

EAST OREGONIAN

Founded October 16, 1875

KATHRYN B. BROWN

Publisher

JENNINE PERKINSON

Advertising Director

DANIEL WATTENBURGER

Managing Editor

TIM TRAINOR

Opinion Page Editor

OUR VIEW



The Hermiston High School marching band plays at Saturday's Umatilla County Fair parade.

Staff photo by Jonathan Bach

Fair thee well

In 1935, Umatilla County saw its fair move to a plot of land in Hermiston that can now be described as careworn.

Through the decades, many a foot has trampled its dirt, leading fairgoers to the next whirly ride or animal exhibit. Many a child has undoubtedly begged their parents for just one more walk through its cow pens, or one more spool of cotton candy from a stand set atop its grounds.

Now, it's time to say goodbye. Make sure to make your way to this year's Umatilla County Fair, held Tuesday through Saturday. It's the last to be held at these fairgrounds before the big move next year to the \$12.9 million Eastern Oregon Trade and Event Center in Hermiston.

While there won't be a formal send-off for the event's last year at its location on West Orchard Avenue, 2015's entertainment sure won't disappoint. For the first time — but certainly not the last — you'll

be able to snap a selfie with Frank Rendon's Legendary Longhorns, two gigantic steers who showed themselves to be docile as doves when they strode down Main Street during Saturday's parade. Also keep an eye out for Curtis Carlyle, the Portland-based showman who has juggled and joked his way over the last 15 years, performing at the Kennedy Center in Washington, D.C., to ports-of-call like Belize and Hawaii.

Feeling nostalgic for the early 1990s? Head over to Warrant's main stage gig on Saturday. (Hint hint: there will a pie-eating contest the same day at 5 p.m. on the Coke stage, and rumor has it there may be cherries involved.)

Eighty years ago, the fair moved to a new home. West Orchard has been a good host those eight decades, so fairgoers should take the opportunity this week to give a heartfelt, Umatilla County send-off to the fairgrounds.

Fare thee well, fair.

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

County can rescind marijuana ban

East Oregonian editorial board is not privy to committee's hard work in recommending ban

Once again, in their "Tip of the hat; kick in the pants" of August 7, the editorial board of the *East Oregonian* presents themselves as experts on all things marijuana holding the only possible correct opinion on the establishment of retail marijuana stores and medical marijuana dispensaries. How naïve.

The committee that was formed to study the use of medical marijuana dispensaries and make recommendations to the Board of Commissioners was not "stacked" as the editor might want one to think. It consisted both of people who support and oppose the use of marijuana, people who know how to draft regulations, people who would need to enforce the regulations and general members of the community.

Hundreds of hours of work were given to the task by hardworking, conscientious committee members; a 4-inch thick notebook detailing their study and deliberation was compiled in the process. The editorial board did not attend a committee meeting nor have they read the notebook. Perhaps, they did not want to hear conflicting facts to their opinion. The "kick" was a blatant slap in the face to dedicated people who worked very hard and very diligently on the matter; it shamefully and wrongfully impugns their integrity. They deserve the thanks from all of us for the work they did.

The committee studied the issue extensively, debating concerns, often times emotionally, and, ultimately, reaching a unanimous conclusion in recommending to the Board of Commissioners that the drug not be sold in Umatilla County for recreational or medical purposes.

The editor portrays the Board of Commissioners as making a "head in



BILL ELFERING
Comment

The Umatilla County marijuana committee studied the issue extensively.

