

OUR VIEW

Straight talk about 'sex talk' story

The lead story in last week's edition of the Blue Mountain Eagle focused on the so-called "sex talk" scandal, which involved an inappropriate relationship between a former Grant County corrections deputy and a jail inmate under her supervision — including more than 100 phone calls, many of them sexual in nature, that the inmate made from the jail to the deputy on the deputy's personal cellphone.

Some readers will wonder why we're reporting on this issue at all, given the personal and embarrassing nature of the allegations. The answer is pretty straightforward: It's our job. One of the fundamental roles of a newspaper is to act as a watchdog on government agencies. In this case, investigators from an outside agency determined that the deputy violated multiple policies governing the conduct of law enforcement officers, and one has to wonder whether that level of familiarity with a jail inmate could ultimately have put other law enforcement officers in danger.

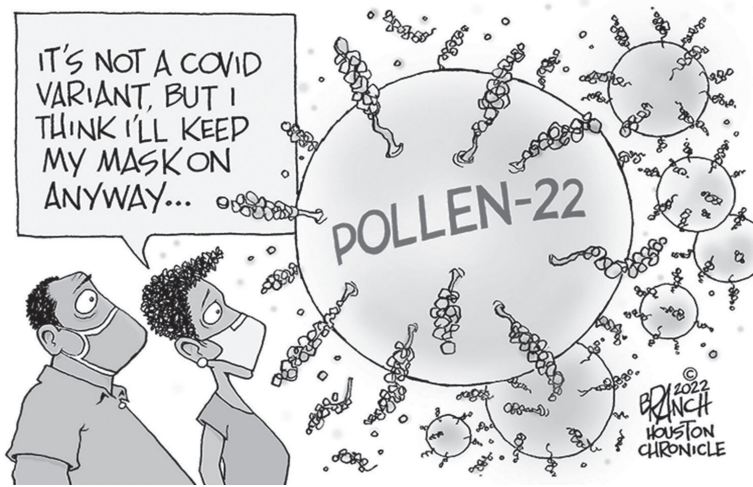
Others will ask why we're reporting on this issue now, some three years after the deputy was placed on leave while the claims were investigated and more than a year after she resigned following a 30-day suspension. The answer to that question is also pretty straightforward: It's because that's how long it took to get the information.

As you might imagine, most public agencies are not eager to advertise the fact that one of their own may have committed policy violations or criminal acts. And with 600-plus exemptions to Oregon's public records law, it's all too easy for public officials who don't want to release information (or who are simply confused by the byzantine provisions of the law) to say, "I can't tell you." It took the Eagle's previous editor, Sean Hart, two months and more than four dozen emails to state and county officials just to get confirmation that the deputy was under investigation by the Oregon Department of Justice. If not for Hart's dogged persistence, this story might never have come out at all.

Even then, more than a year would pass before the outcome of the internal and external investigations into the deputy's misconduct — all of it public record — would be released. Just as county officials were preparing to make the information available, the former deputy went to court to keep the records secret. That case did not conclude until February of this year, with the release of most of the records requested by the newspaper many months earlier.

So, no, our goal here was not to reopen old wounds. It was simply to give the public all the information it needed to understand the extent of misconduct by a public official in a position of authority, as well as the discipline meted out for that misconduct. Like you, we are frustrated that it took so long to be able to do that.

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 two letters per person per month. Deadline is 5 p.m. Friday. Send letters by email to editor@bmeagle.com; by mail to Blue Mountain Eagle, 195 N. Canyon Blvd., John Day, OR 97845; or by fax to 541-575-1244.



