

Quick takes

Statue decorations

If we were to subscribe to the *EO*’s ideas of the benefits of public art, such as statues, it would be perfectly fine to decorate Mount Rushmore, the Lincoln Memorial, or Martin Luther King Jr. Memorial in a “playful” manner. All of these memorials have statues of presidents and a civil rights leader — all pieces of public art, stewarded by the National Parks Service. I’m still strongly opposed to decorating or desecrating statues that are memorials to our collective history — locally or nationally.

— Chuck Sams

Thank you council for having heart in your decision to ban decorating Jackson Sundown.
He is my ancestor and I found the disrespectful decorations offensive. Should have left his statue at the Convention Center where it was unveiled.

— Etta Conner

One of the great lessons of the Twitter age is that much can be summed up in just a few words. Here are some of this week’s takes. Tweet yours @Tim_Trainor or email editor@eastoregonian.com, and keep them to 140 characters.

Western theme at Brownfield Park best for Pendleton

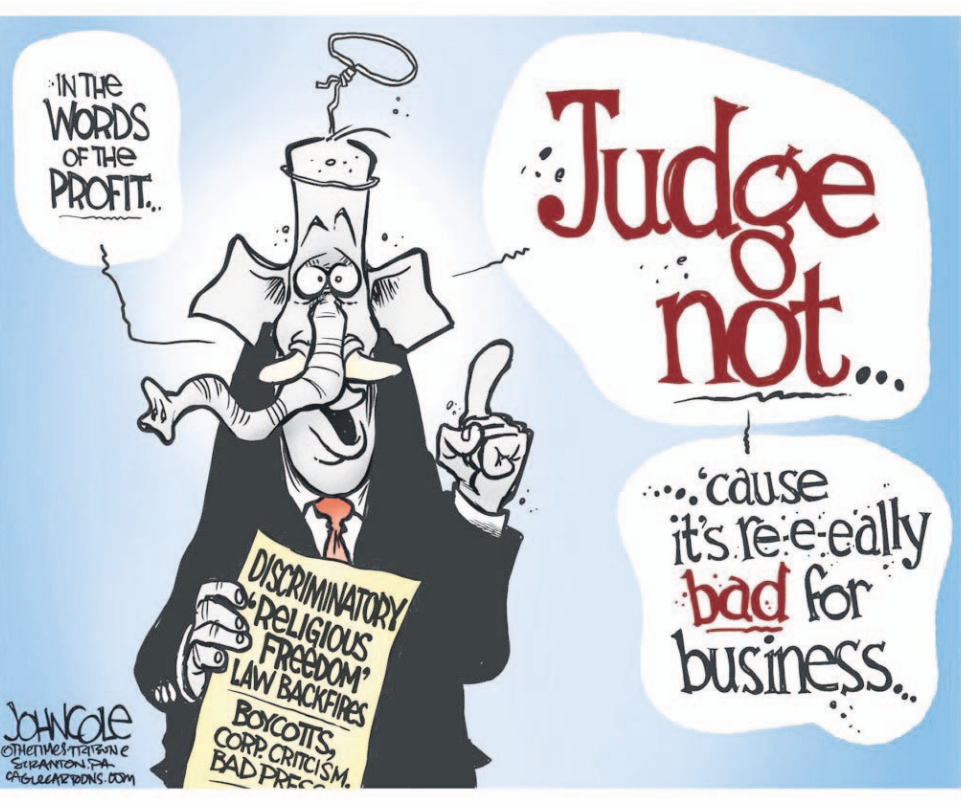
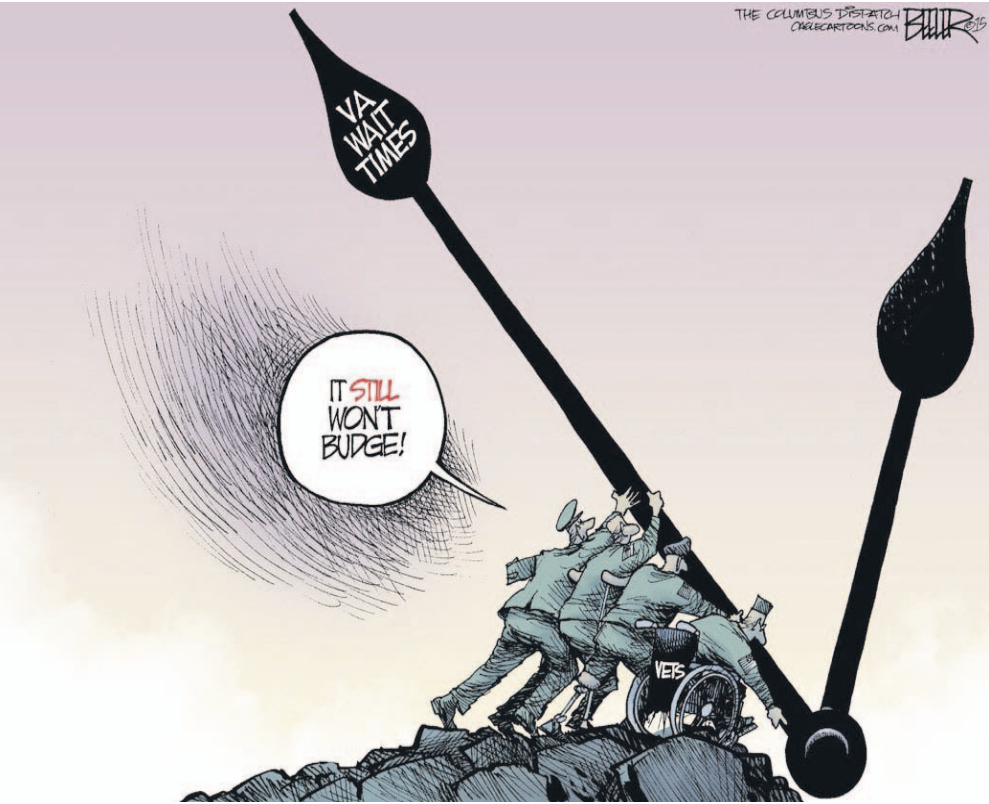
By FRITZ HILL

