

Remembering independence

As we celebrate our independence, it is worth remembering that freedom is not free.

A glance at international headlines is a sobering reminder that so many people enjoy far fewer protections of their liberty than we do in the United States.

While sitting at a barbecue, it can be easy to forget the sacrifices of our forebears that made possible life as we know it.

If you're enjoying your freedom this Independence Day, you should thank our veterans for their part in providing it and those in the military for preserving it.

And our thanks should extend beyond servicemembers.

Countless public servants — police, firefighters, educators and many others — work daily to maintain our free society. Without order and information, our system would fall quicker than if another military could actually defeat ours.

It is also worth remembering

that our independence came from, and comes from, our unity.

When we overthrew monarchic rule by one for democratic rule by all, we did so on a united front as united states. Our independence was, and is, collective.

In order to maintain our independence as individuals in a free society, we must remain united.

We must work together to overcome the obstacles confronting us.

We must remain vigilant against those who wish to see our way of life diminished.

We must remember how we got here and where we were headed.

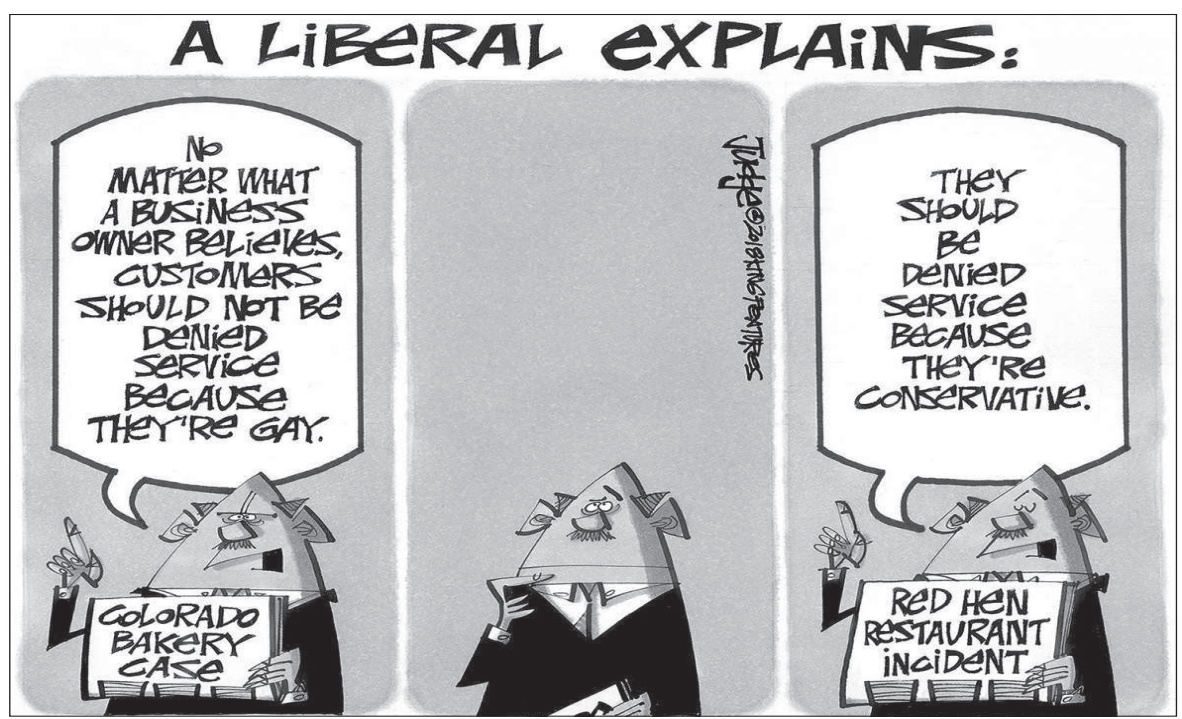
And we must do it together.

What makes this country great is that it was built by the people from the ground up — to provide liberty and justice for all.

Happy Independence Day.

Remember what that means.

And remember it is neither free nor easy.



