

# Opinion

## NO BAD DAYS

### A language lesson

A few days ago I was reading the comments on our Facebook posts and chanced upon a comment about the “tyrannical” behavior of our state government in imposing COVID-related protocols for wearing protective masks.



Don Nelson

This while an entire sovereign nation in the heart of Europe is dealing with what tyranny really looks like, and bravely fending off a murderous aggressor.

I admit, I was angered by the “tyrannical” remark because it is so overblown and cluelessly self-absorbed. It’s one more example of what I call “word inflation” — amping up or overusing a perfectly serviceable word for more-dramatic effect. The use of “hero” has been

made almost meaningless by word inflation.

As for “tyranny,” some people apparently think that the temporary inconvenience of wearing a mask is somehow akin to having your country attacked, having everything that matters to you put at extreme risk by a violent invading force, having your democratic principles challenged at a life-or-death level.

Maybe I simply overlooked the news stories about Gov. Insee sending tanks, bombers and troops to our towns with the intent of subjugating us to dictatorial control. Perhaps I didn’t hear about the shellings, the killings, the desperate evacuations, the nuclear weapons threats. Can’t imagine how I missed all that “tyrannical” behavior right here in Washington state. Could have been the liberal media keeping it on the down-low, I suppose. But you would think that someone would have noticed.

Unless of course none of that happened. It didn’t, and it wouldn’t. So people in search of “tyranny” to rail against must clearly be desperate for something to make them feel imposed upon. I guess any minor grievance will do, and for now it’s masks.

Let us pose a question: What would you do in the face of actual tyranny, the likes of which Ukraine is dealing with? Would your “freedom fighting” extend to fire fights on your home turf? Would you, as many Ukrainian civilians have done, strap on weapons and move to the front? Or would that just be too inconvenient and uncomfortable, just another damn nuisance like, say, wearing a mask for 10 minutes while you are in a store? Pretty darn comparable, right?

It’s not an entirely hypothetical question, because Putin would be coming for us if he could. His psychopathic obsession with establishing global dominance would, like his nuclear arsenal, vault the oceans if it were practical. Putin has played his lap dog sycophant Donald Trump for the dupe that he is for years, and Trump’s sycophants have similarly cast adoring eyes on a power-mad Russian terrorist who doubles as a head of state. Autocracy-loving Trump and many of his followers were easy pushovers for Putin compared to the Ukrainians whose fundamental freedoms are actually in peril.

But even many on the right end of the political spectrum see Putin for what he is. Here’s a recent statement from our Fourth District Congressman Dan Newhouse: “Russia’s warmongering over the past few weeks has unsurprisingly culminated in acts of war against Ukraine. This is in direct conflict with international agreements and must be met with severe and punishing sanctions. Vladimir Putin and his regime have continued to prove they are little more than criminal thugs, and the international community must reject their delusional and alarming attempts at creating a new world order and work together to prevent any further loss of life in Ukraine. I call on our NATO and UN allies to act as swiftly as possible to sever all ties with Putin’s murderous regime. The free world depends on it.” That pretty much says it all.

And this from a Yahoo News story: Sen. Mitt Romney said, while acknowledging that some Putin sympathizers may be changing their minds, “But how anybody — how anybody in this country, which loves freedom — can side with Vladimir Putin — which is an oppressor, a dictator, he kills people, he imprisons his political opponents, he has been an adversary of America at every chance he’s had — it’s unthinkable to me. It’s almost treasonous. And it just makes me ill to see some of these people do that.”

It really is this simple: If you are backing Trump/Putin, you are on the wrong side of freedom, democracy, history and basic human decency. You are allied with evil and terror. You want to do something about tyranny? Stand up against the real thing, any way you can, large or small. And stop throwing around words like “tyrannical” when you have no idea what you’re talking about.

## Box 97: Letters to the editor

### Please return patches

Dear Editor:

We were saddened recently to discover two patches were stolen from the Robert Van Klinken memorial located in the Methow Valley Community Center. We hope to educate the person(s) who thought they could take them, and encourage you to bring them back to the community center so they can be replaced. No questions asked.

First, one of our own, a young man from Poorman Creek, wore these patches on his jacket as he fought and died serving our country. Robert Van Klinken graduated from the Twisp School in 1939. He is remembered locally and honored in the book and film “Band of Brothers.” He is buried in the Netherlands with more than 8,000 other soldiers who fought and saved the world from Nazi Germany. I encourage anyone to learn more about Mr. Van Klinken by visiting the Twisp library archives. You will be moved to know that these graves and servicemen are still honored today through a program where decedents of the Dutch survivors have adopted a serviceman and tend the grave, attend ceremonies, and pass this honor to their children.