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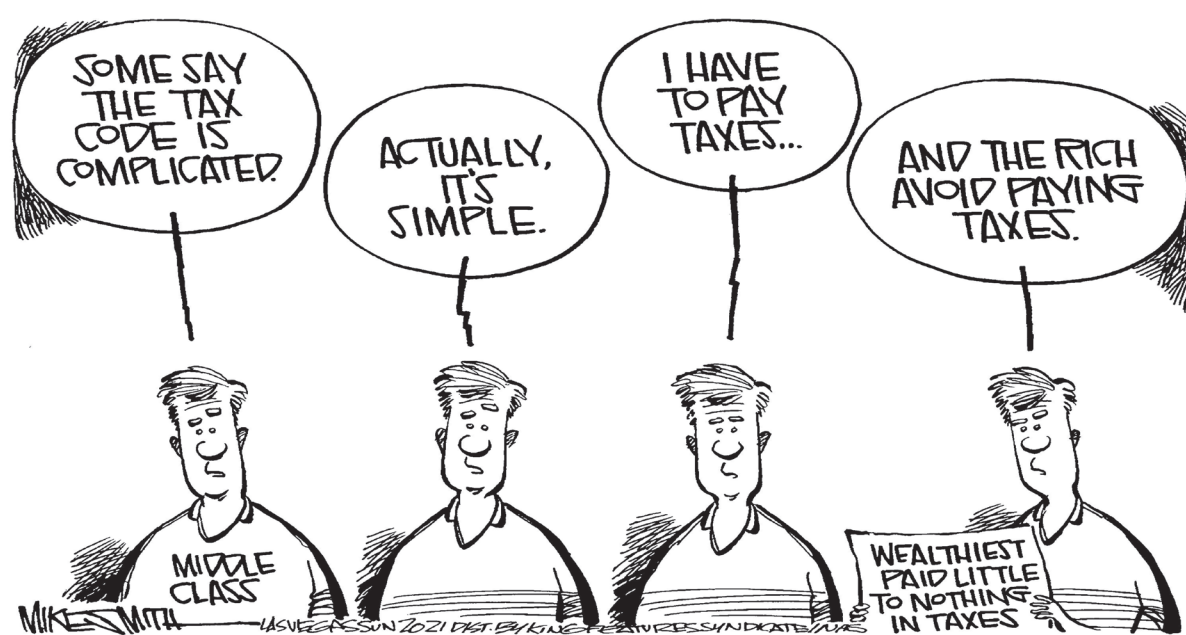
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OFF THE BEATEN PATH

Space laundry lament

My NASA "boarding pass" for the Artemis I moon rocket shows the launch site as Kennedy Space Center, Florida, the spacecraft, Orion. Mileage to be earned: 1,300,000 miles.

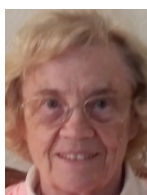
I'm an armchair space traveler. NASA collected names to put on a flash drive to be put aboard the Orion spacecraft and send into space. Artemis is now on the launchpad for testing in April. After testing, the uncrewed mission launch could be sometime between May and July. The Space Launch System rocket, reported to be "the most powerful rocket in the world," is capable of reaching into deep space.

From the comfort of my lawn chair, I'll read about the space mission.

Artemis I is just the beginning. Artemis II will have a crew and do a moon flyby. Then comes Artemis III — astronauts on the lunar surface. Next anticipated mission — from the moon to Mars.

Wait on a little. Back up a couple summers ago when NASA provided times and locations where the International Space Station could be seen without a telescope. In Grant County, near sunset or sunrise, I spotted the ISS several times like an oversized star briefly trailing across the sky. A covey of quail occasionally joined me as I sat in my lawn chair.

Cruising through the NASA website, I happened onto a short piece on a tour of the International Space Sta-



Jean Ann Moultrie

tion with astronauts showing where they work, eat, use the bathroom, etc. What an educational look into weightless life in space.

I later read about the rest of the story. Report-

edly the International Space Station smells. The word used — it "stinks." It seems that the astronauts exercise two hours a day to counteract the weightlessness. And they sweat. Water is limited and any liquids are recycled. Their clothes are used over and over. No space station laundromats. After a year, what to do with 160 pounds of smelly laundry per person? Toss it out to burn up in space? Send it back to Earth to be laundered? (The ultimate: "Hey, Mom, would you wash up my 160 pounds of space laundry? Here's some long-handled tongs and a gas mask.")

Lest I dwell too much on the challenge, especially for longer future missions, there is hope for a resolution. NASA has partnered with Procter & Gamble, the maker of Tide laundry detergent, to work on the challenge — with what and how to wash clothes in space with less water? The answer could serve not only astronauts, but also communities with drought conditions or limited water throughout the world.

Along with the Artemis I launch

for a lunar orbit, another stunning launch — that one in December 2021, namely the James Webb Space Telescope. Instead of orbiting Earth, the telescope is now a million miles from Earth and orbiting the sun. This boggles my mind. Not only is it orbiting, but it's programmed to stay in a path where Earth's shadow helps shade the enormous telescope lenses. Currently the telescope's workings are being adjusted with plans that by summer stunning pictures of previously unexplored vistas will be seen.

Several years ago, while visiting Warsaw, Poland, a guide pointed out the school where Copernicus, an astronomer in the 1400s, studied and announced that the sun did not revolve around the Earth, but that the Earth and the other planets in our solar system revolved around the sun.

Then came Galileo in the 1500s, who is known as the father of the telescope.

Today, "a Golden Age of Astronomy."

Grant County, a location not inundated with "light pollution" from large cities, makes for a grand spot to do nighttime gazing for an armchair space traveler.

Jean Ann Moultrie is a Grant County writer. It's speculated that if the author lived centuries ago and her ancestors depended on the author's bravery to explore new lands, she'd still be living in a remote cave carving stick figures of mastodons with a sharp rock on the cave walls.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Illegal immigration getting out of hand

To the Editor:

The lieutenant governor of Texas just announced that at the present rate, by the end of President Biden's first term, 20% of the population of the United States will be here illegally. As of May 23 the Border Patrol will no longer be enforcing Title 42. This action will bring about another huge influx of illegal immigrants.

