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OUR VIEW

Younger tourists would pump life into Pendleton

If you inform them, they will come.

That's the approach the city of Pendleton is taking in an attempt to draw a younger, more urban group of tourists to the city. Event recruiter Pat Beard has referred to the demographic as 'hipsters,' and no matter how much the audience may cringe at the term, it gets the point across. These are fashion-forward people who like to live outside the mainstream.

Pendleton can provide that.

There's no city in the Pacific Northwest with a more distinct and pure Western downtown, and the Pendleton Woolen Mills create clothing and blankets that are the epitome of Western fashion — sturdy, authentic and stylish. A walk down Main Street will take you past bars, restaurants, saddle shops and clothing boutiques rich with flair that you won't find anywhere else in such a concentrated area.

The trick is getting these urban youngsters to leave their comfort zones and head east into the West. Thus the marketing campaign in downtown Seattle and later Portland. The ads will specifically target those who may not even know Pendleton exists, creating an urge to visit a new frontier.

One thing Pendleton can boast, aside from its true West vibe, is familiar territory for Seattlites and Portlanders. The Great Pacific and Prodigal Son are perfect starters, with live music and award-winning beer on tap. The coffee shops and arts center also offer that ground zero for the under-35 crowd, and we hope to see the Rivoli Theater fill that role in the not-too-distant future as well.

By showcasing Pendleton's cast of regulars, these places show Pendleton isn't a gimmick. Real people live and mingle here. The western shtick may grow tired in a ghost town, but in an actual city with actual people there's the kind of authentic life this crowd is looking for.

This is where you come in. These tourists that Travel Pendleton is aiming for don't want to get on a bus, arrive downtown, take a tour, visit a museum, snap 400 photos, then load back up and hit the road. They want to experience the town and the people. Strike up a conversation the next time you see a new face and find out where they're from.

Because besides the expendable income in the young tourist's pocket is the promise of future visits if they enjoy the experience. The retiree passing through town in an RV or tour bus may come back sporadically through the next couple of decades, but the 20-something who is hooked by the town's charms will be a lifetime visitor and ideally an ambassador.

That's how name recognition is built, and with the help of the Woolen Mills, Round-Up and Whisky that all bear the town's name it will become a place that's hard to avoid.

We won't dismiss the baby boomers, those stalwarts of travel who help pump life into wherever they frequent. But it's smart for Travel Pendleton to set the hook for a new crowd in hopes of hauling in a bigger piece of Oregon's $10.3 billion tourism industry.

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.

YOUR VIEWS

Cutting expenses should be easier than asking for money

Councilman Chuck Wood may have a little memory loss. In his letter dated August 27 he stated that I did not make any recommendations for cuts when there was still time for the council to consider them. This is not true. At the January 6 council meeting I made the following recommendations: Stop installing more statues; the city of Pendleton has too many parks for a city our size, sell some parks or return them to the donors so taxes can be collected from the land; the fire station should not be moved. The money saved to be used for street repair.

At the budget hearing April 30 I gave testimony as follows: Parks, recreation, the Vert and gym should collect 50 percent of the operating cost from people who use these facilities. Now only 26 percent of the cost is collected from users. Taxpayers make up the other 74 percent. Willsonville and Sherwood, both larger than Pendleton, have fewer parks. This would have given us $525,000 more for street repair.

Councilman Wood thinks that the city should keep giving $247,725 of tax money to the chamber of commerce. A perfect example why the chamber should not be dependent on government for money happened at the September 1 council meeting. There were two longtime businessmen complaining about how the city operates. In most cities they could have gone to the chamber of commerce for help. With the city financing the chamber, how could it oppose anything the city does? If the chamber was independent, it could oppose some of the dumb decisions made by the city, like gas tax, tax increases, new utility fees, high license fees and long waits for permits. This will never happen in Pendleton.

Councilman Wood implied that I took the easy way out by suggesting cuts instead of tax increases for street repair. Only a dyed-in-the-wool liberal would think that cutting expenses was easier than asking taxpayers for more money.

Finally I have not heard many people wanting a festival director. If Councilman Wood thinks that this is necessary he could get Mayor Phillip Houk to solicit donations for it. The mayor is good at getting donations for statues.

Rex J. Morehouse
Pendleton

This liberal Democrat supports Walden

I wish to take a break from Sheldon Cooper's "Fun With Flags" for an unpaid political advertisement. I am a proud liberal Democrat who lives in a very red part of a very blue state. Anybody out there should be able to recognize my car — it's the one with the "I'm From the Elizabeth Warren Wing of the Democratic Party" on it.

I would like to take this time, however, to say a word on behalf of Rep. Greg Walden. I pay more attention to politics than the average bear and he impresses me the more I learn about him and his service to this country. While he is a conservative Republican and we frequently disagree about specific issues, as one of his constituents, I always support him.

I have even told him jokingly that he may force me to find out what it's like to vote for a Republican before I die.

Patrick J. Delaney
Hermiston

OTHER VIEWS

The new romantics in the computer age

DAVID BROOKS
Comment

Just once I'd like to have a college student come up to me and say, "I really wanted to major in accounting, but my parents forced me to major in medieval art." That probably won't happen. It always seems to be the parents who are pushing their children in the "practical" or mercenary direction.

These parents are part of the vast apparatus — college résumés, standardized tests, the decline of humanities majors — that has arisen to make our culture more professional and less poetic.

But you see a counterreaction setting in. You see, here and there, signs of a new romanticism.

Ironically, technological forces may be driving some of the romantic rebirth. As Geoff Colvin points out in his book "Humans Are Underrated," computers will soon be able to do many of the cognitive tasks taught in places like law schools and finance departments.

