

O P I N I O N

Editorial...

Restoring the Hatfield legacy

The Mark O. Hatfield Courthouse in downtown Portland, which has become the epicenter of more than two months of protests and clashes between rioters and federal law enforcement bears the name of one of the truly great Oregonians.

Mark Hatfield was not a mere politician — he was a genuine public servant; a statesman, in fact. A state representative, state senator, governor and U.S. Senator, Hatfield served Oregon and America for almost a half a century, and was, with notable (and honorably-earned) exceptions, loved, trusted and respected by Democrats and Republicans alike.

Hatfield was a Republican, but of a stripe that, sadly, no longer has a place in the GOP. He'd be known today as a RINO (Republican In Name Only). He was pro-business (particularly small business) and favored limited and fiscally responsible government and the sacred rights of all individuals. But he understood that government has an important role in civil society, and that political divides can and must be bridged in order to do the people's work; that politics and policy are about good governance, not ideological and cultural warfare.

Gerry Frank, who knew Hatfield for decades, wrote a guest column in last Sunday's *Oregonian* contemplating what his friend would think about the current state of affairs in Portland, the state of Oregon, and the United States (<https://www.oregonlive.com/opinion/2020/08/opinion-what-would-mark-hatfield-think.html>). It's worth taking the time to read.

There's a certain symbolic poignancy to seeing the landmark federal building named after this towering figure in its current state.

"Mark would ... have defended the absolute right of citizens to peacefully protest," Frank wrote. "Mark was one of the earliest and most prominent opponents of America's military involvement in Vietnam. He earned his spot on President Nixon's 'enemies list' through his sponsorship of the McGovern-Hatfield amendment, which called for a complete withdrawal of U.S. troops from Vietnam. Mark was heartened by peaceful anti-war protests on the nation's college campuses and traveled to many of them to lend his prestige and support.

"Republicans and Democrats alike agreed that decency, civility and bipartisanship were the hallmarks of Mark's years in public service. He was, first and foremost, a statesman. For that reason, he would grieve over the lack of those qualities coming from the White House, Congress, social media and the streets of Portland, where some have used the protests as an excuse for vandalism and violence. A strong supporter of Oregon's small businesses, he would also sympathize and stand with the many shops and restaurants in downtown Portland who have been harmed by their proximity to the Hatfield Courthouse."

The unrest around the Mark O. Hatfield Courthouse will eventually abate, the damage that scars it will be repaired; the graffiti will be scrubbed and sandblasted away. The years-long deterioration of the values of "decency, civility and bipartisanship" that Hatfield embodied will be harder to restore. But maybe we owe it to him — and even more to ourselves — to start.


Jim Cornelius, Editor in Chief

Police reform takes leadership and time

By Chris West
Guest Columnist

"There is always a well-known solution to every human problem — neat, plausible, and wrong." -
— H. L. Mencken, 1917

I've been thinking about this quote recently because it seems especially relevant today, more than a century later. My professional experience includes 30 years of police work, both in the military and as an officer, detective, and supervisor in Los Angeles Police. The human problem that concerns us all is how best to rethink and reform policing in our communities.

Two questions must be addressed: What can and should the public reasonably expect from law enforcement? Given the current, contentious debate about policing, how can reform best be done?

The primary mission and top priority of law enforcement is to keep the peace and to provide protection from injury or death while upholding civil rights and the law.

So, what should the public expect from good officers? Honesty, constancy, practical knowledge, respect, neutrality, compassion, and stamina, all while exhibiting a command presence and providing good role models for their fellow citizens — and of course, to magically appear when needed. Two bonus characteristics: a sense of proportion and an inherent sense of right and wrong. An officer is motivated by (and is paid to have) an overt commitment to law and to public service, to exhibit physical and moral courage in difficult circumstances, and to endure potentially arduous working conditions.

Police act as arbiters much more often than they do in stereotypical cops and robbers scenarios. Problem-solving skills are expected and should be demanded. Law enforcement officers wield two solemn powers: the power to arrest and trigger a prosecution, and to take a life without due process of law (albeit in extreme circumstances). If officer candidates or serving officers are unable or unwilling to fulfill these expectations, they should not be trained, hired, or retained. The public is absolutely right to expect this from those who pledge to protect and serve.

But too often these expectations are not met. Several well-known reform solutions — more training, more money, a few high-profile firings after the fact — seem neat and plausible. Even some ideas of "defunding the police" can seem, to a few, neat and plausible. But, as Mencken points out, that does not mean they are right.

Let's look at what reform actually entails. Law enforcement is an essential component of local government, and as such, wields power and demands funding priority. These hierarchical organizations typically exhibit internal solidarity and value the shared experience peculiar to police work. Selling major change to the rank and file, never mind the command staff, can be daunting. It's roughly analogous to changing religion.

Additionally, finding collaborative solutions to long-festered problems is especially challenging when those problems explode. The propensity to throw out the baby with the bath water is a dangerous solution that serves no one.

But does that mean that reform is impossible? It does not. The harder the problem, the greater the value of the solution. Internal change in response to external problems can help: new technologies, changes in the law, and better policies and procedures.

However, leadership is key. Successful leaders will have several traits: experience backed by a strong intellect; moral certitude and honesty; creative thinking and problem-solving abilities; political skills and proven consensus-building attributes; iron willpower, and an elephant hide. Major stakeholders must be included in the process.

Reform in a police agency requires complicated, expensive training and re-training. Resources, usually money, must be identified. And then there is luck and time. Luck is preparation that meets opportunity. Change — real change — will take time. Americans are famous for perseverance, not so for patience. We must insist on leadership that will provide a model for the changes that are needed.

In the end, we have no choice but to pursue a police reform solution that is not only neat and plausible but, most important, right.

Opinions expressed in this column are solely those of the writer and are not necessarily shared by the Editor or The Nugget Newspaper.

Letters to the Editor...

To the Editor:


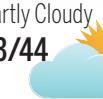

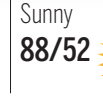


I am anxious enough living in a time of pandemic and so limit myself to about 30 minutes of reading the news about the latest outrage from Trump. Unfortunately, I stumbled across the opinion piece by Jim Cornelius published July 29 opining on the Portland Troubles ("*Echoes of tumult*," page 6).

If evidence-free "both sides do it"

nonsense is the best thing he can do, he should stop. "[S]omebody was going to take action" he says. You mean like tear-gassing peaceful protestors, stopping bystanders and demanding identification with the threat of arrest, taking media personnel off public sidewalks and throwing them in unmarked

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Sisters Weather Forecast
Courtesy of the National Weather Service, Pendleton, Oregon

Wednesday Mostly Sunny 86/52 	Thursday Partly Cloudy 73/44 	Friday Mostly Sunny 83/48 	Saturday Sunny 88/52 	Sunday Sunny 90/54 	Monday Sunny 90/52 
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