KeizerOpinion

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Tomorrow's volunteers

Pride, spirit and volunteerism. It is the Keizer city motto and it is in evidence every day in our community. The mayor, the city council, all of the city's boards, commissions and task forces are manned by residents volunteering their time forwarding proposals and advice to the council.

Those volunteers are important to the operation of the city. There are other volunteers who are more hands on, doing the heavy lifting on projects the city does not have money for. What will the future hold for projects led by volunteers who are getting older and ready to retire from their community service duties?

That issue was in the spotlight on Monday at the city council meeting regarding Keizer Rapids Park in general and the Keizer Rotary Amphitheatre in particular.

A small core of Keizer residents and businesspeople, working with the acquiescence of the Public Works Department, have fertilized, watered, dug trenches, power washed, mowed, pruned and constructed at the amphitheatre. There was also much work at the Keizer Rapids Park Dog Park.

Clint Holland, Rick Day and Randy Miller, some of Keizer's premier community volunteers and philanthropists, will not be able to continue do the work they've been doing indefinitely. Time and work do take their toll. Currently all three men (and the others in their core group of selfless community activists) are still vibrant and vital, but thought must be given to who will take their place in maintaining the amphitheatre and other Keizer Rapids Park amenities, especially new ones that are planned: big playground, sports fields, etc.

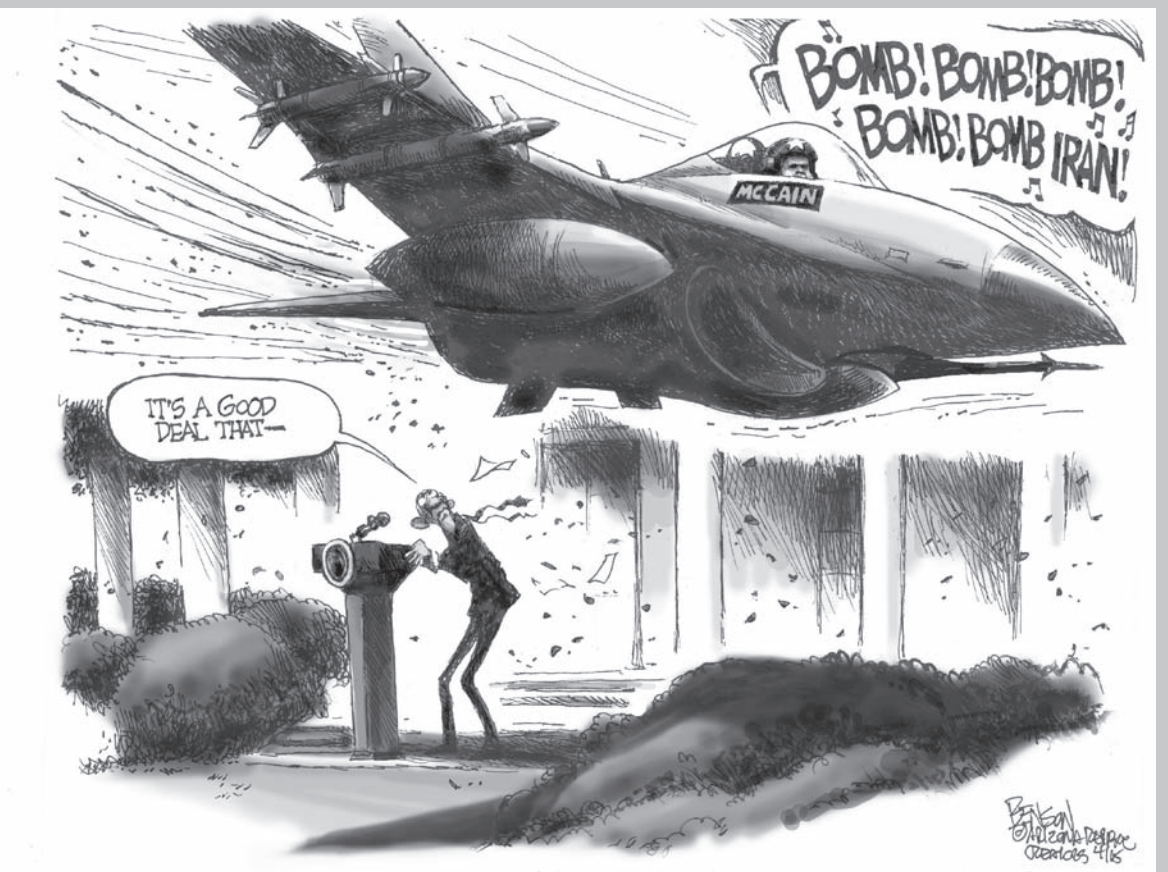
Can we expect this small group of dedicated citizens to take on the additional task of overseeing the playground toy? Softball fields? Soccer fields? Volleyball courts? The generous people of Keizer will open their wallets and free up their time to build such amenities. Maintaining them is a different story. Giving money to build a soccer field is more fun than hauling irrigation hoses and mowers out to a three-acre field.

