

EAST OREGONIAN

Founded October 16, 1875

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OUR VIEW

The Kitzhaber chorus

The Oregon Attorney General’s office has started investigating Governor John Kitzhaber and his fiancée Cylvia Hayes amid calls from both friends and foes that the governor should step down.

The investigation is necessary, and AG Ellen Rosenblum had started the process days before Kitzhaber gave his belated blessing. That “blessing” was given only after it was clear that the governor’s preferred method of inquiry — the Oregon Ethics Commission — was moving at a glacial pace too slow for the torrent of information that was being dredged out daily by media.

Journalists from the EO Media Group, following initial digging from *Willamette Week* and follow-up from *The Oregonian*, among other outlets, have brought this controversy into the light for a very public reckoning. The state must respond sooner rather than later and Kitzhaber’s governorship — and his legacy — hang in the balance.

Although the facts illuminated by the light of print remain dim, it is clear that Kitzhaber’s best chance for survival would be for the investigation to reveal he had little or no knowledge of how first lady Hayes was making a living and how much of that living was built on her close relationship to the governor. If that turns out to be the truth, maybe Kitzhaber survives as governor longer than Hayes survives as his fiancée.

On the other hand, the worst-case scenario will show Kitzhaber did have knowledge of Hayes’ ethically and financially suspect actions — that he helped facilitate them or was purposefully ignorant to her machinations. If that is confirmed by the investigation, resignation seems inevitable and Kitzhaber could end up on trial like other recent governors accused of illegally profiting from their political positions.

More likely, however, is that

enough unanswered questions add up to their own result.

Kitzhaber showed his dislike of a pesky and bloodthirsty press corps after his disastrous no-news press conference two weeks ago, during which he professed innocence and ignorance. He was noticeably rattled and uncomfortable as he claimed to have no knowledge of Hayes’ tax documents, nor was he sure if his longtime, live-in girlfriend is even a legal member of his household. Hayes was not able to answer such questions herself, as she was helpfully on vacation in Sweden traveling on her own dime.

Despite all this inanity, the editorial board does not yet feel comfortable adding our voice to the chorus calling for Kitzhaber to resign. We will closely watch the investigation, however, and will continue to focus our reporters on gathering facts about Kitzhaber’s administration.

Every day we’re becoming less sure the governor survives this controversy and more convinced that people in his own party will be the ones that push him to resign.

Democrats in the legislature will surely want to change the topic from governor’s mansion intrigue to issues they want Oregonians to get behind. And party operatives will chafe at a governor scandal splashed across front pages for years —no matter the final outcome — that dirt undoubtedly trailing onto the next Democrat who campaigns for the top state job. That could be Kate Brown, who would take over from Kitzhaber in the event he resigns.

It is kind of a shock that what weeks ago seemed all but impossible — Oregon’s longest serving governor laid low by a woman not yet his wife — is now a serious conversation. That conversation won’t end anytime soon, which is why the governor might not wait around to see what the investigation turns up.

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

An unexpected journey

By KAREN HUTCHINSON-TALASKI
Umatilla Chamber of Commerce

As a kid, images of China always included dour looking Chinese people, dressed in olive-drab military type uniforms, waving red flags. Today, China is a country trying to modernize itself, attempting to outdo other countries with taller, grander high rise buildings, each one vying for the most elaborately designed. China isn’t the China of my youth.

China is still a communist country but since the early 1980s, its doors have been opened up to the western world. The Chinese people have embraced western culture to such a degree that you are hard-pressed to find anyone who doesn’t speak some English; at least in the big cities.

Citslinc, a travel company promoting trips to China, offered chamber executives the opportunity to visit Beijing, Shanghai, Suzhou and Hangzhou for a 10-day business mission in October, all expenses paid. Debbie Pedro from the Hermiston Chamber of Commerce and I jumped at the chance to see China. We are offering another trip for \$2,399 — including airfare, local transportation, food and lodging — with an orientation on Thursday, Feb. 12 from 5:30-7:30 p.m. at the Oxford Suites in Hermiston.

