

Quick takes

Umatilla County pot ban

Do they think that this will keep pot out of Umatilla County? There are many people who benefit, medically, from marijuana. This isn't going to stop those that abuse the use of it.

— Sherry Chapman Thompson

How about you figure out why those "medical" marijuana users are in need. I bet legit users are far and few between. I mean seriously, fibromyalgia doesn't qualify in my book.

— E.O. Reader

Remember Prohibition? Remember how well that worked out? If people want pot, they're going to get pot, one way or another. Sell it, tax it, watch the community benefit from it.

— Brad Dodson

Patnode wins national award

I tried a lot of traffic ticket cases in front of her. I like her very much. She was always very professional, took her job seriously, but was also super nice. Great to see a lovely story about her!

— Kara Davis

What a neat story. I'm so sorry for her family's loss, however can't help but appreciate how she has chosen to use that experience to try to make the world better. Kudos!

— Misty Buckley

Racehorse rescue

Everyone that hauls Cabbage Hill's greatest nightmare. Thank heaven for the people that live in that area always ready to help. Much appreciated.

— Lana Jackson

And that story right there is another reason I'm happy to be born and raised in Pendleton. People helping strangers that need help. Love my hometown!

— Brenda Melton

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.

Sister cities, on opposite sides of the world

On the last leg of the 16-hour trip from Pendleton to Minamisoma, you begin to wonder how in the world two such disparate places ever became sister cities.

The view rolling by illustrates

the difference between a place with 10 percent humidity and one with 95 percent humidity. The lush, bright green foliage in the Japanese landscape invades every nook and cranny, even in the hottest months of the year, and you get the feeling that farmers there have never had to pray for rain.

But even as everything we encountered on our Sister City trip seemed exotic and markedly different than what we were used to at home, the undercurrent of warm generosity made things feel familiar very quickly. The people of Minamisoma took the six Pendleton students and me into their homes like beloved family members. Big-hearted hospitality definitely ties the two communities together.

Our new families and local guides were eager to teach us about the history, art and food of the region, and every experience they prepared for us had several facets. For example, our lessons in samurai culture started with a trip to the Minamisoma museum, where we saw armor and relics that dated back to the 10th and 11th centuries.

A few days later, amid a host of other activities, we traveled to an old sake warehouse where a contingent of women dressed each of us in traditional samurai armor from our helmeted heads to our tabi sock clad toes. Weighed down by about 40



ROBERTA LAVADOUR
Comment



Photo by Roberta Lavadour

The Soma Nomaoui festival opening ceremony includes the Koshiki Kacchu Keiba, shown here, in which 12 samurai armor-clad horsemen, carrying 28-inch katana swords, race 1,000 meters on horseback.

pounds of iron and more than 300 meters of silk cord, we then walked a few blocks to a Shinto shrine, learning to properly cleanse our hands and mouths in the temizuya. Several days later we helped to carry a portable shrine from the Mishama Shrine to a spot near the festival grounds.

By the time we attended the acclaimed Soma Nomaoui festival we had a breadth of understanding about the event that made the experience vivid and rich.

Highlights of the three-day Soma Nomaoui festival included a beautiful opening ceremony, the Koshiki Kacchu Keiba in which 12 samurai armor-clad horsemen, carrying 28-inch katana swords, race on the 1,000 meter track, and the Shinki Sodatsusen, in which several hundred samurai

horsemen compete for 40 shrine flags shot into the air with fireworks. To know that spectators had been viewing these same activities for more than a thousand years from our exact same vantage point was humbling.

By the end of our visit, the sister city relationship between Pendleton and Minamisoma seemed a perfect fit. Just as the fine craftspeople of Eastern Oregon create beautiful saddles, hats, boots, belts and finely beaded regalia to support the Round-Up, the craftspeople of the Fukushima prefecture make the Soma Nomaoui festival a feast for the eyes. The passion to maintain respected and beloved traditions in the most authentic way possible is the same in both communities.

To see the festival thrive is a testament to the resilience

of the people of Minamisoma. The death toll from the earthquake and tsunami in 2011 in Minamisoma alone was more than 1,800 people, and across the Japanese coastline more than 15,000 people lost their lives. About 2,500 remain missing to this day. To know that just a couple of years ago the town was largely empty because of the ensuing nuclear disaster, with families living in evacuation shelters in other cities, was difficult to comprehend.

About 75 percent of the residents have returned and daily life to the outsider looks as normal as could be. Air quality is monitored constantly and radiation levels are well within safe concentrations. New structures are difficult to distinguish from long-standing ones, and in the coastal areas the new vegetation obscures the fact that whole neighborhoods were lost. My host mother, Kazuka Hasagawa, took our group to visit the place where her childhood home used to stand, and we paid homage at the memorial set up at the site of the only tree left standing in the area.

