

A HEAVENLY GOOD TIME

"Is there a heaven? I'd like to think so."
— Bryan Ferry.

And if there is, I'd like to think that the world's largest album collection (including 45s) is also up there — hooked up to the world's finest stereo components from the 1970s.

And if there is, I'd like to think that Mr. Bill Finneran is at the controls, having a heaven of a good time playing the best of everything he so loved.

And if there is a heaven as such, I'd like to think that I'll also be up there in the end, picking out the next selection.

Goodbye Mr. Finneran — you will always be remembered.

Chaz Kirsch
Harrisburg

FOOD RIGHTS

Support Local Food Rights maintains that the people's right to vote trumps substantive objections to our initiative, the Local Food System Ordinance of Lane County. What is the point of the initiative process if the people's voices are silenced before we even get to speak? We are not deterred by the passage of SB 863 (formerly SB 633) and are not encouraged by a proposed statewide answer.

The state's assertion that it can achieve better results than the local communities is patronizing. We remain committed to the initiative process that respects the community's right to the ballot box and local decision-making.

Michelle Holman
Deadwood

SKIN IN THE GAME

Regarding all of the brouhaha over the disrespectful name Washington Redskins: Team names are obdurate; they don't easily embrace change. However, out of respect for Native American cultures and to more honestly reflect the city that they represent,

I do believe that it is high time for the Washington Redskins to change their name. I even have a suggestion: the Washington Foreskins, in honor of all the peckerheads representing us in our nation's Capitol.

David Perham
Eugene

CELEBRATE MARRIAGE

Things are definitely worth celebrating after reading Sally Sheklow's "State of Celebration" column Oct. 3. Especially when finding out about the Oregon United for Marriage petition, which is collecting signatures so that a marriage equality

DISPATCHES FROM AFGHANISTAN

BY JAKE KLONOSKI

Shutdown's Distant Impact

U.S. GOVERNMENT CHAOS CARRIES INTO WAR ZONE

The U.S. entered the 13th year of conflict in Afghanistan Oct. 7, and the effort here sits on a knife's edge. A week ago, the U.N. Security Council authorized the final extension of the international security mandate, which is now set to expire at the end of 2014. Ongoing deliberations between U.S. and Afghan governments will determine the future of our anti-terrorism efforts and training missions here after 2014. Coalition partners await the outcome of the U.S.-Afghan agreement to decide their own commitments. Negotiations with the Taliban continue in fits and starts. And on Oct. 6 Afghan presidential candidates registered for a democratic transition of power, a first in Afghan history.

Also on Oct. 6 four U.S. soldiers, including a 24-year-old from Philomath, were killed by an IED in Kandahar province, bringing the number of coalition forces killed to 3,390. The next day, reviewing the effort in Afghanistan, President Karzai declared that on the security front, "the entire NATO exercise was one that caused Afghanistan a lot of suffering, a lot of loss of life and no gains because the country is not secure."

While Karzai's comments may offend those who have sacrificed so much, at least he recognizes the challenges facing his country. Back in the U.S., where a bitter standoff that began with a senator reading from *Green Eggs and Ham* during a 21-hour call for a government shutdown that continues, it seems this war is forgotten.

Progress in Afghanistan is always difficult, but now it seems nearly impossible. In ideal circumstances, significant development requires steady effort, reliable engagement with Afghan leaders, continuous coordination with coalition partners, unending outreach, countless cups of Afghan chai and, in Herat where the coalition is Italian-led, many cappuccinos. The shutdown has pushed us much further from the ideal.

For instance, consider an ongoing development project that required travel to Kabul to meet with Afghan Minister of Water and Power Ismail Khan. Khan's political career began as a junior officer in the communist government. Sent to Herat to suppress popular protests in March 1979, he instead ordered the Army's weapons to be distributed to the crowds. They proceeded to storm

city government buildings and executed a garrison of Soviet advisers and their families, putting severed heads on sticks that were then paraded through downtown Herat. The action marked the beginning of the Afghan war against the Russians and resulted in the eventual Russian carpet-bombing of Herat.

Khan led the resistance in the west for more than two decades, against the Russians then the Taliban. His political domination of western Afghanistan is near absolute, and his promotion to a cabinet position in Kabul failed to shake his position as its preeminent warlord. He is not a man to deal with lightly.

Flown to Kabul to brief Minister Khan on development projects in western Afghanistan, I cursed the government shutdown that left the project expert, a Defense Department civilian employee, behind in Herat because the \$104 plane ticket could not be purchased.

After I had finished laying out our project in his Kabul office, a platter of grapes, pistachios and almonds alongside the requisite cup of tea in front of me, Khan inquired about the status of another project, a girl's dormitory being built for Herat University. I had to explain that although the project would be completed, while the U.S. government remained shut down, no money could be spent.

"This situation is difficult for those who support your projects, for the workers and those expecting them to be finished," he replied through a translator. With a slight shake of his head, the cabinet minister of a nation that ranks near the bottom of every governance list asked, "How long until the U.S. is working again?"

Flying west after the meeting, the plane I was on aborted its descent into Herat International Airport and sharply climbed in altitude. As we circled over Herat, I looked out the plane's window and noticed small explosions around Camp Arena, the coalition base near the airport. As we circled, I watched as insurgents lobbed mortars toward the people with whom I serve. Texting on my cell phone, I reported what I could see to the base operations center.



KLONOSKI, SECOND FROM LEFT, STANDS NEXT TO ISMAIL KHAN

Fortunately, the plane eventually landed safely and no one was hurt. Thinking about the trip later, I realized that the airborne experience was less frustrating than sitting opposite Khan. At least in the air I could see what was going on and could report on the enemy firing at us. The government shutdown, more destructive on the whole than any indiscriminate fire from insurgents, leaves much of the American effort aimlessly circling, waiting for the conflict to subside, but blind to the details of the fight and impotent to counteract a force that fails to comprehend the damage being done.

Perhaps worst of all, the shutdown even cut off the Armed Forces Network, a military rebroadcast of U.S. television. One cannot even seek out Oregon football to escape the frustrations of Central Asia.

In Afghanistan, as the presidential election gets under way, men (and some women) with antagonistic ethnic support bases, radically divergent national visions and often with violent histories (as well as command of large militias) are joining forces to form election tickets, each with one presidential and two vice presidential candidates. Though the election will certainly not solve all the nation's problems, 27 tickets have been formed to seek a popular mandate to lead. Among those running is Khan as a vice presidential candidate.

If Ismail Khan, who oversaw a parade of his enemies' heads through the streets, can accept the advantage of solving difference through building bridges with opponents and contesting policy differences through the normal electoral process, perhaps, with so much at stake and so much already sacrificed by so many, America's leaders can as well. The effort here likely depends on it.

Jake Klonoski is from Eugene and has been a U.S. Navy submarine officer since 2002, serving in Italy, Bahrain, Japan, Kosovo, Afghanistan and plenty of time at sea. He left active duty in 2010 and was mobilized after graduating Stanford Law School in June 2013 for service in Kabul assisting in economic development and stability operations.