So, you can see that we are talking about more than just a patch or two. We are talking about honoring and respecting a local veteran.

I hope this letter will be helpful in educating the person who took them. Please do the right thing and return them to their place of honor.

Kirsten Ostlie  
Methow Valley Community Center  
Twisp

YOU CAN FOOL THE SENATE PANEL AND STALL THE DISTRICT ATTORNEY



By Len Baublitz

### The Methow in action

Dear Editor:

I was badly injured in the Ski to Sun Marathon race Feb 12. I fell on one of the icy patches and badly fractured my right hip. It was terribly painful and scary to be completely immobilized in the snow in the shade miles from the nearest road. Practically every skier who passed by stopped to check on me, and offer words of encouragement. One, Dr. Z (I can’t remember his full name), stopped and stayed with me for the full two hours it took for Aero Methow Rescue to reach me. It is difficult to convey how much he helped to keep my spirits up as I got colder, the pain got worse, and the wait got longer.

While waiting, Steph and another person I think from Methow Trails showed up with a heated blanket and big smiles to warm my body and my spirits. A couple of warm smiles and a heated blanket never felt so good.

Eventually Aero Methow showed up, and I am sorry I can’t remember the crew’s names, because it was quite a project getting me, a 170-pound man, onto an inflatable full

body splint, into the mini-CAT, down to the road, transferred to the ambulance and off to Mid-Valley Hospital. Their efforts to get me the heck out of there as quickly as possible, while minimizing my pain, and stabilizing my injury, felt miraculous. I really have no idea how they did it.

Once at Mid-Valley, the trend continued: Excellent care, from managing my pain, to round-the-clock support, to hip replacement surgery. Again my expectations were exceeded at every turn. Wow! I felt lucky to be there!

I have been a part-time resident in the Methow since the early 1990s, and felt I had a good sense of and appreciation for the strength of this community. But that Saturday, while being a nightmare I would just as soon forget, also became my most precious memory of the magic of the Methow in action. It really says something about a community, when without exception, everyone made a complete stranger feel as if he was a close, close friend with a medical emergency.

Peter Loft  
Kirkland/Lost River

## GUEST COLUMN

### Proposed legislation would hurt rural hospitals

BY J. SCOTT GRAHAM

House Bill 1868, which addresses regulations for nurse staffing, could be devastating to our rural health care facilities and communities if it becomes law.

This bill requires the Department of Labor and Industries to “regulate and enforce hospital staffing committees and minimum staffing standards,” according to the bill summary. To achieve this, hospitals would need to maintain specific nurse-to-patient ratios, and mandate and enforce strict breaks for nurses that could not be interrupted for patient care needs.

Three Rivers Hospital already has a nurse staffing committee. We trust our nursing leadership and staff to make appropriate decisions to meet our organization’s goal of providing the ideal patient experience. Administration supports breaks and lunches for all staff, including in patient care.

This bill removes choice from our nurses, who are professionals that should be allowed the flexibility to determine what’s best for their work flows and our patients.

#### Heavy burden

A law like this would strain much larger and more well-staffed hospitals. For non-profit rural hospitals like Three Rivers, the burden of meeting every requirement in HB 1868 would be unsustainable during a time when nurse staffing is already sparse.

As of this writing, we have openings for

six full-time registered nurses and one part-time OR nurse, and we are continually seeking per diem nurses to fill shifts as needed. To fill the gaps in coverage now, our existing staff works together to rearrange their schedules, and we also pay high rates for five traveling nurses. It was already a challenge to recruit nurses to work in rural hospitals, and many nurses across the U.S. have left their profession entirely due to the stress brought on from COVID-19.

We are far from the only hospital experiencing nursing shortages: According to the Washington State Hospital Association, there are about 6,100 job openings throughout the state and not enough students in nursing programs to meet that need. In order to comply with the new law, Washington state hospitals would need an estimated additional 15,000 nurses at a cost of about \$1 billion.

If our hospital could not meet the new staffing ratios required, we would have to go on diversion, meaning we’d be forced to temporarily shut down certain services and turn away patients. While there have been occasions we needed to go on diversion in acute care and transfer incoming patients to other hospitals due to lower staffing levels, we do not want that to become the norm. This law could also put our community members at risk during emergencies.

#### Better choices

We are committed to doing our best for all parties involved in these unfortunate times,

and we understand very well the need to help nurses avoid burnout. Our legislators could consider better alternatives. They could increase investment in health care education, including adding more slots to nursing programs, increasing pay for instructors, and adding financial support and/or loan forgiveness for nursing students. We are also brainstorming ideas with local and regional partners to resurrect a hands-on nurse education and training program in hospitals, but it could be some time before that becomes a reality.