It's not an exaggeration to say that each of us on the trip fell in love with Japan and with the people of Minamisoma. Built on the work done by past exchange leaders and the committed staff and volunteers at the Minamisoma International Association and the Pendleton Cultural Foundation, our experience was not just the trip of a lifetime, but the beginning of many lifelong friendships and additional points of contact in a great sister city relationship.

Robert Lavadour was a chaperone of the Minamisoma trip. She is the director of the Pendleton Center for the Arts.

Is Nigeria's president a born-again democrat?

Nigeria looms large in Africa. It replaced South Africa in 2014 as Africa's leading economy. It has the blessings of Africa's largest population, massive oil deposits, ample fertile land and exceptionally energetic entrepreneurs — but the stigma of half its population living on less than \$2 a day. Corruption is everyone's complaint in Nigeria but everyone's tool. Add to this the radical Islamic Boko Haram movement that since 2009 has brutally pulverized the northeast and remains undefeated by the Nigerian military.

March election: Such failures helped oust the feckless incumbent president, Goodluck Jonathon. Voters chose by 54 percent the opposition party candidate, Muhammadu Buhari, a 72-year old ex-military dictator and disciplinarian, now a born-again democrat. Or so he says. I remember him unfavorably from my earlier years in West Africa and just hope for a born-again maturity to bring Nigeria enlightened governance.

Boko Haram: Far too long, Jonathan and his advisors mistakenly treated Boko Haram as a fringe movement in the neglected state of Bornu in northeast Nigeria (revealingly, literacy is 15 percent in Bornu compared to 92 percent in Lagos). They could no longer ignore it when in 2014 world media highlighted the kidnapping of 276 girls while taking school exams (Boko Haram loosely means "Western education is forbidden"). The girls are still missing today. Boko Haram's spreading attacks have made northern Nigeria unsafe for business and travel, and its suicide bombers even reached the capital of Abuja. More recently it has gone across borders into Niger, Chad and Cameroon and, ominously, pledged fidelity to the self-proclaimed Islamic State in Syria/Iraq.

Military: Nigeria's history is speckled with military dictators until civilian rule was restored in 1999, although even then the first civilian president was a prominent retired general and former military ruler in the 1970s (Obasanjo). Nigeria's infamous corruption has affected its military operations over the years. Commanders reportedly siphon money from huge military budgets and sell off weaponry at the expense of paying and equipping soldiers whose morale is understandably low. Beyond that, there have been well-documented reports of Nigerian military human rights violations such as shooting into crowds, large detentions without trial, arbitrary executions and harassment of civilians. Therefore a key promise in Buhari's election campaign was to reorganize Nigeria's military. That appealed greatly to voters.

Buhari: He is incredibly persistent. He has run and lost three times for president since 1999, campaigning in traditional robes of the north and wearing thick framed spectacles. He was once a ruler in military



HARRIET ISOM
Comment

uniform. He deposed an elected president in 1983 and ruled until he himself was toppled in a military coup in 1985. On the positive side, Buhari has a reputation for being personally frugal and incorruptible. As a military ruler, he was big on discipline, sometimes overzealously so, and he did punish corruptors. At the same time, he was thin-skinned and heavy-handed, restricting the press and political freedoms. His economic policies were draconian

and unsuccessful, e.g. replacing the entire naira currency and curbing nearly all imports.

Task List: Buhari's governing challenge is staggering. He is taking over government coffers emptied by sharply declining oil prices and lavish election payments by the Jonathan administration. He must restore confidence in the military, and to this end he has already replaced the top military leadership. He must decide whether to renew a deal with former militants in the Nigerian oil region, paid not to blow up oil installations.

He must manage heightened expectations of the populace to bring jobs, pay civil servants, distribute money to the poor and provide a reliable electric grid. He needs to

appoint cabinet ministers who won't just spend on pet projects and live lavishly. He must deal with bankrupt state governments and institutions at all levels hollowed out by corruption. For the oil sector, a key action would be for him to call for an audit of the state oil company, which controls opaquely what revenues go to the government. What a list!

U.S./ Nigeria relations: Relations with Jonathan were strained after the USG refused to sell military helicopters to Nigeria, citing our law preventing such deals if militaries have documented human rights violations. Nigeria, angered, in turn rebuffed a team of American trainers to be sent last year to help teach one of its battalions. Washington was therefore greatly encouraged by Buhari's repeated promises during the election campaign to fight corruption and Boko Haram, as well as to look into the reports of military human rights violations.

President Obama consequently welcomed Buhari to the White House just 8 weeks after his inauguration. But on July 23, Buhari surprised Washington in a speech at the Institute of Peace when he sharply criticized the USG for refusing to sell his country weapons and brushed aside reports of human rights violations by the Nigerian military as "unproven." Was he just posturing for his home audience — or dropping his campaign promises? That is the question for the coming months, along with much else to observe in his coming leadership of Nigeria.

