The Sandy Post

Editorial & Opinion

Scott Newton, editor
Kimberly Nelson, advertising representative

Merchants donate to cheer up streets

If you've seen the new street decorations that have brought a touch of Christmas to Pioneer and Proctor boulevards, you should realize that someone went to a lot of effort to put them there.

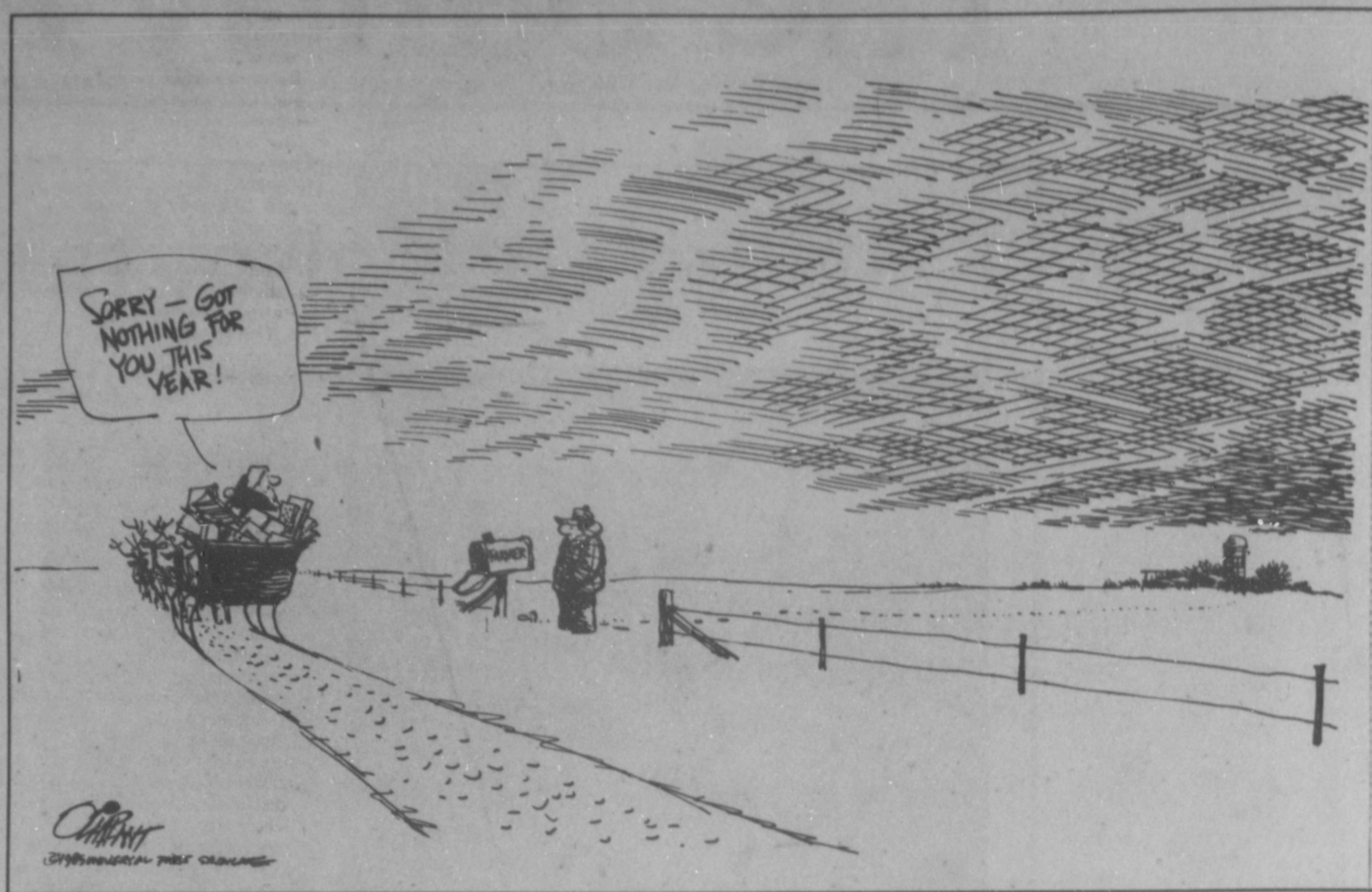
And if you appreciate the bright and shiny gleam of those decorations, you should consider spreading a thank you to those folks who made it possible — or perhaps your thanks will come in donating yourself to expand the street decor for next Christmas.

