

# Blumenauer widens urban-rural divide

You have to hand it to U.S. Rep. Earl Blumenauer. He's not afraid to take a stand, especially when the issue will have zero impact on his district and when the victims will be hundreds of miles away.

The Portland Democrat sent a letter to President Barack Obama recently urging him to use the Antiquities Act to establish the 2.5 million-acre Owyhee National Monument.

The law allows a president to unilaterally designate a national monument, which forbids multiple use of the land. The act is often used by lame ducks to shove such designations down the throats of local residents and curry favor with environmental groups.

The distance from Portland to the proposed monument: 368 miles.

"A growing statewide coalition of local citizens, businesses, conservation organizations, recreational interests, sportsmen, and other diverse partners support permanent protection of the Owyhee Canyonlands," Blumenauer wrote to Obama.

But, he wrote, "there are some local interests who are opposed to such a designation."

The "local interests" are Malheur County residents, including ranchers and others who for generations have depended on the canyonlands area to graze cattle. They fear grazing and other economic activities would ultimately be banned if the monument were designated. That would most likely put them out of business. Last spring, 90 percent

of Malheur County voters opposed the monument proposal in a county-wide advisory vote.

In essence, Blumenauer is telling rural Oregonians that their opinion doesn't matter, and neither do their businesses, many of which have been in Malheur County since long before he and his Portland friends ever heard of it.

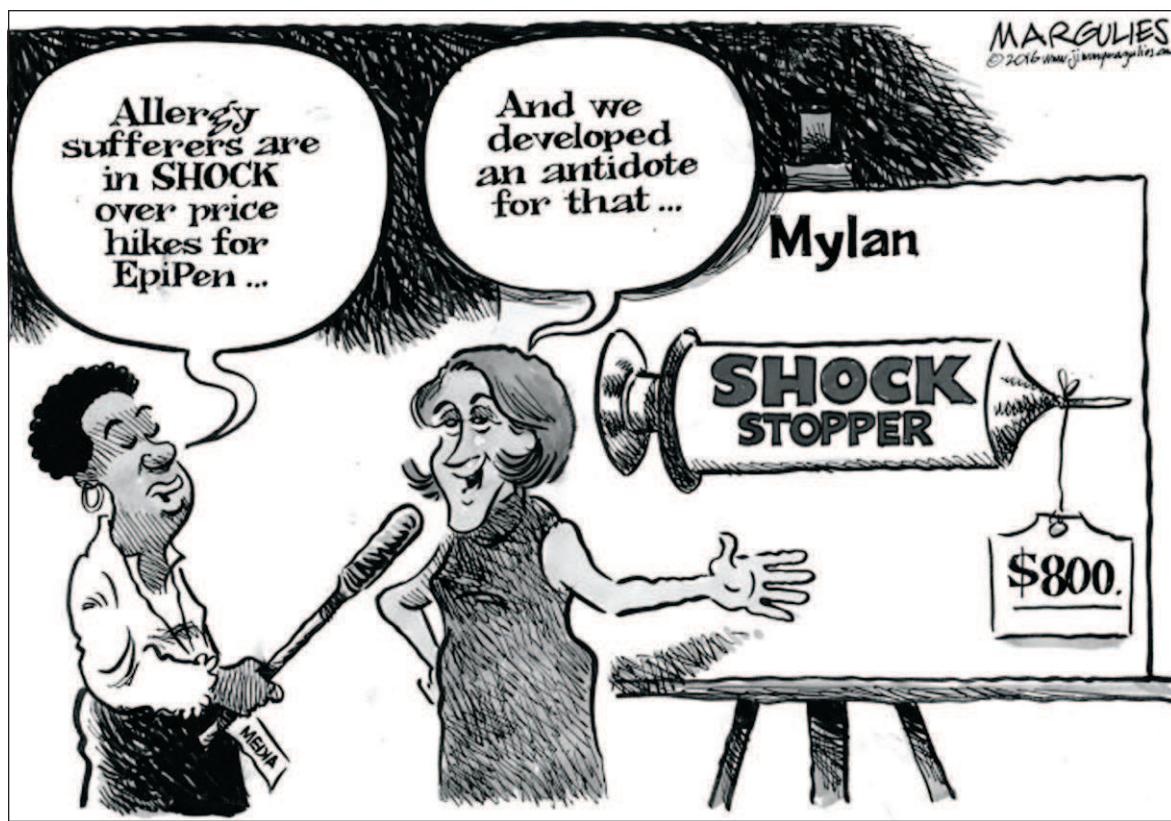
There is a lot of talk these days about the urban-rural divide, about how urban folks lack an understanding of rural areas. These same people say rural residents need to understand the needs of urban folks.