The city cannot take for granted that the future will be taken care of by successors to the current super-volunteers who have seen that the promise of Keizer Rapids Park not only came to fruition but is thriving.

Aside from identifying successors to Holland, Day et al, the city needs to find a way to pay for the parks and structures it approves.

The Parks and Recreation Advisory Board has been discussing how to create sustainable funding for Keizer's parks. With an eye to the future, especially at Keizer Rapids Park and its many elements, the city council needs to address the issue this year. Parks and green spaces undeniably add quality of life to a community. Aside from privatizing its parks the city has to find a way to assure that the parks it brings on line are taken care of so they will have a long shelf life and be enjoyed by many future generations of Keizerites.

—LAZ



Colleen Busch for transit

letters

To the Editor:

I support Colleen Busch, for Salem Keizer Transit District, Position #2. What a great opportunity to jump on board the Colleen Busch for Salem Keizer Transit District campaign. She knows a great deal about families and their needs, since she and her husband Bob Busch have raised a large and loving family in Keizer.

While she is God-centered, she is actively others-minded and has invested countless hours for health-related campaigns, such as cancer awareness and fundraising. She consistently supports the early childhood, youth/student and adult ministries at her church, which have positively impacted our community.

Colleen Busch has a firm grasp of what it's like not to have viable transportation, which has caused her to have an appreciative attitude towards those who've provided it. She knows the transportation struggles of our residents. Colleen Busch has been involved with the Keizer Chamber of Commerce and has effectively communicated with the businesses that serve a wide variety of age group within our community. Therefore, due to her high level of commitment, dedication for community service, knowledge, positive attitude, flexibility and her ability to work well with others, I strongly support Colleen Busch for Salem Keizer Transit District, Position #2, to ensure that our community's transportation needs will be met in a cost-effective and realistic way.

Gary B. Steiner
Keizer

Celebrate service focus next week

To the Editor:

"Celebrate Service," the theme for National Volunteer Week (April 12-18), honors the people who dedicate themselves to supporting, taking action and solving problems in their communities. The Keizer Heritage Center joins in this celebration to recognize the hundreds of volunteers who use their personal and collective talents to make a difference at the Keizer Community Library, Keizer Art Association and the Heritage Center Museum.

Without volunteers these organizations would not exist. Hundreds of generous men and women, who through countless acts of kindness, generosity and service, assure these organizations' services will continue to serve the community. One person can make a difference, and these volunteers assure the doors are kept open so that:

The Keizer Community Library can continue to provide classic library services for patrons including children's programs and a small computer center with Wi-Fi that are free to the public;

The Keizer Heritage Museum can continue to be a critical link in keeping the community connected to the past;

The Keizer Art Association can continue to provide art education as well as promote local artists at the Enid Joy Mount gallery monthly art shows. Our volunteers are the heart and soul of our organizations, and each one makes a big difference in our community. Our services depend on volunteers, and we thank them from the bottom of our hearts.