Ambassador Harriet Isom grew up in Pendleton and has retired to the family ranch. She was a career diplomat serving in Asia and Africa from 1961 to 1996.

Building on Pendleton's 'good bones'

Editor's note: This is the second of two columns on Pendleton's future by Tom Hebert.

To continue our journey together, crossing over into a preferred future, following is a sampler of opportunities for local development. But first, 34 words that could herald the kind of much-needed trigger event we need to move Pendleton off its collective duff: McMenamins is a chain of 65 brewpubs, breweries, music venues, historic hotels, and theater pubs. The chain is located mostly in the Portland metropolitan area, but has many other locations in Oregon and Washington.

And second, rejecting the words tourist and tourism, let's enlarge our thinking by leaning on two different words, visitor and visiting. It helps to understand that the tourist industry considers anyone traveling more than 50 miles from home, for any reason, a tourist.

Thus avoiding the problematic terms, tourism and tourist, we suddenly enjoy business travelers, folks visiting friends and family, convention and trade show attendees, passers-by simply stopping for gas and/or food, parents visiting their kids at BMCC, and other visitors escaping the spiritually hollow suburban Tri-Cities and Hermiston, experiencing instead an authentic Western spirit.

These definitional insights aren't mine. Find them explained in the 2011 book "Your Town: The 25 Immutable Rules of Successful Tourism" by Roger Brooks who actually knows Pendleton well. Because he consulted here for his 2006 "Community Assessment Findings & Suggestions," a comprehensive and insightful but now mostly-ignored illustrated study of Pendleton's marketing, its attractions, retail mix, customer service, visitor amenities, customer service, its critical mass, and thus its potential to attract overnight visitors. To learn all this he sent two experienced "secret shoppers" into the region and then Pendleton and with 71 mostly ignored suggestions — they got the goods on us.

With Brooks' ideas in mind, beyond Round-Up here's a short list of Pendleton's visitor assets that can be marketed year around: Hamley's, several leather and saddle shops, the Underground, Heritage Station, Prodigal Son, Main Street's Great Pacific, Cimmyotti's, Sister's Café, Coffee Bean and more — and yes, touring the very beautiful Umatilla Indian Reservation and visiting Tamastlikt Cultural Institute. But we need more.

Well, an irresistible critical mass develops if Pendleton adds to that mix a full-featured McMenamins Rivoli Theater Pub. This because entering the rapids of change it's a game changer — it presents the best possible



TOM HEBERT
Comment

opportunity Pendleton has going forward. Remember, a town needs ten unique things to do after 5 p.m., right?

1. Work with the genuinely dedicated volunteers of the Rivoli Theater Coalition to develop a McMenamins presence in downtown Pendleton. Could the Rivoli be reborn as a McMenamins theater pub, but one with both a movie schedule and stage spaces for live shows, concerts and more?

Collaborating with both the developer and the partnership, the coalition creates a unique institution with the large visitor base of brew pub fans that The Prodigal Son has already discovered. This possibility could be the game-changer, the confidence builder Pendleton needs.

A McMenamins Rivoli Theater Pub could be the game-changer, the confidence builder Pendleton needs.

Could/would Pendleton's development commission move this project along with significant incentives?

2. Promote a much-needed downtown Pendleton Woolen Mills flagship store, first suggested to the Pendleton Development Commission in 2004.

3. Bring Court Avenue's charismatic but largely vacant Ladow Building across from the Prodigal Son back into the city's life.

4. Support redevelopment of Pendleton's upper stories like the new Oak Hotel project. At the moment, downtown development is stalled by a few passive and/or distant owners.

5. Collaborate with Main Street's building owners on remaining façade work, thus completing its long-awaited facelift.

6. Bring together Main St. merchants, the Farmers Market, and Main Street Cowboys.

7. Work with the city's cultural institutions to create marketable assets in economic development as Pendleton works to become a regional visitor destination.

8. Get to reality quickly, after consulting with its current board the city council repeals the ordinance establishing the Pendleton Progress Board, thus freeing up 20-plus community leaders for important community service with the new Pendleton Partnership, Inc.

9. Finally, there's a saying in the world of community development and change makers: "No vision, no development." To this truth, years ago an official of Wenatchee's city government observed that Pendleton had "good bones." She was right. We just need to shape them bones, them bones, into detailed images of where — amid a sea of visitors — we wish to live. With such a shared vision, a livable/marketable whole will emerge and then Pendleton, working together, will become what it once was — second only to Portland — a stylish small city.

Tom Hebert is a writer and public policy consultant living on the Umatilla Indian Reservation.