The Sandy Post

Editorial & Opinion

Scott Newton, editor
Karinda Hedlund, advertising representative
POST Thurs., December 24, 1987

Giving is evidence of Christmas spirit

It would be nice to keep the spirit of Christmas alive all year round.

Not the gift giving and the candy and the Santas, although those things are all fun.

But the true spirit of Christmas, which we are so fortunate to see all around us.

Christmas trees are sold to raise money for good causes. Cans of food are sought for admission to a business group's noon meeting. Stacks of cans sit in the corner of a classroom. A neighbor is repairing old dolls.

And Saturday, in a culmination of the work of so many people and groups, members of the Kiwanis Club of Sandy loaded boxes of food and toys into the cars of people who have not yet found the bountiful life.

The food boxes were given to our neighbors, people we see on the streets and in stores.

And Saturday, when they went to collect the food boxes, they did not talk a great deal, but smiled politely. A few of them appeared to be embarrassed.

Members of the Kiwanis Club joked good-naturedly among themselves, giving the cavernous room inside the old Thiftway building a friendly atmosphere. There was no reason for embarrassment, no reason to fear disparaging remarks. There was no talking behind people's backs.

There were some quiet but meaningful exchanges. "Merry Christmas." "Merry Christmas to you."

The world is not a perfect place, but some people try darned hard to make it that way.

Lot dispute is private

It is interesting how some ideas circulate. Ever since Glen Butler fenced off Tax Lot 300, people in Sandy have been suggesting that the City Council force him to allow access on something a nebulous as a "fire lane."

For starters, fire issues are the jurisdiction of the Sandy Fire District, not the City Council. But more importantly, Butler's cable is not blocking access needed if there were indeed a fire at Heritage Square or at Sandy Sentry.

It is funny how some people look to government to solve every problem. But this is one case where the City Council has decided it is a private matter — and the council members were entirely correct in their thinking.

According to Tom Farrell, owner of Sandy Sentry, a year ago Butler sought to quadruple the amount he charged in rent for Farrell's use of the lot, so Farrell quit leasing it. Last week Butler put up a fence around the property. Since the fence went up, neither Butler nor Farrell will discuss the matter with The Post.

But Butler did appear before the City Council a year ago asking that the council lease the parking lot for $500 a month. The City Council said it wasn't interested. And rightly so. Why should taxpayers subsidize the Butler family investment?

The forces of a free market — and not government — will solve this problem.

It may not be an easy, painless solution, but it will eventually get worked out.

It is unfortunate, of course. Sometimes it seems that business owners in downtown Sandy never get a break.

But it is up to Farrell, Butler, other business owners in the vicinity, or the Sandy Area Chamber of Commerce, to find a solution.

It is not a fray, however, for the City Council to enter. Free market forces will eventually solve it.

Where to write

State Representative Bob Shiprack, D-Dist. 23, 22610 Forest Park Rd., Beavercreek, Ore., 97004. 631-3817. Or: State Capitol, Room H288, Salem, Ore., 97310. 1-800-332-2313.

State Senator Bob Kintigh, D-Dist. 14, 38865 E. Cedar Flat Road, Springfield, 97478. 746-1842. Or: State Capitol, Room S310, Salem, Ore., 97310. 1-800-327-7389.

