

## Bob's Corner

It's about time, in more ways than one for some graduates for commencement exercises, speeches, parties and other mind-boggling events for this year's flock of soon-to-be high school diplomates.

For me, "commencement" means an ending and a beginning. The *Pomp and Circumstance* happenings on Wednesday, June 4 will signal the end of high school education for the Illinois Valley High School Class of 2008. But it also will signify the beginning of ... of what? Of whatever comes next: a four-year college, a two-year college, marriage, a trade school, hanging out, seeking a job, looking for one's bearings, or wondering what happened and now what?

Hopefully what will come next will not involve tragedy or an ill-fated venture. As one mentor I knew was fond of saying, "Don't do stupid things."

My own high school graduation during the past century was held at night. In the dark. Just as some of my fellow graduates were, and I wasn't far behind as far as knowing what to do next or what direction to take. We thought we knew about everything there is to know, and that we were invincible. We were going to run shouting in victory, climb Mt. Everest nonstop, and make about a million dollars a year in a dream job. Didn't work out that way.

Reality set in. There is no free lunch. The Tooth Fairy will come no more. Santa Claus could be too busy to visit next Christmas. There are few jobs with a starting salary of a million bucks a year. There are bills to pay, responsibilities to shoulder, more lessons to be learned. We are accountable for our own decisions and the inevitable consequences.

It's great to be optimistic though. Optimism and humor can make life much easier. Just remember some of the truths of life, perhaps as Mark Twain put it in two comments (among many): "A person with a new idea is a crank until the idea succeeds." And, "A round man cannot be expected to fit in a square hole right away. He must have time to modify his shape."

Also, remember the insightful comment by Shakespeare, "To thine own self be true, and it must follow, as the night the day, thou canst not then be false to any man."

I would add: Kill your TV set. Exercise. Eat wisely. Treat others as you would like them to treat you. Read books and newspapers. Help those less fortunate than you. Honor your mother and father. Pray. Omit needless words. Stop to admire and sniff flowers. Be careful. Smile because you live in the greatest country in the world. And remember what Russell Baker stated during a commencement talk:

"When you get out there in the world, try not to make it any worse than it already is."

## Letters to the Editor

**(Editor's Note: Views and commentary, including statements made as fact, are strictly those of the letter-writers.)**

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**Typed, double-spaced letters written solely to this newspaper are considered for publication. Handwritten letters that are double-spaced and legible also can be considered. "Thank you" submissions are not accepted as letters.**

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**Gun idea; educating public**  
**From Carol Dickson**  
**Cave Junction**

Why is our mayor wasting time and taxpayer money drafting an ordinance requiring every business and home owner in the city limits to have a firearm and ammunition?

First, our Constitution guarantees us the right to bear arms; it doesn't mandate it. Secondly, who is going to decide if I'm physically or mentally handicapped so as to be exempt from the ordinance? Thirdly, how will such an ordinance be enforced when the ordinances against drinking and/or urinating in public can't be enforced?

I think the mayor's and the council's time would be better spent ensuring that grant requirements are met so

the city taxpayers don't lose another \$500,000.

On the county-front, a note of interest was Curt Bynum's comment regarding county budget issues; that 80,000 residents have "checked out" and are "clueless." I disagree with that assessment. I think most of the voters understand that O&C funds are a thing of the past and that we are going to have to pay for the services we want.

The issue may be what services we want and will we get what we are promised. It was suggested that the taxpayers need to be educated. That education process has been going on for decades, but it's a bit one-sided.

Maybe it's time that the politicians, all the way from the lowest county politician to the highest office in the land, should be educated as to the fact that voters aren't ignorant, but they don't trust their politicians. The last two boards of county commissioners have done more fighting among themselves than working.

The latest example of breaking our trust was when the commissioners took two-thirds of the \$300,000 earmarked for the library and gave it to the sheriff. I support the library and law enforcement, but it's wrong to promise the library group \$300,000 if it raises its share

and then pull out the rug half-way through. Let's start the educating by recalling Raffenburg.

**Obama 'danger' outlined**  
**From Nancy Hook**  
**Cave Junction**

Ken Blackwell, who is black and a columnist for the *New York Sun*, recently wrote about Barack Obama. Here are some of his observations:

It's an amazing time to be alive in America. We're in a year of firsts in this presidential election: the first viable woman candidate; the first viable African-American candidate; and, a candidate who is the first front-running freedom fighter older than 70. The next president of America will be a first.

We won't truly be in an election of firsts, however, until we judge every candidate by where they stand. We won't arrive where we should be until we no longer talk about skin color or gender.

Now that Barack Obama steps to the front of the Democratic field, we need to stop talking about his race, and start talking about his policies and his politics.

The reality is this: Though the Democrats will not have a nominee until August, unless Hillary Clinton drops out, Obama is now the frontrunner, and it's time America takes a closer and deeper look at him.

Some pundits are calling him the next John F. Kennedy. He's not. He's the next George McGovern. And it's time people learned the facts. Because the truth is that Obama is the single-most liberal senator in the entire U.S. Senate.

