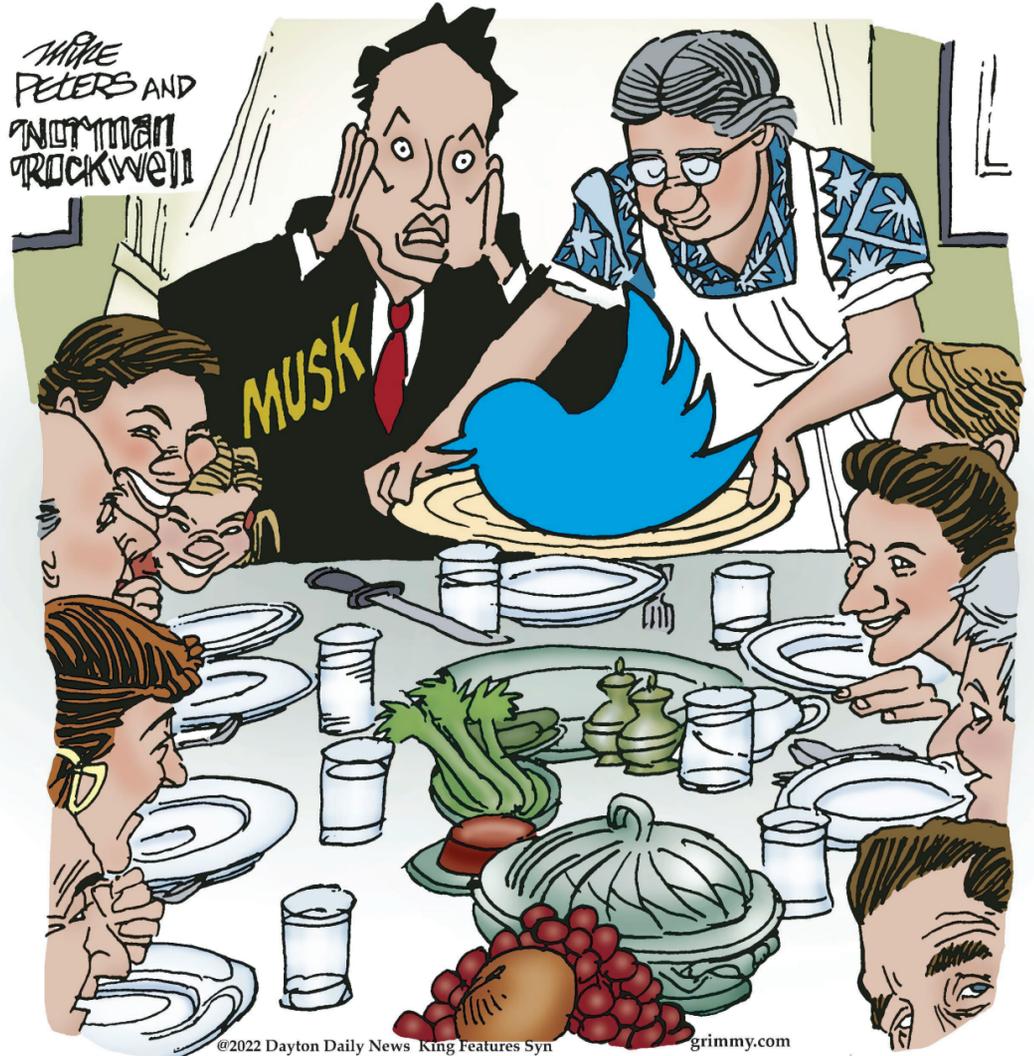
Sports and other activities took place on the regular schedule, a vital part of the high school experience for students, and an important connection between the schools and the communities.

Most summer festivals and other events happened, and that trend will continue with Thanksgiving dinners and, next Saturday, Dec. 3, the Twilight Christmas parade and tree-lighting ceremony.

There is of course so much else to be thankful for, both in the community and in our own lives.

But this year, perhaps more than any other in recent memory, we can, in addition to everything else we cherish, relish the return of all that once again is normal.