It all got started with the Sandy Area Chamber of Commerce. They ponied up the first $2,000 and plan to dedicate $2,000 next year and in 1987 for more decorations. But, it didn't stop there. A committee under the guidance of Diane Tiller and George Hyland drummed up support from local businesses.

A total of $1,585 came rolling in — a goodly amount for the first try. Merchants should be commended for their open spirit and willingness to give to a project that brightens Sandy for area residents as well as improves its image in the eyes of travelors passing through.

Besides those who donated money, several organizations have provided special services to make the decorations program a success. They need to be commended. They are: the city of Sandy for agreeing to pay for the electric bill; Bob Kallen of Portland General Electric and Roy Allen of Alpine Tree Service for installing the glittering banners and the Christmas trees and candles. Also, Sandy Truck Lines which will store the decorations during the year.

But, the biggest thanks goes to those who opened their wallets during a season when spending is already high. You've helped make Sandy a better place to live.



Salem Scene

AOI demystifies payroll tax

by JACK ZIMMERMAN

Remember getting paid for your first real job?

Chances are you were disappointed because you didn't make as much as you expected.

And how about your first raise?

It was less than you were led to believe, too. Wasn't it?

These circumstances aren't uniquely those of new members of the workforce. The amount nearly every worker takes home for the first pay period of each new year has been diminishing — unless workers happened to get a raise in January.

Why? What's the boss trying to pull?

It's not the boss' fault, honest. Chances are the boss is just as concerned because he winds up paying more while you are getting less.

This confusing state of affairs is largely due to three government-mandated fringe benefits that even some veteran members of the workforce don't clearly comprehend. But, thousands of Oregon workers will be receiving an explanation on their first pay day in 1986.

It will come in the form of a simple leaflet along with their first paycheck or pay envelope of the new year. The free payroll tax leaflets are a long-standing project of the education arm of Associated Oregon Industries — the AOI Foundation Inc. It was incorporated in 1975 to help raise the level of economic understanding among Oregonians. The leaflets are one of a number of projects conducted by the non-profit foundation.

Specifically, the leaflets explain the costs incurred by both workers and their bosses in complying with laws involving Social Security, workers' compensation and unemployment compensation insurance. And in the process, they unravel the mystery of those alphabetical symbols on paycheck stubs — accounting for the difference between base pay and what workers take home.

Examples are FICA (Social Security), FWI (federal income tax withheld) and SWT (state income tax withheld). Others include SUTA (formerly SUCC — state unemployment tax), WC (workers' compensation tax) and FUTA (federal unemployment tax).

In the process of explaining these items clearly and succinctly, the leaflets also reveal details and red tape their employers' accountants and payroll departments must cope with on a regular basis. They go a long way toward dispelling commonly held myths about who pays and how much is paid for Social Security, unemployment insurance and workers' compensation.

For example, employers are required to pay the federal government the exact amount each employee finds deducted for Social Security. In 1986, employees and employers each pay 7.15 percent of each employee's first $42,000 in salary or wages. That's up from 7.05 percent on a base of $39,600 in 1985.

The 1986 increase is the 29th since the Social Security Act was first enacted in 1935. Initial taxes were only $30 each on employers and employees, totaling $60 a year. What was first intended as a forced supplemental retirement fund has spawned such a multiplicity of additional benefits the cost has become astronomical.

The total in 1986 is $6,006 — an increase of roughly 10,000 percent.

Then there is workers compensation — employer-paid insurance benefitting injured workers. Average Oregon premiums will be $2.80 per $100 of payroll — but premiums are based on relative job safety and can be as high as $100 on every $100 of payroll under extra-hazardous conditions. Employers also pay the Workers' Compensation Department an additional assessment of 12 percent of premium and 12 cents a day. Employees pay 14 cents daily.

Workers don't contribute anything to Unemployment Compensation Insurance. Employers pay twice — 3.1 percent of an employee's first $14,000 in wages to the state program and .8 percent of the first $7,000 to the federal fund.

