

OUR VIEW

# Commissioner's job draws passionate, able candidates

Grant County residents have an important job to fill in the May 17 election. County Commissioner Sam Palmer has thrown his hat in the ring for the Republican nomination in the U.S. Senate race, a decision that will leave a seat on the Grant County Court open when Palmer's term expires at the end of the year.

Fortunately for all of us, three solid candidates are campaigning for the open county commissioner position.

John Rowell is a Marine veteran who is retired from a career in the lumber business and lives in John Day.

Prairie City resident Scott Knepper is retired after a 40-year career with the U.S. Postal Service.

And Mark Webb, a Mt. Vernon resident, is the executive director of Blue Mountain Forest Partners and previously served as Grant County judge from 2007 to 2013. (Webb missed the filing deadline, so his name will not appear on the ballot; he's running as a write-in candidate.)

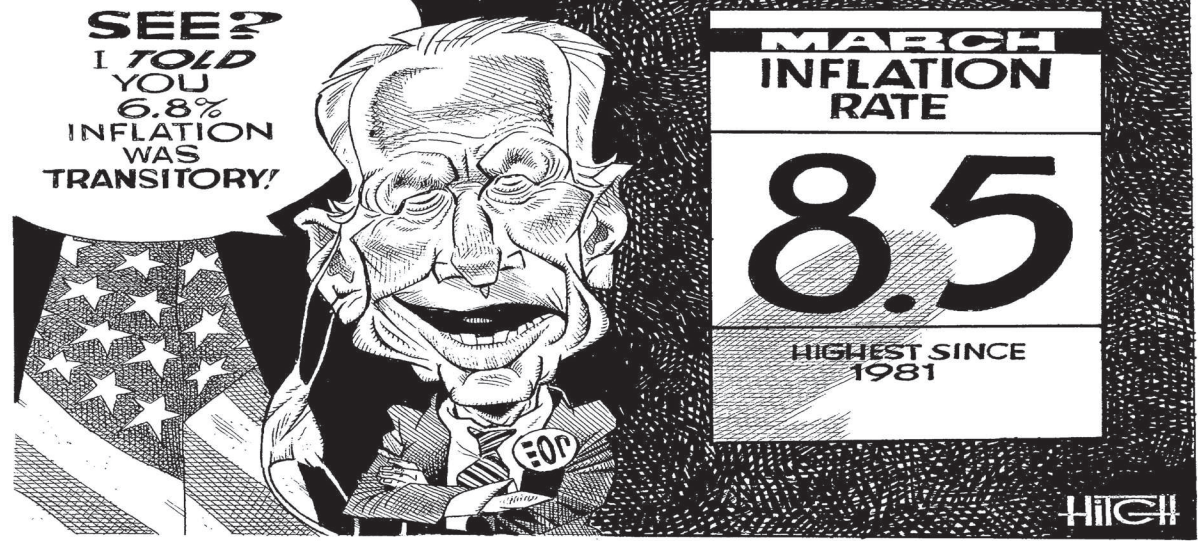
All three have strong ties to Grant County and are passionate about making it a better place. Their commitment was on full display at the Blue Mountain Eagle's candidate forum Wednesday, April 20, at the Grant County Regional Airport, where they all gave well-reasoned, thoughtful answers to questions posed by the newspaper, the people in attendance and those watching the live video feed on our website and Facebook page.

It seems clear from their responses (some of which you can read about in a story on page A1 of this week's edition) that all three men have devoted considerable time and energy to evaluating the issues facing our county and that all three would make valuable contributions on the County Court.

In addition to the county commissioner race, many Grant County residents will also have the opportunity to vote on a \$4 million bond measure to fund a new community pool at the Seventh Street Sports Complex in John Day. That issue has generated quite a few letters to the editor from both sides — so many, in fact, that we've added a second Opinion page to this week's paper to get as many as possible into print before ballots start showing up in local mailboxes.

If you don't see your letter in this week's Eagle, be assured that we'll get it in the paper as soon as possible. Any election-related letters received too late to make the print edition will be posted on our website.

And whatever your preferences in the coming election, be sure to make your vote count by turning in your ballot before 8 p.m. on Election Day.



FARMER'S FATE

# Party of one, please

"I like to party. And by party I mean a slumber party for one with plenty of books to read." This is a sign my mom and I both need right next to our welcome mat.

What candy was to other kids, books were to me. My mom would take me to town once a week and let me spend my limit — at the library. From those books I let my hair fly while riding with Nancy Drew in her convertible or Chet Morton's jalopy as he and the Hardy Boys solved their mysteries. I tasted fresh maple syrup with Laura Ingalls while she still lived in the Big Woods, and my cheeks burned with embarrassment as Anne and I got Diana Barry drunk off "raspberry cordial."

I remember the day when I was finally able to write small enough to get my very own library card. The librarian had told my mom it was perfectly fine if I just wrote my first name, but my mom was adamant that my entire name must be written on the line or no card. I was one proud 4-year-old that day walking out of the library with my stack of books and a brand new pink laminated card. I treasured that card. It was like my first passport.