— Jayson Jacoby, Baker City Herald editor



YOUR VIEWS

No need for large capacity
clips or AR-15s

I have been an avid hunter most of my life, learning how to operate a gun and pistol at safety classes while in school. And I also was a part of a shooting club and belonged to a local outdoor shooting club within my home town. While growing up our rifles were all limited to a maximum 5-shot clip or magazine, shotguns were limited to 3-shot magazine. AR-15 military assault guns were military use only, and never intended for home consumption.

Somewhere down the road, some people, I'd say the NRA, saw a fortune to be made in the military killing weapons, so spent a fortune in back pocket instructions to the Congress of the USA to make these killing machines available to the public market. Starting with 10-shot clips, they have escalated to at least 30-shot clips to use for whatever purpose is beyond me. I can understand the military using these clips for personal safety against an enemy. But to the common citizen I ask WHY? What does a 30-shot clip help with? You cannot legally hunt with these killing machines as the regular rifle is limited to 5-shot clips and no more. You want hamburger out of your meat? Then leave the game animals alone.

I looked at the new laws that were passed and nowhere did I see the government is going to get your guns. This

is another fake informative issue just like the Republican Party is throwing around. No one is asking to stop your hunting and owning hunting guns, just the stupid 30-shot clips and even a 10-shot clip is asinine to use along with the AK-47 and AR-15. There is no place in our society for these killing machines. If you want to use them, then go ahead and sign up for the military and go for it. Personally I am sick and tired of seeing people killed in masses by you idiots who seem to think it very manly or womanly to have the bigger the better. Not in my country! Never again!

Phil Reindl

Baker City

Blue Mt. Council doesn't
speak for the public

October 25 through November 9 the Forest Service's Blues Intergovernmental Council (BIC) held a series of meetings to unveil their "desired conditions" for the upcoming Forest Plan Revision talks. The BIC's desired condition for access is incorrectly stated and must be revised. The public in Eastern Oregon has stated their desired condition for access is an open forest. They have stated this since the beginning of Travel Management in 2007, and through the withdrawal of the forest plan revision in 2018.

The BIC states that "The public has a desire to be well informed on forest access, therefore a current and compre-

hensive inventory of all forest roads and trails is displayed on an easily read map which clearly lists status is essential. Any proposed changes to the status of the road system would be evaluated and analyzed at the project level through the NEPA process in coordination with the local and tribal governments and with comprehensive public notice and involvement.

Where applicable, road and trail systems available for public use should be maintained according with their designated purpose. Any use restriction previously reviewed and approved through the NEPA process are clearly and effectively posted for the public and reflected on updated maps."

This statement is in support of Travel Management, closure of cross-country travel and closure of motorized access to roughly 95% of the national forests in Northeastern Oregon. The statement must be changed to "The BIC has a desire to be well informed." as the BIC developed these desired conditions outside public participation, and without consideration of past public comments or objections filed.

The BIC's documents should reflect it speaking for itself, and not representing itself as a voice of the residents of Eastern Oregon, as it is not a representative body of Eastern Oregon.

John George
Bates

COLUMN

Face full of leaves spurs memories of a maple

I had forgotten how much fun a yard full of fallen leaves can be until I had an armful chucked in my face.

The thrower was my grandson, Brysen Weitz.

His aim was true.

A mixture of willow and ash leaves littered my hair and shoulders.

And the sleeves of my jacket — leaves, even dry ones, as these fortunately were, stick to fleece and once there are not inclined to be dislodged.

Brysen is 5. His brother, Caden, who is 3, proved equally adept at carrying leaves but was less accurate with his crackling bombardments.

The age range between 3 and 5 is the prime period, of course, for turning leaves, which nature supplies for free every autumn, into a toy that holds young attentions longer than any number of expensive electronic gadgets.

Besides which we were out in the good clean air, none of us tethered to a cord.

I had been out there, wielding a rake, a few hours before Brysen and Caden came to visit.