What is best for Pendleton at Brownfield Park?
The twenty-some recent letters from ex-football players supporting the placement of the Requa bronze at Brownfield Park is a testament to the number of lives that he touched during his teaching and coaching years, but the real question is not whether he was a great teacher and coach, but what is best for Pendleton.
In comparison: 25,000-30,000 people are drawn to Pendleton each year by the Pendleton Underground Tours to revisit the early years of Pendleton’s very interesting history. The bronze statues on Main Street help tell that history. For now, a historical marker at Brownfield telling about the Oregon Trail or the birth of Pendleton would be appropriate.
I believe that some of those visitors are so interested in Pendleton’s past they will walk down Main Street to Brownfield Park and have their picture taken on the actual Oregon Trail. Some of those visitors might, on accident, shop or stop for a bite to eat.

The Requa Bronze does not belong at Brownfield, it belongs at the spacious entrance to the Pendleton High School campus. There is not only enough room for Requa but also other great coaches and educators like Debbie Kishpaugh, Dale Warberg, Bob White and Lyle Phelps. What a great setting to honor past heroes, encourage the current athletes and inspire those in the future.
Most people do a little research on the Internet when they are considering stopping at a town or a special destination. Go to Travel Pendleton on the Internet and see what the common descriptions of Pendleton are: western tradition, pioneers, cowboys, native Americans, wild west history, Round-Up, Woolen Mills, Pendleton Underground tours, leather craftsmanship, top true Western town of 2011, Tamastslit.
Those descriptions occur over and over, but I have yet to see any reference to Requa. If you are interested in why visitors are attracted to Pendleton and what they are saying about Pendleton after the visit go to Trip Advisor, Pendleton, Ore., on the web.
When tourists turn off at the airport interchange, what signs do they see that