Computers can already go through millions of legal documents and sort them for relevance to an individual case, someday allowing one lawyer to do the work of 500. Computers may soon be able to cruise through troves of data and offer superior financial advice. Computers are not only getting smarter at systems analysis, they are improving at rates no human can match.

Colvin argues that improving your cognitive skills is no longer good enough. Simply developing more generic human capital will not help people prosper in the coming economy. You shouldn't even ask, What jobs can I do that computers can't do? That's because they are getting good at so many disparate things. You should instead ask, What are the activities that we humans, driven by our deepest nature or by the realities of daily life, will simply insist be performed by other humans?

Those tasks are mostly relational. Being in a position of authority or accountability. Being a caregiver. Being part of a team. Transactional jobs are declining but relational jobs are expanding.

Empathy becomes a more important workplace skill, the ability to sense what another human being is feeling or thinking. Diabetes patients of doctors who scored high on empathy tests do better than patients with low-empathy doctors.

The ability to function in a group also becomes more important — to know how to tell stories that convey the important points, how to mix people together.

Secure workers will combine technical knowledge with social awareness — the sort of thing you get from your genes, from growing up in a certain sort of family and by widening your repertoire of emotions through reflection, literature and a capacity for intimacy.

But the new romanticism won't only be built on workplace incentives. It will be driven, too, by the inherent human craving for the transcendent. Through history there have always been moments when eras of pragmatism give way to eras of high idealism.

Mark Edmundson's new book, "Self and Soul," is a blow in that direction. He observes that "culture in the West has become progressively more practical, materially oriented, and skeptical." But he argues that history has left us different idealistic models worth pondering and reviving.

There is the hero of courage, who possesses prowess and risks life and limb for a cause, thus arousing admiration and awe. There is the hero of compassion, like Buddha or Jesus, who puts others before him or herself. Edmundson writes: "The saint seeks a life full of meaningful compassion. The acquisition of goods, the piling up of wealth, only serves to draw force from his proper pursuit. The saint lives — or tries to live — beyond desire. The saint lives for hope."

There is the hero of serious thought. "Even early on," Edmundson says, "as they enter the first phase of their lives as thinkers, they'll have one of the greatest satisfactions a human being can have: They won't lie. They'll follow Socrates, and they'll look out at the world, and with whatever mix of irony and sweetness and exasperation, they will describe it as it is to them. When others trim and sidestep, they will have the satisfaction of voicing honest perceptions."

I could imagine a time when young thinkers discard the strictures of the academic professionalism and try to revive the model of the intellectual as secular sage. I could see other young people tiring of résumé-building do-goodism and trying to live more radically for the poor. The romantic tries as much as possible to ground his or her life in purer love that transforms — making him or her more inspired, creative and dedicated, and therefore better able to live as a modern instantiation of some ideal.

I'm not sure we're about to be overrun with waves of Byronic romantics, but we have been living through an unromantic period and there's bound to be a correction. People eventually want their souls stirred, especially if the stuff regarded as soft and squishy turns out in a relational economy to be hard and practical.

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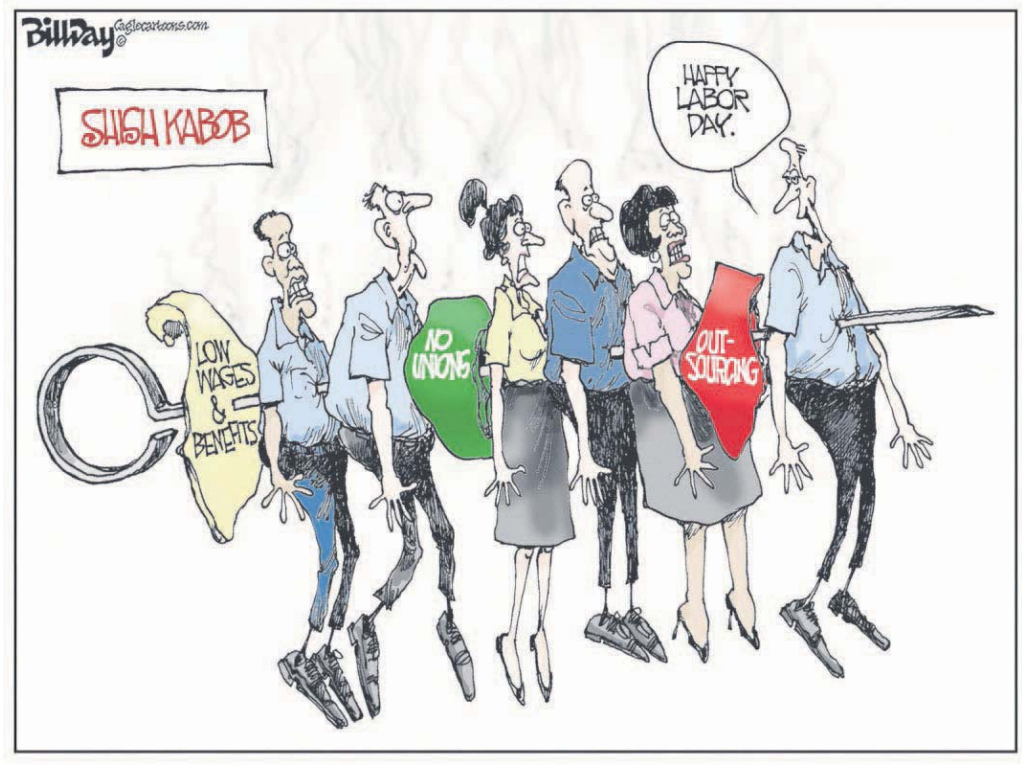
David Brooks became a New York Times Op-Ed columnist in September 2003. He has been a senior editor at The Weekly Standard, a contributing editor at Newsweek and the Atlantic Monthly, and is currently a commentator on "The Newshour with Jim Lehrer."



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