

Iris festival and its future

Diamond in the Rough, the 2016 Keizer Iris Festival, kicked off earlier this month with the opening of the Keizer Art Association's Iris and the Flowers exhibit including the art piece chosen for the 2017 festival (Merren Garland's *Total Eclipse of the Heart*) on display through May 28.

The Keizer Volunteer Fire Fighters Association held their annual Mother's Day Breakfast; Cathy Clark led the Mayor's Prayer Breakfast. Last weekend two young women, Sydney Martindale and Elizabeth Russell, were chosen as the 2016 Keizer's Distinguished Young Women.

It's been a busy festival thus far; it really kicks into high gear this weekend with the opening of the Keizerfest tent and its full weekend of live entertainment. The festival will feature the pet parade and a total of five running events.

The centerpiece of the festival is the Iris Festival Parade on Saturday. Traffic routes will be affected, but that's a small price to pay to celebrate one's community.

The festival is our community's biggest event. Years ago, the Iris Festival was on the event calendar all by itself. These days it is impossible to find a weekend any time of the year that is event-free. A proliferation of festivals, concerts, tournaments and fundraisers over the past 10 years has divided the public's attention.

What used to be 'parade Saturday' is now jockeying for audiences with a number of other events in our area and throughout the region. Therein

editorial

lies the challenge for the Keizer Chamber of Commerce, organizer and beneficiary of the festival—organizing and promoting a festival that Keizerites feel they cannot miss.

The festival has seen many changes over the years, ebbing and flowing with the desires of the public. The parade is the linchpin of the Iris event; the Keizerfest tent is as popular as the music acts that play and the beverages served. The Keizerfest tent serves as reunion of sorts—former McNary High School classmates reconnect, friends, separated by busy daily lives, get together and catch up.

Beside the parade, the five running events have become a major attraction for the festival—a marathon, a half marathon and 10-, 5- and 3-K races bring thousands of people out.

The Iris Festival is the one time of the year for Keizer to show itself off. Thoughts of turning the festival into a regional event faded over the years. Staging a festival this large is not easy nor inexpensive. The number of volunteers needed is titanic. After decades of the Iris Festival being run by volunteers (whom get harder to recruit on the scale required for the task), it might be time to hire a full-time event planner.

Keizer is on the cusp of positive and beneficial growth. Hundreds of new housing units are being added, as are new retail stores and a possible expansion of the city limits to the north. There is a lot to celebrate about Keizer. The Iris Festival is and should remain our best advertisement. —LAZ

Being grateful at all times

By CRAIG MURPHY

There were no signs of the house. Is that a good omen or a bad omen?

That question was going through my mind as I saw the field where the burned out house sat last time I was here, 10 months earlier.

Looking at the field, you would never know there used to be a house where Randy and Debbie Wilson lived.

Regular readers of the *Keizertimes* may recall the story from last July about the Wilsons. The two made it out alive when their house caught fire in June—on Debbie's birthday, no less—but they lost everything.

All they had left was each other and their two dogs.

I wanted to see the Wilsons this week before leaving here. I looked up the directions to make sure I remembered exactly how to get there. After all, Nevada Street isn't too easy to find when you're going 55 mph down Highway 99 just outside of Keizer.

Going slowly up the half-mile gravel Nevada Street—a sign asks you to not exceed 10 mph, lest too much dust get kicked up—I didn't know what I would see. Maybe Randy and Debbie enjoying a new home? Maybe a trailer?

I get to the end of the road and see...nothing. I get out and see familiar landmarks. The tire swing hanging off the tree over there. The gate back there. The neighbor's house just up the road.

But there was no sign of the Wilsons.

Well, that sucks. Maybe they are simply two of the thousands of homeless in the area. Or maybe they stumbled upon some great luck—the good Lord knows they certainly deserve it—and got back on their feet with a nice house somewhere. Who knows, maybe they passed away.

Trade and tariffs could define future

There has been talk during this year's presidential campaigns about free trade and trade protections. If American people are inclined to look to the past they will find that during the latter years of the 1800s, the U.S. was viewed as possibly the most protectionist nation on earth.

The most notable industrialists of that age, often referred to as the robber barons, were not interested in free trade. During that 54-year period from 1860 to 1914, U.S. tariffs on foreign goods were often as high as 40 to 50 percent and America went from an emerging power to an economic giant where our gross national product (GDP) was equal to England, France and Germany combined.

President Chester A. Arthur saw to it that a U.S. tariff commission was formed. By the time Arthur took office tariff policy was the hot American topic of that day with low tariff advocates as strongly detested in the north as slave owners in the south had been before the Civil War.

The pro-tariff argument went like this: Unless high duties on imported manufactured goods were imposed, American businesses could not compete with their European rivals. High import duties on shoes, steel, clothing and furniture, for example, were commonplace in the U.S. for years before 1860; over the decades American industry had become competitive and hugely profitable and wanted protection through high tariffs.

As the world turned to the U.S. in the 19th century, high tariffs didn't only protect American industries from foreign competition; they also enabled businesses to charge higher prices for their goods inside the U.S. So, as the robber baron industrialists accumulated more and more wealth

Politicians and the city budget

To the Editor:

Sometimes politicians can drive me crazy.