Gayle McMurria-Bachik
Keizer Community Library

Betty Hart for fire board

To the Editor:

I support Betty Hart, who is running for Keizer Fire District, position #5. I have known Betty and her husband, Mike, for over 30 years. As long as I have known them, they have both been involved in our community. In recent years, Betty has been a strong supporter of the fire district and worked on their campaigns and attended many of their meetings. She has a background in local government budgeting and non-profit finance. She has also worked at engaging people in the local government process. Betty has always been knowledgeable about issues and researches those things she doesn't know. She is a good listener and has helped me understand some complex issues. She will be a real asset to the Keizer Fire District.

I really care about the Keizer community and I want the best people to serve as our elected officials. That is why I am supporting Betty. Please join me in voting for Betty Hart.

Roland Herrera
Keizer

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If heroism is hopeless

other views

By MICHAEL GERSON

The apocalypse has been much on my mind.

This is not only because Ayatollah Ali Khamenei is now more or less officially in charge of a nuclear threshold state, or because a dictator with the mentality of a spiteful teenager controls North Korea's dozen or so atom bombs, or because a nuclear Pakistan was recently named the world's 10th most fragile state (right above Zimbabwe).

Contrary to expectation, the proliferation of nuclear weapons since World War II has been relatively slow. And the current global balance of power makes a world-ending, ozone-layer-destroying, nuclear-winter-inducing exchange unlikely.

But it doesn't take much historical imagination to spin a scenario in which, at some point over the next century, a different balance obtains. There could be a new and deadly global standoff, involving even more powerful weapons, with one side holding an ideology with a streak of suicide. The Bomb may still be "the destroyer of worlds."

Future existential threats to humanity might involve the spread of destructive knowledge not only to governments but to individuals. The splicing of genes could eventually become a do-it-yourself technology, allowing the creation of some deliberately species-ending virus. Or the fears of Elon Musk and Stephen Hawking could be realized with the emergence of artificial intelligence that becomes superior to human intelligence and annoyed by human existence.

These dark thoughts brought to mind an essay by C.S. Lewis, written not long after the dawn of the atomic age. Lewis provided a bracing warning against exaggerating the novelty of the situation: "Believe me, dear sir or madam, you and all whom you love were already sentenced to death before the atomic bomb was invented; and quite a high percentage of us were going to die in unpleasant ways. ... It is perfectly ridiculous to go about whimpering and drawing long faces because the scientists have added one more chance of painful and premature death to a world which already bristled with such chances and in which death itself was not a chance at all, but a certainty."

For all of us who perceive reality through the functions of a biological organism, the problem of the apocalypse is the problem of mortality. The fact that we may or may not hang together does not change the inevitability of the noose. We can all look forward to our own private apocalypse.

And the prognosis for humanity was never particularly good. The fossil record reveals a disturbing history of large asteroids and mass extinctions. Our sun, now vigorously middle-aged, will eventually flare and die. All of which is admittedly hard to contemplate on a cool spring morning.

Ultimately, the problem of the apocalypse is the problem of time. Blame the second law of thermodynamics. There is nothing about the other fundamental laws of physics that would keep them from running backward. But entropy marches in one direction, from more order to less. Eggs can be made into omelets, not omelets into eggs. It is possible to collect a puddle of organization in a specific place—in a body, a planet, a solar system, a galaxy or galaxy cluster—but only for a time. The universe, like the individual, tends toward sagging decay.

Cosmologists struggle to explain why the initial condition at the Big Bang was a high level of order (confusingly defined as a low level of entropy). But this is what set the arrow of time forward. And we should probably be grateful. Without the inevitability of decay there is no possibility of change, of growth, of evolution, of life, and of all the good, temporary things that life brings.

These things are worth defending from dictators, terrorists and the potential demon residing in our laptop. But it matters if our heroism is ultimately hopeless, like in some ancient, Greek play. Or if the winter of decay and disorder gives way to another season.