might cause them to stop and spend some time in Pendleton?
Directions to the Information Center for the Oregon Trail, historical marker — History of the Oregon Trail in Umatilla County, Welcome to the Real West — Let R Buck, info center 1 1/2 miles, Pendleton Woolen Mills attraction ahead, Round-Up and Happy Canyon Hall of Fame, City of Pendleton Historic District, Oregon Trail route on Main Street Pendleton Oregon. There is no signage about Requa or football.
I suggest that nothing but a historical landmark sign (you are standing on the Oregon Trail and the beginning of Pendleton) be placed in Brownfield. If the city council allows the giant Requa to be placed in Brownfield and be the centerpiece of downtown bronzes it would constitute a huge change in the marketing and branding of Pendleton.
If Pendleton is changing the marketing and branding then I think we must change Pendleton’s slogan from Let ‘er Buck to Let ‘er Reek, because this decision absolutely stinks for Pendleton.

Fritz Hill is a Pendleton wheat rancher.



At Hart Mountain, the land came back

By REBECCA DEATSMAN
Writers on the Range

Cattle are hard on streams. There’s no getting around it. They’re large creatures, they travel in big herds unlike native ungulates such as mule deer and pronghorn, and they love to hang out in streambeds where the living is easy, with plentiful water to drink and delicate plants to munch on.
The damage they do to riparian vegetation can speed up erosion, harm fish by increasing water temperature, decrease bird populations through the elimination of shrub habitat, and cause a long list of other ecological problems.
Conventional wisdom holds that in order to repair this damage, it’s necessary to actively restore a streambed by replanting vegetation, reshaping eroded banks, and filling gullies. If you’ve ever worked trying to restore habitat, you know that it is both time-consuming and expensive. I discovered this myself when I worked for a watershed council in Eastern Oregon, spending hours planting willow stakes and spreading grass seed along streams that had been degraded by cattle.
Happily, though, there is some good news for underfunded and understaffed restoration efforts throughout the West. A new study carried out at Hart Mountain National Antelope Refuge by Oregon State University researchers suggests that in some cases, overgrazed riparian areas can recover on their own in the decades after cattle are removed — no assistance from us needed.
Hart Mountain is a wildlife refuge in sparsely populated southeastern Oregon, established in 1936 to protect remnant herds of pronghorn in the

area. Originally, land managers believed that allowing cattle to graze in the refuge would actually improve the quality of the habitat; a 1970 document described grazing as the “primary means by which vegetation would be managed.”
Over time, it became clear that this assumption was dead wrong; by the 1990s 73 percent of Hart Mountain’s streams were listed as being in poor or very poor condition. The radical solution? Removing all cattle from refuge lands, accomplished in 1991.
To see how things had changed in the decades since, Oregon State University ecology professor Bill Ripple, his student Jonathan Batchelor, and their colleagues tracked down the sites of 110 historical photos of the refuge’s degraded riparian areas. Then they re-photographed each site to see how it looks today. The images were dramatic (see for yourself at www.cof.orst.edu/hart).
Previously eroded channels had been filled with lush grass and willows, bare soil has disappeared, and aspen stands have regenerated. In a few areas, some active restoration had been done in the form of controlled burns and willow plantings, but amazingly, today you can see little difference between managed and unmanaged sites.
Ripple called his paper “rare,” because it showed what happened to the land before and after cattle were removed and can serve as an example to all Westerners. “It’s not practical to do active restoration for huge areas, where people are planting willows and other species,” he said. “What makes this potentially a very powerful management tool is that it is a passive restoration approach, where the government took action to remove the cattle and over two decades later