During a recent budget committee meeting one position in the police department was not filled and we are told the problem is Keizer has such a low tax rate. Then we are told how the city has "stretched, matched, leveraged, granted and volunteered tremendously" and the "elastic has worn out." This is a city staff managing an approved budget and not a financial crisis.

The mayor states there needs to be an honest conversation about what type of community we want to live in. In 2011, the mayor and several others conducted a very misleading campaign for a "Public Safety Communication fee" which failed by 80 percent.

checkered flag

Spotting a neighboring home, I walk that way. A man, Austin, asks if he can help. I explain I'm looking for Randy and Debbie. He offers to walk me over to them. As it turns out another neighbor, Juan Benavidez, has been letting the Wilsons stay in a trailer on his property since the fire.

Austin walks me over to Randy, who comes out from underneath the 1998 Ford Mustang he's been working on. Randy readily admits he's not much of a mechanic, but he's trying to repair the rear brakes.

It's not going terribly well. But that's fine with Randy. A friend had three cars and didn't need the Mustang, so he gave it to Randy and Debbie.

"It's in pretty good shape," a grateful Randy says.

Debbie notes her Social Security application was accepted, so hopefully sometime soon the couple will finally start getting some financial help.

"We're hanging in there, with the generosity of friends," she says.

The couple had a relief fund set up last year via a friend's Wells Fargo account. But only \$275 was collected and it was costing more to keep the account going than it was bringing in. On top of that, the friend with the account suffered a house fire of his own last year.

"We want to get out of this yard and get a place of our own," Randy says. "Nothing has changed yet, but it will."

In some ways, the couple is stuck on last June 20, the day of the devastating fire.

"We do what we can," Debbie says. "It's still overwhelming. Every day I think about it. What can you

do? You just keep moving forward."

The couple can accept mail or donations at: Randy and Debbie Wilson, General Delivery, Salem, OR 97305.

The Wilsons have nothing but kind words for Juan.

"For him to do this was a big dent in his world," Randy says. "It was not necessary, but he did it."

In general, grateful is a good way to describe the Wilsons.

Yes, they lost all of their possessions.

Yes, they are getting by thanks to the extreme kindness of a neighbor and good friend.

Yes, they are still waiting for Social Security to kick in so they can get back on their feet.

"My luck isn't good," Randy begins.

He pauses, then looks over at Debbie, the woman he'll be celebrating a 26th wedding anniversary with the next day.

"Actually, yes it is," Randy corrects himself. "I would lose those things 100 times over again if I could still have you."

I realize at that moment the reason I came here. Sometimes when we have an incredible new chapter in life waiting for us, like I do next week with an exciting job opportunity after 18 years in newspapers, we lose sight of the great blessings we've experienced in this chapter of our lives.

Meeting and getting to tell the hard luck stories of people like the Wilsons and families in our *Chasing Dark* heroin stories has been a deep honor and blessing.

"May God bless you," Randy told me multiple times as we parted company.

He certainly has, Randy. Thank you for the reminder of that.

For that, I'm eternally grateful. (Craig Murphy was News Editor of the *Keizertimes* until this week.)

Deal with the devil

By MICHAEL GERSON

In the category of credit where credit is due, Donald Trump has been exactly right in one important respect. He attacked the Republican establishment as low-energy, cowering weaklings. Now Republican leaders are lining up to surrender to him—like low-energy, cowering weaklings. The capitulation has justified the accusation.

It would be impolite to name names. So I should not mention that former Texas Gov. Rick Perry, who now angles for Trump's vice presidential nod, once said: "He offers a barking carnival act that can be best described as Trumpism: a toxic mix of demagoguery, mean-spiritedness and nonsense that will lead the Republican Party to perdition if pursued. Let no one be mistaken—Donald Trump's candidacy is a cancer on conservatism, and it must be clearly diagnosed, excised and discarded." I should resist the temptation to recall how Rep. Peter King of New York, who now (reluctantly) backs Trump, once asserted he is "not fit to be president, morally or intellectually."

Singling out individuals is unfair in so great a company. One by one, Republican senators have made their peace with a Trump nomination. Many in the House GOP leadership and caucus have urged Speaker Paul Ryan to get it over with and endorse the presumptive Republican nominee. It is humorous—in a sad, bitter, tragic sort of way—to see Republican leaders, and some conservative commentators, try to forget or minimize Trump's history of odious proposals and statements.

And all this has taken place without (apparently) securing any concessions or guarantees from Trump himself. He now knows that he can violate any Republican or conservative principle and still get a round of crisp salutes, even from his strongest opponents. This is the white flag of ideological surrender.

I understand the short-term political calculation. Better to have Trump, who is ideologically unpredictable, make Supreme Court nominations than Hillary Clinton, who is reliably liberal. Better to have Trump rather than Clinton make all those plum executive branch appointments. Besides, if Trump is a liar, Clinton is a worse one. If Trump is a misogynist, well,

other views

consider Clinton's husband.

