

Hood River News

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Danger Zone

Improvement or impairment?

The amenities and upgrades on State Street are visible now that the Urban Renewal streetscape project is done: new pavement, better and wider sidewalks, underground utilities, landscaping, and pedestrian plazas featuring benches, drinking fountains, and more.

THE PROBLEM:

An unanticipated effect, however, is seen at 6th and State, where southbound drivers come to the stop at State from one of the steepest approaches in town — 6th between Oak and State. It's one of Hood River's little slices of San Francisco, and it can be tricky to stop there under the best of circumstances.

The downward pitch of the street, compared with the angle of State, has always created a visibility issue for drivers stopped on the hill and looking west.

It's considerably worse now with the plaza and its elements at the northwest corner of the intersection.

The Urban Renewal changes look and feel nice, but what the city installed is more impairment than improvement.

A driver has highly limited visibility looking west, even when pulling well into the east-west crosswalk, if there are vehicles parked on the north side of State. That blockage, combined with the railing, trash can, and even drinking fountain, create a visual bulk that at times makes it all but impossible to see what is coming without entering the street itself.

Given that the plaza's very purpose is to attract and serve pedestrians, this creates an impediment for people on foot, as well as for drivers.

THE FIX

You can't undo the plaza, but at the very least the trash can could be shifted, and a lower railing would help. The drinking fountain should be repositioned, too, and while there is a cost involved, it could be lessened if done while the Crestline Construction crew is still working on the public restrooms at Third Street.

The immediate solution is to prohibit parking in at least the two closest spaces. Yes, downtown parking is already a premium, but public safety should come first. (There is no loss of revenue involved given that these have been metered spaces for only a few weeks.)

Vehicle, pedestrian and bicycle traffic will pick up in a matter of weeks. Actual congestion should not be aggravated by visual congestion, which is what exists now.



Photo by Kirby Neumann-Rea

THE VIEW from behind the wheel, southbound at Sixth and State, looking west.

WHERE TO E-MAIL

For letters to the editor, guest columns, news items and press releases, the e-mail address is:

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For e-mail letters to the editor, please include your name, address and daytime telephone number.

Our readers write

Walden's two faces

Greg Walden is a really good politician. I attended his town hall meeting where he took questions on Obamacare, climate change and immigration, among others. He told us he thinks Obamacare is here to stay but that he would work to improve it. He implied that he understood climate change was a problem by telling us he drove two hybrids and is trying to pass legislation to do more logging to cut down on forest fires. He spoke of his admiration for agricultural workers, that immigrants have highly specialized skills and contribute to our country.

Sounds reasonable to a Hood River audience, but in Washington, D.C., he voted for legislation that would undo executive directives to provide temporary work permits to four million immigrants and gave relief to 600,000 dreamers. (Visit Causa Oregon, Google, Walden on Immigration.)

He justifies his votes to hurt agricultural workers by saying the President has no constitutional authority.

Yet, Walden and his Republican party offer no solution to the immigration issue. Say positive things to the home audience and then vote to ruin the lives of some of the people you say you admire. Mr. Walden seems like a caring, thoughtful guy. So, it's doubly disappointing when in Washington he votes like a two faced politician. Walden and the Republicans voted to repeal Obamacare again, which would deny me and my family affordable health care.

Guy Tauscher
Hood River

Community immunity

Dr. Charles Haynie's Feb. 4 letter about immunizations prompts

me to add some reflections.

As a child I was fortunate enough to be vaccinated against polio, which had claimed the lives or mobility of so many in the generation just before mine. I had a severe case of measles, however, and am just plain lucky that it didn't result in lasting brain damage. During my medical training, I served in a pediatric ICU where most of the infants and toddlers suffered from a bacterial meningitis and encephalitis (brain and spinal fluid infection), which often left the survivors hearing-impaired or otherwise permanently impaired. Later, I hospitalized adults for adult-onset chickenpox (and treated many others in the clinic), and saw three patients left sterile from the mumps. Measles, mumps and chickenpox vaccinations, among others, became available since all of this, as has the "H. flu" vaccine, which prevents the

very infection I mentioned in that pediatric ICU.

Most of my younger colleagues have never seen a patient with measles, mumps, chickenpox or H. flu meningitis — just as I myself saw only two cases of polio when I practiced medicine. We should be deeply grateful to the scientists and public health professionals who have worked so successfully on immunization against preventable suffering and disability.

