

OUR VIEW

Be on the lookout for suspicious activity this holiday season

The holiday season is a time for reflection and the gathering of relatives, but it can also deliver an unwelcome circumstance — crime.

Every holiday season there is no shortage of scams and other criminal activity that can impact families and ruin what ordinarily would be a fun Christmas.

While the local area isn't consumed with a crime wave, area residents should be aware that even the simplest actions can lead to an unfortunate situation where valuables and other items purchased for the

holidays disappear.

Social media is a great resource for many things and its power is unlimited. Yet social media can also become a fertile hunting ground for criminals. Many of us like, when we go on vacation, to post photos of our time away. We want our friends and relatives to know where we are and the fun we are having. The trouble is that criminals also mine social media for information and posting photos and long storylines of your vacation is a clear signal to someone intent on thievery you are not at home — which means your home

could be unguarded.

Another favorite trick of criminals is the so-called "porch piracy." This occurs when packages are delivered to an individual's home and a criminal is following the delivery truck at a discreet distance. As soon as the delivery truck departs — leaving your packages at the front door — the criminal moves in to steal the merchandise. Again, such activity isn't common locally, but it is never a bad idea to be aware such activity can occur.

The best defense, of course, to criminal activity is to not post photos of your vacation on

social media. As far as package deliveries go, homeowners can avoid a theft by scheduling the deliveries to arrive when they are home or have the items brought to their workplace or a neighbor.

Finally, we need to look out for each other. That means if you see something out of place with your neighbor, call the police. Suspicious activity can be checked out quickly by local police.

The holidays should be a great time for everyone. Let's all take some basic, common-sense measures to ensure it stays that way.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Let's learn from our ancestors

Supply chain problems. Rising inflation. Agricultural concentration. Climate change.

My fellow citizens of Umatilla County, we have a solution: regional self-reliance, something our ancestors knew well. We need to develop our regional and local economies. Our food can travel, on average, 2,000 miles. Our farmers and ranchers are at the mercy of the national and global food system.

All that stuff moving around takes a lot of energy, which contributes to climate change. We need to produce, manufacture and buy more local. Good for the environment, good for our economy. Get some chickens this spring. Plant a garden. Support your local cattle rancher and get a side of beef. Shop at the farmers market. Go solar. Buy less stuff from China.

Our ancestors knew how to do it. Maybe it's time to relearn from the past.

**Don Hartley
Pendleton**

COLUMN

Homegrown: Culture grows and changes with the population

When I moved to Hermiston in the early 1990s, the most recent census had the town's population as 10,366. Thirty years later in April 2020, the census counted 19,354 people in town, and 20 months later in July 2021, Portland State University's estimate put the city at 19,696. If we're not at 20,000 by next summer, we'll be darn close.

So in my time as a Hermistonian, the city has essentially doubled in population. But that doesn't mean there are just 10,000 new people in town. That number includes the regular inflow and outflow of people who come and go, who move in and move away, who are born and die here.

The number of "new" people — those who weren't counted in the 1990 census but were here for the 2020 edition — is much

higher. I won't hazard a specific guess, but these newcomers certainly outnumber us old-timers by a fair margin. And if you'll allow me to move the "old-timer" status to people who have been here since, say, 1980, that balance tips drastically in favor of us newcomers.

This has a large impact on the culture of a community. Of course every town adds and subtracts over the years, slowly altering its identity as leadership and employment opportunities and civic activities change. And some of these new faces are the children and extended families of people who have been here longer, carrying on cultural identity from one generation to the next. But the constant infusion of new blood speeds up the evolution process as people bring with it pieces of culture from elsewhere.

Think of how many of the business owners, teachers, pastors, elected officials and nonprofit leaders who have an outsized impact on our community aren't "from here," and have moved here in the past 30 years. Think about the huge impact they are having every day on who we are. And imagine what kind of place we would be if we were afraid of this kind of change.

Hermiston strives to be an inclusive community, and this includes "outsiders." Having a welcoming attitude prevents culture from stagnating. People who move here get involved with the churches, clubs, committees and programs that set the direction of a town. They feel empowered to add their voice to the collective conversation.

I've known a lot of people who have moved on from Hermiston. My graduating class of 2001 held a virtual reunion on

Facebook this summer and shared updates on what we're doing and where we're living now. About 9 in 10 who posted moved after graduation and haven't come back. I was one of the few whose life took them away from Hermiston and then back again.

But I've also met a lot of people who are new to town. In the past month I've met new Hermistonians from Molalla, John Day and Bakersfield, California. They've come for a job opportunity or to be closer to family but were also drawn by the culture.

We are now in a state of rapid change as hundreds of new homes are built each year, neighborhoods are expanding in every part of town and new jobs come on the market seemingly every week.

People are coming from all over and for all kinds of reasons. They are often looking for a place to settle down and Herm-

iston checks the boxes. They bring a refreshing outsider's perspective, able to see the benefits of a town that's small but not too small, a community that has some traditions but is more than willing to make new ones. They want good schools for their kids, safe neighborhoods and access to health care, but no rush hour traffic jams.

