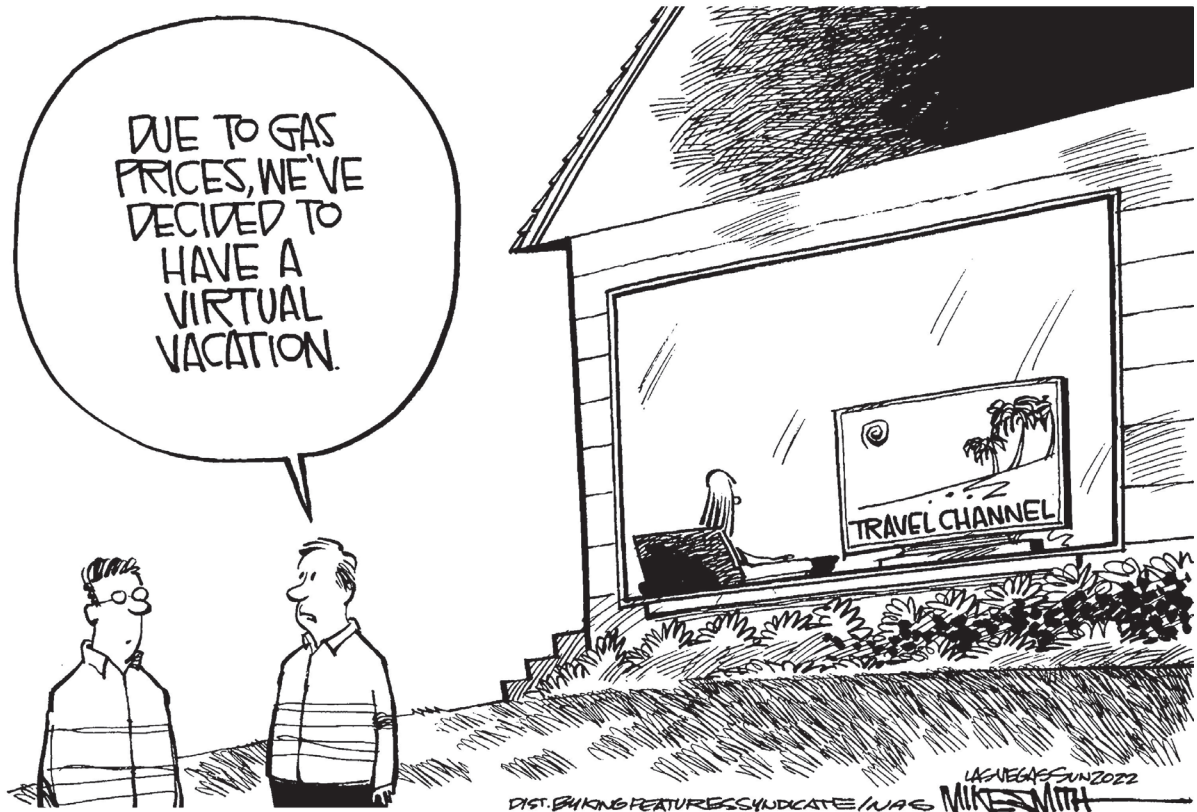


OUR VIEW



Steven Mitchell/Blue Mountain Eagle
Colby Farrell, a member of the Whiskey Gulch Gang, fires a blank in a mock gunfight Saturday, June 11, 2022, during the '62 Days Celebration.



A fair trial followed by a first-class hanging

A gunfight broke out on the streets of Canyon City June 11, and everybody cheered. The gunslingers were members of the Whiskey Gulch Gang, they were all firing blanks, and the simulated showdown was the Wild West centerpiece of '62 Days, the annual celebration that pays tribute to Canyon City's origins as a rough-and-ready mining boomtown after the discovery of gold there in 1862. One of the combatants lay seemingly dead in the street, and the survivors of the shootout quickly converged on the triggerman to hand out some swift and sure frontier justice. To paraphrase the crooked sheriff in "Silverado," he got a fair trial followed by a first-class hanging. No one was too upset when the condemned man broke through the floor of the gallows before the hangman was ready. They just pulled him up, dusted him off, rearranged the harness that kept the noose from choking him, and did the thing properly.