As I yanked the plastic tines across the grass (unusually green for mid-autumn, a testament to weather that, until recently, was quite mild) I understood that my labors were likely to be futile.

I knew the boys were coming over.

More to the point, I knew that small boys can no more ignore piles of leaves than they can pass a plate of chocolate chip cookies without pleading to be given one.

(Or, depending on the boy, grabbing one and commencing to gobbling. This is not illogical — even if the boy gets into a bit



Jayson
Jacoby

of trouble, it's not as if the parents can take the cookie back. Regret is supposed to be a bitter emotion, but it's much less so when the sweet flavor of chocolate still lingers on the tongue.)

I was once a small boy myself, and although that era sometimes seems impossibly distant, certain things — piles of leaves and plates of chocolate chip cookies, to name but two — can briefly bring me closer to the past.

From my adult perspective, the piles of leaves are pleasing to the eye, symbols of order and neatness. I appreciate how the modest mounds, with their mottled shades of brown and yellow, are surrounded by expanses of untrammeled grass, soft and lush.

Such nuances are, of course, as meaningless as calculus to a 5-year-old and a 3-year-old.

They see a series of piles obviously constructed for the sole purpose of being dismantled, the pieces scattered about the yard (with some held in reserve to toss over Papa's head.)

After the boys had gone I grabbed the rake and rebuilt the piles.

A couple days later the wind freshened, the willow boughs whipped about and I was basically back where I had started. A southern gale respects my rake work about as much as my grandsons do.

While I was out there, trying to per-

suade the leaves to yield to the tines, I got to thinking, as I almost always do at such times, about my maternal grandparents' home in Stayton, the town where I grew up.

(Mine was a fortunate childhood in many respects, not least being that both sets of grandparents lived little more than a mile away. Their homes were much closer to each other — very nearly within the range of a well-thrown dirt clod.)

Grandma and Grandpa's house was on what seemed to me, as a boy, a sprawling property. There was a filbert orchard and a big garden and blackberry bushes and a goldfish pond and a secluded patch of grass we always called the sunken garden.

The property was bordered on one side by an irrigation ditch.

But among its many trees and shrubs, one stood out, literally so. It's a bigleaf maple, a hoary old thing, draped in moss and so thick around that it probably would have taken me and all three of my siblings, holding hands, to encircle the trunk.

The maple, which stood between the house and the street, cast a great patch of shade. Two swings hung from branches.

But when I remember the maple I invariably see it in the fall of the year, after it had shed most of its yellow and orange leaves.

And such a bounty of leaves, as the maple is both broad and tall.

We would gather some weekend day, my family and probably some cousins, although my memory is a bit murky in that regard, and have a go at raking the leaves.

The bigleaf maple, if you're not well acquainted with the species, is aptly named.

The leaves, some of them, were as big as a dinner plate.

Those days are among the more vivid from my childhood.

I remember the crunch of the leaves, the earthy smell of them, the skeletal look of the tree, nearly bereft of the foliage it carried for half the year.

My grandpa died in 1980, my grandma five years later. The house was sold, then torn down.

When I drive past the property now, bare of the house and many of the plants my grandparents tended, it seems much smaller than I can account for solely by the different perspectives of a man and a boy. This saddens me in a way I can scarcely describe. It is, I suppose, a palpable reminder of time's terrible passage, that some of our best days, once passed, are gone forever, leaving us with only the ersatz versions we call memories.

But all is not lost.

The maple tree still stands — or at least it did when I last went that way, a couple months ago.

It must be elderly by the standards of maples, which don't live so long, usually, as the conifers. I suppose no one has raked its leaves in decades, their fates left to the vagaries of wind.

I don't wish to involve my grandsons in trespassing, of course.

But I think it would be a fine thing, on some autumn day, to introduce Brysen and Caden to this great old tree, to let another generation — the fifth, they would be — kick around the leaves that are the products of such deep and persistent roots.

■ Jayson Jacoby is editor of the Baker City Herald.

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Oregon Legislature: Legislative documents and information are available online at www.leg.state.or.us.