

OUR VIEW

Something at OHA not adding up

When you read the details of Josh Barnett's story on A1 about trying to right the record on his mother's apparent COVID-19-related death, something doesn't add up.

But not from him — from the Oregon Health Authority.

As far as we (and he) can tell, his mother, Theresa Malec, who died in mid-December, is the woman listed by the OHA as the 14th COVID-19-related death in Wallowa County.

His family is the first that we are aware of in the county to refute COVID-19 having a role in a loved one's death. The death certificate, and Barnett, both state the cause of Malec's death was liver cancer.

Barnett offered to share the certificate with the Chieftain. Following an interview, he gave us permission to publish the cause of death information and that portion of the document.

And after looking at what was provided by Barnett and speaking to him, and then looking at what OHA has given, Barnett's case is much more compelling than the state's.

For one, Malec's passing occurred more than four months after her positive COVID test in August, which, by Barnett's account, she had fully recovered from. Even OHA's own documents say for a passing to be counted as a COVID-related death, the time limit from an individual's first known positive test or symptom onset to their passing is 60 days.

OHA also counts a COVID-19-related death if the death certificate lists specific COVID-related codes. Yet the death certificate for Barnett's mother has no such code listed, and the only mention of her COVID history on the document states there were two negative tests.

(Interestingly, while it doesn't seem to apply here, the other criteria for a COVID-19-related death is "Death from any cause in a hospitalized person during their hospital stay or in the 60 days following discharge and a COVID-19-positive laboratory diagnostic test at any time since 14 days prior to hospitalization." Does that not strike anyone as odd?)

To be fair, we cannot be 100% certain that the woman in the OHA report is Malec, as OHA has not — and said it cannot — provide identifying information. The entity also could not confirm if Barnett's mother, when given her name, was the individual. And yes, Barnett said it was OK for us to ask the OHA that question, as well.

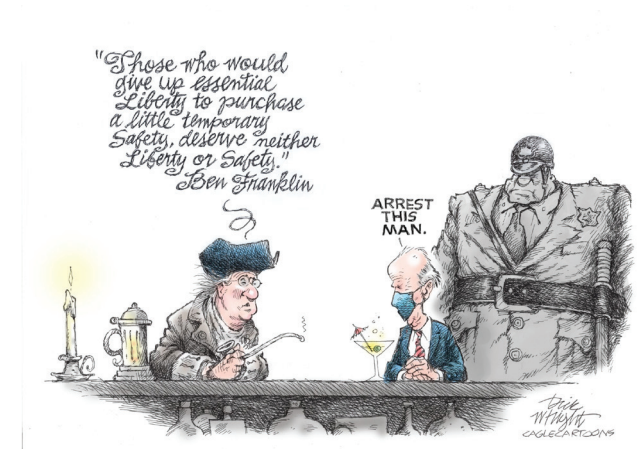
But when you look at the timeline for Malec's passing, in a county as small as Wallowa County, it's pretty easy to put two and two together.

More details are needed to get to the bottom of this particular case, but at the moment, Malec's passing — and Barnett's account and document — raises some serious questions about the validity of OHA's data in this case, and could weaken its overall credibility.

This is not written to discredit the losses felt by people who have been severely impacted by COVID. There is no doubt it's real, and many have died from it.

But as you look a little deeper into OHA's data, it's clear something does not add up.

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YOUR VIEWS

No consequences for false accusations?

The "Our view" editorial of Feb. 1, 2022, on the La Grande-Gladstone racial slurs incident is naive. "...it is over." Nope. This will stick with the falsely accused for a long time.

Ryan Clarke, the reporter for The Oregonian who broke the story, has made a cottage industry of reporting on allegations of racial slurs and the like at high school athletic events. Perhaps he senses a Pulitzer waiting for him.

Those kinds of stories are gold for politicians like Tina Kotek, Rep. Barbara Smith Warner and Rep. Janelle Bynum, who can virtue signal and burnish their anti-racist bona fides by piling on those allegations. No need to wait to see if they are true.

Wasn't there something mentioned back in the day about bearing false witness?

Just a little digging, and you see how common these kinds of accusations are. As long as there are

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no consequences for making false accusations, they will continue.

Steve Boe
La Grande

Leave Marcus Whitman statue alone

I read the article about the consideration of removing the Marcus Whitman statue. This is very upsetting. Marcus Whitman and his wife left a footprint in the history of the then-known Oregon Territory. He was not the first settler in the region. The Hudson Bay Company was the first, and was still there when Whitman had his mission. This leads me to ask: Why is Whitman being blamed for the outbreak of measles? He may have had nothing to do with its outbreak. Look at us now, and the flu that began in China and transported here.

Then there is the comment on how he is dressed on the statue. Let's face it, clothes wear out, and material for clothing was something that was not available. So what do you wear? You make your clothes out of what you can find: animal skins.

I respect the Native Americans, but this issue reeks of "cancel culture" and, worse, "critical race theory" (which many say is not a theory). I was taught this in college and rejected it, not based on my race, but because it's a flawed theory.

I have gotten off my subject, but we can't keep removing statues because someone does not agree with its subject matter. All the issues stated by the CTUIR for the uprising of the Cayuse (property encroachment, immigration of settlers and illnesses) would have happened anyway, so why blame it on just Marcus Whitman? I say keep the statue as is, where it is, and don't touch it.

Gail Baker
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