

THE BACKROADS

A very merry Christmas to all

By Sean Hart
Blue Mountain Eagle



Sean Hart
Editor

It sure is nice to be out of a hotel and into an actual house. Having a washer and dryer truly is an amazing thing — something you don't really think about until you go without.

I appreciate the welcoming attitude that everyone here has shown me so far. This is already starting to feel like home, and that usually has far more to do with the people than the place.

It's been an interesting first several weeks. Minutes into my first day on the job, I stumbled into the first hearing about the county ordinance to ban commercial marijuana operations. I was a little surprised how many people were arguing against the ban and, perhaps more so, that some of their arguments actually made pretty good sense — whether or not they were the best course of action. Maybe the libertarianism just runs in the water here or something. I may have to do some investigative journalism into the unicorn thing, but I digress.

My dog, Frank, and I are finally starting to get settled in here. It's been a while since Frank has seen this much snow, but I think we'll get used to it. He still has to stumble around the unpacked boxes of junk I forgot I had inside the house, but I think he's enjoying having his own yard.

I'm just thrilled to actually have a washer and dryer — that work. It took almost all day Saturday to get the washer to work without pouring all the drain water onto the floor, but we finally got it. My landlord came over and snaked the drain pipe and snaked from the roof and the bathroom and the kitchen. I was beginning to think he needed a longer snake, but it turns out the lines weren't clogged —

we'd been trying to solve a problem that wasn't there. The real problem was that my drain hose wasn't long enough and was forcing too much air down the pipe that couldn't vent.

If I had a nickel ...

I think a working dryer, though, is even more of a marvel. My former duplex in Stanfield was too small for a washer and a dryer, so I was forced to hang my clothes to dry. It worked pretty well in the summer, but when it got cold, I had to make sure I did my laundry Friday evening after work, so I would have something to wear on Monday that wasn't still wet.

Now that I have a working washer and dryer together, I am absolutely amazed how much easier laundry is. My house doesn't look like a flea market with clothes hanging everywhere, and I've been able to use those clothespins to hold up my shower curtain.

For a change, I enjoyed laundry so much this weekend that I was washing rugs and comforters that haven't been washed in years. Does anyone know what cycle you're supposed to set the machine on to wash a dog?

Anyway, it's been fun getting to know the people and what's going on in the community. I look forward to meeting more of you in the future, and hopefully you'll all be as welcoming as those I've already met.

So, Merry Christmas everyone! If you're an atheist, I guess just enjoy the day off or the double time.

I appreciate all the support from the community as I establish my roots, and God bless you all — even the atheists. I think that's a Christmas message of which Jesus would approve.



Old methods meet new solutions

By Sandra Ghormley
For the Blue Mountain Eagle

I vividly remember how annoyed I became after hearing my Dad shout, "Don't forget to turn the lights off when you leave the room."

"OK, Dad, I got," I'd reply. "You've said it 100 times!"

You see, Dad grew up in the 1930s when electricity had not reached every neighborhood in America, and many homes were lit with oil lamps. Back then, only 10 percent of the farms had electricity, and flipping a switch to light a room was still considered a luxury. Yet, even then, people realized how important it was to conserve energy.

Decades later, shutting off lights may be a little old fashioned, but it is still a good idea. Combine it with new lighting technology, and real savings result.

In the 1960s, the economy was booming, and energy was abundant. Consumers gradually moved away from thinking about conservation and developed insatiable appetites for electricity. From the 1940s to 2007, electric usage in the United States more than doubled. America became the largest consumer of everything electricity could offer. As a result, more dams were built, and more petroleum, coal and natural gas-pow-

ered electric generation plants were needed to satisfy the growth. New transmission and distribution power lines were constructed — connecting, expanding and crisscrossing the countryside in order to handle the increased loads and keep pace with customers' expectations.

Today, we cannot imagine our lives without electricity. It is no longer a luxury but a way of life. According to a 2013 report from the U.S. Department of Energy, the U.S. is now the second largest energy consumer and producer of electricity in the world, following behind China, which has moved into first place.

The good news is, if you are a member, Oregon Trail Electric Cooperative can help you find ways to take action. Since 1990, OTEC has offered conservation programs to teach responsible electricity use and to help members make wise energy choices in their homes and businesses. OTEC has joined with Bonneville Power Administration, its power producer, to offer many rebates that can offset the cost of purchasing lights and upgrading fixtures to more efficient, energy-saving devices.