We have always welcomed legal immigration, but this influx of unskilled laborers will only bring down the income of our unskilled citizens. Many are not only illiterate in English, they are illiterate in their native language.

At a time when many entry-level jobs are disappearing because of automation, this will only make matters worse. I recently stopped at a McDonald's restaurant and ordered and picked up my meal without talking to a single person.

I hope the action of the Texas governor of shipping the illegal immigrants to Washington, D.C., will wake up Congress as to what is happening to this country.

Ralph Goodwin
 John Day

Pool will benefit whole community

To the Editor:

I am writing to express my enthusiastic support of the pool bond, ballot measure 12-80.

As the parent of two young children, I consider access to swimming lessons a necessity. Water safety is a serious concern. Despite my efforts to find opportunities to swim, my kids have never experienced consistent, formal swimming lessons taught by professionals. As a result, they do not know how to swim. I want my children to be strong swimmers so they can play safely in the creeks, rivers, and lakes we love to frequent.

Pools are not just for kids! Access to a pool allowed me to remain active throughout my first pregnancy, something I sorely missed while pregnant with my second child. Pools can be used for physical therapy after surgery or injuries, and for low-impact activity. They are great for those with mobility issues, and can benefit adults and

children with a wide range of therapeutic needs. The new pool would be built according to current accessibility standards, and would better serve the full spectrum of community members.

As a homeowner in Canyon City, I will be impacted by the increase in property taxes. A pool is a community resource, but typically not a source of revenue; if we want a pool, we have to pay for it! Taking advantage of grants to reduce the cost is a smart and responsible way to finance such a significant project.

I want to live in a community that is committed to the health and well-being of its residents. The pool bond is an opportunity for each voter to support these values. Please join me in voting yes on the pool bond on May 17.

Jesse Schaefer
 Canyon City

Join me in voting for pool bond

To the Editor:

As a parent and taxpayer, I am voting yes on ballot measure 12-80! Gleason Pool is in a state of disrepair and does not meet our community's needs, especially for individuals with disabilities. Truth is, our 64-year-old pool must be replaced as it is inadequate and no longer able to reliably serve our residents. Could Gleason Pool be refurbished? Maybe, but at significant cost to bring the pool up to today's code, standards, and to address all the deficiencies. Also, a refurbishment will not significantly extend the useful life of Gleason Pool or be able to expand the pool to add an additional lane. Why spend two million dollars to bandage a failing facility when we could invest that money in a new pool that will give us another 60-plus years of service?

Did you know that drowning is the leading cause of death of children under the age of 4? For this reason, we were regular users and took advantage of swim lessons as water safety is important to our family. Navigating the dressing room with young children and a stroller was challenging given there are no zero-entry access points. I cannot imagine how many barriers are present for individuals with differing abilities.

Finances are a concern for everyone but for homes with an assessed value of \$100,000 today, that translates to less than \$6 a month for a new pool. That sounds like a great return on investment for our community! For less

than the cost of a latte and a sweet treat, we can help fund a new, modern, and accessible facility that serves all attendees equitably and allows for future expansion.

Please join me in casting your vote in favor of bond measure 12-80 for a new pool! Continually funding emergency repairs is simply not enough and is not sound fiscal policy. We need to think long term and invest in our future. Please vote yes on May 17!

Ashley Armichard
 John Day

Swimming lessons can be a lifesaver

To the Editor:

Nearly 30 years ago I participated in an event with a dozen or more teenagers at Magone Lake. After leaving their cars, the kids ran to the old docks, jumped in the water, and swam towards the log that is still in the middle of the lake. Some were excellent swimmers, some were not.

Shortly after jumping in the water, several swimmers began to struggle. Adults shouted to get the attention of two young men with a canoe to provide help. As the canoe raced back to assist the struggling swimmers, we realized with horror that one of the boys had been left behind, treading water in the middle of the lake. We were immediately concerned that he could not swim well and would drown far from shore.

We learned later that he had taken swimming lessons at the old John Day swimming pool. Luckily, he had learned how to tread water very well. His life and the lives of his future children were saved by the efforts of his parents and swim teachers in educating him to swim.

Over the years, recalling that incident, I have often thought, how much is the life of one young man and his future generations worth? I support the construction of the new pool and the passing of the Parks and Recreation bond. The relatively small amount of money that I will pay over the life of the bond is well worth the cost to save the lives of young men and women.

Grant County needs a pool so that children have access to swimming lessons.

How much is one life worth to you? Join me in voting in favor of the pool bond.

Dan Cronin
 John Day