There is also an issue locally and statewide with patients who no longer require hospitalization but are difficult to discharge. We are asking the state for help establishing long-term care solutions, which would help reduce nurse to patient ratios.

It would also be a tremendous help to allow licensed nurses to move here from other states and begin working more easily. Our Legislature did not authorize joining the interstate nurse compact last year, which is working well for the 25 states currently a part of it.

We urge our community members to contact our state representatives over the next week and ask them to reject HB 1868. A one-size-fits-all model for nurse staffing is not the answer. Our priority is our patients and their safety, and this bill, if passed, could negatively affect patient outcomes in our rural area.

J. Scott Graham is the chief executive officer at Three Rivers Hospital in Brewster.

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## Harts Pass

By Erik Brooks



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# Opinion

## NO BAD DAYS

### Accept no substitutes

Social media is the ultimate narcotic: addictive, demanding, pervasive, capable of causing delusions, cheap and easy to come by. The dealers and users are perfectly symbiotic.



Don Nelson

At the same time, social media (now widely used as a singular noun) is the most effective information dispersal system in the history of humankind. It's hard to imagine how we would get by without it, although millions of us did for much of our lives. Social media is what we have made of it, and probably not what its creators envisioned. It has the potential to unify or divide, in equal measure.

I have valued this newspaper's social media presence as an opportunity to provide reliable information, quickly and accurately, to an audience beyond our print circulation or our geographic reach. We've always taken that mission seriously, no more so than when the valley faces communitywide challenges of the like we have experienced for the past seven years.

However else you feel about Facebook, it has become a vital tool for us, in conjunction with our website. During the Carlton Complex Fire of 2014, our Facebook audience exploded as we focused on providing as much information as possible, as fast as we could provide it. As I've said before, we trained our readers and followers to come to our Facebook page, and they trained us to keep it current and useful. The staffers who managed social media for the newspaper worked hard to honor that agreement.

But personnel changes and other factors slowed our online offerings to a trickle at times over the past few years. We were too often doing a patchwork job that wasn't up to our own expectations. Our metrics grew stagnant.

A couple of developments have revived our online profile in the past several months. One was the arrival of social media-savvy Managing Editor Natalie Johnson, who understands how our Facebook page and website should engage our audience, and knows how to make that happen.

And then came the fires of 2021.

Back in 2014, when reliable information was crucial to the community's survival, we affirmed and have since reiterated our pledge to the online world: We will only post things that we report and write ourselves, or that we can attribute to a verifiable source. That policy holds firm today. It goes to the heart of our credibility, and distinguishes us from the widespread social media universe.

Since the fires of 2021 broke out, we've been constantly posting our own material, passing along up-to-date information from authoritative sources, and linking to other sites that can provide more detail. Natalie is on the lookout for material day and night, as you could deduce from the time stamps on some of our posted material. People have noticed. All of our metrics are up noticeably. Our online followers now total more than four times our print circulation. While we love seeing the numbers rise, our primary goal hasn't changed.

Another reason we are adamant about vetting what we post is that there are so many opportunities out there to come across things that are just flat-out wrong or misleading, deliberately or unintentionally. We are, like many of you, seeing well-meant posts by individuals, or on group sites, that raise more questions than they answer or may perpetuate rumors, speculation and incomplete information. Something as simple as posting fire photos with no context, no explanation and no perspective can generate a panicky comment string or spread misinformation.

It's not our job to counteract or correct those posts. I would only advise that you consider the source and draw your own conclusions. "I heard" is not confirmation. There are plenty of places to get current information from sources who know what they are talking about. It doesn't have to be us. If you want the best overview of how the fires are going, get to know Inciweb and watch the daily updates from the incident command teams. The Okanogan County Fire District 6 Facebook page offers lots of advice on how to protect yourself and your property from the fires.

Or you could just trust Betty from Bothell's take on the whole thing, natter with the conspiracy theory nutballs, or share complaints with armchair firefighting experts (I overheard one of them in a store last weekend, claiming he could have put out the Cedar Creek Fire all by himself with a single bulldozer).

Hundreds of firefighters including our own District 6 guys are undertaking heroic efforts to protect everything we value about the Methow. One way to honor them is by only accepting reliable information about what they are doing.

