

OUR VIEW

# Looking forward and moving ahead

No getting around it, the past year was tough one.

In fact, the past two years delivered a host of challenges to our nation, state and community.

The COVID-19 pandemic has touched nearly every facet of our lives and will probably do so again in the next year.

The toll of the virus on our nation is incalculable, both in a real sense and in the method — it invaded our very culture.

The pandemic also helped create wider divisions in our nation and our community. That's a depressing circumstance but one that is real and evident.

In terms of tolerance, government transparency and sympathy for different points of view, 2021 was not a banner year for the United States, Oregon or Eastern Oregon.

Racism in all its horrid forms still haunts our nation. Government still seems, at times, to be for the very few and not for all. We still scream at each other more than we ever did and fail to listen. An all-or-nothing attitude flourishes in many places, choking out educated and measured dissent.

Yet, we can change all of that.

We carry the capacity as a people to move forward into the future with a united purpose to overcome the challenges presented by the COVID-19 pandemic.

We are a great nation, and we live in a great community that has much to offer and is resilient.

Yet our greatness also comes with a tremendous amount of responsibility. Much has been given to our piece of the heartland — great places for recreation, wide-open skies and beautiful forests — but much is also required of us.

Someday, far into the future, our decisions and sacrifices and failures will be measured and evaluated by historians. We need not leave a trail of intolerance, apathy and failure.

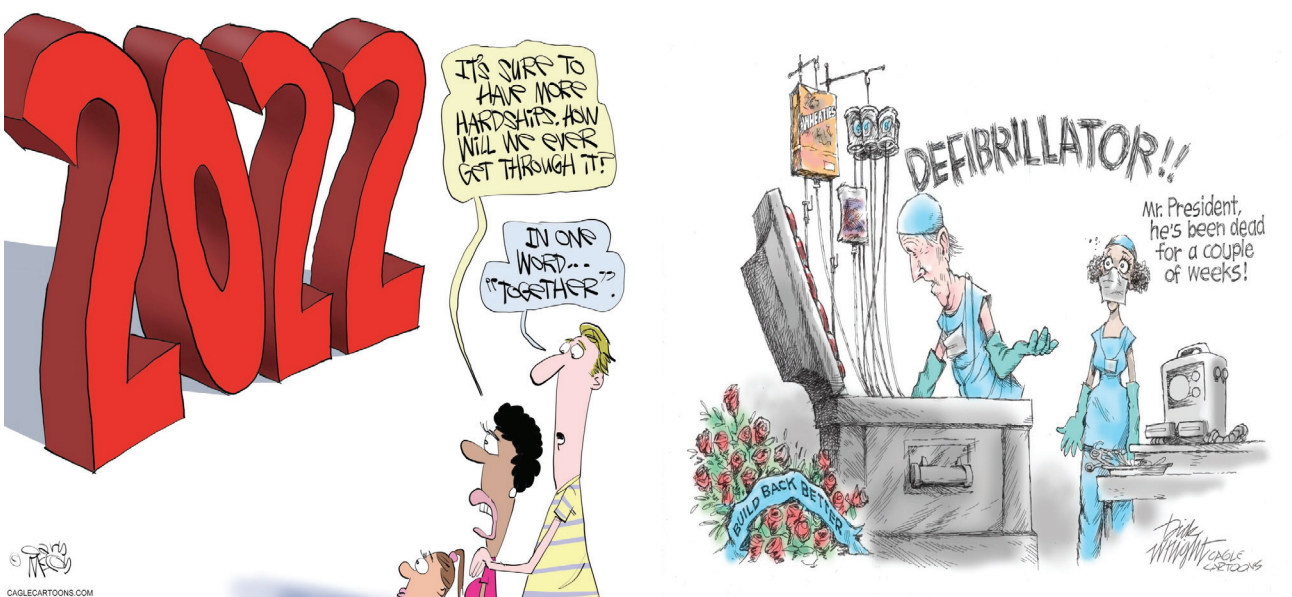
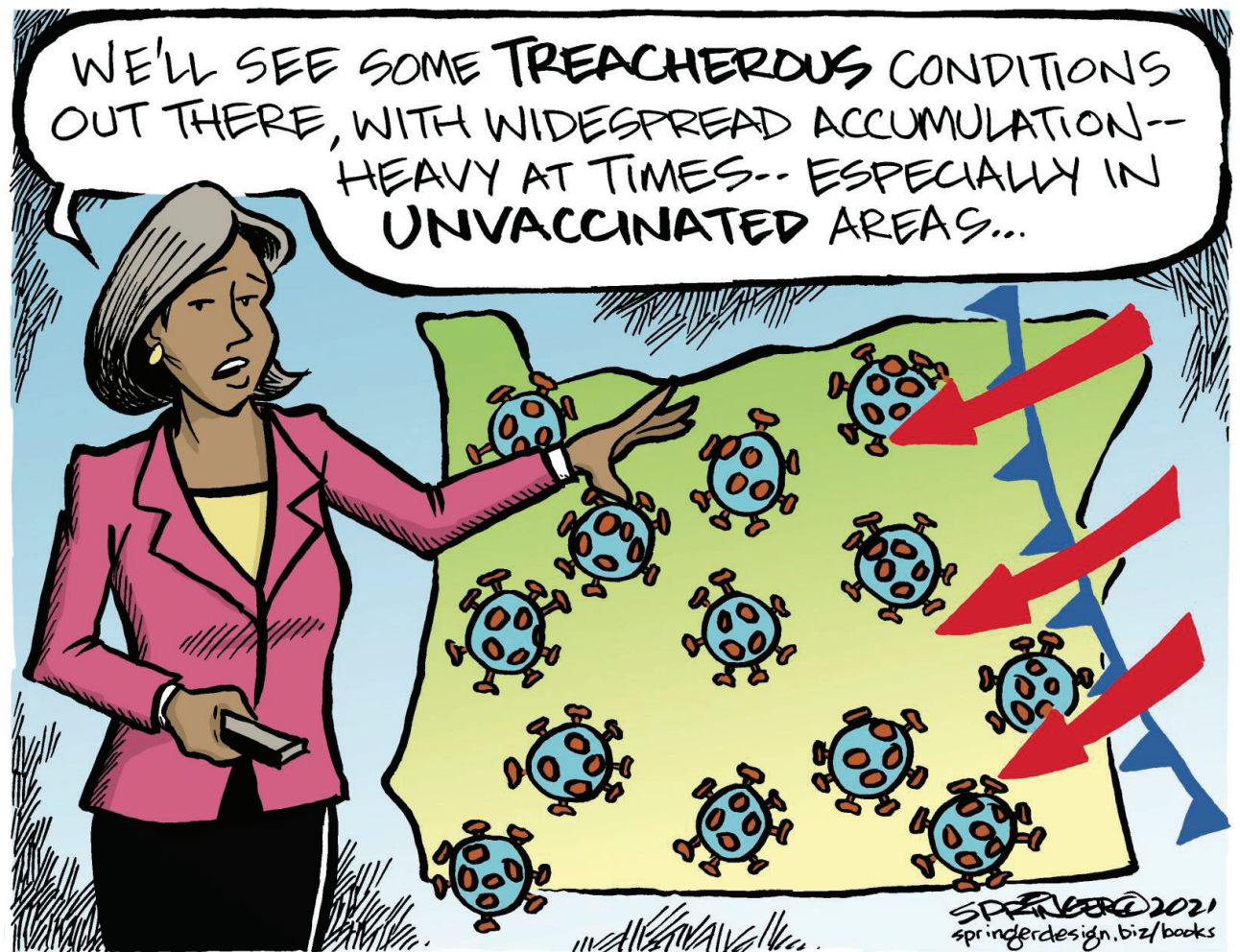
We have the opportunity to meet the challenges in the next 12 months with courage and a commitment to do better than we did in 2021.

