

Opinion

NO BAD DAYS

A different space

Winthrop's new library will be different than what we're used to, and not just because it's so much larger than the repurposed little building on Highway 20 that it will replace.

From the beginning — and that was several years ago now — Friends of the Winthrop Library (FOWL) conceived of the new space as a traditional but maximally modern library that also functioned as a community gathering spot for all kinds of possibilities.

Some who have been following the library's progress, and all the ideas that have been thrown out there for its use, might observe that what's emerging is a community center that happens to have a lot of books and other stuff to check out.

Indeed, the range of uses and activities that will be possible — and encouraged — is impressive, intended for all ages and interests. Including a community meeting space that can be accessed separately when the main library is closed, and divided so that two groups can use it simultaneously, was brilliant. That kind of availability is relatively scarce in the



Don Nelson

valley.

But at its heart, the new space is fundamentally a library — a repository of information or access to it, a place for exploration, a source of inspiration, a connection point where learning, growing and meaningfully interacting with other human beings are all part of the expectations.

The new space is inviting — high-ceilinged, open, with lots of light from several directions. There's even a fireplace. It will be divided into several activity areas with comfortable seating, but without big dividers to discourage movement. Even the book stacks will be mobile, so that they can be moved to create more space on the main floor. Local artwork will be celebrated and abundant.

Some people appreciate libraries as a place to just sit and do nothing but read or work on a computer. Perfect. Others will find that this new library is also a place to do something requiring more effort and engagement. Good reason to get out of the house. A fairly modern concept for libraries is to think of them as your "third place," beyond home and work, where your interests might come first.

The new library's potential doesn't start or stop at the entry doors. The outdoor spaces and landscaping are being planned with utility in mind as well. It's conveniently located close to recreation trails, Little Star School, Jamie's Place, the Winthrop Rink, Homesteam Park and Methow Trails' new headquarters site. The library is well-situated for full integration into its surrounding community.

Transitions are coming as construction nears completion. FOWL, the remarkably ambitious nonprofit that is behind the library's concept and construction, will turn the building over to the Town of Winthrop, while NCW Libraries will operate the facilities. FOWL won't go away. The organization's leaders are now contemplating what its future role might be once the library is open and functioning. I expect they will need a break from years of nonstop planning, community surveys and fundraising, but we'll hear from them again I'm sure.

I know the Winthrop library is getting all the hoopla right now and like many others I can't wait for the grand opening — but our little library in the Methow Valley Community Center will continue to be my favorite "third place" in Twisp. Everyone there is friendly and helpful, they probably will know you and your kids and dogs by your first names, and I always feel a bit calmer just wandering around waiting for something to catch my eye. Something always does. That's the beauty of a library: everything there can yours for a while, and the experience of that book or DVD or online engagement is lasting.

It's hard to overemphasize what a bargain the new library is for Winthrop and all of the Methow Valley. All of this will cost local taxpayers and library users exactly zero dollars more than they may already be paying in property taxes as residents of the library district. I saw a comment somewhere recently about whether it would even be possible these days to advance the notion of a free public library system in this country if one did not already exist. Thank you, Benjamin Franklin, for heading off that culture war and creating such a powerful, enduring institution — one that, as the new Winthrop library demonstrates, can continue to evolve.

EXERCISE YOUR FREEDOM. Letters must be fewer than 350 words and may be edited for libel, grammar and taste.

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Front page banner photo by Steve Mitchell

Box 97: Letters to the editor

Not funny

Dear Editor:

I was shocked and saddened to see the political cartoon by Len Baublitz in last week's paper. In this day and age of increasing political hatred and violence, let's not encourage it. A raging mob attacking a dam because it is named Nancy Pelosi is not funny.

Kathy Goldberg
Twisp

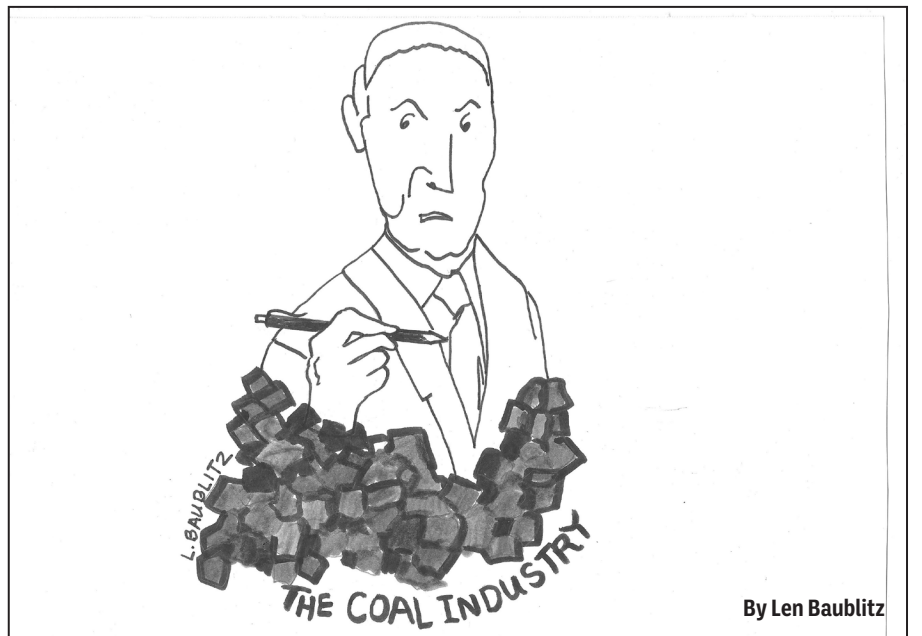
Resolve access issue

Dear Editor:

I want to add some information to Mark Miller's letter regarding the Methow Housing Trust's (MHT) proposed development (Cascade Meadows North) next to the Cascade Condominiums on State Highway 20.

