

My Voice

Forgiveness
is not
forgetting

“Forgiveness is not forgetting. Forgiveness is freedom from hate.”
— Valarie Kaur

I hold no hate for the Lighthouse Church, nor any of its congregation. I suppose that means I’ve forgiven them for their recent illegal, unethical, misguided, and egregiously harmful actions. Yet I’ve not forgotten. As I’ve made clear a few times now, a simple apology would go far in allowing the community and myself to forget yet no such repentance has been forthcoming. Regardless, these ques-

tions of forgiving and forgetting are a personal matter that exists only in one’s heart and mind. Conversely, our justice system operates without regard for the concept of forgiveness. When a law is broken, the consequences for this action are clearly prescribed and the idea that no man nor entity is above the law is foundational to our nation. This principle is not subject to questions of whether or not someone believes in the particular law or doesn’t support the lawmakers who enacted it, nor does a history of good deeds preclude someone from being held responsible for their acts.

No one yet has satisfactorily explained to me how these principles shouldn’t hold true in this case. The church leadership knew they were breaking the law, as evidenced by their invoking a statement from the president that churches should be deemed “essential.” They were contacted at least twice by law enforcement and agreed to cease the activities, yet they simply continued and apparently even escalated these activities. While at the time the church seemed to proudly display these actions on social media, once the community was made aware of the transgressions these videos were promptly deleted never to resurface.

The eager willingness of some to characterize this series of events as a “mistake” betrays a bias that I and many others in the community are quite uncomfortable with. Do those advocating for leniency in this case feel the same towards anyone accused of any crime, or is this reserved only for a certain class of the community? Perhaps I’m just not informed of daily appearances in the local courthouse where these same folks plea the court for forgiveness of defendants facing judgment for their actions. It’s possible I’m just not aware of a universally applied legal theory where we don’t prosecute crimes that happened “in the past.” If there is indeed an informal statute of limitations for prosecutions granted on the basis of prior good deeds, I and many others would like to be informed. You know, just in case.

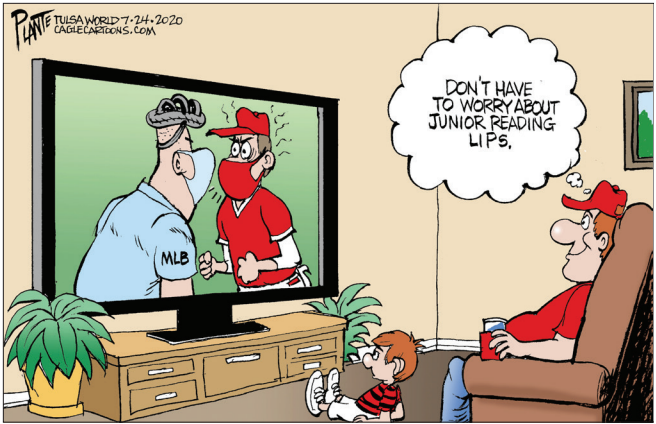
My objections notwithstanding, it’s become clear there is not much likelihood we will see any charges filed in this case. Too much time has now passed, and I’ve also been made aware of a few procedural challenges within the system, which have stood in the way.

I would like to thank La Grande Chief of Police Gary Bell and Union County District Attorney Kelsie McDaniel for their candid conversations and their patience with my rhetoric.

I sincerely hope this event is the only occasion I will have to argue this subject in the pages of this fine publication or anywhere else, as this will show we as a community have finally understood that facts and laws are immutable in the face of selfish opinions.

About the Author
Roger Barnes has lived and worked and sometimes voiced his opinions in La Grande for 25 years. He welcomes your comments and criticisms.

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Letters

Any intelligent person would obey governor’s order

How many lives have been put at risk because a few (as quoted by The Observer) have not adhered to the governor’s executive order?

Whether you agree or disagree, the fact remains there have been more than three months of advertising a policy of “stay at home ... wear a protective face covering,” so any intelligent persons have been notified as to why: It is to protect others. Now some have thrown caution to the wind and a larger number of our caregivers, doctors, nurses are COVID-19 carriers.

I live at Grande Ronde Retirement Residence and am at an age that I must rely on the many caregivers who are willing to take a chance to care for us while they expose themselves, for a small fee that does not come close to compensating for illness or life.

No one would want to take responsibility for having to share the blame for this unfortunate part of life.

It’s time to listen, and obey.

Marie Lester
Former Union County Commissioner
La Grande

Letter: Done with academic mud wrestling

Regarding Lyle Swartz’s letter published in the July 21 issue of The Observer, I was quite disappointed when Dr. Swartz attempted to impugn my character.

I’ve known Professor Swartz for years. I was impressed

with his expertise in the visual and performing arts, and I cannot recall him ever posting an unethical comment like Dr. Tom Herrmann did.

I’m sorry he thinks my comment was a confusing “stew,” which is how many folks misspell my name by accident. My name is spelled Stuart, so his use of “stew” was a cheap shot.

It’s not surprising that Dr. Swartz was confused as I doubt he has any sophistication in the subject of physics, which was the topic of my letter criticizing Dr. Herrmann’s opinion piece. Unfortunately, it is common for a conservative ideologue to come to the defense of another ideologue without understanding why the other is being criticized. Had Professor Swartz understood the scientific meaning of “tautology and specious data,” he would not have attempted to impugn my character.

The fact that he found Dr. Badgley, Dr. Stephas and Dr. Gilbert friendly does not mean those physicists would have jumped into the academic mud wrestling with Dr. Herrmann.

This is my last comment on the matter, as another tactic of conservative ideologues is to attempt to distract their nemeses from continuing with deleterious comments, and I’m not playing that game with them any longer.

Professor Swartz should watch out for conservative economists, both right and left, as they’re coming after his PERS as we speak.

Stuart Croghan
La Grande

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