

FROM THE EDITOR’S DESK

Questioning
character in the
face of COVID-19

I was born in Pendleton in early 1968, and that means my country has been at war or military conflict most, maybe all, of my life.

The Vietnam War, of course, the invasions of Grenada and Panama, the Gulf War, the War in Afghanistan — which is nearing

the 20-year mark — and the Iraq War. And throughout the ’70s, ’80s and finally ending in 1991, the Cold War.

I’m not going to tally the casualties in all this. Those numbers are easy enough to search for online. But throughout all this deadly conflict, one thing has been absent — the national sense of sacrifice.

And that is showing while we deal with the COVID-19 pandemic.

I learned from my grandparents and a bit from my mom and dad about the sacrifices they and the rest of Americans made in World War II. New car tires? Nope, the military needed the rubber. But that didn’t matter so much because folks were not driving without gas, which the war effort also had first dibs on. And the federal government implemented food rationing and wage control.

When U.S. citizens then spoke of supporting the troops, they were serious. They literally went without so a generation of soldiers, sailors, pilots and Marines could fight and win the most crucial war in history.

But I’ve never experienced anything like that, and with the passing of each year, there are fewer Americans who did. Shared, collective sacrifice once was part of U.S. culture. I’m not so convinced it is now.

I wonder what my grandparents — all long dead — would have thought of the protestors who are demanding Gov. Kate Brown fling up the economic doors no matter the consequences. I’m sure they would have scoffed at the payout checks so many of us received. My grandmother on my mom’s side collected every drop of bacon grease for cooking, a habit she picked up as little girl while she and her family endured the Great Depression.

My grandmothers in particular would have said something like, “Try going without before taking a handout.”

Hey, I took that COVID-19 relief check, too. And as a stalwart of the First Amendment, I’m not telling anyone they can’t protest whatever. And I am thrilled businesses can start operating again. But I have to question if in taking that check and hoping I can sit a table and have a coffee or beer, that I eroded just a bit of my character.

Then apply that question to the nation.

According to the Centers for Disease and Control and Prevention, as of Friday morning almost 85,000 people in the U.S. died from COVID-19. That’s more than the population of Medford, Oregon’s eighth largest city. We’re going to debate for some time how well the administration responded to this outbreak. But we need to ask the bigger questions about what this crisis reveals about our national character.

If we find the answer lacking, it is on us to change.



PHIL WRIGHT
OBSERVER EDITOR

War, the War in Afghanistan — which is nearing



Your views

No news is not good
news when it comes to
COVID-19

There is currently confusion and even misinformation or lack of information regarding appropriate behavior during this COVID-19 pandemic both locally and nationally. Because of our natural human tendency to fill the void, opinions and rumors are running rampant. People are either afraid and unwilling to do anything until they “know the facts,” or they choose to ignore the current rules until they “know the facts.”

The bottom line is that nobody actually can know all the facts about this virus, and it is statistically impossible to produce accurate numbers of deaths, or those infected, or those recovering. While we appreciate the tireless efforts of so many we need to realize it is an almost impossible task to be precise in numbers. However, as the media is struggling to keep people informed on a national basis, I believe there is more that could be shared locally as an encouragement to our community that is weary of being somewhat in the dark.

On a local level, why can’t the agencies, whoever they are, share how many people have been tested in this area (city or county), how many have tested positive, how many have tested negative with no symptoms, how many who have contracted the disease have fully recovered? I understand that it is impossible to come up with definite numbers, but people deserve to know what the general trend for our community appears to be.

Currently we have no information other than what The Observer reports — four cases — no deaths. As a result there are many theories floating around that may or may not be true. As an example, I was told

the other day there have been two deaths in Union County, one of whom was described as one of the four cases who happens to be a friend of mine who is alive and well and fully recovered.

Because of so little information, people tend to fall into two camps, those wearing masks, practicing social distancing and staying at home, like myself, or those who choose to put aside all rules assuming “no news is good news.”

I don’t know who makes the decisions in this community but whoever you are, I implore you to enlighten us a little more so that we can make responsible decisions.

*Pamela W. Moore
La Grande*

Expanding Idaho into
Oregon not so brilliant

I recently completed the article, “Expand Idaho movement gains traction” (The Observer, May 12, 2020). Brilliant I say. Join borders with a state as white as the disappearing glaciers, says it’s okay to drive Canada-bound oil drilling rigs through a sovereign Indian nation, has played host to a thriving neo-Nazi community up north and whose last good governor was an Andrus, not someone whose surname was drawn from the mustelidae family. Meld with a state whose power company wants to chew up the La Grande viewshed, create a monumental wild-fire hazard and provide needless power to a rapidly urbanizing state that’s become Californians’ new emigration hotspot. Sure as your born this plays well.

I suspect this map-rending exercise is bull-goosed by the same folks who show respect for their fellow citizens in the supermarket by not

wearing gloves and masks. The same people who think the novel coronavirus is a liberal plot. And the same people who think Oregon Gov. Kate Brown is the lead singer for “Molly Hatchet” and not a true heroine who in conjunction with medical and business professionals has kept Oregon’s infection and mortality rates among the lowest in the world. Yep, sign me up or...

Better yet, as I am in the older and more virus susceptible class, I will most likely not see the success of the movement. But if I am around I have a plan: We will petition to form a new state within a state. Let’s call it “Rosenbomber.” Further, after the requisite 242 petition signatures are presented to the Union County clerk, we will put the petition on the statewide ballot, and after our success we will promptly checkpoint all roads through Rosenbomber to vehicular traffic (not horses) much as is being done in South Dakota to protect the Cheyenne River Sioux and Oglala Lakota Sioux from infection. We would do it for both health and to protect against political infection.

The state of Rosenbomber would be welcomed in the arms of the mother state of Oregon, of which we are so proud for its wildernesses, its environmental consciousness, its budding pot shops, its lovely painted hills and towering mountains, its rivers and creeks, its border with the Pacific Ocean, its once and future great salmon runs and for so many other reasons.

Maybe a creative soul out there could create the first state of Rosenbomber flag with the motto: “Are You Friggin’ Kidding Me?”

*Michael R. Rosenbaum
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