First, to be clear, I live in the Cascade Condominiums. My wife and I along with many of our neighbors support the MHT's plan to provide affordable housing in this location. We definitely do not oppose MHT's plan, but do feel that there has not been enough attention to some of the details of the plan. In my mind it is clearly the Town of Winthrop's responsibility to address and resolve to everyone's satisfaction any and all issues before approving the development.

Foremost in our thinking is that there has not been sufficient attention to the impacts of traffic. The impacts due to an increase in traffic will be realized primarily at two locations: the intersection of Rabbit House Road and High-



By Len Baublitz

way 20 and along the main road through Cascade Condominiums, which is currently the only access to Cascade Condominiums and as proposed will be the only access to the Cascade Meadows North development.

From our perspective, MHT has given little or no consideration to the following:

- Currently there are 33 residences using Rabbit House Road. When Cascade Meadows North and other developments currently underway are completed, there will be approximately 108 residences using that access/egress.
- With build-out, Cascade Meadows North as proposed will have by far the highest residential density in Winthrop.
- There are no public roads in this area and none are proposed.
- The access investigation that was performed on behalf of MHT has math errors and dubious assumptions that cast doubt on its credibility.

All these issues may be resolved if the Town of Winthrop/MHT includes an additional access/egress point to Cascade Meadows North using the existing easement on the north side of the development. I understand that such construction might be challenging, but it is the right thing to do for the safety of all residents.

Harry Hall
Winthrop

Getting worse

Dear Editor:

The recent TwispWorks study is not really new news. In 1998, a local study was completed that showed similar statistics. Average family income generated in the valley: \$19,300; generated outside the valley, just over \$67,000. It's dismaying that the numbers are proportionally even worse now.

Carolanne Steinebach
Twisp

HELLO?

What's our national civic culture?

It's fair to ask why a country with as much promise as ours seems unable to capitalize on its extraordinary strengths to solve existential threats.

We don't lack means to combat pandemics, climate destabilization, social injustice or seditious attempts to overthrow government.

We lack the will.

How did we come to set this table?

Let's unspool the thread of history.

Frankly, it's an abiding wonder any nation that got off to as poor a start as ours has lasted as long as it has. God, greed and genocide were unlikely bedfellows in a nation founded on freedom — for the select few.

The secret of our survival isn't simply armaments. It's been our willingness to self-correct. That's the promising news.

Less promising is what prevents achieving our potential as a nation: we aren't quite one. Practically speaking, we're 50 nations.

Yes, we have an overarching architecture of national defense, the Constitution and federal laws. But we don't share an overarching vision of what this country is, was or should be. We lack a national civic culture.

We cannot even agree on such baseline matters as what legal rights come with American citizenship. In 19 states, voters must overcome hurdles not imposed on citizens living in other states to cast their ballots. In 21 states, authorities legally can kill citizens. And so on.

We're unique

The hodgepodge of powers held by our 50 states are unique among nations. We're more of a grudging confederacy of states than a people united behind national goals or common vision. Many seem to entirely have missed the memo about nationhood.

This crippling structural weakness was baked into American governance by ill-advised design. It's a consequence of colonists' fervid fear of being subsumed back into what they

came here to escape: tyranny.

Under the stress of cobbling together a reluctant union, the Founders left powers to the states that I suspect they might now regret. Yet, despite manifest evidence of the failures that inherently follow, many Americans strive to give even more power to the states.

The Trump administration's refusal to take responsibility for managing a national public health emergency that threatened national security — instead foisting it off on ill-prepared states — is a deadly example of what happens to countries with weak national governance.

The Founders' biggest error was letting states decide how the nation's citizens would be educated. They never expected women, unpropertied white males or Black people to be allowed to vote, so it's understandable how they missed this one.

Role of education

But if we're to produce informed citizens fit for self-rule, rigorous education is essential. Poorly educated citizens weaken nations economically and politically. Nearly every nation on Earth understands this. Except ours.

American children have never had equal access to education. Had responsibility for providing educational standards and funding been left chiefly to the federal government, equality in expenditures for every child would have been required.

It also would have prevented any single state from being, as Texas in effect has been, the deciders of how American history or science, say, will be printed in textbooks and taught in public schools.

And I daresay the economic disparities and divisive political circumstances this country now finds itself mired in would look very different.

But why do we lack a national civic culture? Hello?

In 1989 historian David Hackett Fischer dissected the origins of our country's wildly clashing values. Sensibly, he examined what was going on where the people who first introduced these values arrived from.

In "Albion's Seed: Four British Folkways in America," Fischer unpacks the mismatched cultural baggage dropped on these shores

by the first four waves of immigrants from England: the Puritans of Massachusetts, the nobility of Virginia, the pacifist Quakers of Delaware/Pennsylvania and the fighting Scots/Irish Borderlands people who settled Appalachia. (Albion is an archaic term for England.)