This justification has a few flaws. The first is *reductio ad Trumpism*. If Clinton is the ultimate evil, would anyone be better than she is? How about Trump's ex-butler, who threatened President Obama on Facebook? How about Trump supporter Phil Robertson of "Duck Dynasty"? Of course not, a Republican would angrily respond. A prospective president needs to be morally and intellectually fit for the office. He or she can't be guilty of demagoguery or mean-spiritedness, or talk nonsense all the time.

But this is exactly the issue. Were Perry and King correct in their initial diagnosis of Trump? If so, we are not dealing with the normal give-and-take of policy and politics. We have left the realm of half a loaf and you scratch my back. We are dealing with a question of fitness for the highest office in the land. It is not enough for GOP partisans to assert Trump's superiority to Clinton on this issue or that. They must justify that Trump has the experience, knowledge, temperament, judgment and character to be president of the United States. That is a more difficult task.

This leads to a second objection. Pursuing the short-term interests of the GOP, gained by unity, may actually damage or destroy the party in the longer term by confirming a series of destructive stereotypes. Republicans stand accused of disdaining immigrants; their nominee proposes to round up and deport 11 million people. Republicans are accused of religious bigotry; their nominee proposes to stop all Muslims at the border. Republicans are accused of a war on women; the Republican nominee, if a recent *New York Times* expose is accurate, is the caveman candidate.

All this is a particular blow to conservatives, of which I count myself one. Conservatives latched on to the GOP as an instrument to express their ideals. Now loyalty to party is causing many to abandon their ideals. Conservatism is not misogyny. Conservatism is not nativism and protectionism. Conservatism is not religious bigotry and conspiracy theories. Conservatism is not anti-intellectual and anti-science. For the sake of partisanship -- for a mess of pottage -- some conservatives are surrendering their identity.

It is a very bad deal. (Washington Post Writers Group)

gene h. mcintyre

and lived ever more lavishly, the common American consumer got more and more upset. Consumers viewed high tariffs as enabling the rich to get richer by gouging them.

Then, too, those Americans who opposed high tariffs on manufactured goods, often supported them on raw materials: the farmers who grew cotton opposed foreign competition as much as the owners of textile mills. Southern cotton growers wanted high taxes on Indian and Egyptian cotton while farmers in Ohio wanted high tariffs on imported wool.

In the years immediately after, tariff battles were won by the protectionists in favor of American manufacturing. The rich industrialists were categorically opposed to free trade as they were most interested in creating bastions of power and wealth like their counterparts in those parts of Europe undergoing the industrial revolution but were not about to open their doors to their rivals across the Atlantic. Whatever harm and difficulty the wealthy industrialists brought, workers and farmers were never their concern but did result in American industry rising to dominant international positions that was aided by the U.S. government, helping them at every turn.

Tariffs once ruled and protected American industry but when the U.S. became more international, starting after World War I, there was a wholesale change. Views on the results to American business, industry and employment opportunities from the North Ameri-

Last year the mayor brought in the management from the transit district to discuss their proposed tax increase on the business community, again this tax increase was defeated. I believe this is the community voicing their opinion.

The mayor also points out that our tax rate of \$2.08 was established in 1992 and comparable cities pay a higher tax rate than we do in Keizer. That comment begs the question, "So what?" Our mayor fails to note that the total city revenue has not been stuck at the 1992 level, it has increased with the growth in new homes, increased assessed value of homes and business. The mayor also left out the other funds the city receives such as license and fees, fines and forfeitures,

can Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) in the Clinton administration hold it in low regard while the current Trans-Pacific Partnership is anticipated by many to provide more trade breaks for the likes of China and Japan and more losses in general for us. American companies export a lot of goods and wants to keep it that way, which is true for a many in Oregon. So the debate about trade and tariffs and duties will go on with all parties concerned banging on the doors of Congress and the White House to get what they want.

The best predictor of the future is the past. The best guess, regarding tariffs, duties and trade agreements, is that nothing of monumental significance will take place in these matters during the next four years. Donald Trump, as president, will make some more noise about tariffs, but, being wealthy himself with a lot of self-interest in the mix, will make some threat-like statements about reforms, and, then, saying he was misunderstood, will back off and ignore the matter. Hillary Clinton and hubby simply want to be more filthy rich than they are already and not upset their rich buddies. As for Sanders, he's highly unlikely to be the Democrat nominee as his rants and raves will almost certainly come to little because they are unrealistic in the current American political attitudes about socialism, "democratic socialism" or otherwise.

Things may appear grim. There have been many instances in U.S. history where survival has appeared threateningly dubious. However, positive surprises have come before and may occur again even as bad as they may look before the future unfolds.

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

charges for service and intergovernmental revenue sharing. (Note: the assessed value of a home rises 3 percent every year, provided it's lower than the market value.) Additionally, the mayor doesn't mention that the Keizer Fire District has its own tax rate of \$2.04, which is separate from the city operation.

In my opinion, the city staff hears the community and lives within our means. The politicians seem to hear, tax me more because comparable cities pay more than we do.

Sometimes politicians can drive me crazy.

Jim Keller
Keizer

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Email a letter to the editor (300 words) by noon Tuesday.

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