But when it comes right down to it, urban residents say they have the votes, and whether rural residents agree or not, that's tough. That's Blumenauer's stand, and the stand of others who want the canyonlands "protected" from the generations of Oregonians who have ranched there.

Blumenauer, in his support for the Owyhee National Monument, just made the urban-rural divide wider. He demonstrated — again — that the wants of Portland's elites outweigh the needs of rural Oregonians.

The next time you hear folks talk about the need for urban and rural Oregonians to listen to one another, remember that, on issues such as this, urbanites only seem to hear what they want. Blumenauer mentions the possibility of a "win-win" solution for all communities in Malheur County should the area be set aside as a playland for hikers and campers.

What he really means is, "We win, you lose."



FARMER'S FATE

# Grandpa's Ivy League education

By Brianna Walker  
For the Blue Mountain Eagle



Brianna Walker

Nearly everyone in this country is concerned with getting a good education. Going to the right schools, taking the right classes and getting high grades. Hours are spent sending out applications, studying for SATs and visiting campuses trying to decide what school, college or university will provide you or your child the best education possible.

But some of the best lessons I ever learned had nothing to do with scholastics, and everything to do with Grandpa Johnny.

Grandpa loved teaching small children about hygiene. He taught me, all my cousins, my children, their children, and I'm sure many, many others. I think I was probably 4 or 5 when he traumatized — er, I mean taught me my first lesson. He called me over real close, and then suddenly took out his teeth! I was traumatized, Grandpa was amused and I don't think my parents had to encourage me too hard to brush my teeth after that. Hygiene lessons learned.

Grandpa taught us about sleeping habits. This was one lesson I wasn't so keen on learning. He thought nothing of getting up before the crack of dawn to start on chores — and if truth be told, I didn't think much of it either! He and I both agreed the morning was the best part of the day; we just disagreed on where we should spend it. He and my sister would rise bright eyed and bushy tailed, and I would drag myself out of bed, minutes before school started, and that's when I learned that in the Rayl house there are no such things as Sleeping Beauties. In the Rayl house, they are Lay-a-bed-Uglies.

Grandpa was a clock watcher.

Lunch was at noon, along with Luke and Laura and later Perry Mason, quitting time was 4. Chores at 5, and bedtime was at 9 p.m. Sharp. "It's 9 o'clock, you'll turn into a pumpkin," he'd

say, shutting off the TV or lights, or whatever switch he was close to as he quickly headed to bed. My grandma would wait until the bedroom door shut, and on went both the TV and lights. That's when I learned another, albeit more subtle lesson: The rooster may rule the roost, but who rules the rooster?

Grandpa also taught the days of the week. This was another lesson that didn't fall on receptive ears. Those ears belonging to my dad's mom, Grandma Edith. I am not sure how the original discussion came about, but what resulted was a decade long dispute over the Lord's Day. Grandpa Edith believing it to be Saturday, and Grandpa Johnny doing as much as he could to convince her it was on Sunday. The more flustered she became, the more Grandpa Johnny would tease her. He would get her so riled up, she could only swat at him. If there was ever a lull in the conversation and Grandma Edith was within hearing distance, you can be sure that Grandpa would ask about the Lord's Day.

But Grandpa wasn't always a giant tease, sometimes he was extraordinarily polite — sometimes too much. Grandpa taught us that exaggeration, even at its finest, can really choke a person. Grandpa, during some of his earlier years, ate dinner at a potluck after church. After one bite of a piece of pie he took, he was trying to figure

out how to get it swallowed. It was about that time the baker of the pie asked him how he was enjoying it. And Grandpa laid it on thick. Grandma Betty recalled "he just wouldn't shut up" and he told her many times in many ways just how great a pie she had made. A few weeks later, the lady baker presented him with a whole pie to take home — because he had loved hers so much. Grandma Betty seemed to gleefully recall serving it to him, feeling his exaggeration had earned him his "just desserts."

Grandpa also taught his daughters about frugality. The old 8-mm video panned across a field of dead sheep, before quickly stopping with a close up of a ewe. I had heard the story years before, of how my Grandpa had bought a herd of sheep, just to have them die shortly after of liver flukes. Times were hard, and the wool was worth quite a bit of money, so everyone (kids included) went out and plucked the wool off the dead animals — farm families don't let assets go to waste, regardless of the smell. Like family stories so often are, I had assumed that it had been exaggerated with the passing years. But here it was, the spinning, splotchedy film documenting their family outing. It was all true. Their girls, the youngest looking about 6, were all participating in plucking wool off the dead sheep. That's a lesson best learned without the experience.

I thank God for dead sheep, dentures and the many lessons learned from Grandpa. Those quirky memories will provide a way to hold on to the things we love, the things we are, the things we never want to lose, without quite so much pain.