Having experienced England very differently, they saw the world through radically divergent prisms.

Religiously persecuted, Puritans — who believed children were born evil — built a society valuing education and equality, even as they insisted Christ died to save only some, not all, people. Still, they founded Harvard.

Virginia was led by lesser members of the English nobility. They weren't keen on equality. Their sense of entitlement made slavery palatable, to the horror of Puritans.

Free labor proved profitable. The biggest, wealthiest colony, Virginia would produce more presidents than any state, including four of the first five: slaveholders Washington, Jefferson, Madison and Monroe.

'Seeded' culture

Quakers arrived with King Charles II's blessings. He paid a debt owed William Penn's family by giving Penn lands that weren't the king's to give. Yet Quakers proved a moderating, respected influence. They preached and practiced forbearance for the beliefs of one's neighbors. This was new.

Borderlands people were not respected. Cruelly dispossessed of their former homes, destitute, angry, uneducated and ill-used, they were a rough lot. Proud and independent-minded, they, unlike the Quakers, relished a fight.

While Puritans gifted us respect for equality and education, Virginians normalized inequality and slavery, producing slaveholding presidents whose election to highest office cloaked slavery in respectability.

Quakers taught that democracy requires forbearance, while Borderlands people seeded a culture of fierce disdain of government.

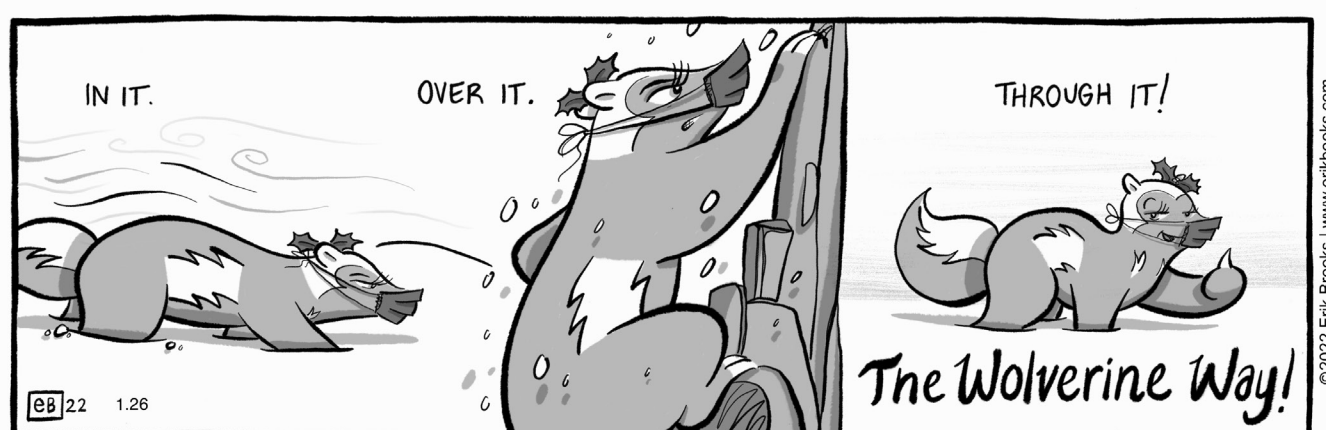
Our values didn't evolve normally, in situ over historic time. They were suddenly seeded, into the soil of a supposedly empty landscape, from troubled foreign precincts.

Centuries on, we're still sorting how to weed and feed this unruly transplanted garden.

Solveig Torvik lives near Winthrop.

Harts Pass

By Erik Brooks



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Opinion

NO BAD DAYS

Things to celebrate

On the good news front — and contrary to some perceptions, we really like good news — there’s a lot to appreciate as we advance farther into 2022.

Our trio of Liberty Bell High School wrestlers certainly acquitted themselves well at last weekend’s Mat Classic in Tacoma, as Noah Holston extended his family’s legacy with another state championship, just as two of his brothers previously did. Another podium spot went to Cody White, who took home a third-place trophy. And Cassidy Jones-Mowen became the first Liberty Bell wrestler to represent the school in the girls’ competition.



Don Nelson

Each had an impressive season before advancing to the state finals, and that can’t be easy with just three wrestlers hoping to honing their skills in practice week after week. Congratulations to the Mountain Lion contingent for making the valley proud.

It has been fun following the exploits of Mazama native Novie McCabe (the larger media outlets refer to her as being from Winthrop, but we know better) at the Beijing Winter Olympic Games, where she exceeded expectations. Novie made the team anticipating that she would compete in one race, but ended up skiing in three, and drawing attention in each of them for her strong performances.

Methow Valley fans who have been following Novie since she was upright on skis have always suspected that the Olympics were in her future, following in the tracks of her mother Laura. But we probably didn’t expect it would be this soon.

Novie’s maturity and continued improvement mark her as someone to keep an eye on for years to come. At age 20, she likely has many more kilometers of World Cup and Olympics competition ahead of her, as she and other U.S. skiers have put the European Nordics on notice that they are not content with back-of-the-pack finishes. The valley’s consecutive streak of being represented in the winter games has a good chance of continuing.

