I was afraid I'd miss the shenanigans when the *EW* reported June 13 about 2012's rodeo scramble's rabbits getting flung out of pickup trucks and trailers. Being stepped on while the horde of children chased them. One bunny got his jaw broken. Family values! Teach our kids compassion!

Hardly surprising if, thrown from a place many times your height, you get hurt. If someone three or four times your weight jumps or steps on you, you might break a bone. I say if critters want to be in a rodeo, that's their lookout!

But, despite bunny huggers, my heroes at the Cottage Grove Rodeo did a workaround. Rabbits get folks' dander up — so much so that two organizations offered to pay us not to do it — well, let's just use chickens! And chickens are smaller and more easily hurt than rabbits, so that ought to ratchet up the fun!

And a good time will be had. By some.

Rita Castillo
Springfield

READY TO BLOW

Hey Oregon, I can't pump my own gas because of "safety concerns," yet I can stuff my trunk with explosives from a roadside fireworks stand? Whaaa?!

Glenn Leonard
Eugene

NOTES FROM THE RIVERSIDE

BY MARK HARRIS

The Wiley Preacher

CERTAIN PARTS OF HISTORY PRONE TO BE BURIED

The air was calm, the birdsong brisk, as sunlight slanted through the canopy, spotlighting the Wiley Griffon Historical Monument in the Eugene Masonic Cemetery. It may have been a trick of the light, but Wiley's bronze eye sparkled. The Preacher and I stood looking out into the forest, overlooking the gravesite on the 50th anniversary of the assassination of Medgar Evers, June 12.

"So, they canceled?" he asked. "The TV station that didn't make the memorial dedication, but did make an appointment to come out on the anniversary of Medgar's death?"

"Right. Not that they made that connection, but I thought it made a good peg: them doing a story on a monument to the first historical African-American, whom we know not by his voice, but by his death." I said. "They wanted to know why it took 15 years to finally build it, but decided the police chief scandal in Springfield was more important than a man who himself lived here for 15 years, as an illegal citizen of the United States."

"An illegal citizen?" the Preacher asked.

"Yes," I said. "The state of Oregon made African-Americans illegals in their own country for the same reasons that today the descendants of pyramid builders were made illegal: entering the lands which once belonged to the first non-indigenous country on the continent to free its slaves and elect a black president."

"Were you going to actually say that on camera?" the Preacher asked. "That certain illegal immigrants were once welcomed here long before either Spanish or English were even heard in the land?"

"Yea verily," I said unto him. "I might have broadcast it even to the uttermost rooftop, that they were welcome here before the Latin alphabet was even invented. So who is the illegal immigrant now, Pilgrim?"

"Race is not a card," quoth the Preacher. "But why did it take so long to build it? If it were just simply a matter of money, it would have been done a long time ago. There are forces working to bury certain history, so you have to remain focused if you get betrayed; be resolute in the face of setbacks," he said.

"A book called *Peculiar Paradise: A History of Blacks in Oregon* by Elizabeth McLagan largely omits Eugene, and it went out of print, except for online if you know about it. Buried black history, unmarked like Wiley. In this peculiar paradise of Eugene, Ore., the people you'd expect to be your natural allies don't support you. You receive unexpected help from interesting quarters," he said.

"The Black community in this instance was represented by a handful of students at LCC, and a couple. The mainstream community was represented by various governmental organizations, and a couple."

"So, the lesson for you," the Preacher summed up: "Focusing the heat of anger into the light of determination, bringing Cheri's research to fruition, finally pouring ancestor libations.

I replied, "I wrote the text as if my voice wouldn't be heard, or quoted, like Wiley's voice, but the monument at least would endure. Wiley's smilin'."

"Amen," said the Preacher.

Mark Harris is an instructor and substance abuse prevention coordinator at LCC. Harris and Cheri Turpin, his wife, have worked for 15 years to raise money for a monument to Wiley Griffon.

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