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OUR VIEW

Tip of the hat; kick in the pants

A tip of the hat to the Ducks of Oregon.

The school's football team will play for a national championship Monday against those nuts from Ohio State University.

It has already been an historic, successful campaign for the Ducks. They won the first Division I college football playoff game ever. Quarterback Marcus Mariota brought the first Heisman Trophy to Eugene. They won the Pac-12 title. They've won a school record 13 games. They made Jameis Winston throw a ball backwards in a play that was so bad a referee fell down in amusement.

That's not to say the work is done.

The cap to this season would be dispatching Ohio State and winning the first-ever College Football Playoffs, and securing the school's first national title.

We offer our support to that endeavor and will be rooting for them to bring

home the title. And no matter your alma mater or where your allegiances lie, we hope you find a little place in your heart for state pride and cheer for the Ducks on Monday.

Because this isn't just a football team. It seems like a genuinely good group of young men. Mariota has been a supremely capable role model and the Oregon coaching philosophy — advocating the kinder, gentler, more supportive way to teach skills — is the right move in today's culture. To see a squad not dogged by accusations and rap sheets, nor led by a dictatorial lunatic, reach the apex of college football is a rare bright spot in the warped world of college athletics.

We can happily cheer "Go Ducks!" and feel confident laying in the points.

A kick in the pants to the nearly useless "Won not done" T-shirts with Ducks and Buckeyes logos that went on sale the moment after each team's bowl game win.

Talk about a short shelf life. For just \$25.95, you can be reminded every time you open your closet that your team won one playoff game, and then went on to play another game.

Far be it from us to tell big-time university marketing departments how to sell T-shirts. But we think it's a better use of fabric to represent something timeless. (War on 84, anyone?)



A kick in the pants (and more) to Wednesday's attack in Paris.

We spoke our piece on Thursday's editorial page about the import of supporting free expression and bemoaning the utter barbarity of the terrorists who committed the ghastly act. That murderous action deserves much more than a kick in the pants. It deserves swift and powerful justice.

But now we spread that piece a little further — to the response to the crime and the desire to make the world a more peaceful and tolerant place.

It's human nature to be angry in the rubble of such carnage. We should

always cry over spilt blood. But if we respond to such actions with hatred, violence and racism, we further perpetuate the wheel of mistrust.

We can always draw cartoons of whatever we wish — tolerance is not acquiescence or servility. But we should not paint whole cultures with the same broad brush, a brush that was informed by our own cultural norms.

The country's foibles in the Iraq and Afghanistan in the jittery years after 9/11 should be a reminder of the difficulty of exporting one's ideals elsewhere. To many around the Muslim world, those wars looked no different than the Charlie Hebdo killing did to the West.

Yet a tip of the hat to those standing strong in the face of intimidation and terrorism.

Despite the massacre of a dozen people, including eight journalists, the voice of Charlie Hebdo will carry on. The satirical magazine vowed to stay on its publication schedule and put out another edition next week. Fellow news organizations are pitching in to help fund the effort, and have already raise 250,000 euros (about \$296,000).

Witnesses say they heard the gunmen shout "We've killed Charlie Hebdo" as they left the magazine's office. We're

glad to know that's not true.

Unsigned editorials are the opinion of the East Oregonian editorial board of Publisher Kathryn Brown, Managing Editor Daniel Wattenburger, and Opinion Page Editor Tim Trainor. Other columns, letters and cartoons on this page express the opinions of the authors and not necessarily that of the East Oregonian.



OTHER VIEWS

The man or the moment

We measure our presidents against not only our hopes for the present, which are sometimes unreasonable, but also our understanding of the past, which can be just as flawed.

Has a misreading of history informed a misappraisal of Barack Obama?

That's a question raised, not explicitly but implicitly, by a new book by Princeton historian Julian Zelizer, "The Fierce Urgency of Now," to be published on Thursday.

Its setting is the 1960s, as the title, a phrase uttered by Martin Luther King Jr., suggests. Its focus is Lyndon Johnson. And one of its conclusions is that despite Johnson's legend as a peerless legislative tactician, he was largely a hostage of Congress and of forces beyond the presidency.

Zelizer reminds us that many of Johnson's signature victories came during a two-year period when Democrats had two-thirds majorities in both the Senate, where they held 68 seats, and the House, where they held 295.

Zelizer also reminds us that Johnson's trouncing of Barry Goldwater in the 1964 election spooked Republicans to a point where many fought progressive legislation less stridently than before, lest they be portrayed as Goldwater-style extremists.

Those dynamics and others worked powerfully to Johnson's advantage, and when the climate and the Congress changed, so did his fortunes. On the domestic front (as well as on the foreign one), the final two years of his presidency were a bust, at least in comparison with what preceded them.

Obama's name appears just twice in Zelizer's book. But it's impossible not to think of him more often, given how frequently the yardstick of Johnson's presidency has been applied to his.

If only Obama were a schmoozer like Johnson. If only he had Johnson's taste for the muck of lawmaking. If only he had Johnson's patience for minutiae.

