

KeizerOpinion

KEIZERTIMES.COM

Candidates deserved more

If you're going to hold a candidate forum, hold an actual candidate forum.

That is the takeaway from what was billed as the Keizer Chamber of Commerce's candidate forum during Tuesday's monthly chamber luncheon at Keizer Quality Suites.

There are a number of races in next month's election, with various seats on the Keizer Fire District Board, Salem-Keizer School Board, Marion County Fire District Board, Salem-Keizer Transit Board and the Chemeketa Community College Board.

Chamber officials invited candidates for all races to the luncheon, which was a tight time squeeze to begin with. Luncheons start at 11:30 a.m. with food, with the main program running from noon to 1 p.m.

What happened Tuesday was still a bit puzzling.

Squeezing a candidate forum into a luncheon can be done. After all, the same chamber did so for last fall's election. This time was different.

To start, candidates didn't sit up front at a head table. They were placed around the room at various tables, with the idea being that luncheon attendees would be able to chat with the candidates.

Considering the number of candidates, that seemed reasonable.

Except not all of the candidates were there. If all were present, there would have been 23 candidates.

Roughly half of them were absent, with a couple of opponents such as Chuck Lee taking advantage by getting in cheap (and inaccurate) shots.

But this was a prime chance for candidates to give speeches. Many would suspect candidates would jump at the chance and figure out a way to make it work.

That wasn't the biggest problem. Normal luncheon announcements and reminders were made. Mary Stewart from Oregon State University Extension Service talked about that group's program. She was kept to five minutes.

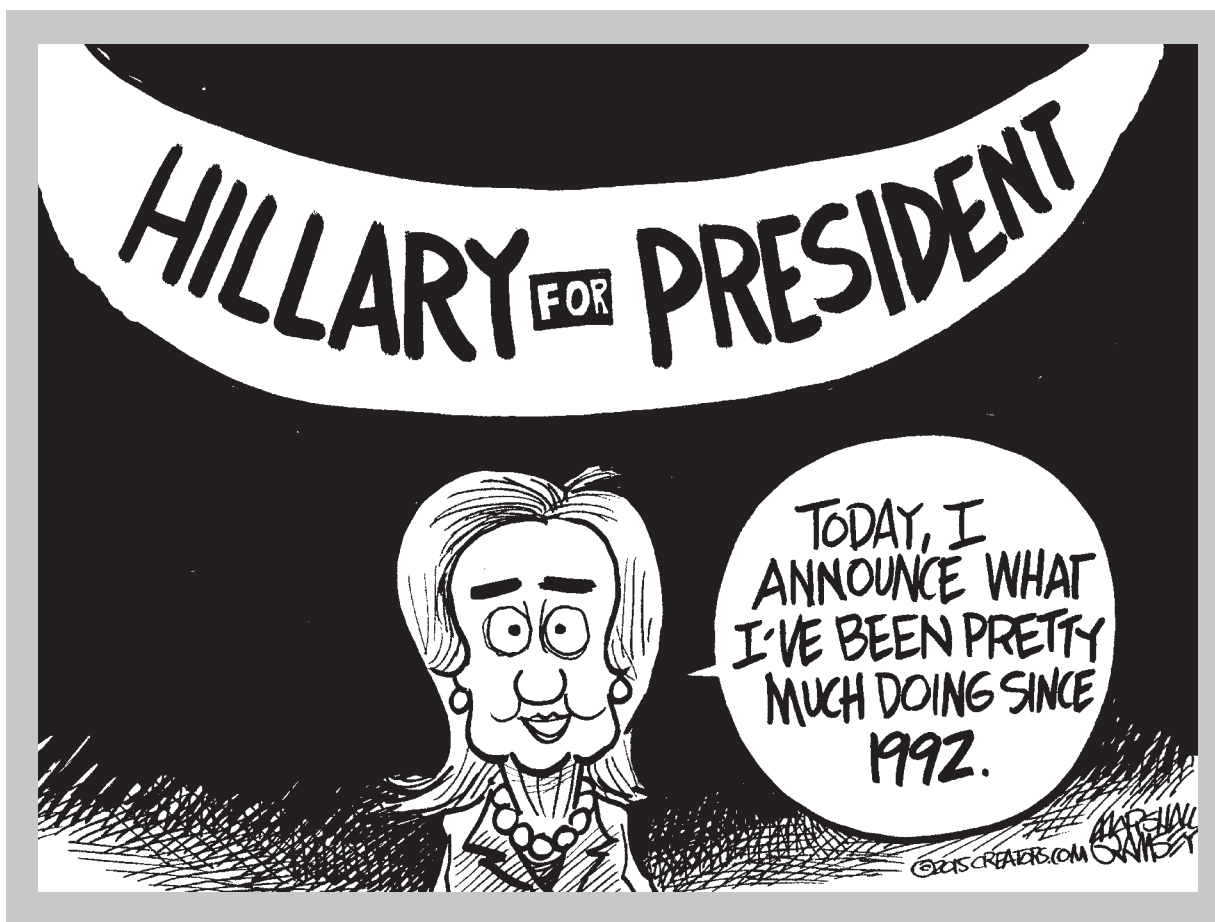
Here is the problem: by the time Joe Egli was done with a 20-minute talk about the upcoming Iris Festival, it was about 12:40 p.m. Since the chamber puts on Keizer's biggest annual event next month, it absolutely makes sense to have Egli promote it. But it left just 20 minutes for the normal self-introductions of the 50 or so people in attendance, plus time for door prizes.