Just about every culture has ceremonies of fertility and renewal this time of year, celebrating the green shoots of hope within nature. Christianity, for its part, claims to reverse the natural order of decay and time, so that the end for human beings is not the darkness and silence of the universe as a tomb. Perhaps, it has been said, we are not human beings having a spiritual experience, but spiritual beings having a human experience. It is an unlikely, even outlandish, hope. But it reaches, on good authority, "even unto the end of the world."

(Washington Post Writers Group)

Taxes and IRS targeted as 2016 nears

gene h. mcintyre

There was a time in this country when Americans supported the government through taxes on distilled spirits, carriage making, refined sugar, tobacco and snuff sold at auction, corporate bonds and slaves. Limited as it was, it didn't last, of course, as the War of 1812 brought sales taxes on gold, silverware, jewelry, and watches and, in the next war, the American Civil War, Congress enacted the nation's first income tax law. Further, the Act of 1862 established the office of Commissioner of Internal Revenue.

Regular taxation waxed and waned until 1913 when the 16th Amendment made the income tax a permanent fixture in the U.S. tax system. The amendment gave Congress the legal authority to tax income and resulted in a revenue law that taxed incomes of both individuals and corporations. The withholding tax on wages was introduced in 1943 and brought a whole lot of money into the national coffer to fight a world war in Asia and Europe.

Americans were never ecstatic about paying their taxes but there was a certain amount of public resignation to them as a necessary evil. That mentality changed after American politicians noticed that elections can be won by dwelling on matters about which the general population, especially the anti-government crowd that want no part of organized government unless they want personal help. Then there are the so-called entitlement programs that are perennially on the chopping block because Americans in too many numbers don't want to help anyone but themselves no matter how dire the consequences to those denied assistance of any kind.

Putting the gloves on early to get out there in fighting form for the 2016 presidential competition, Senator Ted Cruz (R-Texas) wants to eliminate the IRS altogether. It's a good talking point for a political candidate who's got frontrunner status for now with the most conservative American voters. While it's unlikely to ever happen, folks such as Cruz make it sound as easy as eating a piece of cake.

Cruz has all but promised the votes of Tea Party Republicans but abolishing the IRS is a very tall order of the probably impossible kind. The IRS collects more than two and one-half trillion dollars every year that funds the military (you want to give ISIS free reign?), social security and Medicare (you want to see older Americans living, if at all, on the streets of America?) and the many projects that members of Congress deliver to constituents (by way of money through IRS collections that satisfy voters and help to keep the tenured ones in office).

Whatever your complaint, the IRS collects around $2.4 trillion every year. There are something like 90,000 IRS employees to accept and process your taxes while the Treasury Department also enforces the tax code for all who are required to pay. The bottom line on this matter is that if the U.S. is going to collect taxes, an agency must be there to do the work.

As president, Cruz says he'll make it easy as he'll have Americans file their taxes on the back of a postcard-size form. This way, the Treasury Department would collect taxes and not need the IRS. However, keep in mind that with every simple answer there are always related questions such as that the government would still need something in the order of 20 thousand workers (call them something other than IRS workers if that makes you feel better) to process the postcards coming into the Treasury.

Cruz also wants a flat tax that would use the postcard approach. Yet, a flat tax means no deductions. Is that a new condition of taxation in the U.S. that will be readily acceptable to those for whom this and that deduction mean savings of hundreds, even thousands of dollars, every year? But it also means the wealthy would pay the same percentage as those of lesser means.

Meanwhile, there are those organized groups that manage to avoid taxes. Religious orders and churches are so relieved. Scientologists were at one time ordered to pay the government taxes because there was a question about their political actions but used their bully pulpit, and alleged "dirty tricks," so to speak, to beat down the IRS through U.S. courts and avoid any taxes. Whatever the case, it takes a lot of money and power to be able to thumb your nose at the tax man so there are few among us, save for offshore U.S. corporations, who've succeeded.

For we mere mortals, April 15 is only five days from your reading this column. Yes, you can use the extension clause but they cost more because of interest charges. So, to delay to pay only costs you more.

(Gene H. McIntyre's column appears weekly in the *Keizertimes*.)