While things are a lot more civilized these days, that Old West culture still adds its own distinctive spice to life here in Grant County, and '62 Days is a great way to savor the flavor.

The historic Sels' Brewery comes out of hibernation just once a year to serve as headquarters for the two-day celebration, and it's perfect for the part. Built in 1872, the stone structure houses a bar that could have stepped straight out of a classic Western movie, complete with swinging doors, sawdust on the floor, an elkhorn hatrack and a large nude painting on the back wall. Sels' outdoor patio was the scene of live music and dancing on both Friday and Saturday, with a big tarp overhead to keep the worst of the rain off the revelers, none of whom seemed to mind the wet weather too much. Washington Street was blocked off to vehicle traffic for the occasion, with vendors offering barbecue, burritos and other tasty treats. Kids played across the street from the brewery in the city park, where a band was set up in the gazebo.

On Saturday morning, a parade rolled slowly down Highway 395 through town, with the Grant County Fair and Rodeo Court riding horseback, a group of high-kicking can-can girls performing their routine on the back of a wagon, Boy Scouts marching in uniform and a string of ATV riders rolling along on their four-wheelers. Other attractions at '62 Days included a chili cook-off, a cornhole tournament, an art show hosted by Painted Sky, the Miners' Breakfast, the Gold Rush Run and the Medicine Wagon Show.

All in all, it was a fun and lively tribute to Canyon City's colorful history. Our hats are off to the Whiskey Gulch Gang and other community volunteers for keeping this grand Western tradition alive.



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 • **Oregon Legislature** — State Capitol, Salem, 97310. Phone: 503-986-1180. Website: 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, oregonlegislature.gov.
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FARMER'S FATE Waddle we do with the ducks?

There's been quite a bit of fowl play at our house lately.

As the rain keeps coming down in buckets, all of the animals have been most irritable — with the exception of the ducks. Those ducks just quack happily, splashing in puddles while pretending not to notice how miserable the soggy sheep look.

The happy ducks seem to waddle across the pasture, intentionally flaunting their big, happy, water-logged grins. They may taunt — but they do it smartly. They must have seen the sign that reads: "The farmer allows walkers to cross the field for free, but the bull charges."

They always make sure their mocking leaves enough space for them to flap to the safety of their pond. After a mad splash into the water just ahead of the wet and aggravated llama, one could almost hear their twinkling little brains saying, "Put it on our bill ..."

We have decided that if it walks like a duck, and talks like a duck — you better have someone on duck patrol. Duck patrol is a real thing at my house. Because those mischievous little ducks don't keep their taunting to just the other farm animals — oh, no. They love to see how long it takes for us to discover they're missing and bring them home. If I saw a duck with a stopwatch around his neck, I wouldn't be surprised.

Coming home the other day, wearing tall-heeled boots and a skirt,

I saw six of the 10 ducks across the road and in the alfalfa field (because apparently it tastes better than the alfalfa field next to their pond).

I pulled off the road and went bouncing through the wet alfalfa, high heels and all. Five of the six ducks hunkered down while the "sentry" stood tall and gave me a one-eye stare-down.

Was I bluffing? Was I really going to keep coming?

Everyone else was still doing the "duck and cover" until the sentry must have decided I was serious and quacked out a loud "get the flock back!" order. At his command, the five other ducks stood up and the whole procession waddled and quacked back to the driveway.

As my procession of ducks toddled back toward their pond, the other four came out to watch, and I could easily imagine them holding up scoring signs for how well their escape plans had gone: 8.4, 9.1, etc.

Hollering out the window won't get their attention. No matter how much noise you make, they will totally ignore you until they see the door open. Then the sentry will stretch his neck and acknowledge you for the first time. They still won't budge, though, until your feet actually touch the ground. Then they start quacking as they wobble-wobble their way back home.

Each time I'm on duck patrol, I can't help but hum "Five little ducks went out to play, over the hills and far away ..." I'm starting

to think that was more than a kid's song — it was a warning.

Day after day we watched the leader, a little curled feather on his back, lead his ragtag gang of naughties off to play. One day after having been on duck patrol nearly every hour, chasing them off the road and out of the neighboring ditch, I was starting to get a little annoyed.