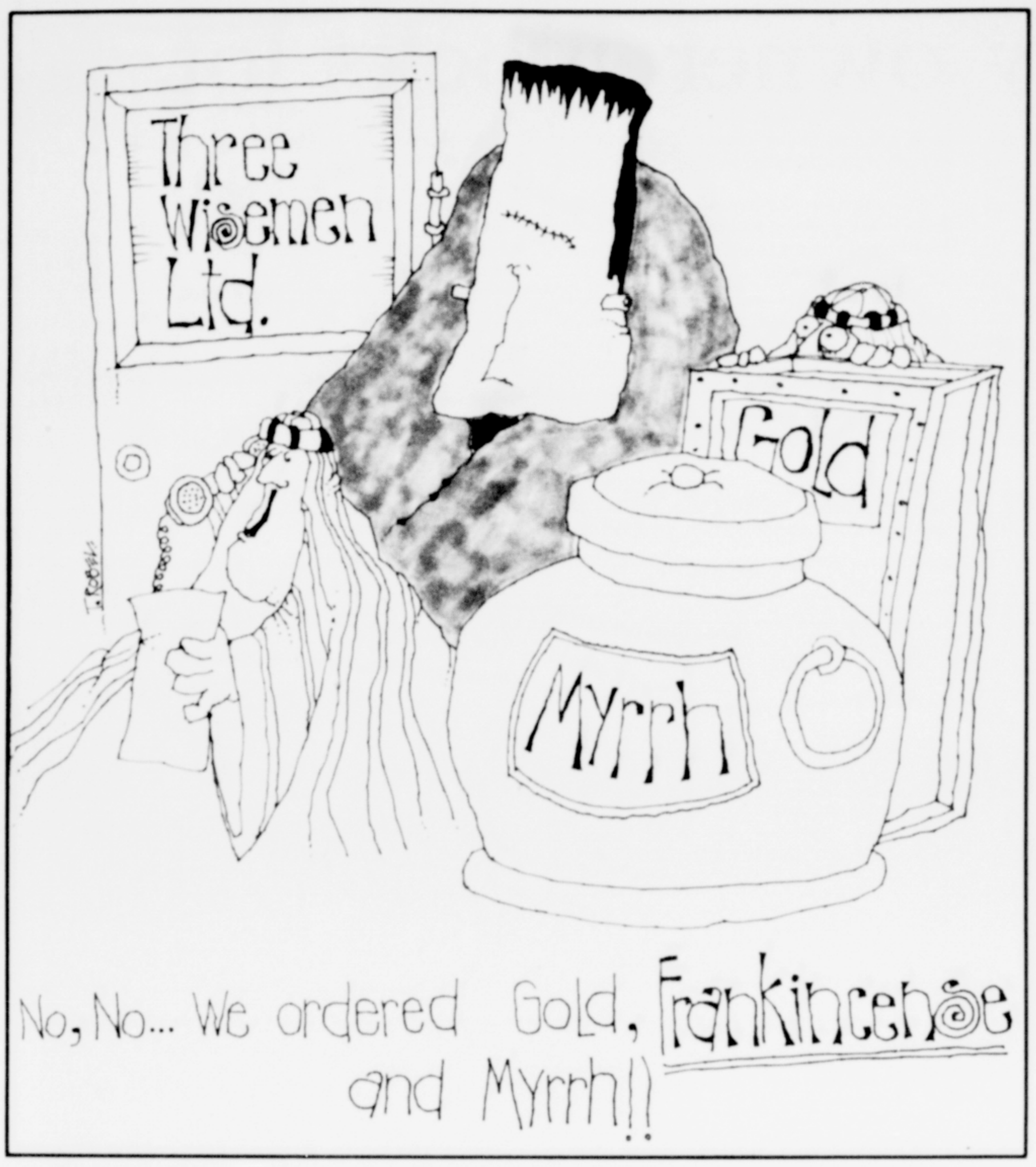
Sen. Mark Hatfield, R-Oregon, 711 Hart Building, Washington, D.C., 20510. 202-224-3753. Portland office phone 221-3386.

Sen. Bob Packwood, R-Oregon, 259 Russell Building, Washington, D.C., 20510. 202-224-5244. Portland office phone 221-3370.

Rep. Denny Smith, R-5th Dist., 1213 Longworth Building, Washington, D.C., 20515. 202-225-5711. Salem office phone (toll free) 1-800-452-7889.

Legislative access in Oregon: **1-800-327-7389.** One may call this number and ask to be connected to any state legislator's office.

Oregon Legislative status number: **1-800-332-2313.** One may call this number to learn the status of bills pending in the Oregon Legislature.



State retirement fund study likely to get attention in '89

by JACK ZIMMERMAN
Associated Oregon Industries

A claim that the state's Public Employee Retirement System (PERS) may be overfunded appears likely to become an agenda item when the Legislature meets next in 1989.

Such a claim is part of preliminary findings of an independent study of PERS by Oregon Tax Research, a non-partisan, non-profit taxpayer research organization.

Associated Oregon Industries, a statewide organization of private employers, has further suggested to the Governor's Commission on School Funding Reform that the OTR contention may be a new source of revenue for basic support of schools.

Initial reaction to both the OTR study and the AOI school funding proposal evoked claims such action would constitute a raid on the $8 billion kitty from which public employees receive their retirement benefits.

Neither organization proposes any changes in the level of PERS benefits, however. OTR believes the PERS fund has attained such a high level of liquidity through successful investing that public employers could declare a contribution holiday for as long as seven years. During that period, OTR claims the fund would grow to $10 billion. OTR further claims such a holiday could result in annual savings of as much as $450 million in property taxes and income taxes.

AOI suggests that reducing employer contributions 50 percent would create savings sufficient to increase statewide basic school support to 40 percent — 10 percent above current state funding.

Remarkable growth in the size of the PERS fund has attracted attention of lawmakers in Salem for years. In 1979 the Legislature enabled employers to absorb employee contributions to the fund — adding 6 percent of salaries and wages to the composite 10.9 percent paid by public employers.

The 1985 Legislature, eyeing a fund nearing the $5 billion mark and earning nearly a billion dollars a year on investments, appointed an interim task force to study the issue. It produced a measure passed earlier this year requiring more frequent actuarial evaluations and assumption reports.

Members of the task force claimed that under the previous evaluation schedule the data presented to them each session was out of date and new data wouldn't be available until after the session ended.

PERS Director Patricia F. Wiegert indicated her staff was concerned about growth of the fund but tends to believe OTR's preliminary findings are simplistic.

PERS Board Chairman Ed Schroeder, retired State Forester, adds that the minor blip caused by the $900 million loss to the fund on Black Friday is an indication of the fund's relative health.

