

Opinion

— EDITORIAL —

Starbucks and the red holiday cup controversy

There are so very many reasons to boycott Starbucks: We prefer to support local businesses. We detest their anti-gun policies. We dislike Howard Schultz's ultra-politically correct, über-liberal stances on pretty much ... everything. We don't agree with the fact this company donates money to Planned Parenthood, which in turn harvests and sells baby parts ...

However, this year's silly red cup controversy isn't included in the reason-to-boycott list.

Starbucks' 2015 holiday cup is a red ombre design, lighter red on top, darker red on the bottom, with white and green on the logo and lid. Festive enough. In years past, the cup has boasted red pine bows, ornaments, reindeer, etc. This year's cup isn't really a change of pace for that company; it remains brightly colored with no tribute to any religion.

Just like it's our right not to frequent

a business whose practices we oppose, it's Starbucks' right to not practice or promote any particular religion, including Christianity.

We don't think the red cups are exactly an attack on our religion of choice anyway, an opinion that seems to fall in opposition to that of at least a few folks out there. We don't believe most Christians give a darn about the red cup, though. After all, how many of our local restaurants print "Jesus Saves" on their to-go boxes or paper coffee cups?

The frustrating part about this social media-driven brew-haha (lame pun intended) is that in so many areas, Christians *are* actually being persecuted. They are targeted, tortured, beheaded, forced from their homes, imprisoned and uprooted from their lives.

When something so silly as a coffee cup garners so much attention, the biggest shame in the situation is that the controversy almost always serves to deflect from an actual issue, and makes those who wish to speak out on that actual issue hesitant for fear of being lumped in with the type who would complain about the design of a paper cup.

We think if a red paper cup somehow makes a person feel persecuted, then they probably have no idea what the word really means.

—The Baker County Press Editorial Board

— GUEST OPINION —

Old-fashioned conservation methods

By Sandra Ghormley
Special to The Baker County Press

I vividly remember how annoyed I became after hearing my dad shout, "Don't forget to turn the lights off when you leave the room."

"Okay, Dad, I got it. You've said it 100 times!" I'd reply.

You see, Dad grew up in the 1930s when electricity had not reached every neighborhood in America and many homes where lit with oil lamps. Back then only 10% of the farms had electricity and flipping a switch to light a room was still considered a luxury. Yet, even then, people realized how important it was to conserve energy. Decades later, shutting off lights may be a little old-fashioned—but it is still a good idea. Combine it with new lighting technology and real savings result.

In the 1960s, the economy was booming and energy was abundant. Consumers gradually moved away from thinking about conservation and developed an insatiable appetite for electricity. From the early days in the 1940s to 2007, electric usage in the U.S. more than doubled. America became the largest consumer of every-thing electricity could offer.

As a result, more dams were built and more petroleum, coal and natural gas powered electric generation plants were needed to satisfy the growth. New transmission and distribution power lines were constructed connecting, expanding and crisscrossing the countryside in order to handle the increased loads and keep pace with customers' expectations. This increasing demand for electricity was met with building more generation and power lines.

Today, we cannot image our lives without electricity. It is no longer a luxury but a way of life. According to a 2013 report from the US Department of Energy, the U.S. is now the 2nd largest energy consumer and producer of electricity in the world, following behind China which has moved ahead to first place.

The good news is if you are a member, Oregon Trail Electric Cooperative (OTEC) can help you find ways to take action on that inner voice. Since 1990, OTEC has offered conservation programs to teach responsible electric use and to help members make wise energy choices in their homes and businesses. We joined with Bonneville Power Administration (BPA), our power producer, to offer many attrac-



Submitted Photo

Sandra Ghormley is a 20-year veteran of the electrical utility industry. In 2013, she joined OTEC as the Director of Member and Program Services. Before coming to OTEC, Sandra served as the Manager of Member Relations at Homer Electric Association in Kenai, Alaska.

tive *rebates that can offset the cost of purchasing lights and upgrading fixtures to more efficient, energy savings devices.

Over the last two years, OTEC has assisted more than 150 local businesses to upgrade their lighting systems to a variety of Light Emitting Diode (LEDs).

Many of the new LED lighting products offer brighter, more widespread illumination of areas while at the same time use 1/10 the energy to achieve a greater output.

LEDs last much longer than incandescent or compact fluorescent bulbs, light quickly, and do not radiate as much heat. There is a wide range of LED lamps and fixtures on the market today to customize your specific lighting solutions. The last two years, OTEC has made it worth the investment by helping members save over four million lighting kilowatt hours, reducing electric consumption, and lowering electric bills.