we’re seeing a major resurgence of stream-side plants. It’s an indicator of the resiliency of nature.”
He was quick to caution that these results may not be universal; nature is temperamental as well as adaptable, and what works in one place may not work in another. In a degraded streambed that has been overtaken by invasive weeds, for example, native plants will probably have trouble reestablishing without a helping hand.
That Hart Mountain’s streams are now healthy again doesn’t mean it’s time to reintroduce cattle to the refuge, either, Ripple adds. If the grazing were managed intensively, using a low stocking rate and frequently moving cattle between pastures, cattle could be compatible with healthy riparian areas, but he adds, it would be challenging.
I wouldn’t trade the time I spent on the banks of Fox Creek planting willow stakes along with a group of teenage volunteers. It got me out of the office on a sunny day and deepened my understanding of the land whose stewardship I was supposed to be overseeing.
But restoring every foot of overgrazed streambed across the vast American West by hand is clearly not going to happen, and it’s a relief to learn that maybe it doesn’t need to. Thanks to the experiment at Hart Mountain, we finally have data to back up what ranchers and others who live close to the range have long maintained: Given time, on the scale of decades or more, tired, beat-up, overgrazed land has an amazing capacity to heal itself.

Rebecca Deatsman is a contributor to Writers on the Range, a column service of High Country News. She is a writer in Walla Walla.

Enjoying the low life?

The United States is the most powerful colossus in the history of the world: Our nuclear warheads could wipe out the globe, our enemies tweet on iPhones, and kids worldwide bop to Beyoncé.
Yet let’s get real. All this hasn’t benefited all Americans. A newly released global index finds that America falls short, along with other powerful countries, on what matters most: assuring a high quality of life for ordinary citizens.
The Social Progress Index for 2015 ranks the U.S. 16th in the world. We may thump our chests and boast that we’re No. 1, and in some ways we are. But, in important ways, we lag.
The index ranks the United States 30th in life expectancy, 38th in saving children’s lives, and a humiliating 55th in women surviving childbirth. OK, we know that we have a high homicide rate, but we’re at risk in other ways as well. We have higher traffic fatality rates than 37 other countries, and higher suicide rates than 80.
We also rank 38th in the equality of our education system, 49th in high school enrollment rates and 87th in cellphone use.
Ouch. “We’re No. 87!” doesn’t have much of a ring to it, does it?
Michael E. Porter, the Harvard Business School professor who helped devise the Social Progress Index, says that it’s important to have conventional economic measures such as GDP growth. But social progress is also a critical measure, he notes, of how a country is serving its people.
“We’re not now No. 1 in a lot of stuff that traditionally we have been,” said Porter, an expert on international competitiveness. “What we’re learning is that the fact that we’re not No. 1 on this stuff also means that we’re facing long-term economic stresses.”
“We’re starting to understand that we can’t put economic development and social progress in two separate buckets,” Porter added. “There’s a dialectic here.”



NICHOLAS KRISTOF
Comment

The top countries in the 2015 Social Progress Index are Norway, Sweden, Switzerland, Iceland, New Zealand and Canada. Of the 133 countries rated, Central African Republic is last, just after Chad and Afghanistan.
Sri Lanka does better than India. Bangladesh outperforms Pakistan. Both the Philippines and South Africa do better than Russia. Mongolia comes in ahead of China. And Canada wallops the United States.
One way of looking at the index is to learn from countries that outperform by having social indicators better than their income levels. By that standard, the biggest stars are Costa Rica and Uruguay, with New Zealand and Rwanda also outperforming.
Green notes that Costa Rica offered free, universal primary education in the 19th century. In the 20th century, it disbanded its military forces and invested some of the savings in education. One payoff: Some surveys have found Costa Ricans among the happiest people in the world.
The Social Progress Index, now in its second year, might seem a clarion call for greater equality, but that’s not quite right. Porter and his number-crunchers found only a mild correlation between economic equality (measured by Gini coefficient) and social progress. What mattered much more was poverty. Of course, wealthy countries with high poverty tend to be unequal as well.
In any case, the 2015 Social Progress Index should be serve notice to Americans — and to people around the globe. We obsess on the wrong measures, so we often have the wrong priorities.
We can send people to space and turn watches into computers, but we seem incapable of consensus on the issues that matter most to our children — so our political system remains in gridlock, even as other countries pass us by.

Pulitzer Prize winner Nicholas Kristof has been a columnist for The New York Times since 2001.

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Your opinions can make a difference.

