

THE DAILY ASTORIAN

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The elephant in our living room

PERS will shortly be devouring school districts and city governments

Imagine that the school your child attends is paying one-third of its payroll to people who are not there. Imagine that the city you pay taxes suddenly must dedicate one-third of its payroll to people who are not on the job.

That will happen in Oregon in a couple years, because of the state's expensive Public Employee Retirement System (PERS). At the Oregon Leadership Summit last week, a panel of economists "urged lawmakers not to ignore the problem: an \$18 billion-and-growing funding deficit in the Public Employees Retirement System. In order to bail it out, required payments from government employers will go up by 20 percent in each of the next three budget cycles, said Steve Rodeman, PERS executive director," reported Ted Sickinger of *The Oregonian*.

"By 2021, that means schools, municipalities and government agencies will be dedicating almost one-third of their payroll dollars to the retirement system," noted Sickinger.

If left uncorrected, PERS truly is the pension system that will devour our school systems and our city governments.

The most obvious fix to PERS, as one panelist suggested, is to require current public employees to contribute to their pensions. Oregon is the only state that does not require employees to make such a contribution. In other words, our PERS system is unreal within the context of America's public and private employment.

The most disturbing thing that Sickinger reported is that Gov. Kate Brown and House Speaker Tina Kotek would not go near the PERS discussion. That is the immense drawback of our one-party government, in which the public employee unions call the shots in the statehouse.

Republican Sen. Tim Knopp of Bend will introduce legislation that includes legitimate PERS reforms. We urge Sen. Betsy Johnson and Rep. Debby Boone to help make their chambers face the urgency of the voracious PERS machine.



Jordan Poyer, left, tries to strip the ball from Clay Keyser, 11, right, during drills at the Jordan Poyer football camp at CMH Field in June.

Daily Astorian
File Photo

Jordan Poyer sets a good example

Having a professional football player as a hero is virtually a requirement for middle school students, nowadays, of either gender. Following the National Football League is a badge of membership in our society, but one that too often comes with heartburn when players, coaches and owners misbehave.

How fortunate we are at the mouth of the Columbia River to have in Jordan Poyer a home-grown NFL player who appears to relish being a role model for young people. His team, the Cleveland Browns, is now 3-11 after losing to the Seattle Seahawks on Sunday. But Poyer himself is distinctly a winner in ways that matter.

Poyer made his first appearance in local newsprint on May 31, 2000, as a third grader receiving a PRIDE Award (for Positive, Respectful, Improved, Dependable and Encouraging) at Naselle Elementary School in Washington. Later in 2000, he was playing on the Long Beach Peninsula's Little League Football team, scoring touchdowns and contributing in other noticeable ways. Poyer went on to become a highly valued three-sport athlete at Astoria High School.

It cannot have always been a smooth path for a young man of color — even a handsome and successful one — in our decidedly rural, white culture. But Poyer clearly didn't let racial identity become a handicap on his path to a successful career. And he continues to give back to our area, in the form of summer football camps that must be a real thrill for their young participants.

Poyer is just one of many examples of how it's feasible for a person educated here to rise to the top of their profession. The NFL is a sternly Darwinian organization, with most players active for only a few seasons before they are supplanted. The ultimate test of individual success for players is what they do with their lives after football. The late Pacific County Sheriff John Didion, who played for the New Orleans Saints, is a prime example of someone who found new productive outlets for his talents.

Positive, respectful, improved, dependable and encouraging continue to be Poyer's guiding principles. It's possible to foresee him living a great life long after his NFL days are over. His young fans should aspire to the same values.

Words like Trump's have consequences for the innocent

SOUTHERN EXPOSURE

BY
R.J.
MARX



When Seaside's 'lone Japanese national' was sent away

For a preview of what our country might look like if Donald Trump had his way, let's go back to 1942 Oregon.

In Seaside, the *Signal* reported in April 1942: "Seaside's Lone Japanese leaves for Hood River."