Keeping with all things winter, Carlton’s Christina Gibson of Whiteout Racing Kennel took first place in the 100-mile event at the Race to the Sky sled dog racing competition in Montana in mid-February. She finished ahead of 13 other mushers. Christina has been on a trajectory to take the top spot for the past several years: she won the 100-mile Junior Race to the Sky four years ago, came in fifth at the 2020 Idaho Challenge 100-mile race and fourth in the 2020 Race to the Sky.

Another athletic accomplishment worth noting: Senior Jady Mitchell finished her Liberty Bell basketball career averaging a double-double (at least 10 points and 10 rebounds in every game) and making the CWB all league team for the fourth consecutive year. That’s consistency.

It was also good news that Winthrop attorney Robert Grim has been named at Okanogan County’s next Superior Court judge, replacing the retiring Chris Culp. Grim has strong ties to the Methow Valley, and has served as a District Court judge before applying for the Superior Court vacancy. He brings experience, insight and local context to the job.

You’ll also read this week that the Winthrop Rhythm & Blues Festival will be making real noise again this year with its live return to the Blues Ranch just west of Winthrop in July. The site served as a fire camp much of last summer, but it will be good to see the performers and their fans back on the festival grounds. And we can only hope that a fire camp of that (or any) size won’t be necessary in any part of the valley.

Finally, another venerable musical tradition, the Methow Valley Chamber Music Festival, also returns after two years of absence with six live concerts at the Twisp Terrace Lodge in June.

It’s shaping up as a promising summer.

Departing note

We are saying goodbye — but not forever — this week to our colleague Natalie Johnson, who has been the Methow Valley News’ managing editor for the past year and a bit more. Natalie is moving on to a job with the state Department of Natural Resources (DNR) in that agency’s Olympia office. Her new job as a communications liaison will involve DNR programs in eastern Washington, so we expect to continue being in contact with her.

Natalie has brought energy, creativity and passion to her role as managing editor, and her knowledge of the area as an Okanogan County native has been a bonus. Her experience and capabilities as a journalist showed every week, and helped make us a better community newspaper. Hers will be tough shoes (or boots, depending on the weather) to fill. We will miss her and her friendly canine cohort Teddy, but wish her the best.

Box 97: Letters to the editor

Mazama hydrant help

Dear Editor:

Last summer’s fires (Cedar Creek and Cub Creek 2) started in the north. But even down where I live south of Twisp, we knew how easily and quickly they could spread to the rest of the valley. So when the Valley Life Mazama column (Jan. 19) talked of a project in Mazama to improve firefighting response time, it wasn’t just a Mazama story. It’s important to all of us.

Stopping a fire takes water, often a lot of it. If the fire is in Mazama, it can take 45 minutes or more to refill a bigger fire truck from the current main source in Winthrop. For years, firefighters have dreamed of turning an old well near Mazama into the high volume source they need to cut that time in half or even less. Now they need the funds for the pump and electrical to get that water from the well quickly into their trucks.

Firefighters have donated their own money and gotten important contributions from others. They still need more. They have mostly focused fundraising efforts on the people who live closest to Mazama. But I think anyone who lives in or owns property in the Methow Valley should recognize the importance of contributing so the big hydrant project can be ready for this summer.

If you want to contribute or just get more information, please contact Alan Fahnestock, a volunteer Mazama firefighter and volunteer project manager for the hydrant, at fahnestock-alan@gmail.com. Donations to Okanogan County Fire District 6 are tax-deductible and can also come from your IRA if you’re making a Required Minimum Distribution. Of course,



By Len Baublitz

you may want to check with your own tax preparer to be sure it applies to you.

Randy Brook
Twisp

Support Tim’s Act

Dear Editor:

I am a wildland firefighter on the Okanogan-Wenatchee National Forests writing for public support for Tim’s Act. Wildland firefighters are exposed to risks and hazards that reduce our quality of life and shorten our life span.

Our starting wages at \$15 hourly require us to earn 900-plus hours of overtime each summer to afford basic needs in the off season. If we’re lucky, we work 16-hour days for 14 days straight, take two paid days off, and do it all over again until fire season ends. Local ranger districts work their firefighters 13 days straight, then grant one unpaid “day off” on unpaid on-call status.

Unsurprisingly, many wildland firefighters are leaving this field. There are many positions remaining unfilled and even engines that will remain unstaffed this fire season.

Many of the promises made by the infrastructure bill (specifically increased pay) will not be fulfilled. The Tim Hart Wildland Fire-

fighter Classification and Pay Parity Act (Tim’s Act) H.R. 5631 will secure funding for a sustainable work force. Tim’s Act, named after smokejumper Tim Hart who died in the line of duty last summer, will fill the gaps that the infrastructure bill hasn’t.

Wildland firefighters need your support to bring Tim’s Act to the attention of your elected representatives. Please write your elected representatives in support of providing living wages for the hard-working people who protect your homes and natural resources. Sens. Patty Murray, Maria Cantwell, and your congressperson need to hear from you about Tim’s Act.

Rachel Granberg
Wenatchee

Outstanding work

Dear Editor:

I want to echo the letter sent in by the Willets about the quality of the Methow Valley News. I too look forward to it every week. The reporting on Valley Life is truly outstanding.

Keep up the great work!

Barry Leahy
Chelan

HELLO?

We’re emerging from our second winter of COVID cocoonery with our collective happiness riding on what We the People do next.

Do we fold and fade under the stress of multiple, unprecedented system failures? Or — COVID-hardened and resilient — do we repair our failing civic, energy and climate systems?