## Box 97: Letters to the editor

### Another absurdity

Dear Editor:

Dan Newhouse has a new schtick, looks like. Having alienated a big chunk of his constituency through the uncharacteristic act of trying to protect democracy, he's back-pedaling into "conservative" la-la-land as fast as he can. His latest exercise in absurdity, the CATASTROPHES Act, is apparently designed to ensure that scientists have as little say in the GOP version of the environment as they do in the GOP version of the pandemic. This raises a couple of thoughts:

First, how many hours-worth of my taxpayer dollars did it take to think up that ridiculous name? Dan, if you must fiddle away your time doing nothing particularly useful, how's to take up doodling, or Sudoku: they just wear out pencils, which I'll happily provide, and will presumably cause less brain-damage among your long-suffering aides. This competition to cook up catchy acronyms for goofball legislation, while not exclusively a GOP preserve, does seem a good bit more prevalent within the Party of No Ideas.

Second, as a firefighter and the son of something of a luminary in forest management, I'd appreciate it if you would un-wedge your head just a little. We're burning because it's way too hot and way too dry practically everywhere in the West, and anybody with a glimmering of sense recognizes the link between that and the wacko way the climate is behaving. Call it what you will, we've created a hell of a mess by over-tweaking our planet, and, while we're all guilty, at least some of us are trying to do something about it; maybe give it some thought? As for landowners caring for their land, tell that to the Dustbowlers, the residents of the Imperial Valley, and the folks who live in the Amazon ... oh, wait, those folks down there are brown, so I guess they don't count.

I had really hoped that Dan, having done something right for a change, was on a roll, and would continue paying attention to what's good for his country. Silly me: He knows he's done at the polls, but, all the same, he's too invested in his lies to change.

Alan Fahnestock  
Mazama

### Please be safe

Dear Editor:

Human-caused: Two words we do not want to hear!

Several years ago, a construction worker was welding on a bridge west of Ellensburg. This was during a burn ban and outdoor work ban. There was no fire spotter nor water truck. Of course, a wildfire started.

It would seem we are in a similar situation, as the Cub Creek Fire appears to have been human-caused. Whether fires are started by carelessness, ignorance or inten-



By Len Baublitz

tionally set, these fires have the real potential to take human or animal life. They also destroy the natural habitats, peoples home and dreams and businesses.

When I was a kid in Colorado, my Pop would carry a water jug and shovel for fire suppression. In our exploration of the Methow area, my wife and I have come across numerous abandoned campfires. We always have a water jug and shovel. Campfires are not the only source of wildfires. Burning rubbish in piles or burn barrels and tree trimming piles are all good sources of ignition.

A couple years ago on the drive up to our cabin, we saw open flames along the side of the road where one of our neighbors had been burning tree boughs. The boughs had completely burned, but the embers had gone down into the pine needles. The neighbor said they thought the fire was out and drove home. Luckily there was snow left over from winter. We were able to extinguish the fire using the snow and my trusty shovel. I am certain that would have been a devastating fire.

The main reason for writing is to inform and remind folks of being fire smart. You can prevent forest fires, just like Smokey Bear says. You can also start fires with carelessness. Be fire smart!

Patrick Johnson  
Upper Rendezvous

### Much madness

Dear Editor:

The number of "anti-vaxxers" who refuse the COVID vaccine in the supposed name of personal liberty is both astounding and frightening. They refuse to acknowledge that they are putting their families and communities at risk of infection and death. Do they also refuse to use car seats for their young children? Car seats are a government mandate, not just a strong recommendation like the vaccine.

It isn't just Americans who act so stupidly. France has started requiring proof of vaccination or a negative COVID test to attend most public events, restaurants, etc. Like in the U.S., vaccination is free in France. Yet unvaccinated people there are paying up to \$500 for counterfeit certificates of vaccination. The penalty for offering or using a false

certificate is up to three years in prison and \$50,000 in fines. Hundreds have already been arrested in the few days since the vaccine certificate went into effect.

Back here, even if you can hardly see it through the smoke, you've probably noticed how low the Methow River is. It's less than half the median flow in Winthrop. Water to junior rights irrigators has already been shut off, as it has been in most recent years. Yet the county commissioners are fighting in court to be able to allow more subdivisions and houses to drain our water supply even further.

Here in the heat and smoke greatly exacerbated by climate change that humans continue to cause, it's hard not to think the whole world has gone mad.

OK, maybe not the whole world. At least a few small towns and cities are placing moratoriums on new building. As one Utah mayor asked: "Why are we building houses if we don't have enough water? . . . The right thing to do to protect people who are already here is to restrict people coming in." Makes sense, particularly in a fast-growing state where groundwater and streams vital to both farmers and cities are drying up from endless droughts.