"Mason Akiyama, Seaside's lone Japanese national and a resident of Seaside for the past 20 years, left with his family late Saturday night for Hood River, where he will meet other members of his family and join them as evacuees under the order evacuating enemy aliens from the Pacific coast," the *Signal* reported.

Akiyama was the proprietor of the Red Gate Curio shop.

He had been in the United States for about 20 years, according to the *Signal*. "His father has been in the United States for about 35 years and his mother for nearly as long. Mrs. Akiyama was born in the United States. Their children were born there and attended Seaside schools."

Akiyama's wife and two children had already left Seaside to live with his parents, who ran an orchard near the Hood River.

"Eventually, however they will have to move still further inland and he had made no plans for the second move, anticipated within a few weeks," the *Signal* reported.

Following the attack on Pearl Harbor, President Franklin D. Roosevelt had ordered the evacuation of all Japanese Americans to internment camps. Hood River not only had a sizable Japanese population, but when internment of Japanese Americans began, became a hub for rail traffic to camps throughout the West.

Evacuation of 111,000 people was completed by Aug. 12, 1942, to 10 inland camps. Each block contained about 20 barracks, and each barrack housed five to seven families. There was a shortage of toilets, showers, curfews, 100-degree temperatures and biting scorpions. Sentries in towers held watch with searchlights over families.

In the weeks in Seaside before Akiyama was sent to Mount Hood and points beyond, he was busy packing up stock, storing some goods in Portland, while former competitors and shop owners in Seaside purchased additional items.

Not until Dec. 18, 1944, did the U.S. Supreme Court rule that loyal citizens cannot be held in detention camps against their will.

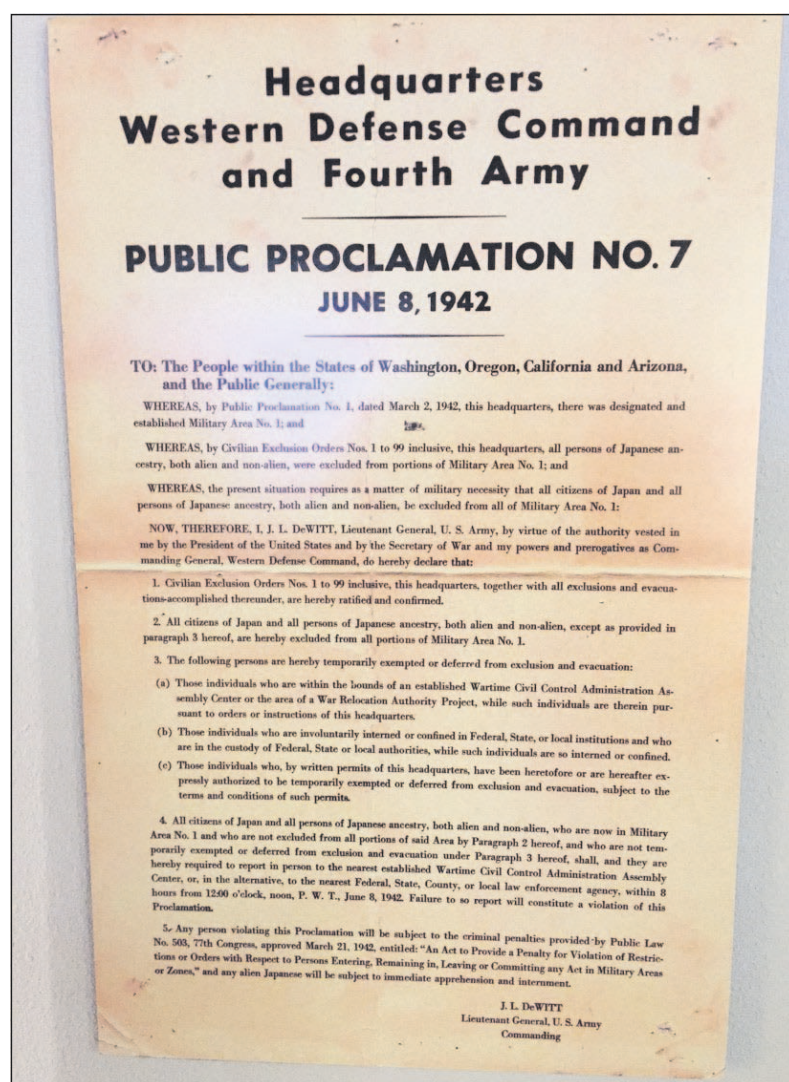
The Mount Hood Cultural Center and Museum has a monument to these Japanese Americans, and an exhibit in their honor. After the war, in 1945, Hood River Valley Japanese Americans were finally permitted to return to their farms and homes. But only 186 out of 462 pre-war Japanese Americans returned to the Hood River Valley by the following year.