A lot of mischief slipped by during this pandemic.

The most important factor hindering economic success for American adults is a childhood spent in poverty. Everyone understands this. Except Congress.

Backstory: In just one pandemic year, America’s 745 billionaires increased their collective wealth by 70%, adding \$2.1 trillion to their bank accounts.

Thirteen of them shared this wealth with Democratic U.S. Senators Joe Manchin, a coal broker from West Virginia, and Krysten Sinema of Arizona, who opposed President Joe Biden’s efforts to address existential threats to the nation. Manchin joined 50 Republican senators to kill Biden’s short-lived program that, with annual grants up to \$3,600 per child, had reduced child poverty by one-third. Too expensive an investment in the nation’s future, they said, at \$1 billion per year. We can’t afford it.

It’s an existential threat to the rich.

Hello?

Former U.S. Labor Secretary Robert Reich put that one to rest: this \$1 billion is markedly less than the \$2.1 trillion, one-year increase in wealth for those 745 billionaires. And it’s less than corporations and the wealthy are saving in taxes, thanks to Donald Trump’s tax cut.

The program lifting poor kids out of poverty “died because, simply, the oligarchy didn’t want to pay for it,” said Reich, a University of California Berkeley public policy professor who authored “Saving Capitalism: For the Many, Not the Few.”

“Oligarchic economics coupled with racist nationalism marks the ultimate failure of



Solveig Torvik

progressive politics,” Reich warned. “Beware. When the people are no longer defended against the powerful, they look elsewhere.”

That link between inequality and distrust of government will resonate in this fall’s elections. As will racist nationalism.

Betrayal of the working class seems a baked-in interest of many oligarchs. Yet we’re seeing an improbable alignment of working class white supremacists’ interests dovetailing with the oligarchy’s: barring certain citizens from voting.

And we have the “freedom” folk, who claim they’re entitled to choose which laws to obey. Their anarchist impulses, ever-present in American history, were stoked by Trump.

Showing up

It’s gotten to be a heavier lift to prevent oligarchs and racists from calling the shots in this country. But it’s not impossible — if the rest of us show up.

If we’re to survive as a democratic nation, though, we cannot just focus on fixing civic systems. We must intervene in the unruly climate system.

“Climate change is a market failure,” New York Times columnist Ezra Klein correctly observed. It’s a failure of the unfettered, socially irresponsible capitalism that we so foolishly allow those with the most capital to practice.

Here’s where our national interests really lie: The 22-year-old megadrought ravaging the Western states with wildfires is the most severe in 1,200 years; scientists attribute 42% of its origins to human activity. All seven of the hottest years recorded on Earth happened in the last seven years.

By 1988, the average global temperature had risen to 1.1 degrees F. above what it was before the Industrial Revolution. Thirty-three years later it had risen to 2.2 degrees F. If our present failure to intervene continues, 78 years from now it will have risen to nearly 5 degrees F. above the pre-industrial average.

Fossil fuel industries know all this. So what is their response?

The American Legislative Exchange Council (ALEC) is in the business of drafting corporate-friendly laws that ALEC urges state

legislators to pass. Now ALEC’s peddling the Energy Discrimination Elimination Act; so far, four fossil fuel friendly states are in.

As a condition of doing business with a state, this legislation requires financial institutions to agree not to boycott petroleum companies by refusing to loan them money for new drilling, or by dumping carbon industry-based investments from their portfolios.

“Decarbonization” of Wall Street investment portfolios is a powerful tool deployed to stem climate change; it puts huge investment sums in play.

It’s meant to spur quicker changeover of fossil fuel investments to climate-friendly energy. The world’s largest financial asset manager, BlackRock, which manages the \$20 billion Texas state pension fund, is a chief target of ALEC’S legislation because BlackRock supported dis-investments in fossil fuels.

The intent of getting states to outlaw financial boycotts of petroleum corporations by firms that want to do business with them is to enlist states on the side of the fossil fuel industry to “fight back against woke capitalism,” according to a memo circulated at an ALEC meeting.

Cheeky. Meanwhile, Trump’s malevolent legacy looms over Biden’s effort to prohibit new drilling and to regulate greenhouse gas emissions. For example:

Last year’s climate change damages cost an estimated \$145 billion. A government “social cost of carbon” analysis determines how much money the damages from climate change cost society. That cost helps decide the stringency of federal regulations that are imposed on carbon-producing industries.

Damages were set at a social cost of \$51 per ton of emissions when the Trump administration lowered it to \$7 per ton, effectively rendering the regulation toothless. Biden re-instated it to \$51.

But two Trump-appointed Louisiana district court judges, Terry Doughty and James Cain, ruled against Biden.

People, we have to do better than this.

Solveig Torvik lives near Winthrop.