FROM THE PUBLISHER

Discovering new places, seeking out backroads

By Christopher Rush
EO Media Group

Whenever I've had the pleasure of moving to a new town, I've always tried to be very receptive to the good advice offered by folks who have lived there for awhile and know the ways and customs of their community.

That is certainly true of my first few weeks here in northeast Oregon.

I relocated here in May after spending three years on the west (and wetter) side of the state in Coos Bay-North Bend. Prior to that, my 26-year newspaper career has taken my family to small cities like Bentonville, Arkansas, Aberdeen, Washington, and Bartlesville, Oklahoma. Although dramatically different in climate, culture and economic fortunes, each of the communities in which I have lived and worked shared something in common: They are all fiercely proud of their unique heritage and the niche they occupy in the world.

I have discovered this to be true here in northeast Oregon as well. In the brief time I have been here, I've had the opportunity to visit numerous towns in the region: Pendleton, Hermiston, Stanfield, Umatilla, Echo, Milton-Freewater, Athena, Weston, Tollgate, Elgin, Wallowa, Lostine, Enterprise, Joseph, Pilot Rock, Uki-ah, Long Creek, Mt. Vernon, John Day and La Grande. I still have Irigton, Boardman, Helix, Heppner, Lexington, Baker City and other towns on my to-visit list.

Each community usually hangs

its proverbial hat on something that sets it apart. For instance, I now know that watermelons play an important part of Hermiston's branding identity, "Where life is sweet."

Of course, everyone identifies Pendleton with a bronc-riding — "Let'er Buck" — cowboy image, but as Mayor John Turner pointed out to me recently, the actual city seal honors the city's woolen products heritage with an image of a sheep.

I see that the hamlet of Athena honors its nineteenth-century Scottish settlers with the annual Caledonian Games "to preserve and perpetuate Scottish social manners and customs." The event is scheduled for July 13-15 this year, by the way.

According to Wikipedia, Lostine, in Wallowa County, was named after a short-lived place by the same name in Cherokee County, Kansas. Further down the road, the tourist town of Joseph, originally named Silver Lake or Lake City, eventually adopted its name for the legendary chief of the Nez Perce people.

In Grant County, John Day takes its name for a member of the famous 1811 Astor Expedition. A renowned hunter and fur trapper, his name is well remembered in the state as it is attached to multiple river branches in Oregon as well as the John Day Fossil Beds National Monument.

But perhaps my favorite name so far is the quaint hamlet of Echo, "Where History Blooms." It was named by one of the town's founding fathers, J. H. Koontz, for his then three-year-old daughter in 1880. Her

Victorian image, as an adult, still adorns the city's signage and marketing materials.

But beyond the cities and towns, it is clear to me that the land of Eastern Oregon is a special place. I've taken the opportunity on weekends to steer my four-wheel drive down some unpaved and unmarked roads in the beautiful Blue Mountains that surround us. The views from a mountain meadow at 4,000 feet in elevation can be breathtaking.

Most recently, I discovered the joy of taking the slow route from Deadman Pass down Cabbage Hill via the narrow and winding Poverty Flat Road (now, there's some interesting names for you!). If you're not in a hurry and the weather is clear, I highly recommend it.

Once down the mountain and back onto the gently rolling plains of golden wheat fields, the drive through the Umatilla Indian Reservation is enlightening. The Confederated Tribes are doing some extraordinary things with their facilities and services. And I truly believe I'm getting closer every day to the correct pronunciation of "Tamastlikt."

It's clear that we live in an incredibly rich and diverse area and I can't wait to continue my education and exploration here.

Here's to a safe and happy Independence Day holiday to everyone!

Christopher Rush is regional publisher of the East Oregonian, Hermiston Herald, Wallowa County Chief and Blue Mountain Eagle newspapers.