A graphic example of how these payments and deducations stack up appears on the backs of the payroll leaflets. Using the example of a married worker with two dependents earning $363 a week, the worker contributes $25.95 for Social Security and 70 cents toward workers' compensation, for a total of $26.65.

That worker's employer matches the Social Security payment of $25.95, pays $11.25 for state unemployment insurance, $2.91 to the federal unemployment fund, an average of $10.16 workers' compensation premium, 60 cents additional contribution and $1.22 assessment to the Workers' Compensation Department.

That adds up to $52.09 — almost twice what the employee pays.

What's more, if those employer contributions were added to the employee's base pay, it would rise from $363 to $415.09 weekly.

Still another way to look at it involves adding the employer contributions to the worker's net pay. In the case of the leaflet example, the employee takes home $275.35 after federal and state income tax withholding and the deductions for Social Security and workers' compensation.

Add the employer's contribution of $52.09 and the worker actually receives $327.44 — considerably closer to the base pay of $363.

All of which proves that part of an employer's cost of doing business tends to alleviate the cost of workers being employed.

Zimmerman is communications coordinator for the Associated Oregon Industries, a business-based lobbying group.

Guest column

Two teenagers say 'don't drive drunk'

by DARCY STOUT
and SHANNON CONNALL

I am 17 and my friend is 16. We are presently attending Gresham High School.

We are writing with a concern. A concern about drunk driving. We feel we have this right considering the fact that we have lost two people between us: a mother and a sister and best friend.

We know it's the holiday season and a time of good cheer and many parties — parties at which alcohol will be served. Our concern is for those people who attempt to drive after they have been drinking.

Even if we only reach one person and cause them to not drink and drive, we will have accomplished something.

When you get on that road with too much alcohol in your system, you're like a time bomb waiting to explode. You endanger not only your own life, but the lives of those around you who have family and friends.

It is not a good way to go.

It can be prevented so easily by not getting on the road if you are intoxicated. There are many other options. Don't do it just out of the fear of having your liscense suspended.

Do it out of concern for your own life and those around you. That is what it really comes down to.

Drinking and driving don't mix!

It seems the laws get tougher but still lives are lost. People don't understand. They never think it will happen to them. They think they can handle their alcohol, especially when it is necessary to drive.

What we feel would help would be if alcohol bottles were required to put on warning labels, like cigarettes do, saying, "Don't Drink and Drive!"

We all know how dangerous alcohol is by itself. But when someone gets on the road drunk, they are putting you and I in danger. It is not fair!

Maybe if alcohol did contain a warning label people would think. But individuals need to be responsible for their own acts by not getting on that road if they feel the slightest bit intoxicated.

We realize we cannot stop anyone from drinking and driving. That is up to the individual. But we felt obligated to write this warning and get a few people to understand. Drinking and driving is dangerous.

Don't say, "I'm all right and can make it home." Give someone your keys or call a cab. You could be saving your life or, most likely, someone else's life.

Have a very Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year. Please drive safely.

Darcy Stout's sister, Kimberly, 17, and her mother, Marjorie, 36, were killed in a car accident in June 1985.

Policy on letters

Letters to the editor should be typed, double-spaced and signed. An address and telephone number should also be provided, although only the name of the letter writer and the city or area he is from will be published.

The news deadline of noon, Tuesday is also the deadline for letters to the editor.

Letters should be accurate, free of libelous remarks and in good taste. This newspaper attempts to publish all letters it receives from area residents. We reserve the right to edit letters to conform to style guidelines or for length. A preferred maximum length is 300 words.

The Sandy Post

(USPS 481-180)

MEMBER: Oregon Newspaper Publishers Association, National Newspaper Association and U.S. Suburban Press.

Published weekly Thursdays by the Outlook Publishing Co. Box 68, Sandy, Oregon 97055. Second class postage paid at Sandy, Oregon.

668-5548

SUBSCRIPTION RATES

In Clackamas County per year $9.00
Multnomah County $10.00
Elsewhere in Oregon $11.50

Sandy Post, Sandy, Oregon 97055 No. 51 December 24, 1985