"Rotten ducks anyhow, if they weren't so adorably mischievous, I might be contemplating duck stew," I grumbled to my husband.

"You need to let it roll like water off a duck's back," he sing-songed to me.

"Don't use such fowl language in front of the kids!" I exclaimed overdramatically, "my day was for the birds — the very definition of unpro-duck-tive!"

We continued with our lame duck puns all evening amusing ourselves more than our children — they thought we'd flown the coop. It probably wasn't all it was quacked up to be, but I did learn there is no hope our ducks will ever grow up — because they will grow down.

But one of the best things about duck patrol is that, at the end of the day, however crazy things have gone, one can always say they had their ducks in a row — at least once.

On a late evening duck patrol, shooing the naughty little ducks back home, I thought about a "badling," a group of ducks on land — and right then I decided the person who came up with that name knew all about duck patrol!



Brianna Walker

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Building on debt is risky business

To the Editor:

Looking back on a management style and its tactics and looking forward to accountability is the topic of the day. The city of John Day hired, in my opinion, the most liberal and unexperienced manager in its history. In April 2019 Nick Green writes: "Profitability is less important for a public agency. We are not designed to generate profits and are required by law to break even." As we, on the outside watching in, find the service on the debt rise every year. This figure is the principal amount taken off of debt, plus the interest paid in each fiscal year.

Audit for FY 17-18, the debt service amounted to \$259,568. Under the topic of "solvency," Mr. Green includes the following statement: "By using leverage (debt) to make land acquisitions, capital improvements like finishing the fire hall, and building greenhouses, we created near-term debt obligations ... and long term debt obligations." By doing this, he says, "we also created assets whose value exceeds our debts as a result of external investment from third parties."

So, to make this short, he is creating debt to build stuff to borrow

more money as assets rise. To date, I know of no third parties that are participating in this failing plan. So far, the city has been borrowing large amounts of money to "subsidize" third parties, and only a handful of them.

Let's go forward now and look at the 2022/2023 budget. \$1,413,889 is the debt service for this coming fiscal year. This comes to \$812.58 for every man, woman and child within the city limits this year alone for the privilege of living in the city. For the property taxpayer that figure is \$1,178.24 for this upcoming FY.

In the Dec. 14 URA meeting, (RES.) No. 2021-06, he requested a loan from Business Oregon for URA, and in this resolution it includes additional funding from this loan for "debt service." So he is borrowing for debt service to satisfy these loans. How does this sound like "breaking even" to a balanced budget? Borrowing for debt service is not a way to balance a budget.

Bob Pereira
John Day

Phone customers left in the lurch

To the Editor:
While returning to our ranch recently, we called the Kimberly

Post Office to resume our mail. No answer. We correctly guessed that the Kimberly phones were once again not working. Five days later still no dial tone for any of us.

After four days I finally went online with CenturyLink. Their system reported that there is no outage in our area and that the problem must be with the wiring in our home! I then tried to talk to a real person and was told that the wait time was 160 minutes! When I finally reached them, they said they could send out a technician on June 24 — that's over two weeks without phone service for us or any of our neighbors.

This is all typical with CenturyLink, and one has to wonder if they just want us all to go away. I understand that most people today rely on cellphones, and many have gotten rid of their landlines. But for people in rural areas where there is little to no cellphone coverage, and satellite internet is our only digital connection, our landlines are essential. Who is going to protect rural folks from corporate giants like CenturyLink?

And to all you other Grant County residents who have Oregon Telephone Corporation service — count your lucky stars!

Jim Kelly
Kimberly

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.

Published every Wednesday by ecMEDIA group

MEMBER OREGON NEWSPAPER PUBLISHERS ASSOCIATION

Grant County's Weekly Newspaper

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SUBSCRIPTION RATES
(including online access?)

One year\$51
 Monthly autopay \$4.25

Subscriptions must be paid prior to delivery

Periodicals Postage Paid at John Day and additional mailing offices.

POSTMASTER
send address changes to:
 Blue Mountain Eagle
 195 N. Canyon Blvd.
 John Day, OR 97845-1187
 USPS 226-340

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