By Erik Brooks

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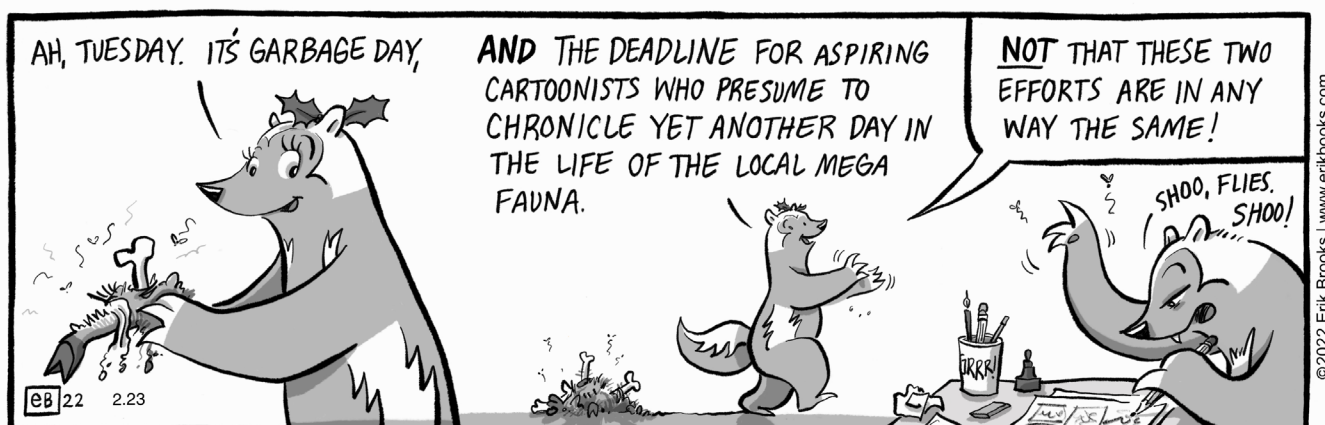
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Harts Pass



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Opinion

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Where's Don?

I never meant to make this a habit. Yet here I am — four years after surgeries and recoveries kept me at Central Washington Hospital in Wenatchee for a month — coming up on three weeks of inpatient care for a completely different reason. As I write from my bed in the Intensive Care Unit, plans are being made to transfer me to Seattle for my next level of treatment.



Don Nelson

Let me make it clear that I do not have COVID or anything like it. I am vaccinated, repeatedly tested negative and am up for the booster shot. My “vitals” are all strong, my respiratory system is fine. That is a good thing, because the preventable disease I took the reasonable precautions against would have dangerously complicated the non-preventable disorder I am dealing with.

I have been diagnosed with an autoimmune condition that is rare enough that most people have never heard of it, but common enough that neurologists can recognize and treat it. Causes can include stress, but it's not something you contract. Symptoms can develop over several years (mine did). Treatment can take several months (mine will). The condition cannot be cured but can be managed into remission or control. It is generally not progressive and doesn't affect life expectancy for most people.

Symptoms can include drooping eyelids; blurred or double vision; impaired speech; trouble swallowing; and weakness in the arms, hands and fingers. I have all of these. My ability to speak is impaired and at times I cannot make myself understood, like Elmer Fudd on downers. Blurred vision makes it hard to read anything; the pile of books I brought along sits untouched. Motor skill losses in both hands make it challenging to write.

Most problematic, I cannot voluntarily swallow anything most of the time. I am getting all my nutrition, hydration and medication through a feeding tube in my stomach (an improvement over the nose tube I started with); or by IVs. Although I've shed some pounds, I cannot recommend it as a weight-loss plan.

I am getting excellent and effective care at Central, just as I did four years ago, and am making steady progress. The doctors, nurses and staff have all been attentive, concerned and consistently professional — while they are dealing with unimaginable stress, burnout and insane hostility from some people whose lives they have sworn to protect.

I could not be more grateful and appreciative, and I tell the dedicated Central care providers that constantly. I don't think they are hearing enough supportive feedback these days, and they deserve it.

By the time many of you read this, it's likely I will have been transferred to a Seattle hospital for another course of treatment that Central doesn't provide. The doctors here have been in direct contact with doctors in Seattle to find me a space. And like too many people in this country, I have an urgent care need that is waiting in line behind people being treated for a disease that they could have prevented.

I could write more about that, but Solveig Torvik covers the issue pretty well in her column this week. I would echo her sentiments, but probably with more anger and profanity than would be appropriate for a family newspaper. I'm not angry about my condition. I could lament what you might call a “why me?” disease, but what good would that do? I'm angry that people like me have been put at greater risk by people who won't get vaccinated.

What's next? I'm likely to be mostly in Seattle for a while, under the impossibly patient home care of my partner Jacqui, before I make a full-time return to the Methow. While there is a limited amount of work I can (and must, for my sanity) do remotely, it will fall to my amazing crew of staff and freelancers to keep the paper going. They are already stepping up with energy and attitude to continue producing the print and online information this community deserves. I am proud and thankful. Our otherworldly competent Managing Editor Natalie Johnson will act as editor in my absence; please direct information and questions to her. It's going to be a challenge as we have a lot to do, so your help is important.

Thank you, as always, for the support you provide to this community-driven newspaper. Its worth is beyond expression. I could not have been sustained these past 10 years without it, and can't wait to return. I will try to respond to emails as I can, but it may take a while as I am rationing my efforts, and overdoing it will slow my recovery. My closing thought, from my bed in the ICU where some days I am the only non-COVID patient, is this: Please get the shots.

CORRECTION: A U.S. Forest Service employee who was the heavy-equipment boss on this summer's fires clarified a correction to a story in the Sept. 1 issue about cutting trees to combat the wildfires. There were 300 to 400 truckloads, with 20 to 30 logs per truck, not whole trees per truck. Most trees were cut into at least two pieces, he said.