Zelizer told me that when he began work on the book more than five years ago, "I still had a kind of view of Johnson, as many do, as someone who really knew how to work the system. What's surprising to me is that as conditions in Congress change, he is really shut down."

I didn't expect the last part of the book: a president who's really emasculated and can't get anything done even though he's trying the same old tricks. It really became crystal clear to me how Congress determines the fate of the presidency.

Republicans currently control both chambers, and have a House majority bigger



FRANK BRUNI
Comment

than before. That bodes disastrously for Obama's legislative dreams, and it's the point of reference for his impulse to wield executive authority.

Zelizer said that instances over the last 50 years of a president truly imposing his will on a Congress fully or partly controlled by the opposing party are rare. Ronald Reagan got tax cuts in 1981 despite a Democratic majority in the House, but he'd just shellacked Jimmy Carter in the 1980 elections and Democrats were running

scared.

Johnson's name is popping up a lot now. This year is the 50th anniversary of many of the laws grouped under the Great Society, and the movie "Selma" is drawing complaints for its portrayal of Johnson as resistant to voting rights for blacks and sharply antagonistic to King.

"It's not fair to Johnson," Zelizer told me.

But in his view, Johnson has been considered too kindly by writers who attribute the Great Society to his wizardry.

"He was cagey, he was smart, he was politically savvy," Zelizer said. "But that doesn't explain why the bills passed."

And Obama can indeed be cold and disengaged. But, Zelizer said, that's not why he hasn't scaled the legislative heights that Johnson did.

Johnson benefited from "a vibrant period for grass-roots mobilization as a result of the civil rights movement," he said, adding that there was pressure for legislation from the bottom up, which is most effective.

There hasn't been any commensurate mobilization during Obama's presidency. Zelizer said that voters frustrated with congressional inertia should examine their own exertions — and the ways in which campaign financing, lobbying and gerrymandering have created a dysfunctional legislative branch — as much as any president's character.

Zelizer's read on things leaves ample room for Obama to be questioned on foreign policy and for not making more of his first two years, when Democrats controlled Congress. It's also possible that he should have made less of them, that delaying health care would have spared Democrats their 2010 drubbing and given him additional time with a friendly(-ish) Congress.

But it's undeniable that we treat our presidents as larger than life, simplifying the stories we tell. They're not always mighty frigates parting the waters. They're just as much buoys on the tides of history, rising and falling with the swells.

Frank Bruni is an Op-Ed columnist for The New York Times since June 2011.

YOUR VIEWS

Hayes' fleet of mistakes leaves plenty of questions unanswered

The Oregon State Ethics Commission is to report whether or not Oregon's Governor John Kitzhaber and his fiancée, Cylvia Hayes, violated their roles in state government. Hayes, from Bend, is the founder of 3E Strategies, an economic consulting firm.

She spent much of the governor's third term with a desk in his office and a role as advisor even as she conducted consulting work around Oregon and elsewhere, according to a report from *The (Bend) Bulletin*.

The ethics commission is supposed to be investigating whether or not Hayes had an unofficial role as advisor to the governor. Did she use her position with the governor to advance her own consulting business?

The governor has asked the ethics commission to look into the matter. Meanwhile, he says Hayes will not accept new contracts through 3E Strategies during his fourth term. What is not clear is if he/she in her role as advisor to anyone in state government is finished no matter what the ethics commission says.

What has this to do with a general sales tax? I agree with Gov. Kitzhaber. Oregonians would not accept a general sales tax unless

the personal income tax is abolished. They would not tolerate both taxes — and isn't it unconstitutional as "double taxation"?

Hayes does not appear to be a very upstanding citizen and not the kind of person we want as the First Lady of Oregon. Her past is not commendable. She seems to have advanced her own career by using a state official and she is neither an elected nor appointed official.

She took part for illicit purposes in accepting \$5,000 for a sham marriage to an immigrant in 1997 so that he could stay in the United States.

How could anyone find loyalty in such a devious person who did not come forth with the truth of a clandestine marriage? The *Willamette Week* newspaper first revealed this matter. How would you feel if your fiancée played such a trick on you?

Finally, it was poor judgment that she lived on a property in Washington state that was intended for a marijuana plantation. What were to be her gains from this venture?

All of this appears to be more greed than love. Does she really care about the governor?

Wow! She wouldn't last five minutes in any corral of an Eastern Oregonian.

Dorys C. Grover
Pendleton

LETTERS POLICY

The East Oregonian welcomes original letters of 400 words or less on public issues and public policies for publication in the newspaper and on our website. The newspaper reserves the right to withhold letters that address concerns about individual services and products or letters that infringe on the rights of private citizens. Submitted letters must be signed by the author and include the city of residence and a daytime phone number. The phone number will not be published. Unsigned letters will not be published. Send letters to Managing Editor Daniel Wattenburger, 211 S.E. Byers Ave. Pendleton, OR 97801 or email editor@eastoregonian.com.