We, and our children, will inherit what we sow, but instead of an empty garden we should expect and want to leave a cornucopia for those who come after our time has passed.

Our future is as bright as we want it to be. But it is up to us individually and collectively to meet the problems of the future with clear thinking and a methodical resolve to live up to the high standards set by our nation's founders.

The new year will deliver many high-spirited revelers around the area and we would be remiss if we did not remind everyone who indulges to be prudent and safe and responsible.

And Happy New Year from The Observer.



## Find your clean fork in the new year



**KARRINE BROGOITTI**  
FROM THE PUBLISHER

Like most people, I've been desperately searching each day for any tiny sliver of joy that I can find. And, after 649 days of "pandemic-ing," I'm happy to report that I've been mostly successful.

Some days are certainly more joyous than others. There are days when I've been getting ready for bed and realize that I haven't mentally acknowledged anything in particular that brought me joy that day. On those nights, I'll take a minute to review my day's events and find a tiny sliver to appreciate. Such joyous recognition might be tied to something like a perfectly brewed and doctored cup of coffee that morning, or something far more trivial and desperate — like realizing I have just enough clean forks to eat dinner with that night.

Then, there are those rare days that overflow with "clean fork moments," like the 24 hours of bliss recently shared between myself, my sister, Keisha, and my maternal grandparents as we traveled to a funeral, of all things. My sister and I drove our grandparents, John and Sally Smith, to Hood River so that they could pay their respects to our grandma's favorite cousin, Ann, after the loss of her husband. There were clean forks everywhere.

We listened to Willie's Road-



Karrine Brogotti/The Observer  
**John and Sally Smith take time to pose for a photograph during a December 2021 trip to Hood River.**

house on SiriusXM and overheard our grandparents humming and singing along to Merle Haggard, George Jones, Conway Twitty and Patsy Cline. Joy was found at the Idlewilde Cemetery, where Keisha and I walked with our grandparents as they showed us the final resting places of many of our relatives and shared stories we'd never heard before — or didn't pay attention to the first time. Forks, forks, forks.

Joy was even found at Rosauers Supermarket where our grandpa returned to the car with trays of steaks and sealed packages of sausages ("Girls, they have the best meat department of any supermarket I've ever been to. It's worth the stop"

— and best served with a clean fork, I would imagine).

We enjoyed a post-funeral luncheon, complete with wine and views of the beautiful Columbia River that stretched for days, where our grandma visited with family and our grandpa told us stories of how loggers once moved logs high from the surrounding hills down to the river for transport.

It was joyous.

The trip ended with breakfast at Egg River Cafe — four perfectly brewed and doctored cups of coffee, alongside four clean forks on the table — where my sister and I hung on every word they shared with us about their time living in Hood River.

As we drove back into the valley, the trip was capped off with a Grammy-worthy performance of Kenny Rogers and Dolly Parton's "Islands in the Stream" — covered by my sister and me, with the sweetest sound coming from the backseat of my grandparents' Buick — the backup vocals of our 85-year-old grandma. It was one of the single, greatest moments of pure joy that I can recall over the last 649 pandemic days. Or any pre-pandemic days, for that matter.

I encourage each of you to start day No. 650 of the pandemic, Jan. 1, and every day after in the coming year, finding your clean fork. It's easier to find than you think.

*Karrine Brogotti is the publisher of The Observer and the Baker City Herald.*

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