The Methow Valley News is seeking a complete accounting from the U.S. Forest Service of the logging carried out during fire suppression, including trees cut and left in the forest and those brought to landings for commercial sale.

Box 97: Letters to the editor

Do it for the community

Dear Editor:

I would like to take a moment to acknowledge and thank the staff at Aero Methow Rescue Service — two staff members in particular, Justin Porter and Jenn Schumacher. This past week they helped me navigate a possible COVID exposure for my family. With so much information swirling around, it was so helpful to have their scientifically backed advice and guidance. They helped me understand my testing options, and provided me with a flow chart regarding the different scenarios for my school-aged children, one who is vaccinated, and two younger who are not.

On that note, please consider vaccinating yourself and your children if you haven't already. This community will thank you for it. If you choose not to get vaccinated, then please follow the proper guidelines of masking, testing and quarantining if needed. Do it for our kids, for our seniors, and even our working parents.

I know the August 2021 return to school was way more exciting for me than March 2020 shutdown. I believe that to be one thing this community can all agree on.

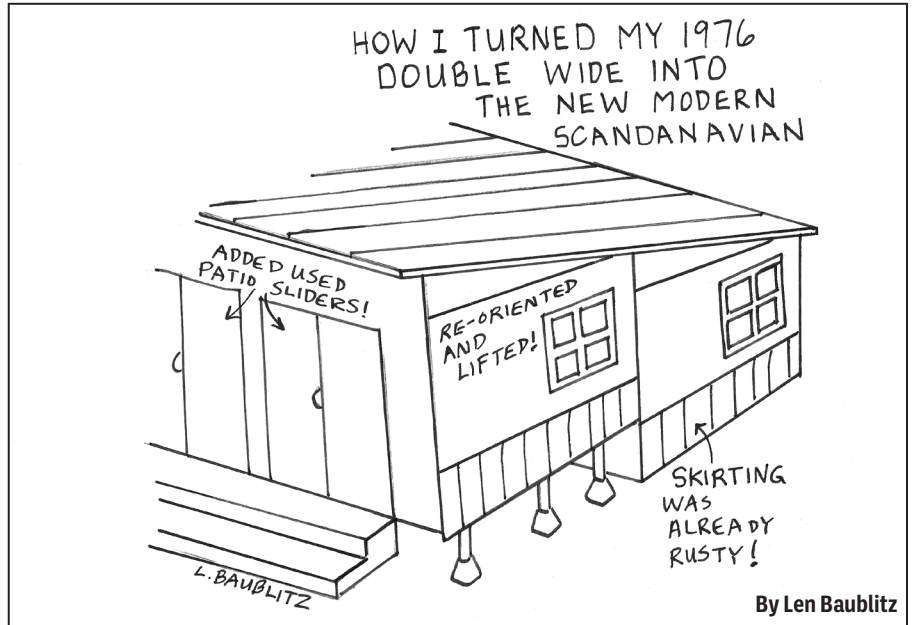
Patti Somerville
Winthrop

Coming Home Celebration, COVID style (again)

Dear Editor:

Although we have canceled the public gathering for this year's Coming Home celebration at Homestead Park, we hope everyone has an opportunity to visit the park this fall to take in the changing season and marvel at the resilience of our returning salmon. If you haven't ever done so, a must-see is the view from the Winthrop pedestrian bridge looking down at the spawning activity that usually starts in the first couple of weeks of October. Born in the Methow waters years ago, these salmon have traveled thousands of miles, navigating nine dams to and from the Pacific Ocean, venturing far out into the sea until called to return “home” to spawn a new generation. It's remarkable!

This notion of “coming home” has even greater significance this year as the Methow Conservancy is nearing completion on a land transaction that will return over 300 acres and 1.6 miles of Chewuch River front to the Confederated Tribes of the Colville Reservation in honor of the Methow people who have called the valley home for thousands of years. Their bond to the water, the salmon, and the land can be an inspiration to the collective efforts underway to rebalance our relation-



By Len Baublitz

ship with nature and its threatened bounty.

Though we won't be gathering in person out of respect for the health of our fellow community members, we still celebrate the renewal of the season, marked by the returning salmon.

Cathy and Phil Davis
Winthrop

Biggest loser

Dear Editor:

I've just been watching a PBS documentary series on the great American boxer, Muhammad Ali. I've also been reading about all the baseless Trump lawsuits still being filed, even in our own state, and that Trump is still whining about election fraud. So I was particularly struck by Ali's dignified statement after he lost a world championship fight to Joe Frazier in 1971 (as quoted from the documentary):

“We all have various defeats. A celebrity or so-called great person have obligation to fulfill to take defeat like a man so they can take their defeats when they have them because we all will have various defeats in life. ... And when a man can come through this after so many years of victory and been so supreme in his field and able to handle his defeat also victorious, then this makes him a bigger man.”

Al Gore beat George W. Bush by over 500,000 votes. Had the Supreme Court not stopped the vote recount in Florida, Gore would have won the Electoral College and the presidency as well. After that decision was announced, Gore conceded:

“I accept the finality of the outcome ... And tonight, for the sake of our unity as a people and the strength of our democracy, I offer my concession.”

Hillary Clinton beat Trump by nearly 3 million votes. When our skewed Electoral College count denied the popular vote and made Trump the winner, Clinton called Trump the next day to congratulate him.