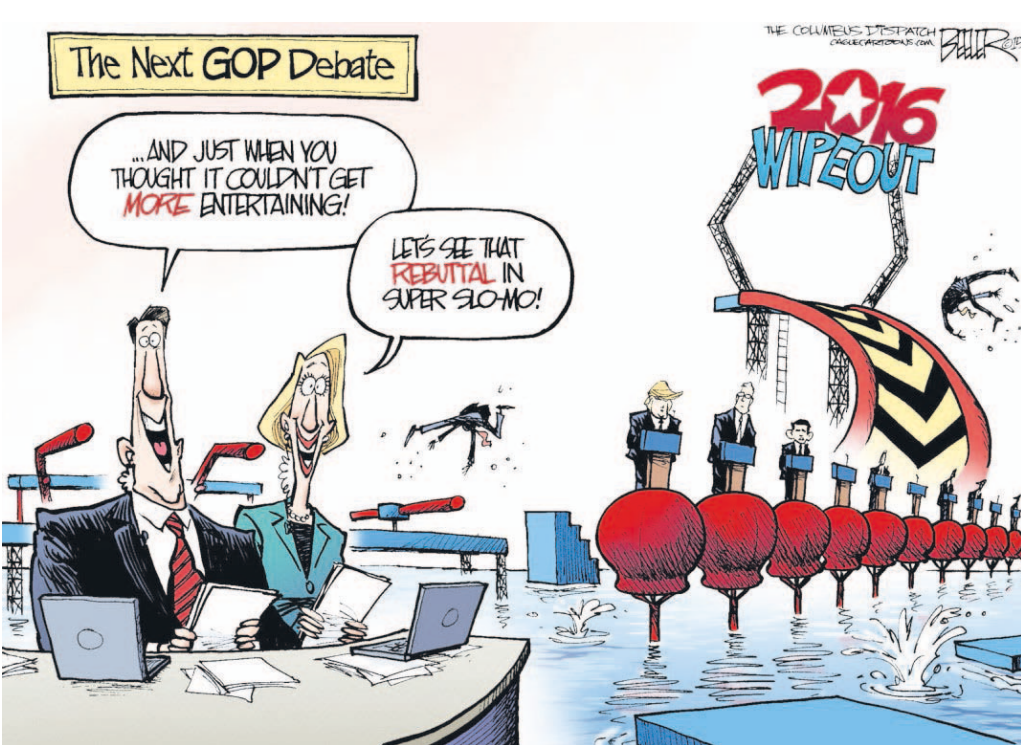
the sand" decision to ban sales of the drug in Umatilla County rather than allowing them to be able to purchase the drug anywhere they wish including, perhaps, the produce section of the neighborhood grocery store. I regret that neither the editors nor their representatives attended the Board of Commissioners meeting at the Umatilla County Courthouse August 5, when the matter was deliberated, discussed and determined.

They complain about the Board of Commissioners lack of compassion. Were they there? Were they privy to the conversations with constituents over the many months that this matter was pending? Were they at the conferences where pro's and con's and legal implications were discussed? How can they whine about a determination made when they weren't even there to hear the considerations upon which it was based? Nor have the editors of the *East Oregonian* bothered to call and discuss the issue with a member of the Board of Commissioners. What can they really know of "the attitude of the three" commissioners? They must consider themselves clairvoyant or, I guess, fact doesn't really matter for an editor.

The editors don't think "the ban will last long." It may not; the study committee remains active and decisions can be changed as more is known. State regulation is vague and weak. And, they conflict with federal regulations. When those imperfections are corrected and the board can come to a conclusion that medical or recreational marijuana is in the best interests of the citizens of Umatilla County, the matter can and may be revisited.

■

Bill Elfering is a Umatilla County Commissioner.



OTHER VIEWS

America, no more the land of opportunity

YAMHILL, Ore. — We like to boast of America as the "land of opportunity," and historically there is truth to that.

"We have never been a nation of haves and have-nots," Sen. Marco Rubio once declared. "We are a nation of haves and soon-to-haves, of people who have made it and of people who will make it."

That's a lovely aspiration, the vision that brought Rubio's father to the United States — and my father, too. Yet I fear that by 2015 we've become the socially rigid society our forebears fled, replicating the barriers and class gaps that drove them away. That's what the presidential candidates should be debating.

Researchers have repeatedly found that in the United States, there is now less economic mobility than in Canada or much of Europe. A child born in the bottom quintile of incomes in the United States has only a 4 percent chance of rising to the top quintile, according to a Pew study. A separate (somewhat dated) study found that in Britain, such a child has about a 12 percent chance.



NICHOLAS KRISTOF
Comment

the medicine. That's what put him in the hospital.

And, yes, that was for his EX-wife. Last year, I wrote a series titled "When Whites Just Don't Get It," about race gaps (the reaction was not entirely enthusiastic!). I also think that many successful Americans "don't get" the income gulf.

Sean Reardon of Stanford University has calculated that the race gap in student test scores has diminished, but that the class gap has widened. A half-century ago, the black-white test score gap was 50 percent greater than the gap between the richest 10 percent and the poorest 10 percent. Now it is the other way around, with the class gap almost twice that of the race gap.

A friend in Yamhill was smart, talented and hardworking, but he faced an uphill struggle from birth.