The trip was an eye-opener and is perfect for those who wish to have a totally different experience like we had in China. One of the first places we saw was the Great Wall of China. The only man-made structure you can see from space, the Great Wall is, well, great. Although I knew we were in China, it wasn’t until I saw the Great Wall that I truly realized I was in the “Middle Kingdom.” It was incredible to stand on the wall where thousands of others have walked for centuries, and a definite thrill.

Each day, we took off from our five-star hotel on a bus — expertly driven by our drivers — and listened while our guide regaled us with Chinese history. We walked on Tiananmen Square to the Forbidden City, exploring the huge courtyards and into the smaller living quarters of emperors. We visited the Temple of Heaven, where the emperor prayed for a good harvest and elderly

Chinese exercised, played Chinese chess, knitted, and sang as a way to continue their mantra of longevity. It is important to the Chinese people that they live long. Women retire at 55 and men at 60, so there is plenty of time to exercise and stay healthy long into their 90s. Watching an 80-year-old man do a back flip off a piece of equipment resembling an arched bridge made me feel like a complete slug. Everyone appeared to be very limber and it was fascinating to watch them do stretches, tai chi and traditional dancing, and play hacky sack.

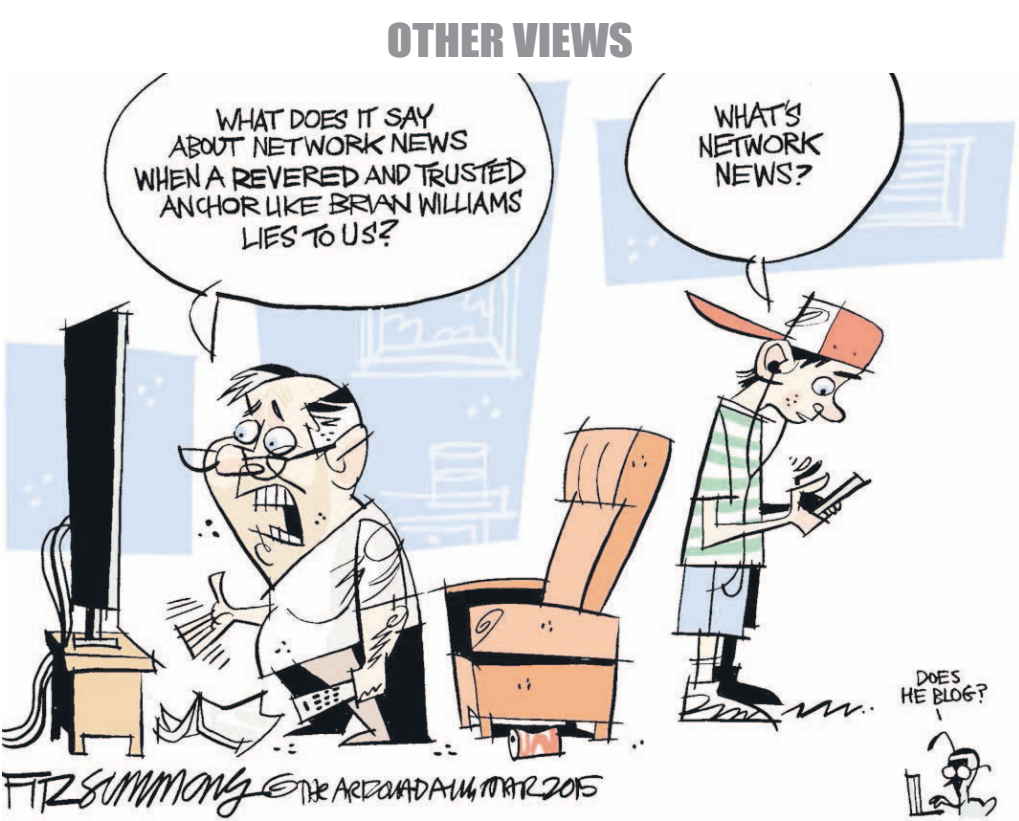
Everywhere we went, we saw evidence of the modernization of China’s cities. Both Suzhou and Hangzhou have transformed themselves into large cities with western factories and western jobs.

