

THE BACKROADS

# Hunting is human nature

By Sean Hart  
Blue Mountain Eagle



Sean Hart, 2016, Beulah Unit.

Hunting — the way of life in the West that connects so many of us to our families and ancestors is also one of the truest expressions of human nature in a historic sense.

Unlike farming and the domestication of animals — where humans wield their will upon the world — hunting sets a human in direct competition against the will of nature, against animals far more adapted to surviving in the wild.

Without claws or sharp teeth, armed only with humanity's wit, we craft tools to elevate our status as predators. We rely on reason to develop strategies to overcome our shortcomings in seeing and smelling.

Through these technological and tactical evolutions, we embody the essence of humanity. And the carnivorous spoils of our efforts provide the high-calorie diet necessary to sustain our mental prowess.

While the technology has advanced beyond spears and

slings through millennia, the experience of hunting today remains almost unchanged from the days of the caveman. Sure, rifled barrels and high-powered optics improve a human's odds, but the pursuit of game animals is still rightly called a hunt, as so many unsuccessful hunters can attest each year.

Even without success,

though, hunting can provide camaraderie and a sense of a tribal connection between friends and family members in a party.

Traveling over rugged country to a tucked-away family deer hunting spot in the mountains of Eastern Oregon recently, my father recounted stories of ventures he had taken there with his father and grandfather, who died before I was born.

I heard tales of my great-grandfather bouncing his head off the side window after falling asleep en route and of my grandfather accidentally igniting a sleeping bag with the ash of his cigarette in a doorless Jeep.

When we came upon one of the last hills to traverse before the hunting ground, technology failed us. The pickup could not make the crawl up the mountain, and we were forced to set out on foot.

Shortly into the journey, I spotted a buck grazing. With his tail toward me, I opted to wait for a better shot, but the buck soon laid down behind some brush. If I didn't already know he was there, I may never have seen him.

I moved within a couple hundred yards and tried to position myself for a better shot. And then I waited, not wanting to spook him into the short run it would have taken for him to disappear over the ridge. And waited. And waited.

About fifteen minutes later, a cow that had been grazing made its way within 20 yards of where the buck bedded down. Finally, the buck stood up, and I expected to have a decent shot.

The buck obviously wasn't too startled, however, as he remained in the one place I didn't have a great shot and resumed his breakfast.

My eyes began watering and getting blurry as I stared through the scope on my .30-06 for at least 15 more minutes — practicing more patience than perhaps ever before in my life.

Finally, he turned, and I took the shot. He tried to run but died within 15 yards of where he was standing when I pulled the trigger.

The drive back off the mountain was filled with more stories about my ancestors and my father's hunts when he was a child.

At the post-hunt feast, we cooked the heart and liver in an attempt to recreate my grandmother's cast iron cooking that I got to enjoy before she passed away several years ago.

Later in the week, my father and I took my younger cousin out hunting, and he shot his second deer, his first buck.

Through it all, I was immersed in a family tradition that transcends the Hart family tree.

By participating in the timeless tradition of hunting, I experienced nature on its own terms — simultaneously a part of the natural procession and in competition with it.

By hunting, I achieved a state of harmony with nature and, in the process, actualized the essence of humanity.

Sean Hart is the editor of the Blue Mountain Eagle. Send your hunting stories and photos to editor@bmeagle.com.



The Eagle/Angel Carpenter

Preschoolers Harper and Hayden Workman join in the fun at the Prairie City School jog-a-thon last Wednesday at the school's gym.

## JOG-A-THON

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Lindsay Rausch, who was voted parent teacher association president last Wednesday, said the jog-a-thon was a collective effort, with association members, parent volunteers, teachers, staff and others involved.

She credits Jenny Shaw, the former parent teacher association co-president, with inspiration for the event.

"We are all really excited and overwhelmed by the success and support of our students and the patrons who made pledges," Rausch said.

She said one preschooler

collected \$150 from donors.

"It's by far our most successful single fundraiser since I've been involved in PTA for the last seven years," she said. "We couldn't be more proud of all our kids, preschool through sixth grade, who ran or walked the whole time."

Rausch said she was especially impressed seeing older students helping younger students at the event, and encouraging them to continue.

"These kinds of multi-age activities are a big part of what we love about our small school," she said. "It was a very positive, healthy, fun event, and we can't wait for next year."

## SQUAD

Continued from Page B1

This year's team includes junior Ariana Ceja, sophomore Paige Moore and freshman Emily Ennis.

"The girls are very dedicated to cheer," Wright said.

They arrive at the school at 6:50 a.m. for morning practice, and Moore and Ennis also play volleyball, attending practice after school.

She said their goals include: supporting the Prairie City High School athletic programs, promoting school spirit, modeling good sportsmanship and showing school

pride to the community.

Wright said the girls held fundraisers to purchase their own uniforms before the season started.

Besides learning cheers and dances, they also make banners and posters for the school hallways and decorate the football and volleyball teams' lockers.

They also organize pep assemblies and are planning a service in the community.

"I'm extremely proud of these girls," Wright said. "Their hard work has brought a sense of energy to our school. You can feel it when you walk down our high school halls."

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HOW THE TIME FLIES! October is just about history, and it seems like we just started a new year, not sure if it is an age thing or just busier than usual.

We had a great turnout at the Elks Lodge for our annual installation dinner. There was plenty of good food, entertainment and an opportunity to interact with our members.

Our guest speakers were Nick Green and Haley Walker, who shared their family background and also their vision for the future of Grant County. We are all very fortunate to find such talented people of this caliber who have values and a vision and passion to promote our area to bigger and better things. We wish them much success, but they will need all of our help on this journey.

The monthly 2017 solar eclipse meetings are still on track with new information and challenges being discussed. If your community or groups are planning any special events or activities in 2017, you need to contact Tammy at the Chamber office by Nov. 14, 2016, so that she can submit that information to be featured in the Oregon Events Calendar. We are still seeking out anyone who may have extra rooms, apartments, RV spaces, acreage or any location available for guests to stay or camp. Be sure to get on our list so that we can direct visitors to you. YOU COULD EVEN MAKE A FEW RENTAL BUCKS.

The Chamber drafted a letter of support for the airport, which is applying for two grants from the Oregon Department of Aviation to help hire a consultant to study the feasibility of rural commercial air service to our area, which also might help promote our shovel ready Industrial Park as well. The second grant would be for the construction of two concrete helicopter pads and tie downs, which are now gravel and grass.

Our Transient Room Tax keeps increasing each quarter, so we must be attracting more visitors to our area.

The Grant County Greenback program has generated around \$14,000 to our local member merchants.

Did you know that being a Chamber member helps support our office and county activities? Only \$50-150 per year.

Our monthly business meeting will be Oct. 20 at 11 a.m. at the Chamber office, and the business meeting at noon at the Outpost. Both are open to the public. Our guest speaker this month will be Sally Bartlett, the Grant County economic development director, who will update us on county activities. SEE YOU THERE!

Jerry Franklin  
Chamber President

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**ERICKA DICKENS**  
School: Grant Union  
Grade: 9  
Parents: Artie and Janice Dickens  
Sport: Cross Country

What I like best about my sport: "When you finish a race, you feel so good about running and finishing. You train every single day and try to improve."  
Coach's Comment: "Erika is a hard worker and has improved consistently throughout the season. I can't wait to see what she can do at district."  
-Coach Sonna Smith

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