Randy Brook  
Twisp

### Don't be childish

Dear Editor:

Although I am thankful that Dan Newhouse is working on legislation to help mitigate wildfires and support all of us affected by them, I am deeply saddened to see he has taken it as an opportunity for name calling. He decided to call his act the "Stop Causing Alarming Tree, Air, and Soil Trauma Resulting from Obstructive Progressives' and Hypocritical Environmentalists' Schemes Act," or the Stop CATASTROPHES Act.

To Mr. Newhouse: Alienating the many progressive environmentalists in our state and country for no other reason than to call names will not help you get legislation passed. Please work on this in a reasonable, cooperative manner rather than politicizing your district's pain and fear in what is frankly a childish way.

Murray Sampson  
Winthrop

## MY TURN

### Community campaign needed to protect our forests

BY GINA MCCOY

As fires rage, aren't we getting good and tired of evacuations, choking smoke, lost homes and devastated forests? Not to mention the ever-present risk to lives. Surely, the large majority of Methow Valley residents — particularly, those who have been here long enough to have experienced the changes — understand that extreme wildfire is a growing threat to our ecosystems, community, economy and health.

By now, it is commonly understood that long-term suppression of natural fire is the primary cause of the widespread overstocking of forests, with attendant problems: stressed, low-vigor trees vulnerable to disease, insect outbreaks, drought and unnaturally extreme wildfire. This is not news to land managers.

As a recent column by Stephen Pyne noted: "U.S. land agencies reformed policies to reinstate good fire 40 to 50 years ago . . ." He also notes that it has "not been achievable at scale," although I wonder whether he should have added "given resources provided to reinstate good fire."

What has changed since those ineffectual policy reforms is the incidence and size of uncontrollable mega-fires. These pose a much different kind of threat. Just a few years ago, it seemed unthinkable that wildfires would overrun towns. Now, it is a yearly occurrence in the western United States. In the state of Washington, the Methow Valley has the distinction of having three of the 10 communities most at risk from wildfire. We are at ground zero. It is time to demand swift action to reduce these risks.

### Feds must change

Public lands managed by the federal government encompass 84% of the Methow watershed. Much of the threat we are under is due to the long-term dereliction of duty on the part of the feds to responsibly manage these lands. Only rapid, large-scale action by the federal government can meaningfully reduce our risks. To be clear, I am not blaming local U.S. Forest Service staff; I believe they are doing their best, under very difficult circumstances. This is far more the result of decision-making, or the lack of it, in Washington, D.C.

Year by year, the cost of suppressing fires grows. Average annual spending by the Forest Service on fire suppression between 1985 and 1989 was \$258 million. Thirty years later, between 2016 and 2020, it had grown more than seven times greater, to \$1.91 billion. Don't get me wrong: I am deeply grateful for the protection we receive from federal, state and local fire-fighting efforts. The problem is that Congress has neither created separate funding for fire suppression, nor increased the Forest Service budget to fund the growing costs.

Thus, the war on wildfire has starved the budgets of other programs, including those aimed at reducing the hideously expensive problem. Remember, nothing productive comes out of fire suppression — the whole value is in preventing harm. Really, it brings to mind the old quote "Billions for firefighting, but not one cent for forest health restoration."

The federal approach is allowing the problem to worsen, particularly as climate change accelerates. Let's face it: As mega-fires continue to grow bigger, more-destructive and more-numerous, we cannot expect there will always be the same level of firefighting response. There will be other, big-

ger communities needing that protection. The bulldozers, helicopters and bombers will be gone. Ask yourself where the Cub Creek and Cedar Creek fires might now have spread without those resources.

### Much to do

There is not a lot of time to turn this around, but there is much we can do. Since at least the 1970s, and the founding of the Methow Valley Citizens Council to oppose the development of a ski resort, the Methow community has a rich history of successful environmental advocacy.

Just a few years ago, the Methow community rallied again and mounted the Methow Headwaters Campaign. A coalition of local residents, business owners and organizations successfully banded together to make federal lands in the upper watershed off limits to mining.

We need this same kind of effort, this time to protect our forests and community from the threat of extreme wildfires. The federal government's management of our lands is a primary cause of the threat we are under. We must work together to hold the federal government to account.

Only by protecting our forests can we protect our community and climate. We need to demand swift and effective action to restore the health and resilience of our forests. What to do is not a mystery. What has been lacking are the resources and will to make this happen. Together, we can change that.

Gina McCoy is a watershed hydrologist and fluvial engineer living in Winthrop. She is a co-founder of C6 Forest to Farm, a non-profit dedicated to protecting our forests from extreme wildfire. She can be reached at [info@C6F2F.org](mailto:info@C6F2F.org)

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Front page banner courtesy of Pat Leigh

# Opinion

## NO BAD DAYS

### Toilets in Twisp: a No. 1 priority

We all understand what it means to answer “when nature calls,” one of many euphemisms for the most basic of human functions. Other analogous expressions are more colorful or elegant, but nevertheless effective. You can’t miss the point, or underestimate the need. When you gotta go, you gotta go.