By the time I was in the seventh grade I had read all of the Clive Cussler and Robin Cook books our local library had, and was constantly on the lookout for new authors. I never stayed in just one genre; I simply read whatever pleased me at the moment and I'd take away from it whatever impressed itself at that time, without any set purpose.

I would read books in the bathroom, in the bathtub, over my bowl of breakfast cereal, often during recess, and in bed — under the covers, of course, because I was supposed to be sleeping.

One night when I was around 10, I had a Phyllis Whitney novel under



Brianna Walker

the flashlight steady. The protagonist had discovered a warning note and a dead canary on her pillow. My heart pounded and my eyes dashed from word to word. I wanted to go to sleep. But I couldn't shut my eyes until the villain was forever locked away in the last chapter of the book, and I could be safe.

While my classmates were discussing the latest episodes of "Friends" and "Mad About You," I was at a loss, because I had been betting on horse races in England with Dick Frances, assisting James Herriot on veterinary calls in Yorkshire, and committing espionage in Austria with Helen MacInnes.

Books were my passport to the universe. I loved the look and feel of them, even the smell. That evocative mixture of paper, ink, glue and dust never failed to take me on adventures. Anyone who says they have only one life to live must not read books! A well-written book can make you feel as if you were right there when Sir Ernest Shackleton and his crew camped on ice floes in Antarctica, or feel as if you were really watching Dorian Gray's picture get uglier the more immoral its subject became.

I hope my kids grow up to love books the way I do, but I doubt my husband will ever come to that appreciation. Every time spring cleaning rolls around, he is quick to volunteer my books for the thrift store. He likes to tease that had I come across the Oregon Trail, my team of oxen would have

died under the stress of my books.

That may have been one of the only situations where I would have taken an e-reader. I am aware of their advantages: less storage, fewer trees, and adjustable font. But I prefer books that don't need batteries. How does one press flowers in an e-book?

Stepping into a bookstore wouldn't smell the same if it was filled with shelves of little computers instead of the beautiful, musty smell of old leather and worn pages. I agreed with a sign that read "be a hardback in a world of e-books." I take comfort in the look, the feel, the smell, and of course the old friends tucked just under the cover of books.

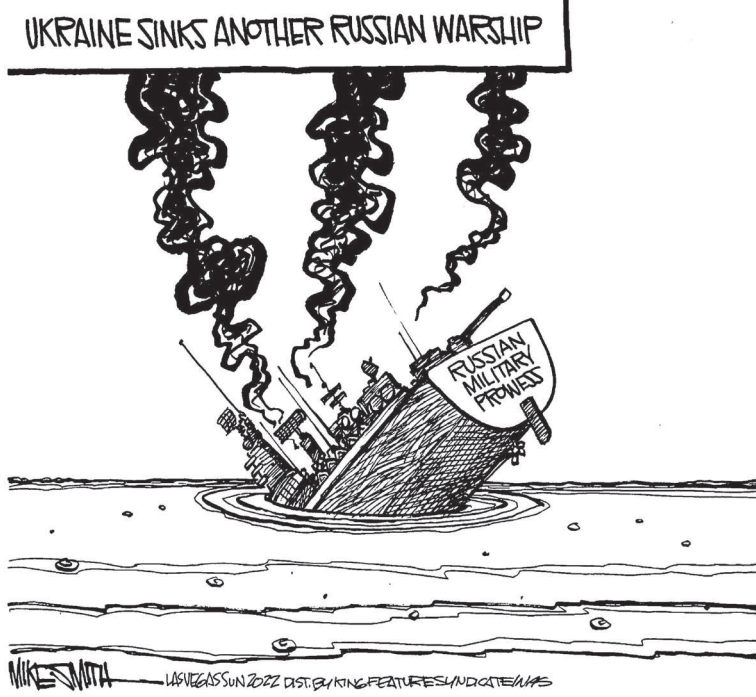
In my house books are everywhere: in bookcases, the bathroom, under the beds, and in the vehicles. Some have special places on the mantle, others are used as decorations, while still others help hold up a broken leg on the couch.

Books are many things to me. I have old friends and heroes, enemies and lovers, all tucked neatly between covers both new and old. Sometimes opening a book brings back memories that aren't even about the characters.

I can't see a copy of "1001 Nights" without craving pie dough. For it was while reading that book as a kid that my mom showed me how to mix up individual cups of pie dough and roll them in sugar. I read about thieves sealing themselves in oil jars trying to get at Ali Babba's treasure while nibbling on sugar-encrusted dough.

With World Book Day just around the corner, I invite you to join me in mixing some pie dough, pouring some "raspberry cordial," grabbing your favorite book or maybe a new author or three, and hosting your own slumber party for one!

*Brianna Walker is a Grant County resident who occasionally writes about the Farmer's Fate for the Blue Mountain Eagle.*



LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

## Willing to pay for community benefit

To the editor:

We have followed the planning and efforts to construct a new swimming pool complex in John Day.