Over the last two years, OTEC has assisted more than 150 local businesses to upgrade their lighting systems to a variety of light emitting diodes, or LEDs. Many of the new LED lighting products offer bright-

er, more widespread illumination of areas while using 1/10 of the energy. LEDs last much longer than incandescent or compact fluorescent bulbs, light quickly and do not radiate as much heat. There is a wide range of LED lamps and fixtures on the market today to customize your specific lighting solutions. OTEC has made it worth the investment over the last two years by helping members save more than 4 million kilowatt hours, reducing electric consumption and lowering electric bills.

Today, almost everyone recognizes the importance of conserving electric energy. Although our motivations for conserving electricity may differ from altruistic to personal gain, it lowers our electric bills, puts less pressure on electric infrastructure and makes the world a little better for the next generation.

Combining old-fashioned ideas for conserving electricity with new lighting solutions is good advice. I must admit Dad got a few things right. And, yes, I catch myself offering similar advice to my children: "Let's change it out to an LED bulb, and oh, before you leave the room, turn the lights out."

Sandra Ghormley is a 20-year veteran of the electrical utility industry and joined OTEC in 2013 as the director of member and program services.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Unconstitutional laws are invalid

To the Editor:

For those laboring under the assumption of federal government supremacy, Unconstitutional Official Acts — 16 Am Jur 2d, Sec 177 late 2d, Sec 256 — is worth the read. Succinctly put:

The general misconception is that any statute passed by legislators bearing the appearance of law constitutes the law of the land. The U.S. Constitution is the supreme law of the land, and any statute, to be valid, must be in agreement. It is impossible for both the Constitution and a law violating it to be valid; one must prevail.

The general rule is that an unconstitutional statute, though having the form and name of law is in reality no law, but is wholly void, and ineffective for any purpose.

Since an unconstitutional law is void, the general principles follow that it imposes no duties, confers no rights, creates no office, bestows no power or authority on anyone, affords no protection and justifies no acts performed under it.

An unconstitutional law cannot operate to supersede any existing valid law. No one is bound to obey an unconstitutional law and no courts are bound to enforce it.

Any unconstitutional act of an official will at least be a violation of the oath of that official to execute the duties of his office, and therefore grounds for his removal from office. No official immuni-

ty or privileges of rank or position survive the commission of unlawful acts. If it violates the rights of individuals, it is also likely to be a crime, and the militia duty obligates anyone aware of such a violation to investigate it, gather evidence for a prosecution, make an arrest, and if necessary, seek an indictment from a grand jury and, if one is obtained, prosecute the offender in a court of law.

Judy Kerr
Canyon City

Unregulated pot market is dangerous

To the Editor:

I was quoted in the Dec. 16 issue of the Blue Mountain Eagle regarding the county ordinance to ban the commercial growing and selling of marijuana in the county. I am not in favor in any way that underage youngsters have access to marijuana. But the reality is that youngsters do have access, and it is easy for them to get it. But they are getting it from an unregulated market.

Oregon Measure 91 legalizing recreational marijuana contains requirements for security systems surrounding and within commercial sites of growers, processors, dispensaries, wholesalers and retailers. Measure 91 requires registration and licensing of the business and monthly reports of activities to the state Health Department. It requires labeling and

packaging the products sold and requires testing for molds, pesticides and the potency of the product. This information has to be stated on the product label.

The county's ban (opt-out of Measure 91) on these commercial activities has removed these safety measures and left youth and adults alike the unregulated "street market."

The production and selling of food and medical products is regulated to secure consistency and purity of those products sold. We have tried to develop systems for the protection of our youth from the negative effects of alcohol, tobacco and other drugs that are on the market today. We recognize these are not perfect and they never will be perfect, but we can try.

I don't like being regulated any more than you do.

Our youth need some protection and guidance on moderation until they have developed the maturity of judgment to be responsible for their actions. It would be nice if these things could be learned at home with our families. But that does not always happen.

Measure 91 is not perfect. But opting out and passing the ban has removed the opportunity to require and enforce these safety measures and has left us without the tools we need to assure the security of grow and processing sites and the clear identification of the products being sold.

Eva Harris
Canyon City

WHERE TO WRITE

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- **Oregon Legislature** — State Capitol, Salem, 97310. Phone: (503) 986-1180. Website: www.leg.state.or.us (includes Oregon Constitution and Oregon Revised Statutes).
- **State Rep. Cliff Bentz, R-Ontario** (District: 60), Room H-475, State Capitol, 900

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• **U.S. Sen. Ron Wyden, D** — 516 Hart Senate Office Building, Washington D.C. 20510. Phone: 202-224-5244. Email: wayne_kinney@wyden.senate.gov Website: http://wyden.senate.gov Fax: 202-228-2717.

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