The candidate forum still hadn't even started. People were asked to keep their self-introductions brief. It was announced candidates would get a minute or two to talk about themselves.

At an event billed as a candidate forum?

In short, candidates didn't get the forum they deserved on Tuesday, nor did voters.

- CM



Following the trail of the phone menu

BY DON VOWELL

As an illustration of the time I invest in research for these rants, I called the office of this newspaper during normal business hours.

They answered the phone. Hal-lelujah. My gratitude is out of proportion because I had just finished a call to the office of a large pharmacy several time zones out. When I die and am rightly sent to some middling level of Dante's Inferno, I suspect my eternal torment will be restricted to speaking only with automated phone systems.

The opening greeting of my pharmaceutical call was "If this is a medical emergency hang up and dial 911." Duh. The button pressing began when I needed to choose a language. That's reasonable. There was a needless warning to listen closely as menu options may have changed.

This one sometimes crosses me up. My mounting dread many times prevents me from devoting full attention to the recording. Option 4 seems like it could be right, but I keep listening all the way through 8 in case there is a choice that actually works for me. Sometimes I start over

because I don't remember if I was supposed to press 3 or 4.

Next you are advised if you know your extension number you may dial it now. It looks like an escape hatch until you are shunted to yet

another automated system. If you were unable to take that exit the menu options begin. Press 1 if you are a doctor or a hospital, press 2 to refill a prescription, 3 if you are a new patient (get out now if you still have that choice and find a pharmacy that answers the phone), 4 if you have questions about the amount of your co-pay, 5 for billing questions.

Billing questions, that's me. Sensing victory, I press 5. There's an electronic click, a panic-inducing silence then a ring tone indicating a new call to another department. Ms. Automated System picks up the call to advise me that my call may be recorded for quality control. Maybe that shames a few of us into not screaming when we finally get through. Then begins yet another set of options to categorize your billing question. Your last button press makes you think you are about done. You are told the average wait

time to speak with a representative is currently 12 minutes.

These systems are sold to businesses in the name of efficiency. Efficiency means saving businesses a little time by costing customers a lot of time. A robotic system that took several minutes to steer you to the right employee could have been eliminated by an employee that answered the phone and connected you with the right party. If Giant Pharmacy gets 1,500 calls a day they still must speak with each one, possibly excepting those that gave up on the automated phone system and hung up. If those calls cost each customer three minutes system navigation time that's a total of 75 hours. In the name of corporate efficiency they spent 75 hours aggravating their customers.

It could be that customer satisfaction and goodwill have fallen way behind net profits and stock performance as corporate goals. If any of those businesses are reading this please know that you can win lifelong loyalty just by answering your phone. After all the money you spent persuading the Supreme Court to declare your personhood, you might as well act like one.