Don Nelson

Gather enough people in one place, and that adds up to a lotta gottas. Absent nearby relief, stress, anxiety and irritation levels inevitably will rise concurrently with bladder levels. And that’s just the adults. Squirmy, low-capacity kids have even less patience than they have control. Other people have health issues that require reason-

able proximity to a toilet.

In extremis, most people will accept whatever trepidations they associate with using “public” facilities. It’s the least public thing we want to do. Yet that is often the only option.

Except when it isn’t. If, at this point, you are thinking “downtown Twisp,” get in line. You’re a bit late to the potty pity party.

There are few practical public alternatives in downtown Twisp—even fewer since the street-accessible restrooms in The Merc Playhouse were closed for a variety of reasons. Most restaurants and retail establishments have bathrooms for customers, but they aren’t meant for walk-in traffic. Other facilities such as the Methow Valley Community Center can accommodate events and tenant traffic, but not the general populace.

But it is that pesky general populace that shows up for the Saturday morning Methow Valley Farmers Market, and they may also spend time browsing in downtown shops or eating at nearby restaurants.

Last summer, with the Merc bathrooms closed and no other evident public options available, the search for places to go often turned desperate, and local merchants became the fallback options. Last year and again this year, downtown businesses are pressing the town to do something about the situation.

How difficult can that be, you say?

Now, just hold it a minute. You can’t simply dig a pit latrine and hang a roll of toilet paper from a stick. Even portable toilets must be private, sanitary, secure, reasonably comfortable and adaptable to whatever COVID protocols are necessary. Moreover, they need to be maintained—cleaned, emptied, repaired, regularly inspected. Somebody has to make sure that all happens, and pay for it. Typically, it’s a local or state government function.

In Winthrop, the town provides public restrooms at several locations, including adjacent to Town Hall at the four-way stop, and at the Winthrop Barn next to Mack Lloyd Park. The town pays someone to regularly inspect and clean the bathrooms. As a tourism destination, Winthrop can do no less—and some critics say it’s not enough.

Twisp has its share of visitors, but the town isn’t flush with cash. There’s not much wiggle room in its operating budget. Recently, Twisp Public Works Director Andrew Denham had a portable toilet installed at Commons Park next to the Community Center parking lot to alleviate some of the pressure. He says it will stay as long as it’s needed. Denham did that on his own initiative to provide some kind of response.

More is needed, but that may be as good as it gets for a while. What the town could really use is a commodious central public facility, like the one on La Conner’s main shopping drag, that is regularly attended to. As I recall, at the La Conner bathroom, users are asked to make donations toward its upkeep.

Something similar in Twisp would require a location, money to design and construct it, and a regular budget commitment to maintaining the building. It would take a lot of community effort. (On the other hand, writing even more stories about the need for public bathrooms provides a low-threshold opportunity to weave in groan-inducing and even borderline-tasteless puns, and I’ve used about all of them that are printable in a family-friendly newspaper.)

It’s not as dramatic a project as a new library, fire hall or civic building, but it seems like a worthy project for someone’s near-term agenda. A permanent solution is necessary. Until then, renting porta-potties ad infinitum is just throwing money down a hole.

**CORRECTION:** In a story titled “Twisp man faces sentencing on four sexual abuse” charges in the April 21 edition of the Methow Valley News, the age of the suspect when the crime was first reported was incorrect. Jedidiah McMillan had turned 18 before he was first accused of rape of a child.

## Box 97: Letters to the editor

### The undiscovered Methow

Dear Editor:

No one can know the Methow Valley. There are new experiences every year. Every year there are undiscovered hikes, more bird species to find, or undiscovered back country ski trails. We have produced several world class cross-country ski racers. After 20 years, I thought I had done all of the hiking trails; I had not. Last year I found the wonderful trail on the west side of Lewis Butte. This year I found the dirt road to the Fish and Wildlife camp was open in early spring, with its marvelous views. Just this year I found a new lake in which to swim.

And the animals. A cougar killed a deer in my back yard; not everybody’s cup of tea but wonderful for me. Not seen the wolves yet, but some coyotes and some bears, lots of eagles; I love the redwing blackbirds.

If I am allotted 90 years, 80-some are gone away, but I can safely say, I enjoyed here my day.