It takes all of us together to carry out the vision — to think of the collective good, to immunize our own children in order to protect not only them but other children and adults, to get our own immunizations on time and appreciatively. Here's to prevention and community immunity! (I propose a bumper sticker with that rhyme to remind us all.)

Tina Castañares
Odell

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EDITOR'S NOTEBOOK

Running into the 'what-if motif' and trying not to nickel-and-dime the odds

By KIRBY NEUMANN-REA
News editor

A recent visit to Eugene took me to some interesting intersections, figuratively and literally.

I drove to the University of Oregon to see my first Ducks basketball game with son Delaney and take him to dinner. I had a little time to spare so I had decided on a whim to detour from I-5 over to Corvallis to see my brother; that led me down Highway 99W and a different route to UO than if I had taken the direct route to Eugene via the freeway.

It was one of the day's detours that by early evening, led me to wonder:

■ What if I had not gone that way, and not happened into our friends Mark and Sophie from Hood River, who had just parked their car a block or so away?

■ What if I had left my coat in the car? It was a warm day and would be warm in the arena but I wore it anyway.

I got to Delaney's residence hall and we talked awhile in his room. ("How are classes going?") It would be my first time at Matthew Knight Arena, and not knowing the lay of the land, one thing I wondered was the likelihood of my sitting with him in the student section. Should I just buy two seats or take a chance since he got in free? We decided to just get the one ticket.

■ Did something cause us to pause a few more minutes before heading to the arena? It's just a block from his building, so no rush.

■ Once we left, did something make us run into Mark and Sophie again, and stop and talk for a few minutes — "How are classes going?" — before heading to the ticket booth?

Somehow we were in the right place at the right time when, a moment after arriving at the window, a stranger approached Delaney

and said, "I have a ticket I don't need — you want it?"

It saved me buying a ticket. Weirdly I had even taken a slight detour when I thought I saw a gate employee beckon me. Total fake-out. Had I not taken that detour or had any of these pauses taken longer, either way, the free ticket would have gone to someone else.

We get inside the arena and the 13th and Olive student housing complex is handing out "Go Ducks" towels, and we each take one. Thousands of people ended up with those towels; more on them later.

We watched the game and left the arena and immediately decided that even though it's not quite 4, since we were both hungry we would head downtown for dinner. We come to a stoplight at Oak and I decide to take the right. I signal. The light turns green and — bam!

A cyclist runs into my right front panel, and hits the pavement hard. We jump out to see about the guy, along with four passersby: one 40-something and a trio of college students heading to party with a couple of six-packs. Medics and police arrive a few minutes later. Guy is bleeding but alert.

Someone gives the bicyclist their 13th and Olive towel, and it comes in very handy. Without it, we would have figured something out, but how lucky were we that we had these towels, and the one guy had the presence of mind to hand his to the cyclist? There was a fair amount of blood, but his helmet probably saved him from serious head injury. It rattled me, and I have to say I was glad Delaney was there to calm me.



(The bicyclist walked away, pushing his undamaged bike, after medics turned him loose.)

I can doodle all month in the "what if?" motif: Would it be different had I done this or not that done that, or done this at a certain time, as opposed to "what if" I had done that in a certain other place five minutes earlier, or had done so later.

On that Saturday afternoon, I wondered what if: would I have collided with that cyclist if Delaney hadn't had to go up to his room to retrieve the coat I never needed, or if we had chosen to go another direction to dinner. Of course, the losey-goosey sci-fi premise naturally suggests, well, something ELSE might have gone wrong — or right. Like, say, encountering Marcus Mariota who'd run out of gas and needed a ride to practice ...

These kind of space and time associations are the stuff of Roddenberry and myriad time travel movies and TV shows. Moments as they match up with experiences are not like players-to-be-named-later in some great trading game. You take them as they come and don't concern yourself with some parallel universe.

Does everything happen for a reason? We are not talking about coincidence here (oh, I've had my share of those), but it's like a cousin to coincidence. And it's probably about as worth my time as comparing the weight of 10 dimes against 20 nickels. They amount to the same thing and get you just as much in the end. No matter what way you go in life, Buckaroo Banzai, well, there you are. It's all how we respond to the moment, no matter what way the coin flips. And sometimes fate throws in a towel.



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