One of the places we visited was a building dedicated to technology and a huge room filled with information on how China is working towards a more modern society and better paying jobs. The man who took us through the building was quite proud of China’s achievements in the past 29 years since opening its doors to the west. They have come a long way from what I remember as a kid.

The people of China were warm and friendly and very generous. People wanted their picture taken with us. It was quite funny to see the smaller Chinese literally dwarfed by tall Americans. I was surprised at the number of people who spoke English fluently and how excited they were to speak to us. I met a young lady, dressed just like someone from the U.S. would dress — complete with braces — from the city of Tsingtao, where the famous beer is made. Her English teacher was from Philadelphia and when we told her we were from Oregon, she exclaimed, “The United States!”

All in all, our journey to China brought us closer to understanding a country which remained such a mystery to us for so many years. The Chinese people are still trying to find their footing in the modern world. I believe they will succeed.

Karen Hutchinson-Talaski is executive director of the Umatilla Chamber of Commerce.



Anchors aweigh

WASHINGTON — This was a bomb that had been ticking for a while.

NBC executives were warned a year ago that Brian Williams was constantly inflating his biography. They were flummoxed over why the leading network anchor felt that he needed Hemingwayesque, bullets-whizzing-by flourishes to puff himself up, sometimes to the point where it was a joke in the news division.

But the caustic media big shots who once roamed the land were gone, and “there was no one around to pull his chain when he got too over-the-top,” as one NBC News reporter put it.

It seemed pathological because Williams already had the premier job, so why engage in résumé inflation? And you don’t get those jobs because of your derring-do.

When Williams was declared the hair apparent to Tom Brokaw in 1995, hailed by Jay Leno as “NBC’s stud muffin,” I did a column wondering why TV news programs only hired pretty white male clones. I asked Williams if he was an anchor android.

“Not that I’m aware of,” he said gamely, in his anchor-desk baritone. “I can deny the existence of a factory in the American Midwest that puts out people like me.”

Williams told friends last week that he felt anguished, coming under fire for his false story of coming under fire.

Although the NBC anchor had repeated the Iraq war tall tale, ever more baroquely, for more than a decade, when he cited it on his Jan. 30 broadcast during a segment about going to a Rangers game with a retired, decorated soldier who had been on the ground that day when he landed, Williams got smacked down on Facebook.

A crew member from a Chinook flying ahead of Williams, who was involved in the 2003 firefight, posted, “Sorry dude, I don’t remember you being on my aircraft. I do remember you walking up about an hour after we had landed to ask me what had happened.” *Stars and Stripes* ran with it.

Social media — the genre that helped make the TV evening news irrelevant by showing us that we don’t need someone to tell us every night what happened that day — was gutting the institution further.

Although Williams’ determination to wrap himself in others’ valor is indefensible, it seems almost redundant to gnaw on his bones, given the fact that the Internet has already taken down a much larger target: the long-ingrained automatic impulse to turn on the TV when news happens.

Although there was much chatter about the “revered” anchor and the “moral authority” of the networks, does anyone really feel that way anymore? Frothy morning shows long ago became the more important anchoring real estate, garnering more revenue and subsidizing the news division. One anchor exerted moral authority once and that was



MAUREEN DOWD
Comment

Walter Cronkite, because he risked his career to go on TV and tell the truth about the fact that we were losing the Vietnam War.

But TV news now is rife with cat, dog and baby videos, weather stories and narcissism. And even that fare caused trouble for Williams when he reported on a video of a pig saving a baby goat, admitting “we have no way of knowing if it’s real,” and then later had to explain that it wasn’t. The nightly news anchors are not figures of authority. They’re part of the entertainment, branding and cross-promotion business.