Richard O. Zerbe  
Winthrop

### Need a solution

Dear Editor:

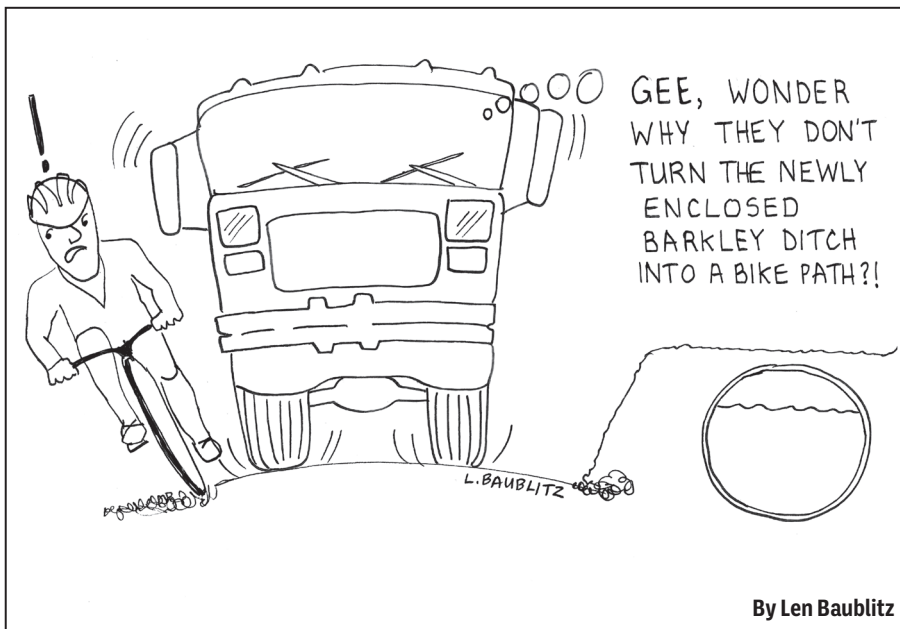
Twisp is my go-to town. I like its character and diversity. However, while the mayor and Town Council have had their attention on the more glamorous projects, such as the new civic center, the Canyon Street crossing project and new sidewalks, they have not been addressing the basic needs of its citizens. I am referring to the article in the April 21 edition of the paper, concerning the public toilet situation. First, Andrew Denham should be given an award, for taking the initiative to bring in a public toilet near the Methow Valley Community Center. I do hope it will be maintained due to the busy Farmer Market each Saturday.

The COVID virus last year caused the shutdown of many public facilities that people depended on. With us getting through a year of how to live with the virus, it is a scientific fact that it would be extremely hard to catch the virus from public toilets.

“The town currently doesn’t have the funding for anything more permanent,” yet as Denise Tompetrini states in her letter to the council that we are promoting tourism, without providing this basic service.

Winthrop has restrooms outside their Town Hall and Methow Trails in Mazama was able to provide a new heated facility with actual flush toilets and running water. And the town of Twisp has one portable toilet?

Which leads me to the question: Will our new civic center in Twisp have public toilet



By Len Baublitz

facilities? Perhaps that is part of the solution.

Pearl Cherrington  
Twisp

### Consider caregiving

Dear Editor:

Caregivers must have strength and a kind heart. Caregivers certainly are the heart of Jamie’s Place. They provide love, support and care to our residents 24 hours per day. This important work can be challenging, both physically and emotionally and unfortunately burn-out can be high in some settings. We have been fortunate to have a team of dedicated caregivers at Jamie’s Place over many years.

We are in a caregiver crisis in our own community and nationwide. Stressors imposed by COVID-19 have taken a toll during a time when our population is aging faster than we can provide support throughout the Methow Valley.

Jamie’s Place wants to highlight the importance and satisfaction of a career as a caregiver. Sadly, this noble career is underappreciated by our society. We wish to raise awareness and celebrate those who are choosing this career path.

Jamie’s Place is working with local partners to provide caregiver training through Jamie’s Place. Our goal is to train caregivers for employment at Jamie’s Place while also creating a pool of caregivers that would be available to serve our community. This program is a small part of our new focus through SASH, Senior Assessment for Support and Housing.

SASH is researching the needs of the community to assist in connecting resources to our aging population in the Valley. The focus of SASH is to determine what is needed and how our community wishes to be supported as they age.

SASH will conclude the initial phase of work in August and will be looking for feedback from our community as we navigate these challenges together. There is a sizable gap between what we have available now and what we will need in the future. We need to act quickly to determine what resources and assistance our community needs to navigate aging in the Methow. Our caregiver training program is a first step towards expanding eldercare in

the valley.