By another measure, "intergenerational income elasticity," social mobility is twice as great for Canada as for the United States. Alan Krueger, a Princeton economist, has noted that in the United States, parents' incomes correlate to their adult children's incomes roughly as heights do. "The chance of a person who was born to a family in the bottom 10 percent of the income distribution rising to the top 10 percent as an adult is about the same as the chance that a dad who is 5 feet 6 inches tall having a son who grows up to be over 6 feet 1 inch tall," Krueger observed in a speech. "It happens, but not often."

I've been reflecting on this because of a friend in my hometown, Yamhill, Oregon. Rick Goff was smart, talented and hardworking, but he faced an uphill struggle from birth; I wrote about him last year as an example of the aphorism that "talent is universal, but opportunity is not."

And now Rick is dead. He died of heart disease last month in his home in Yamhill at age 65.

I visited him the day before he died, as he was pained and struggling to walk, and I keep thinking of his prodigious talents that were never fully deployed because, in the United States, too often the best predictor of where we end up is where we start.

Rick, who thought he was one-eighth American Indian, pretty much raised himself, along with his brother and two sisters. His mom died when he was 5, and his dad — "a professional drunk," Rick once told me — abandoned the family. A grandmother presided, and the kids hunted and fished to put food on the table.

School might have been an escalator to a better life, for Rick had a terrific mind, but as a boy he had an undiagnosed attention deficit disorder and teachers wrote him off. In the eighth grade, the principal punished Rick for skipping school by suspending him for six months. Rick was thrilled. By 10th grade he had dropped out for good.

Rick worked in lumber mills and machine shops, then became a talented custom painter of cars. After his hand was mashed in an accident, he survived on disability and odd jobs. His phone worked when he had enough money to pay the bills.

He married twice and divorced twice, raised children as a single dad, and was a loyal friend to everyone around. A few years ago, Rick was slowly mending from a serious illness, dependent on a crucial medicine. Then he abruptly weakened and had to be hospitalized.

It turned out that his ex-wife's car had been towed and she had needed to pay a fee to get it back. So Rick had given her \$600 and skipped

Consider that 77 percent of adults in the top 25 percent of incomes earn a B.A. by age 24. Only 9 percent of those in the bottom 25 percent do so.

Yet as Tim Wise notes in a forthcoming book, "Under the Affluence," there's an "increasingly vituperative narrative of cruelty" to those at the bottom.

The musician Ted Nugent once suggested that the "takers" in society are "entitlement chumps" and "gluttonous, soulless pigs."

The conservative author Neal Boortz compared the poor to toenail fungus.

Sure, entitlements are a legitimate issue for debate. But if you're troubled by publicly subsidized meals, what about the \$12 billion in annual tax subsidies for corporate meals and entertainment? And if you want to see a real scam, how about those zillionaires who claim huge tax deductions for donating art to their own nonprofit museums, which aren't even open to people dropping by?

I hear from people who say something like: I grew up poor, but I worked hard and I made it. If other people tried, they could, too. Bravo! Sure, there are extraordinary people who have overcome mind-boggling hurdles. But they're like the NBA centers with short parents.

Remember that disadvantage is less about income than environment. The best metrics of child poverty aren't monetary, but rather how often a child is read to or hugged. Or, conversely, how often a child is beaten, how often the home descends into alcohol-fueled fistfights, whether there is lead poisoning, whether ear infections go untreated. That's a poverty that is far harder to escape.

Some think success is all about "choices" and "personal responsibility." Yes, those are real, but it's so much more complicated than that.

"Rich kids make a lot of bad choices," Reardon notes. "They just don't come with the same sort of consequences."

Rick acknowledged that he had made bad choices. He drank, took drugs and was arrested about 30 times. But he also found the strength to give up alcohol when he felt he was turning into his father. What distinguished Rick wasn't primarily bad choices, but intelligence, hard work and lack of opportunity.

So let's just drop the social Darwinism. Success is not a sign of virtue. It's mostly a sign that your grandparents did well.

Meanwhile, more children in America live in poverty now (22 percent at last count) than at the start of the financial crisis in 2008 (18 percent). They grow up not in a "land of opportunity," but in the kind of socially rigid hierarchies that our ancestors fled, the kind of society in which your outcome is largely determined by your beginning.

Now, that's what the presidential candidates should be discussing.

■

Nicholas Kristof grew up on a sheep and cherry farm in Yamhill. A columnist for The New York Times since 2001, he won the Pulitzer Prize two times, in 1990 and 2006.

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.