In discussions and informal conversation, there has been a wide variety of opinions, from support to angry rejection. In more than 40 years of living in Grant County, with few exceptions, we have enjoyed the community compatibility and unity. We have also faced numbers of proposals which required bond or tax initiatives. Running a small farm has required, for us, strict frugality. Nevertheless, when proposals could improve the quality of living for everyone, we never failed to support them and pay our share.

For those who say, "I'd never use the pool, so I'll vote no," I might suggest that some benefits could be hidden there, beyond using the pool themselves. On a hot summer afternoon, a swimming pool full of happy, active children is a joy to them and us. Happy, active children do better in school and have stronger relationships with their peers. They are less likely to engage in mischief than if they are bored and lonely. Their positive behavior is an asset to the community, and people who will vote for the pool are providing the means.

Vic and Zola Pike  
John Day

## Vote to restore American values

To the Editor:

Recently the newest Supreme Court justice said she could not define what a woman is because "I'm not a biologist," and I started thinking.

While in a large Democratic-run city two years ago, and I saw people tearing down statues, spraying graffiti everywhere, attacking federal and police buildings, and looting and burning businesses. At the time, I thought this was criminal activity; now I'm not sure. I'm not a criminologist.

A couple of weeks ago I was out-

side and something was falling from the sky, and I got wet. I think it was rain, but I'm not sure. I'm not a meteorologist. Yesterday, I was outside and I stepped in a pile of something; at first I didn't know if it was a pile of rocks or a pile of poo. Then I remembered — I'm a geologist! I'm sure it wasn't a pile of rocks; rocks are never that soft, or smell that bad.

I now realize that our president and many of our government leaders have been stepping in piles just like that too. But instead of cleaning themselves up, they are tracking it all over the place; into many of our schools, our city, county and state governments, and especially in the halls of Congress.

Bob Dylan, an American Nobel Prize winner for literature, immortalized a phrase long ago: "You don't need a weatherman to know which way the wind blows." I think he's right! And we don't need leaders who insult our intelligence, and tell us good is evil, and evil is good. Most rational people have come to the conclusion that current levels of government spending, inflation, immigration, crime, corruption, and other problems promoted by the current administration and their enablers in Congress are unsustainable.

A lot of our "emperors" have no clothes at all, and it is up to us to point that out to them. We can't buy or spend our way out of this. We need to do our due diligence and, as informed voters, vote like our lives depend on it. And elect new leaders that will restore our nation and its core values. No one else can do this for us; we must do it ourselves.

Mark Lysne,  
John Day

## Please cast your vote for pool

To the Editor:

My family needs a pool. Please vote "Yes" on ballot measure 12-80.

We are a water-loving family. We boat and swim in Magone Lake and the John Day River. All of us swim except our youngest. She floats. She does not take off her life jacket. She took multi-

ple swim lessons every year at the pool until it was closed, but she was still too young to have water safety and swimming mastered. She needs a few more years of lessons by an instructor (not a parent) and to have lifeguards watching to be safe in water.

Summers are hot in Grant County. Swimming will happen. Let's vote "Yes" to allow that learning time to be a safe and fun time as well.

Thanks for voting "Yes."

Ryan McKnab  
Canyon City

## New pool will be worth the cost

To the Editor:

I am writing this letter in hopes that more people in Grant County will really step back and look at the benefits of what a pool does for a small community. When I moved here, my parents' co-worker had several children on swim team and it piqued my curiosity and so I went for it. I loved the weekend meets, both in Grant County and surrounding areas, and being able to participate definitely kept me out of trouble.

By having a pool in John Day it will help keep kids occupied and those that want to be on swim team will have that ability to participate, and also with swimming lessons and life-guard training, recreational swimming, these are all assets to a small town bringing revenue, jobs and a lifetime of memories.

I can honestly say from experience that this is so important to have in this community. I realize to some people are upset by increased taxes, but don't we all buy coffee or go out to eat? Seems like a small price to pay for the kids and families to have something to do.

Vote "yes" for a pool, it will be worth it!

K. Pike-Howard  
Seminole, Texas

**Editor's note:** The author is a traveling nurse who spends part of each year in Grant County.

**Blue Mountain EAGLE** USPS 226-340  
Grant County's Weekly Newspaper  
Email: [www.MyEagleNews.com](http://www.MyEagleNews.com) John Day, Oregon  
Phone: 541-575-0710

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EDITOR Bennett Hall, [bhall@bmeagle.com](mailto:bhall@bmeagle.com)  
REPORTER Steven Mitchell, [steven@bmeagle.com](mailto:steven@bmeagle.com)  
SPORTS [sports@bmeagle.com](mailto:sports@bmeagle.com)  
MULTIMEDIA Alex Wittwer, [awittwer@eomediagroup.com](mailto:awittwer@eomediagroup.com)  
MARKETING REP Kim Kell, [ads@bmeagle.com](mailto:ads@bmeagle.com)  
OFFICE ASSISTANT Alixandra Hand, [office@bmeagle.com](mailto:office@bmeagle.com)

PUBLISHED EVERY WEDNESDAY BY EO Media Group

Periodicals Postage Paid at John Day and additional mailing offices.

Subscription Rates (including online access):  
One year ..... \$51  
Monthly autopay ..... \$4.25

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