Both are awaiting completion of a current evaluation and assumption report from the actuarial firm of Milliman and Robertson. Mark Johnson of that firm said the report likely will not be concluded until late spring or early summer next year.

Meanwhile, Wiegert said a portion of her concern involved the fact the system's 30-year funding cycle (1975-2005) had attained a 93 percent level in its first 12 years.

Johnson, on the other hand, contends the vast bulk of current employer contributions are necessary to assure the system's funded philosophy. He added, however, that he believes the 30-year funding period must be reassessed.

Johnson claims that of the approximate 17 percent contribution, 15 percent is necessary to pay current and future benefits and the additional 2 percent now goes toward retiring the system's debt.

He likens the system's operation to a 30-year home mortgage plan, assumed in 1975 after the fund was discovered to be underfunded. In theory, at least, the fund would be debt free in 2005 and contributions could conceivably be reduced at that time.

Many variables stand in the way of such an assumption, he cautions. Johnson says his firm's current charge is to devise a system that reduces volatility inherent in contribution rates. He reports PERS consists of some 350 covered jurisdictions, ranging from the judiciary, schools and state agencies to cities, counties and local government subdivisions. Most have different rates from which the 17 percent composite is determined.

Those rates tend to vary from time to time, depending on conditions within each segment and the fund as a whole.

Many conditions affect the entire system — wage and salary levels, benefits, deaths and disabilities, employment levels, inflation and retirements.

Consequently, the rate structure must be fine-tuned periodically to keep up with changing conditions. Keeping the rates as stable as possible is advantageous to employers from a budgetary standpoint.

In the meantime, PERS is cooperating with OTR and the taxpayer research organization is soliciting funds to carry its preliminary investigation through to completion.

Depending on its ability to attract sufficient support, the OTR study could conclude about the same time the acturial study is completed.

In any event, it's a safe bet one or more of the current Legislature's interim committees will consider results of both with an eye toward drafting proposals to consider beginning in January 1989.

Daughter warms an icy heart

by SHARON NESBIT
Staff writer

The letter came last week:

"To the editor:

"I feel the need to apologize to East Multnomah County on behalf of my mother and your resident columnist, Sharon Nesbit.

"You know, you do your best to raise your parents right, and then they turn around a write a smug, right-wing diatribe about how the homeless just failed to pull up their bootstraps (Dec. 9). Believe me, I tried to talk her out of it before she wrote it. I reminded her of all the caring and compassionate values I've tried to instill in her over the last 26 years. But you know mothers: headstrong and obstinate, despite your best intentions.

"So please, don't hold it against her. She means not what she says. She really is a good person, despite some advancing conservative attitudes. Just give her some time to mature, and I'm sure she'll come around to a more progressive viewpoint."

Though she signed her brother's name to it, I knew in a flash that the viper in my nest had to be No. 1 Kid. The first clue was that she, not her brother, is 26. And in those 26 years she has developed a finely-honed social consciousness and a wicked sense of humor.

Briefly stated, the column she took issue with was the one in which I took issue with fund-raisers who try to make us feel guilty in an attempt to further their causes. No. 1 Kid does not buy my theory that the homeless are often homeless because they make poor choices.

The neat thing about having kids is teaching them to think. The shock comes when they grow up "headstrong and obstinate" and don't necessarily think the way we do.

Her father says that she was all right until we sent her to Eugene to college. "That hotbed of liberalism," he mutters.

But No. 1 Kid also learned about poverty firsthand. For five years she has run a Christmas program that aids poor families in Clark County, Wash.

It is part of her job and she gets paid for it. But No. 1 Kid also puts a lot of heart in it. Beginning in November she sets aside her dress-for-success clothes, pulls on jeans and heavy socks and mittens and works in a drafty warehouse gathering money, new and used goods, and food from the community. This year she and a corps of volunteers have done battle with a balky furnace, have sorted mountains of old clothes, have figured out a way to cover ruptured upholstered chairs so they'll last through one more winter and have scrounged gift wrap from department stores.

This year the project will aid 2,400 families and in that, No. 1 Kid and I are in total agreement. I said in my column that families with children need the best of our resources.

No. 1 Kid always comes from the warehouse with stories to tell. Of the Mexican family looking through piles of discarded clothes for a first communion dress for their daughter. Of the father whose son died at Christmas and each year since has brought a new bicycle to give to a poor child.

Poverty happens all year long. So does kindness. But both shine in a special light at Christmas.

And the shadows are darker. Last Thursday as No. 1 Kid got ready to leave the warehouse, she went to the office for her favorite ski jacket, a special present from someone she loves. It was gone. Possibly stolen by one of the people she was there to help.

Her employer will buy No. 1 Kid a new jacket. And the theft doesn't appear to have changed her thinking. Her philosophy may be dented but it is intact.

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
In Northwest and Pacific Coast States Outside Oregon, per year	$14.00
Outside Northwest and Pacific Coast States, per year	$17.00

Sandy Post, Sandy, Oregon 97055 No. 51 December 24, 1987

Bobcats

Adam Kraft