(Don Vowell lives in Keizer and regularly takes to his box of soap in the Keizertimes.)

a box of soap

Vote for Betty Hart

The election of citizens to the Keizer Fire Board does not raise much attention.

This is a shame because the decisions made by the board affects life and property in Keizer. I believe it is important to elect knowledgeable people to those positions.

This is the reason why I am supporting Betty Hart to the board of directors. I attended monthly board meetings for more than eight years and I have always seen Betty there. In addition, she has also attended budget and advisory meetings consistently. Betty has been active in supporting much-needed levies to ensure the people in Keizer were protected. I believe Betty deserves a position on the board because of her knowledge and devotion to the district. Please join me and vote for Betty Hart.

Bill Quinn
Keizer

letters

big picture vision. If the 12 years as a city councilor were his only experience, that would certainly be enough; but

that's really just padding to his resume when compared to his decades of service to the community in other areas.

A local businessman, Rotarian and Little League coach, Jim has dedicated his life to the community and his vast experience will be a welcome addition to the fine members of the fire board. If you want an experienced, detailed and watchful eye keeping track of your tax dollars, join me in voting Jim Taylor for Keizer Fire District board of directors.

Brandon Smith
Keizer

Keizer Rapids concerts

I don't think it is right that they are making a for-profit operation out of the concerts at Keizer Rotary Amphitheater.

It was always non-profit for the people of the community, put on by band members of the community. Now they are going to make everybody pay and as usual only the folks that can afford it will go. It's too bad these greedy people are doing this to the community.

Tom Bidwell
Salem

Saving water? It's really not that difficult

BY GENE H. MCINTYRE

The classic *Two Years before the Mast* tells the story of Bostonian Richard H. Dana's experience as a common seaman aboard an American sailing ship that rounded Cape Horn to Mexico's California in the 1830s with return by ship to Massachusetts.

Six years before the Desert relates the adventures of this column's writer while working for the Arabian American Oil Company (Aramco) in the 1980s.

Thoughts of Saudi Arabia have been fresh on my mind as news out of California this year is mostly about its drought. Much of Southern California takes on the likeness of a desert unless water by irrigation is available, so that state's governor Jerry Brown announced last week a historic statewide measure that would aim for a 25 percent reduction in water use by the end of 2015.

Incidentally, it was reported on April 7 compliance is at 2 percent now and, unlike Saudi Arabia, with an autocratic government, California practices America's brand of "freedom" which "gives" everyone the "permission" to-do-as-he-pleases, ignoring and sometimes intentionally subverting what amounts to a water crisis in that case.

But back to my story: Saudi Arabia's eastern-most city is Dhahran where my family and I lived while employed in that country. The most important fact to convey to our neighbors to the south is that desert circumstances are not only survivable, but survivable with grace and style. How much water California can pump to the surface from deep wells to compensate for lack of rainfall is not known, but Aramco had several deep wells to provide what

was called "sweet" water. Meanwhile, most of the water for uses other than drinking and dish washing was from the process of desalination.

Aramco discouraged its employees from drinking desalinated water because its composition bears no resemblance to water from a fresh water stream in Oregon. If one should indulge himself, we were told, the result would be something like the purging of an aggressive enema. We — my wife, myself and our children — took their word for it but had to get used to desalinated water for bathing, clothes washing and the watering

of outside plants. The use of sweet water from a bucket filled at the kitchen sink had to be employed to clean up a car's exterior or otherwise the result of a car wash Oregon-style meant a film on the windows so thick from the minerals that one could not see out to drive. It was much too laborious to proceed that way very often, so we got used to a thin coat of dust on our four-wheel machines as well as all things outside. Then, too, regular wind storms meant the opportunity to taste the flavor of Saudi Arabia's desert sands.

It was my privilege to visit many a Saudi home, invited there by workers who were Saudi citizens. There were no grass lawns. Native indigenous plants of somewhat scarce abundance meant homes fit in with the arid landscape and protected its natural display and the survival of flora and fauna. Inside Aramco's compounds the company planted and cared for small patches of lawn mainly there, it was believed, to protect the American employees from devastating bouts of homesickness.