OTEC has the proof—listening to that inner voice and taking action to conserve makes a difference.

Today, most everyone recognizes the importance of conserving electric energy. Although our motivation for conserving electric energy may differ from altruistic to personal gain, every time we act on that small inner voice, we lower our electric bill, put less pressure on building any new electric infrastructure, and make the world a little better for the next generation. Combining old-fashioned ideas for conserving electricity with new lighting solutions is good advice. I must admit Dad got a few things right.

And, yes, I catch myself offering similar advice to my children, "Let's change it out to an LED bulb, and, oh, before you leave the room, turn the lights out."

*Rebates subject to available funds and program criteria.

— LETTERS TO THE EDITOR —

FOIA Response Disappointing

To the Editor:

It was disappointing to receive a preliminary cost assessment for a Freedom of Information Request to the Malheur National Forest from Supervisor Steve Beverlin on my request as to the contact his forest has attempted with Sheriff Palmer.

It's disappointing to see the County Court lining up in a feeding frenzy to marginalize a man so well respected in our community, but is more disappointing to see the Supervisor Beverlin hide behind excessive fee gouging to hid the truth. I submitted my request as a member of Citizens for Public Access so that I could make sure the full story was told, whether or not it was in the Sheriff's favor or not, but obviously, Supervisor Beverlin would rather hide behind \$1,680 worth of fees in order to keep the truth from coming out. Just so everyone is clear, you pay your taxes to employee people, and that is not enough to retain public information that has already been paid for, but again, when you can hide the truth with excessive fee's it's pretty simple to justify.

Law Enforcement: 6 hours @), \$45/hour = \$270.00

Fire Staff Officers: 4 hours a \$45/hour = \$180.00

District Rangers: 18 hours a \$45/hour = \$810.00

Forest Supervisors: 7 hours (a \$50/hour = \$350.00

Freedom of Information Act: 2 hour@ \$35/hour = \$70.00

For a total estimated cost of \$1680.00 There is no freedom of information at the Malheur National Forest, especially when dealing with men that threaten to stop vegetation projects (i.e. logging) if roads are not closed along with them.

Don't you wish you were making that \$45 or \$50/hr. to develop all those supposed meeting request to then stand back and thumb your nose at the public and keep them from the truth?

John George
Bates

Owyhee Canyonlands thoughts

To the Editor:

I'm becoming increasingly concerned we are going to end up visitors to areas our families have freely accessed since settling in Eastern Oregon.

Wanda Ballard
Baker City

Coming away from the public meeting in Adrian, on the latest threat of over 2 million acres being signed into a monument, I've switched my attention to a coalition between the green machine Oregon Natural Desert Ass., Pew Charitable Trust, and Sierra Club joining with recreation based businesses such as Keen Footwear. This is some of the principles, but not all, pushing the Owyhee monument.

Is it about saving the Canyonlands or selling more sandals to fill the coffers of private companies. Self-serving coalitions with no interests to the negative impacts imposed on the local population that will result in families being displaced. No recreationists are being held back from enjoying the Owyhee Canyonlands at the present time.

If you were to believe the presentation from Oregon Natural Desert Association everyone comes out a winner. Access would remain, but failed to mention closing the scores of spur roads locals have historically used for sustenance. Failed to mention grazing will be negatively affected. Economic values from the mineral resources would be lost. Urbanites all decked out in their subtle, "look at me attire," could breeze in, spend a few days and dollars, and be gone just as they are free to do presently. Is it hard to understand, we are not for sale, our historical cultural access is not for sale. We are doing just fine without your money. A new Presidential Memorandum, "mitigating impacts on natural resources from development and encouraging related private investment."

Encouraging related private investment, what in the world does this mean? The term "invest," means putting money in business etc, in order to get a profit, this implies our public lands are for sale. This is a general term that can and will be used to implement more redundant regulations from out of control bureaucratic agencies.

Will people push back, I hope so. Nothing has worked to stop the land grabs swirling around us. We desperately need representatives to serve the people they represent, be our voice at the table. Playing politics, has not been a winning hand, time to quit bargaining away the very items you are entrusted to protect.

Letter to the Editor Policy: The Baker County Press reserves the right not to publish letters containing factual falsehoods or incoherent narrative. Letters promoting or detracting from specific for-profit businesses will not be published. Word limit is 375 words per letter. Letters are limited to one every other week per author. Letters should be submitted to Editor@TheBakerCountyPress.com.

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