Joe Biden beat Trump by over 7 million votes. Yet Trump refused to congratulate Biden or even admit defeat. He's a sore loser, still cry-

HELLO?

A wretched triumph of American ‘exceptionalism’

“Folks are supposed to have common sense. But it's time to start blaming the unvaccinated folks ... It's the unvaccinated folks that are letting us down.” — Alabama Republican Gov. Kay Ivey, July 23.

Hey, vaccine refusers. Listen up.

People are losing patience with your lame excuses for failing to get vaccinated against COVID-19. This virus has killed one in every 500 of us; nearly 680,000 Americans have died. Yet only 55% of our total population, and 66% of those over age 18, are fully vaccinated.

Enough is enough.

Unvaccinated, you're an exorbitantly expensive liability to society.

You're a potential killer, a walking woodpile, a welcoming petri dish. You're exactly what the virus needs to not only spread itself but also mutate into a perhaps even more deadly version.

Your failure to vaccinate abetted the super-contagious delta variant now detected in 99% of U.S. cases and sending us, once again, into crisis mode. Perversely, national vaccination rates recently dropped.

Understand this: With COVID-19, you're either the problem or the solution. The anger coming your way is caused by the unnecessary deaths of people you're blindly killing, the exhausted health care workers you're traumatizing, the medical system you're bringing to its knees, the non-COVID patients you're depriving of urgent medical care, the children whose education you're hampering, the local businesses you're destroying, the national economy you're undermining and the national security you're weakening.

All this, you're proclaiming, is what others must endure in the service of your blinkered notion of “individual freedom.” You insist it always trumps the common good. But in a civilized society, that's never been a survivable strategy.

With 42.6 million COVID-19 cases in a nation of 330 million, we've won a dreadful global seesaw. Runner-up India, with 1.3 billion inhabitants, has “only” 33.6 million cases and 446,000 deaths.

American ‘triumph’

It's a wretchedly ironic triumph of our prized American “exceptionalism.” We're the scientific superpower that produced safe, free, remarkably effective vaccines. Yet we're the nation, in sheer numbers, opting for the most COVID deaths.

The vaccines have made the virus far more selective about who it kills. While you dawdle and dissent, it's rewarding responsible behavior and punishing irresponsible behavior. Nearly all of those dying are people like you. Hospitals report that roughly 95% of COVID-19 deaths are among the unvaccinated.

When there wasn't a vaccine, private insurers paid 100% of treatment. Now patients are charged co-pays and deductibles. COVID-19 hospitalization costs up to \$156,000 for patients on ventilators or in intensive care. People on Medicare without supplemental insurance may face medical bills. Insurers do pay for vaccinations and testing. People without insurance are vaccinated for free.

Washington recorded 7,487 COVID-19 deaths by Sept. 24. The state is 69.7% fully vaccinated. Okanogan County, 52.6% fully vaccinated, reports 53 deaths. With more than 500 new cases over the past two weeks, county infection rates are higher than ever.

Vaccine mandates raise hackles. Your failure to vaccinate is why we have them.

The unvaccinated and unmasked increasingly, and rightly, are denied access to commercial services and public venues — and they're losing jobs. When Gov. Jay Inslee issued a vaccine mandate as a condition of employment for state workers, 7% of them demurred.

Yet there's long-settled legal precedent that allows government to require vaccinations. General George Washington, hardly in the business of depriving Americans of freedom, ordered smallpox vaccination of troops. But at least 26 states recently passed laws weakening government authority to protect public health.

It's a perplexing tactic, this Republican anti-vaccine mandate, anti-masking stuff.

ing fraud. To paraphrase Mohammad Ali, that makes Trump a very small man indeed.

Randy Brook
Twisp

Great reunion

Dear Editor:

On Sept. 19, the Class of '71 met in Twisp for their 50th high school class reunion. In attendance were: Curt Bovee, Winthrop; Elaine Evans Meis, Vancouver; Maggie Grim, Selah; Jim Doran, Bellingham; Linda Hutson Diseth, Wenatchee; Verlene Lorenzen Hughes, Omak; Mike Mauk, Brewster; Rob Risley, Twisp; John Shaw, Monroe; Gary Shemorry, Peshastin. Class of 1970 emissaries were Chuck Hopkins, Kennewick; Jerry Merrier, Ellensburg; Steve Michelson, Olympia; Melinda Bourn, Winthrop; and Darralyn Johnson Darwin, Twisp and Hayden, Idaho.

Jere Seguin, from the Class of '72, hosted the group at his site along the Twisp River. It was a pleasant day as summer began to fade. Not too cold and not too hot.

Two realizations came from the gathering. One, it was very good to see that reliable, stable and enjoyable people from so long ago had held on to their souls. There is a lot of strangeness and strangers in the world today. It is reassuring to see that goodness is still goodness. Two, it was agreed upon, by a consensus so it must be true, that the classes of 1970 and 1971 were the best high school classes that Twisp High School had ever seen.

It was also determined that at age 68, or thereabouts, we are not yet geezers. Young at heart and glad to still be here. It has been a long interesting ride, that's for sure.

There are plans to hold a 55-year reunion in 2026 because the concerns over COVID kept a number of classmates away. There will be reminders sent out and the place to be determined.

Go, Yellow Jackets.

Jim Doran
Twisp Class of '71

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