

# EAST OREGONIAN

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## OUR VIEW



# Where urban/rural divide is widest

We have often used this space to highlight aspects of the so-called rural/urban divide.

At least in broad terms, people in the country differ politically, economically and culturally from people in the city. No place is this divide probably wider than on the subject of guns.

People in rural and urban areas hold all kinds of opinions about guns. It would be all too easy to reduce the arguments to stereotypes. But there is clear research showing that there are distinct differences in how rural and urban residents generally view guns.

A report released in August by the Pew Research Center, based in Washington, D.C., documented the urban-rural differences. Of people living in urban areas, 60 percent believe it's more important to control gun ownership and 38 percent believe gun rights should take priority. The results are reversed in rural areas, with 63 percent saying gun rights are more important.

Guns are a part of life in the country. They are a common tool made familiar to many rural residents years before they are old enough to drive. They are used for sport — target shooting and hunting. They are used to dispatch predators and varmints that plague farms and ranches.

In locales where police are few and far between and help is not readily available, guns are kept ready for self defense.

Guns are respected, but not feared. They are a part of rural culture, but not the focus of it. Guns are certainly not a distinct culture onto themselves.

While many in the city can't

imagine why people in the country keep guns, country people don't understand why someone in the city, where danger seems to lurk around every corner, would not.

That's not to say there aren't areas on which rural and urban Americans agree. No one wants to see people slaughtered in mass shootings.

And no one objects to keeping guns out of the hands of criminals and the mentally ill.

We can all agree that "something" should be done to reduce violence. If only it were as simple as passing another gun law.

In the wake of the recent shooting at Umpqua Community College in Roseburg, President Obama and other politicians have suggested increasing background checks on gun buyers and tightening the definition of sellers who need federal firearms licenses.

All well and good, but these measures would not have prevented Christopher Harper-Mercer, the student who killed nine people and wounded nine others, from obtaining his guns. Nor would they have prevented other recent shootings.

Rural sensibilities are wary of actions that are expedient and designed to advance a broader policy on guns without addressing the problem of imbalanced, violence-prone perpetrators.

The vast majority of gun owners are responsible, peaceful and law-abiding. They believe as absolute the right for individual gun ownership enshrined in the Second Amendment and upheld by the Supreme Court.

And when they understand that, urban gun control advocates will know everything they need to know about guns in the country.

## Guns are a part of life in the country.

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.

**Correction:** Fred Bradbury's op-ed "Reorganized downtown association has new priorities for Pendleton" (Page A5, Oct. 24) included a breakout box that was incorrect. Bradbury said the association is "supporting the Farmers Market plan to move" from its current location on Main Street, but the Pendleton Downtown Association does not necessarily want the Farmers Market to relocate.



## 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 211 S.E. Byers Ave. Pendleton, OR 97801 or email editor@eastoregonian.com.

## OTHER VIEWS

# What family really means

My friend Elli has never given birth, never adopted, never taken primary responsibility for an infant, a toddler or an adolescent.

But on the far side of 65, she finds herself playing the role of mother.

At the beginning of each school year, she's likely to be helping one of her college-age boys move into his freshman dorm. At the end, she's at a commencement, beaming as another of her boys finishes his four years and receives his diploma.

The boys are from Zimbabwe, where Elli has spent extensive time over the past decade and where she met many poor, bright teenagers determined to study in America.

She not only guided them through the application and financial aid process, but also remained one of the central figures in their lives.

And they became essential to her. They're always calling and emailing. She's always calling and emailing back.

They consult her about the summer internships in their sights; they confide in her about new romances. And on holidays, they converge at her house to be fed and fussed over.

By any definition of the word that matters, she and her kids are a family.

And they kept coming to mind as I read about a gathering of more than 250 Roman Catholic leaders in Rome over the past three weeks for what's been called the Synod of Bishops on the Family.

The bishops have been examining such issues as whether the church should relax its censure of divorce and remarriage, whether it should be more welcoming to unmarried couples, whether it should open its arms to the children of same-sex parents. A report is expected this weekend.

In *The Times* on Wednesday, my colleagues Laurie Goodstein and Elisabetta Povoledo described the synod as "the most momentous, and contentious, meeting of bishops in the 50 years since the Second Vatican Council, which brought the church into the modern era."

