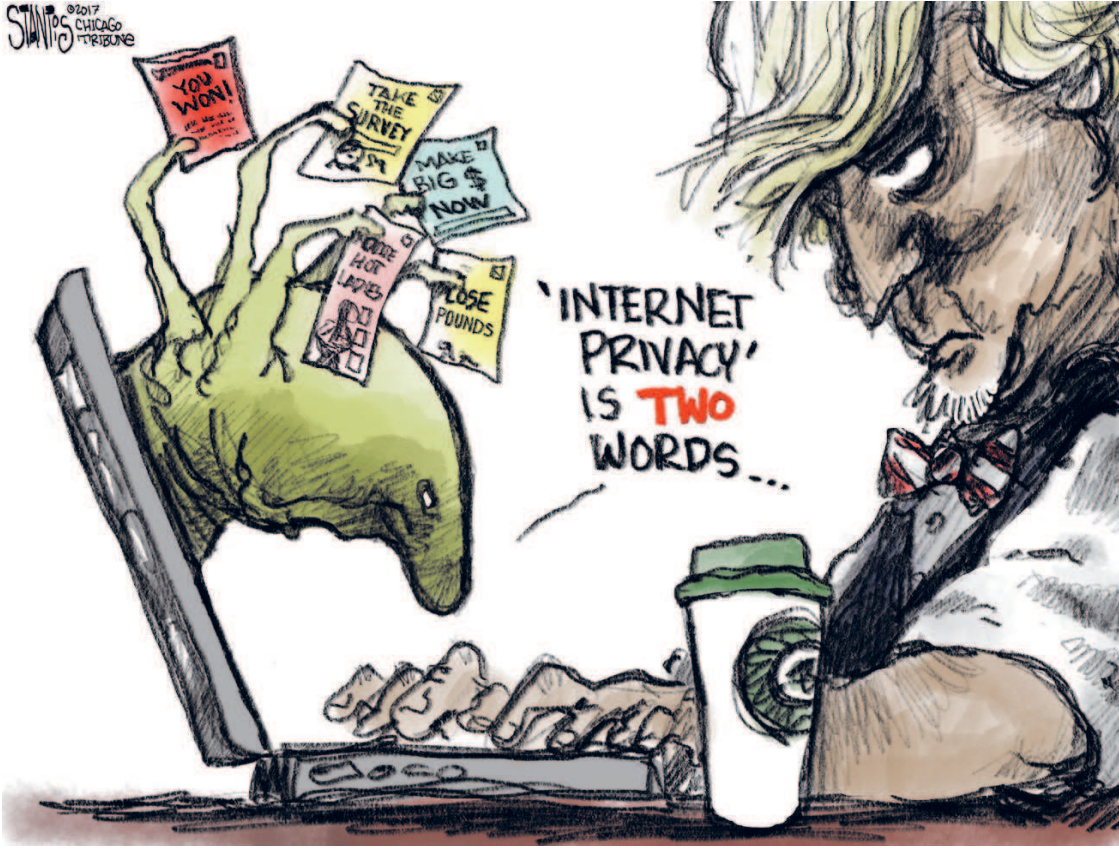


O P I N I O N



Letters to the Editor...

The Nugget welcomes contributions from its readers, which must include the writer's name, address and phone number. Letters to the Editor is an open forum for the community and contains unsolicited opinions not necessarily shared by the Editor. The Nugget reserves the right to edit, omit, respond or ask for a response to letters submitted to the Editor. Letters should be no longer than 300 words. Unpublished items are not acknowledged or returned. The deadline for all letters is noon Monday.

To the Editor:

Perhaps all of us who live in and love this community could pause for a few moments and consider leaving national politics to the national press. Isn't it a lot nicer to read letters and stories about what is going on in the community when we read this wonderful local paper?

TV and larger papers are filled with the national debate, why bring it here? I'm sure we are missing hearing about local good deeds and positive happenings because people are instead focused on national politics. When is the last time you changed anyone's mind about a political position?