If you have a caring heart, enjoy working with the elderly, please consider the noble career of caregiving. Our team at Jamie’s Place is here to help make it happen.

Rana Clarke, executive director  
Jamie’s Place  
Winthrop

### There must be a way

Dear Editor:

We have 911, we have 511, we have 711, and 811 and 411.

Surely the tech wizards who make these work, pretty much wherever we may be, surely they can make yet another three-digit number work nationwide (call forwarding perhaps?), without forcing an entire nation to dial 10 digits for a local call that used to be just four.

Bill Karro  
Winthrop

### Leading the way

Dear Editor:

I had the fortune of being able to compete in both the Methow Trails Ski to the Sun race this past February and the Sunflower Marathon this past Saturday. As we slowly emerge from the COVID-19 pandemic, events such as these provide those of us looking for competitive outlet a small reprieve from the partially restricted lives we’re still living.

Given the enormity of safety protocols, statewide restrictions and challenges that hosting events like these present, I want to publicly thank Methow Trails for their amazing efforts. Through their innovation, web-based tracking for the ski race, and commitment to safety, Methow Trails is leading the way for other race organizers to follow. I would be remiss if I did not thank the volunteers who helped with last Saturday’s marathon, the sponsors and the private landowners who provided access for the course. In the words of MVCC, together, we are Methow Strong!

Owen Rice  
Winthrop

## HELLO?

### A billionaire’s blueprint for saving the planet

Bill Gates knows a lot. But he doesn’t know how thankful he should be for my quick reflexes.

One evening in the mid-1990s, driving to a lecture in downtown Seattle, I spotted Bill and Melinda Gates headed for the same venue, arms entwined, deep in conversation. How remarkable and wonderful, I thought, that the world’s richest man and his wife can freely wander the streets of Seattle at night, unattended, without fear of molestation.

Shortly I saw them again, standing uncertainly on a corner where I was about to turn left into a one-way street. I stopped, awaiting their decision on where to go. It did not seem imminent. So I swung into the crosswalk—just as Bill and Melinda Gates stepped directly in front of my car. My brain busied itself with the “Stand-on-brake!” command before it allowed me to reflect on the unthinkable consequences of becoming the person who mowed down the world’s richest man and his wife in a crosswalk.

I missed Bill’s hip by inches. Oblivious, they sauntered on without a glance my way.

I’ve kept a wary eye out for Bill Gates ever since.

Over time, we’ve both mellowed. Bill Gates has evolved from bratty Harvard dropout and ruthless business competitor to the world’s most generous philanthropist, concerning himself especially with health and education of people in poor countries. That, plus his latest contribution to the world’s well-being, “How to Avoid a Climate Change Disaster,” has caused me to conclude that all is forgiven.

Gates’ book brings clarity and common sense to our underfunded, uncoordinated, ad hoc efforts to deal with climate change. His 230-page primer is a folksy account of how he came to understand what it will take to keep Earth habitable. He provides what’s long been missing: an overarching, reality-based roadmap. “I’m aware that I’m an imperfect messenger on climate change,” the Microsoft co-founder

writes, conceding he’s rich enough to purchase compensation for his large carbon footprint.

Intellectually curious, he’s a self-described “big picture” guy with command of facts on the ground. What I like best about Bill Gates is that—unlike some billionaires who apparently cannot get off this planet fast enough—he’s investing his fortune saving the planet we’ve got and the poorest of those living upon it.

### Little time left

We Americans— who are most responsible for overheating the planet yet the most unwilling to repent—consciously chose to make climate change more expensive. We did this by squandering 40 years not taking it seriously enough. We have 29 years left to intervene before humans will be powerless to stem its worst manifestations. By 2050, time’s up.

So Gates’ basic message is rightly stark. Every year, the world adds 51 billion tons of greenhouse gases to the atmosphere. By 2050, that must be reduced to zero tons, he emphasizes. He does not shy away from how hard, costly and complicated— or how non-negotiable—this tardy reduction will be.

Population growth will add one New York City’s worth of construction every month for the next 40 years, he warns. (We do now see that pandemics may interfere with population growth projections.)

Gates explains why we must build a unified national power grid (see the recent crippling power outage in Texas), how we might deploy cheap hydrogen energy (see Sen. Brad Hawkins and Douglas County PUD’s hydrogen project) and why battery storage is so vexing.

When Gates’ close friend Warren Buffett—himself once the world’s richest man—asked Gates why we can’t just put electric batteries in airplanes to eliminate their emissions, Gates explained that so many batteries would be needed that the plane couldn’t lift off the ground. “Ah,” said Buffett. It’s an “ah-ha”



Solveig Torvik

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