He is more liberal than Ted Kennedy, Bernie Sanders, or Mrs. Clinton. Never in my life have I seen a presidential frontrunner whose rhetoric is so far removed from his record. Walter Mondale promised to raise our taxes, and he lost. George

McGovern promised military weakness; he lost. Michael Dukakis promised a Liberal domestic agenda, and he lost.

Yet Obama is promising all those things, and he's not behind in the polls. Why? Because the major media have dealt with him as if he were in a beauty pageant. Obama talks about getting past party, getting past red and blue, to lead the United States of America. But let's look at the more defined strokes of who he is beneath this superficial "beauty."

Start with national security, since the president's most important duties are as commander-in-chief. During the summer, Obama talked about invading Pakistan, a nation armed with nuclear weapons; meeting without preconditions with Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, who vows to destroy Israel and create another Holocaust; and Kim Jong II, who is murdering and starving his people, but emphasized that the nuclear option was off the table against terrorists -- something no president has ever taken off the table since we created nuclear weapons in the 1940s.

Even Democrats who have worked in national security condemned all those remarks. Obama is a foreign-policy novice who would put our national security at risk.

Next, consider economic policy. For all its faults, our health-care system is the strongest in the world. And free trade agreements, created by Bill Clinton as well as President Bush, have made more goods more affordable so that even people of modest means can live a life that no one imagined a generation ago.

Yet Obama promises to raise taxes on "the rich." How to fix Social Security? Raise taxes. How to fix Medicare? Raise taxes. Prescription drugs? Raise taxes. Free college? Raise taxes. Socialize medicine? Raise taxes.

(Continued on page 3)

## Opinion

By ED FEULNER  
The Heritage Foundation

With gasoline fill-ups routinely costing \$60 or more these days, cost-conscious drivers naturally look for someone to blame. And just as naturally, politicians happily blame others.

Enter "Big Oil," favorite villain of the demagogues. Gas prices soaring? It's because oil companies want "excess profits" as Barack Obama puts it. Right?

Wrong. The truth is more complicated.

Let's look to California, driving capital of the world. Officials there watch gas prices carefully. During March and April, a state analysis found that "distribution costs, marketing costs and profits" made up approximately 10-cents of the cost of a gallon of gasoline, which ranged from \$3.46 to \$3.89. That dime is less than 3 percent of the total retail cost, and profits account for only part of it. So those "excess profits" are actually well below 3 percent of retail costs.

Of course, that's little comfort to tapped-out drivers. And the big oil companies are certainly making big money -- Exxon Mobil alone earned \$40.6 billion last year. But such profits follow naturally when a company sells a product that so many people want to buy. Some recent history offers a bit of perspective.

In 1998, a recession in Asia created an oil glut. Prices plunged to historic lows (near \$10 a barrel), and U.S. drivers reaped the benefits with gas dipping below \$1 per gallon in many locales. So how did Exxon fare in those days of low prices?

According to *Forbes* magazine, Exxon earned more in profits than any other U.S. company during 1998. Sales increased 3 percent from 1997 and profits jumped 12.6 percent, to \$8.4 billion. Again, remember: Oil was remarkably cheap that year, yet Exxon earned double-digit profits. Few complained then.

The lesson is simple: When a company sells a product people want, it tends to make money, in good times and in bad. For years, oil has remained a product that Americans want -- and today's high prices have done little to change that. (Full disclosure: Yes, "big oil" gave to The Heritage Foundation last year. Its combined donations accounted for one-quarter of 1 percent of our revenues.)

It's also worth noting that oil companies are probably the most-investigated companies in America. Every few years, outraged legislators demand that the Federal Trade Commission determine whether oil companies are colluding to inflate prices. Repeatedly, federal regulators find that they aren't.

A few months ago the FTC said this about high gas prices: "All of the increase can be attributed to increased crude oil costs, because gasoline inventories are as ample as they have been for several years; gasoline consumption is declining to a near-record extent; and refining margins -- the difference between the cost of crude oil and the wholesale price of gasoline -- have fallen."

So who's making the big money? The countries that produce crude oil. Crude represents more than half the cost of each gallon of gasoline sold. Federal, state and local taxes represent another fifth. Yet some insist that we punish "big oil." During one presidential debate, Hillary Clinton stated that "the oil companies reported the highest profits in the history of the world. I want to take those profits and put them into a strategic energy fund."

But confiscating oil company profits is a lousy idea. Profits are what keep them in business. It allows them to invest in refining and delivery systems, and search for new deposits of petroleum. Profits fuel our capitalist system as surely as petroleum fuels our national economy. Plus, "Big Oil" returns billions to stockholders through dividends, and millions of Americans own its stock through their mutual funds and 401(k)s.

The best way to cut prices in the long run would be to increase supplies. Policymakers could help do this if they would allow drilling off-shore and in a tiny section of Alaska's barren Artic National Wildlife Refuge.

It makes no sense to keep so much domestic oil off-limits, especially with prices climbing. As long as we do it, we'll pay more than we need to for each gallon of gasoline and keep sending big profits overseas. Let's stop stalling -- and start drilling.

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