When I was a kid, which was soon after a terrible World War II, people kept politics out of conversations because they didn't want to hurt feelings and make others mad. Wouldn't it be nice to bring that back to our beautiful

town?

Jean Nave



To the Editor:

I want to thank Skydive Awesome for having the courage to start a business in our small community. It takes guts to believe there are enough adventurous people here to keep something as thrilling as a skydiving operation afloat. It saddens me that some members of the community continue to be hostile toward this venture and its owners. I thought surely the visceral letters of last summer would wane and people would be kind again. Yet here we are: a new year, a new season, and the same old angry letters. So, the time is ripe for someone to say something nice.

See **LETTERS** on page 19

Sisters Weather Forecast

Courtesy of the National Weather Service, Pendleton, Oregon

Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday	Monday
Mostly Cloudy 60/38	Chance Showers 55/39	Showers Likely 55/36	Chance Showers 48/29	Chance Snow 49/30	Chance Showers 49/na

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Robert C. Koehler

“The wooden carts that residents use to carry vegetables and other wares in the once-busy market area instead ferried out cadavers recovered from the rubble last week.”

And so . . . another “precision” bomb strike in America’s war against terror. This was the scene in Mosul earlier this month, as reported by the *Washington Post*. Possibly more than 200 civilians died, buried in the rubble of several buildings, which had been jammed with terrified residents of Iraq’s second-largest city who were seeking shelter from the war.

Words fail me. So I borrow some from Air Force Brigadier Gen. Matthew Isler, who told *U.S. News and World Report* in the wake of the Mosul strike: “The density of the local fighting for those ground forces has changed. What has not changed is our support, our diligence in making sure we are taking the appropriate levels to make sure we are avoiding any harm to innocent civilians.”

The article, which addresses the controversy that President Trump has “relaxed” the rules of engagement in the war against ISIS, causing an increase in civilian casualties, goes on to note: “Isler specifically said the risk calculus — the number of civilian casualties acceptable to war planners, at times including the president, when considering missions — has not changed.”

Of course, there’s nothing surprising here. This is how war works, especially today, when battlefields are coterminous with civilian living and working space. Innocent people are unavoidably taken out along with the “enemy.” This is the collateral damage that comes with every decision to wage war.

But still, how is it possible for human life to be measured and weighed in the same moral framework as abstract strategic calculation? This is the question that pulses like a heartbeat in

these cold words — almost as though the soul of war itself lays suddenly exposed. Take away the bland terminology of public-relations-speak and the general is saying something on the order of: Killing a high-ranking ISIS guy is worth the lives of no more than two children, max, and if we take out more it’s not our fault. The terrorists are using civilians as human shields. Or whatever.

“Meanwhile,” as Barbara Ehrenreich writes in her excellent book, *Blood Rites*, “war has dug itself into economic systems, where it offers a livelihood to millions, rather than to just a handful of craftsmen and professional soldiers. It has lodged in our souls as a kind of religion, a quick tonic for political malaise and a bracing antidote to the moral torpor of consumerist, market-driven cultures.”

But there’s more to it than this. The morality of war is indeed a serious matter, embedded as war may be into our economic and political systems. Viet Cong body counts, for instance, were an enduring part of the Vietnam War — an indication of our prowess and success — until the war utterly unraveled in defeat and two-plus decades of “Vietnam Syndrome”: the public’s disgust with the war machine. The war profiteers, military industrialists and neocons eventually succeeded in rebuilding a national war mentality, but it required eliminating the draft so that most Americans were not personally affected by it; and all the blood and gore were removed from the PR of war.

What I’m trying to say is that the public truly lacks the will to wage war and has already begun abandoning it as a religion. Disengaging from it economically is more complicated and probably cannot begin until the media begin reporting on war with raw honesty, from the point of view of its victims, not its planners.

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