They're a constant reminder for those of us who have been here a few years to keep introducing ourselves and our community to new faces. Because, ultimately, they are us, and we are Hermiston.

Daniel Wattenburger is the former managing editor of the East Oregonian. He lives in Hermiston with his wife and children and is an account manager for Pac/West Lobby Group. Contact him at danielwattenburger@gmail.com.



Daniel Wattenburger

COLUMN

A slice of life: The broad jump world record

Are you familiar with a dik-dik? It is a very small antelope, being about the same as a big jackrabbit. After roasting over an open campfire, a dik-dik makes a perfect entree for a two- or three-person meal.

Last month, we discussed setting a world record 100-meter dash running away from a hippopotamus. That evening also involved an African buffalo, so both of the most dangerous wild animals in Africa were involved.

Today, we'll deal with a dik-dik-associated world record broad jump.

Ticks carry several very bad cattle diseases in tropical Africa, and controlling these killer diseases is both very difficult and very important. The primary control method is having cattle jump into and swim through a

dipping vat with a chemical that kills the ticks on the cow.

We were building dipvat in the western Loliondo area of North Masailand, right up against the border of the Serengeti National Park. It was only about 30 kilometers from home, so my wife, Barbara, and my nephew, Mark, who was living with us at the time, had come along for a few days of living in the bush and living off the land.

In early evening, Mark and I set off along the bush-track in my Land Rover pickup to get a dik-dik for dinner. Mark drove and I stood in the back with my bow-and-arrow, and soon there one was standing in an open piece of woods that sloped downward toward us. I took a shot and missed (standard operating procedure), so I went up to retrieve the arrow. As

I walked back and forth I looked up and there he was again — a nice, clear shot — and I missed again. So I went up to find that arrow, Mark came looking for the first arrow, and here's where the action begins.

I was walking around with my head down, looking at the ground to find the arrow, when suddenly that was a loud snort about 20-30 yards away and a huge bull buffalo jumped up. A singleton old bull is a deposed king. He has been the leader of the herd, the boss of the harem of women buffalos, the winner of the fights for control, and now he had been run out of the herd by the younger guys and he has nothing at all. He is angry, frustrated, and as I mentioned last month, African buffalos normally are "smart, mean, crafty, agile, fast — and the quintessence of distilled malevolence."

I had awakened the worst

animal in Africa from his afternoon nap. We studied each other for about 3/1,000 of a second, then I turned and began running down the hill through the sparse trees. Under circumstances like this, cerebral function speeds up by geometric multiples and the question "what am I going to do?" was resolved in micro-milliseconds — "jump into the bed of the Land Rover so that he hits the vehicle and I'm protected."

So I jumped. The problem, however, was that I was running so fast and jumping so hard that I flew over the Land Rover and landed on the far side of the road — completely missing the pickup bed. I have no memory of how Mark did it, but he reached safety in the cab. I got up and the buffalo was nowhere to be seen. Thinking about his mental process it might be something like, "I thought that thing was one of those stupid humans but it was

the wrong color — it was like a pallid termite queen that's never seen the light of day and it ran like a wildebeest and jumped like an impala and could even soar like a vulture. Hey, this thing might be dangerous and I'm outta here."

So I never saw him again. That is how I made track and field event history — this had to be a world record broad jump for sure. The length, the height and the velocity all put together how could it not be the record? What a great video it could have been.

The dik-dik was never seen again, either, and the two arrows still are in their resting places in my beloved western Loliondo bush country.

Dr. Andrew Clark is a livestock veterinarian with both domestic and international work experience who lives in Pendleton.



Andrew Clark

CORRECTIONS

It is the policy of the Hermiston Herald to correct errors as soon as they are discovered. Incorrect information will be corrected on Page 2A. Errors committed on the Opinion page will be corrected on that page. Corrections also are noted in the online versions of our stories.

Please contact the editor at editor@hermistonherald.com or call 541-278-2673 with issues about this policy or to report errors.

SUBMIT A LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Letters Policy: Letters to the Editor is a forum for the Hermiston Herald readers to express themselves on local, state, national or world issues. Brevity is good, but longer letters should be kept to 250 words.

No personal attacks; challenge the opinion, not the person. The Hermiston Herald reserves the right to edit letters for

length and for content.

Letters must be original and signed by the writer or writers. Anonymous letters will not be printed. Writers should include a telephone number so they can be reached for questions. Only the letter writer's name and city of residence will be published.

OBITUARY POLICY

The Hermiston Herald publishes paid obituaries; death notices and information about services are published at no charge. Obituaries can include small photos and, for veterans, a flag symbol at no charge.

Obituaries and notices may be submitted online at hermistonherald.com/obituaryform, by email to obits@hermistonherald.com, placed via the funeral home or in person at the Hermiston Herald or East Oregonian offices. For more information, call 541-966-0818 or 800-522-0255, x221.