Yes, Aramco provided its em-

ployees with a golf course but to play the game meant getting used to fairways, tees and greens fixed in place by a thin coat of asphalt-grade oil. As far-fetched as an oil course may sound, Aramco employees played on it regularly and reported it as fun to do. If the Governor Brown order works effectively, Californians will have to surrender their courses to brown grass and desert plants to which, after a decade or two, it's surmised, they'd get used to.

Californians may wish to adjust their mindset to rather drastically-changed conditions. Freshly washed cars may be an unusual sight while lawns will become a rare phenomenon (the great American lawn is, after all, an English affectation and, really now, who wants to imitate those U.K. Windsor-worshippers!). Swimming pools will be used strictly for skateboarding. Some locations in California may become uninhabitable and return to the domain of desert-natural Southern California flora and fauna.

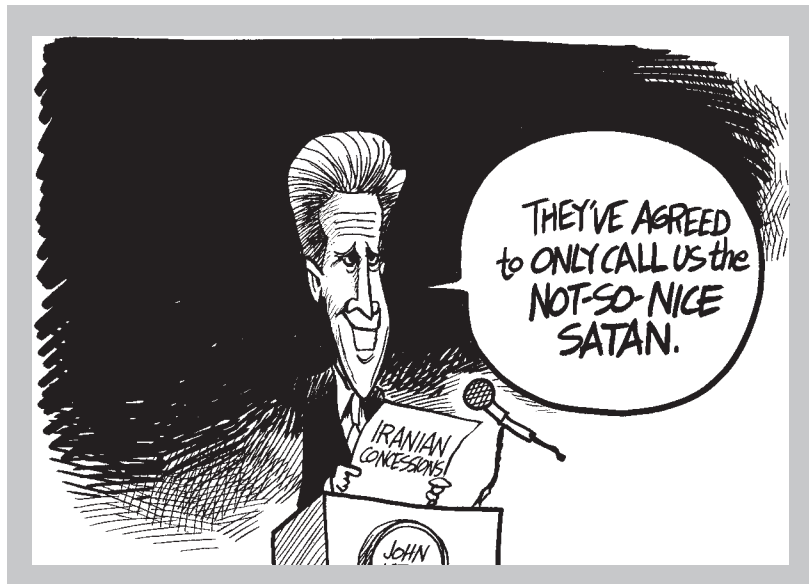
It's a sure bet more tourists will visit the Northwest. We'll continue to enjoy most everything they will have lost in California. We will even continue to flush our toilets at the same rate as has been true of us in past times. Our cars will be shiny clean and our pools open for use.

Meanwhile, what has been envy for "greener pastures" down south will reverse its direction. Hence, there'll be need of another former governor Tom McCall, he who admonished outsiders to visit Oregon but don't stay, which has had the same result as the English king who planted his throne close to the ocean's front and ordered the tide to stop.

In other words, as California dries up, the always dreaded California will increase as those folks literally seek "greener pastures."

(Gene H. McIntyre lives in Keizer.)

gene h. mcintyre



Keizertimes

Wheatland Publishing Corp. • 142 Chemawa Road N. • Keizer, Oregon 97303
phone: 503.390.1051 • web: www.keizertimes.com • email: kt@keizertimes.com



EDITOR & PUBLISHER
Lyndon A. Zaitz
publisher@keizertimes.com

NEWS EDITOR
Craig Murphy
editor@keizertimes.com

ASSOCIATE EDITOR
Eric A. Howald
news@keizertimes.com

ADVERTISING
Paula Moseley
advertising@keizertimes.com

PRODUCTION MANAGER
Andrew Jackson
graphics@keizertimes.com

BUSINESS MANAGER
Laurie Painter
billing@keizertimes.com

OFFICE INTERN
Allie Kehret

LEGAL NOTICES
legals@keizertimes.com

SUBSCRIPTIONS
One year: \$25 in Marion County, \$33 outside Marion County, \$45 outside Oregon

PUBLISHED EVERY FRIDAY
Publication No: USPS 679-430

POSTMASTER
Send address changes to:
Keizertimes Circulation
142 Chemawa Road N.
Keizer, OR 97303

Periodical postage paid at
Salem, Oregon