Former ABC News anchor Diane Sawyer trended on Facebook for reportedly scoring the first interview about Bruce Jenner’s gender odyssey.

When current ABC News anchor David Muir was still a correspondent, some NBC News reporters had a drinking game about how many times he put himself in the shot and how many times his shirt was unbuttoned.

As the late-night comic anchors got more pointed and edgy with the news, the real anchors mimicked YouTube.

Williams did a piece on his daughter Allison’s casting in an NBC production of “Peter Pan.” And Muir aired an Access Hollywood-style segment with Bradley Cooper.

As the performers — Jon Stewart, Stephen Colbert, John Oliver and Bill Maher — were doing more serious stuff, the supposedly serious guys were doing more performing. The anchors pack their Hermès ties and tight T-shirts and fly off to hot spots for the performance aspect, because the exotic and dangerous backdrops confer the romance of Hemingway covering the Spanish Civil War.

Oliver, who has made waves with pieces on financial chicanery in the Miss America contest and the corporate players trying to undermine net neutrality, told *The Verge* that he is hiring more researchers with backgrounds in investigative journalism.

Meanwhile, in an interview with *Fusion*, Muir acted out the facial expressions he uses during his broadcast: “the listening face,” the “really listening” face, and the “really concerned” face. All that was missing was “Blue Steel.”

With no pushback from the brass at NBC, Williams has spent years fervently “courting celebrity,” as *The Hollywood Reporter* put it, guest starring on “30 Rock,” slow-jamming the news with Jimmy Fallon and regaling David Letterman with his faux heroics: “Two of our four helicopters were hit by ground fire, including the one I was in, RPG and AK-47.”

As his profession shrinks and softens, Williams felt compelled to try to steal the kind of glory that can only be earned the hard way.

Maureen Dowd, winner of the 1999 Pulitzer Prize, became a columnist on *The New York Times Op-Ed* page in 1995.

YOUR VIEWS

Greatest Generation has left an incredible legacy behind

In the past year I have attended several funerals of 90-year-old men who were memorialized as being members of “America’s Greatest Generation.” Tom Brokaw in his 1998 book “The Greatest Generation” said “it is, I believe, the greatest generation any society has ever produced.” These men and women did what they did because it was “the right thing to do.”

They came of age during the Great Depression and witnessed the anxiety and hardship that was occurring when unemployment of able-bodied men was about 25 percent. The children of these unemployed were often malnourished, ill and had to quit school to work alongside adults who resented their taking the job of a man.

Things were still only marginally better when World War II began. Over 16 million United States men and women were in uniform with 292,000 being killed on the battlefield and 114,000 more dying from other causes. Many more were wounded.

As bad as our losses were, we fared better than most of the rest of the world. It is estimated that from 60 to 80 million people died as a result of this war. When one thinks of the impact this carnage must have had on

these veterans, it is no wonder they did not want to talk about it when they came home.

When these veterans came home we had become an industrial giant and these veterans needed the skills to fit in. The GI Bill was passed paying for school tuition and expenses, and low cost loans for mortgages and businesses became available. We also realized a good portion of the world was hurting and financial assistance would help them get “back on their feet,” so we made loans to them. This all cost money, but they viewed it as “the right thing to do.”

With all of this happening, it is obvious that we had incurred a massive debt, 112.7 percent of GDP at the conclusion of the war, the highest in our history. This “Greatest Generation” paid it off in about 20 years. How did they accomplish this? By taxing incomes over \$200,000 with a tax rate of about 90 percent and being blessed with the longest run of economic success in our history.

In the memorials I attended little was mentioned about what these men had done while in the service. Had they been asked they would probably have said they did their duty. In response to all the volunteer service they had done during their lifetime, they probably would have said, “it was the right thing to do.”

Carlisle Harrison
Hermiston