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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).
- **Oregon Legislative Information** — (For updates on bills, services, capitol or messages for legislators) — 800-332-2313.
- **Sen. Cliff Bentz, R-Ontario** — 900 Court St. NE, S-301, Salem 97301. Phone: 503-986-1730. Website: www.oregonlegislature.gov/Bentz. Email: Sen.CliffBentz@oregonlegislature.gov.
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FARMER'S FATE

Up a creek with half a paddle

By Brianna Walker
To the Blue Mountain Eagle

Three-fourths of the Earth's surface is water, and only one-fourth is land. Seems like a pretty strong indication that we were intended to spend triple the amount of time in a boat than on a tractor. Everyone has their vices, and it's no secret that I'm an aquaholic. I love water. No matter what the problem, I think the solution always involves water — whether it is sweat, tears, the ocean, or a good watermelon. If there is magic on this planet, it's in water and children. Not to be confused with children in kayaks in water. But I'm getting ahead of myself.

The morning had arrived bright and sunny. Snacks and drinks were carefully packed into bags, while we donned hats, life jackets, water shoes and loaded up eight kayaks — ready for adventure. For years I had wanted to kayak this particular stretch of river — and today was the day!

My excitement was tempered only by a distant memory of floating down a river on innertubes during my teen years. It also had started as a sunny day. It ended near midnight — hungry, cold, and covered in stinging nettle scratches. We had torn nails, lost sandals, and my vehicle had been vandalized while it sat waiting for our return. Even the police were out looking for us.

This was a different river, with a different group of people, and we were on kayaks instead of innertubes, but I still couldn't shake the feeling that this could be another learning trip.

"This is awesome!" my 9-year-old and his friend shouted to each other as they maneuvered through the first set of small rapids. We all seemed to agree, even the 11-week-old puppy that balanced precariously off the front of a kayak.



Brianna Walker

After an hour, the swift rapids gave way to a gentle current. The scenery was gorgeous, so no one seemed to mind the leisurely pace.

After another few hours, however, the river got deeper and even more idle — which also meant harder paddling. My 2-year old, sitting in front of me, found this slow pace boring, and the end was nowhere in sight. As the blazing sun moved slowly across the sky, the other kids (while not exactly complaining), began letting us know of aching backs and blistered hands and empty stomachs. I have to admit the underside of me felt pretty uncomfortable as well.

My 2-year old was getting tired, and his life jacket was irritating his chin. "Look at the fisherman," I would say, trying to distract him. He glanced toward the shore, but within moments was pulling at his jacket again. "Oh! Look at the splash that big fish made!" I pointed toward ripples in the river. I kept trying to interest him in our surroundings, but he wasn't interested. He had found a new pastime. "Helping" me paddle — first with his arms, and then his legs. Paddling a kayak is exercise on a good day, but rowing while a 2-year-old is wrapped around your paddle is quite the "oar-deal." Obviously, he's not a believer in the "paddle solo, sleep tandem" rule. I kept trying to paddle, and he kept trying to help — until I got the bright idea to split my oar so each of us could row.

Thrilled to have his very own oar, he began paddling on the left. Surprisingly, not only was the oar entertaining him, but he was doing a pretty decent job of propelling that side of the kayak. At first, I watched him like a hawk, to make sure he

didn't drop it in the ever-deepening river. Minutes passed, and we had picked up a nice rhythm together and soon had resumed our position in the front of our group. Before long, I was lost in conversation with the other mom in our group.

"Oops, Mommy!" I glanced down to see a fleeting glimpse of white as the oar vanished in the murky river. Multiple diving attempts brought up nothing but large sticks. It was a painful moment when we finally admitted defeat — and it didn't take long to realize that half the paddle makes twice the paddler.

We did eventually make it to our destination, but it wasn't quick. The only quick thing that happens with half an oar is exchanging your position in the lead, for one in the far back.

I think my 2-year-old must have known we were in a predicament because he seemed pretty content to play with sticks the rest of the afternoon. As the river lazily threaded its way through the hills, the trees and the fishermen, I had to work twice as hard to keep up, which gave me much time to think about my actions. I decided it is more prudent to take a conservative course of action, even if it means a baby cries, than it is to engage in risky behavior that you may regret later when it is both the baby and your muscles crying — or, as my husband said, "Better safe with one oar than sorry with a half."

When we finally pulled our kayaks out of the water — tired, hungry and sore — I tossed my half-paddle into the back of the pickup and decided there really is merit to the saying: Love many, trust a few ... but always paddle your own canoe!

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

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