As for Mason Akiyama, from records at the Mount Hood Historical Museum, it does not appear that he ever returned to Seaside.

There is a record of a Mason Akiyama who died in Salt Lake City in 1985 at the age of 81.

In years to come, the internment of Japanese Americans became a source of national shame. Even while many were in camps, many others served our nation valiantly, including the formation of a combat team by FDR himself. Despite the incongruity of his order on the camps, Roosevelt said, "The principle on which this country was founded and by which it has always been governed is that Americanism is a matter of mind and heart. Americanism is not, and never was, a matter of race or ancestry."

By the end of the war, 2,355 second-generation Japanese, or Nisei, from the camps entered the U.S. armed forces. They served with Military Intelligence Service as linguists, translators and interrogators and, "would become the eyes and ears of the Allied forces." By the end of the war, Nisei linguists in the



R.J. Marx/The Daily Astorian
Proclamation ordering the evacuation of Japanese Americans from their homes during World War II.

Exhibit casts light on internment

CANNON BEACH — Elaine Trucke of the Cannon Beach Museum and History Center said historians have determined more than 100 Japanese Americans lived in Clatsop County in 1940. Of those, 60 people were interned first at the Portland Assembly Center, and then sent on to interment camps in Tule Lake, California or Minidoka in Hunt, Idaho. The center has been hard at work chronicling local experiences.

The museum is hosting artist Cathy Erickson's solo show, "What Remains: Japanese Americans in Internment Camps," an exhibit on display through February.

For more than a decade, Er-

ickson has focused her artwork on the hardships that Japanese Americans faced when they were interned in camps during World War II. Much of the work was done in collaboration with Margaret Chula, an internationally known haiku poet. Photographs, letters, and historical documents were used as background information, as well as visiting with people who took part in this piece of American history.

The exhibit is part of a series of events relating to the "World War II on the Oregon Coast" exhibit through February.

The museum is located at 1387 South Spruce St. in Cannon Beach; www.cbhistory.org; 503-436-9301.



R.J. Marx/The Daily Astorian
Belongings of Japanese Americans are on display at the Mount Hood Cultural Center and Museum. Japanese Americans were forced from their homes to internment camps with limits on how many personal items they could transport.

South Pacific had translated 2 million documents with more than 20 million pages, interrogated 14,000 Japanese prisoners, and worked with front-line troops in every Pacific campaign."

General Charles Willoughby, Gen. Douglas MacArthur's chief of staff for intelligence, said these soldiers "shortened the war by two years."

"Never before in history," Gen. MacArthur said, "did one army know so much concerning its enemy prior to actual engagement as did the American army during most of the Pacific campaign."

If Republican president candidate Donald Trump's words on the segregation and isolation of Ameri-

cans of Islamic faith chill us today, it is because they resonate with the worst of human instincts throughout history.

Mason Akiyama had done no wrong, committed no crime. Substitute "Muslims" for Japanese and we will soon find ourselves casting out our neighbors, including those who valiantly served their nation. If 9/11 should have taught us anything, it is that blind national rage is far worse than blind international policy.

Perhaps the hardening of our hearts is the ultimate goal of our nation's enemies.

R.J. Marx is the South County reporter for *The Daily Astorian* and the editor of the *Cannon Beach Gazette and Seaside Signal*.