Brianna Walker occasionally writes about the Farmer's Fate for the Blue Mountain Eagle.

# Inviting fraud in road repair

Added potential fraud to the lengthening list of problems with Oregon's Department of Transportation.

Well known for its exaggerated forecasts and increasing bonded indebtedness despite higher taxes, a recent article shed light on the agency's vulnerability to fraud in road repairs.

Nick Budnick of Pamplin Media reported that ODOT's road-paving inspection program has more cracks than any of the worst streets in Grant County.

The report revealed that:

- Asphalt contractors can game ODOT's inspections and compromise road quality, leading to premature potholes and further costly repairs.

- Oregon does not track asphalt quality results systematically or use testing methods common in other states.

- Contractors often know in advance where and when ODOT will conduct asphalt inspections.

Worse, these vulnerabilities have been well known to ODOT management since at least 2005. That's when the Federal Highway Administration pointed out these issues in a nationwide report and made recommendations for improvement. Eight years later, the feds conducted a new study and reached the same conclusions. Another federal report described the quality

checks used by Oregon as "very weak," saying they "will only detect severe problems with contractor test results."

Former ODOT employees also have called attention to the agency's lax oversight system. "Quality control was not taken seriously," a long-time quality control specialist told Budnick. A former internal auditor for ODOT said there is a "huge risk of fraud." A former quality assurance specialist said that while there are plenty of good road contractors, "it is easy for a contractor to falsify documentation."

ODOT managers downplay these concerns. They claim there is no evidence that contractors are gaming the system. But they note that the state has suspended several contractor technicians, one of whom was suspected of fraud.

Doing nothing and refusing to acknowledge the potential for fraud despite repeated warnings is a glaring example of wrong at ODOT — an agency that will collect \$4.6 billion in revenue this biennium.

Legislators should keep that in mind as they craft a new transportation spending bill. Taxpayers ought to remain skeptical when ODOT asks for higher taxes and fees. Reform must come before more revenue.

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### Offense unintentional

To the Editor:

It appears that voicing my opinion was the signal for the manufactured media mindset of an attack dog to hit the end of his chain. Through attempts to twist words and selective editing, he claims that my statements and references are unclear, incoherent and vague.

I have to agree when his limited level of perception is based on media reporting. His awareness of community issues is restricted to the path the media chooses to lead him. Underlying issues of our county are missed or hidden because of reporting failure and the diversion of attention by the skewed half-truths, lies and irrelevant trash talk. He claims my remarks are "downright insulting to a large proportion (possibly the majority) of the citizens of Grant County."

It would indicate that he believes "the majority" of Grant County citizens have intellectual disabilities. In doing so, he under-

estimates the wisdom, intelligence and ability of understanding of the majority of Grant County residents, and he overestimates his ability to learn or recognize basic facts of our customs, culture and civil rights. It obviously does not occur to him to ask why the media is on the attack, but the majority in our County are asking the question.

His statement that "the media is the fourth branch of power in the United States" should scare the hell out of everyone, especially when that power is represented nationwide by politically led subterfuge.

An example of subterfuge are letters submitted by a New Hampshire outsider who has no inkling of what goes on in Grant County. Perhaps he is a persona of the local media supporters furthering their agenda? Or the rant of an ex-Forest Service supervisor in Idaho who County Commissioner Britton stated was "not good for Grant County" while he was here, so why should anyone pay attention to his tripe now? If I offended "the majority" of Grant County citizens, it was

unintentional. I will identify my intended recipients better next time.

Judy Kerr  
Canyon City

### Nice to see fair alive again

To the Editor:

I just wanted to comment on how great the Grant County Fair was this year.

As soon as you stepped on the grounds, you could see all the hard work that the Fair Board, Mary Weaver and all the volunteers had put into making this year's fair a success.

It was wonderful to see the pavilion full and look at all the exhibits.

It was great having so many different events to attend, and to see all the support in our county. After such a challenging summer last year, it was nice to see our fair come alive again.

I appreciate all those who put so much time and energy into making it happen. I look forward to the fair next year.

Linda K Hunt  
Long Creek

Letters policy: Letters to the Editor is a forum for Blue Mountain Eagle readers to express themselves on local, state, national or world issues. Brevity is good, but longer letters will be asked to be contained to 350 words. No personal attacks; challenge the opinion, not the person. No thank-you letters. Submissions to this page become property of the Eagle. The Eagle reserves the right to edit letters for length and for content. Letters must be original and signed by the writer. Anonymous letters will not be printed. Writers should include a telephone number so they can be reached for questions. We must limit all contributors to one letter per person per month. Deadline is 5 p.m. Friday. Send letters to editor@bmeagle.com, or Blue Mountain Eagle, 195 N. Canyon Blvd., John Day, OR 97845; or fax to 541-575-1244.



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