The church has made minimal progress since. If it's still stuck on divorce, it's still stuck in the past.

And if its discussion of virtue and rectitude is rooted in the architecture of a family and the labels its members wear — married, unmarried, straight, gay — it's focused on the wrong things and missing the boat. It's seeing family in terms that are much too narrow and having a conversation that's much too small.

Are most Catholics even paying attention? We in the media are drawn to these doctrinal wars and the hushed, cloaked deliberations inside the Vatican.

People in the pews are less rapt. The warmth and respect they feel for the current pope doesn't translate into any obeisance to church edict.

According to a survey by the Pew Research Center this year, only 1 in 3 American Catholics believes that it's sinful to live with a romantic partner outside of marriage. Only 1 in 5 believes that it's sinful to get a divorce.

While 44 percent of the respondents in that poll frowned on sexual relations between two men or two women, 39 percent didn't.

And while respondents clearly viewed a family headed by a father and a mother who are married to each other as the ideal, most of them did not view it as the only acceptable situation. More than 80 percent were OK with divorced parents, single parents or unmarried parents living together. More than 65 percent were OK with gay or lesbian parents.

That openness to a variety of arrangements is sometimes described — by religious leaders,



FRANK BRUNI  
Comment

by social conservatives — as a drift away from morality, a sad surrender to an anything-goes ethos.

But the truth is more complicated and less somber than that.

The prevalence of divorce, unmarried cohabitation and single parenting in part reflects laudable advances in the way we regard women. Most of us no longer encourage them to be economically dependent on men; most of us no longer expect them to suffer in subservience when husbands

are emotionally or physically abusive.

That's a change we should build on. It's not turpitude. It's enlightenment.

Most of us understand, in a way we once didn't, that there are men who will never know full romantic and sexual love with a woman, and there are women who will never experience that with a man.

Was society better off when we denied that and trapped gay and lesbian people in heterosexual marriages that brought joy to

neither spouse and were constructed on a lie?

Did society benefit from marginalizing gay and lesbian people?

Those are rhetorical questions. Or at least they should be.

My own parents remained married until my mother's death at 61, and my three siblings and

I are active, integral, cherished parts of one another's lives. Whenever I write about that, a few readers and a few friends will invariably compliment me on our closeness, rightly recognizing that it requires time, generosity, flexibility, forgiveness.

But I'm more impressed by families who are bound by choice rather than blood. For all that I've learned about family around my own Thanksgiving table, I've learned as much by watching people without dependable parents, caring siblings or nurturing spouses forge clans of a different kind.

I saw this happen time and again in the 1980s and early 1990s, when AIDS ravaged gay America and many sufferers found themselves abandoned by relatives, whose religions prodded them toward judgment instead of compassion. Friends filled that gap, rushing in as saviors, stepping up as providers, signing on as protectors. Where families were absent, families were born.

And I see this throughout the unpredictable, untidy world beyond the confines of the synod and the concerns of Catholic bishops, who often seem more interested in dictating the parameters of sex than in celebrating the boundlessness of love.

Only sometimes is a family a mom and a dad under the same roof as biological children produced without the assistance of in vitro fertilization (another Catholic no-no).

Always a family is a troop that marches across the messy, majestic landscape of life with greater strength than any lone individual can muster.

Only sometimes does a family share chromosomes.

Always it shares commitments.

Elli has made and maintained one to her boys, whose aspirations and accomplishments she routinely relays to me, in a voice brimming with a very familiar, poignant kind of pride.

I asked her once how strangers react to her involvement with them.

"They like to see me as Mother Teresa," she said.

And she laughed, because she's no nun and no saint.

But to my mind, she's a mother.

Frank Bruni has been op-ed columnist for *The New York Times* since June 2011.

## YOUR VIEWS

### News from Pendleton leaves onlooker feeling satirical

Late breaking news: In an expected move, the city council has voted to permanently ban all forms of marijuana sales within the city limits.

Citing the inability of voters to make any rational decision, the inability of city staff to compose a simple enforceable city ordinance, and the abundant supply of opiates such as oxycodone available at local pharmacies, councilors felt that the medical benefits gained by the sale of medical marijuana could not be justified. The permanent ban puts medical marijuana sales right there with death and taxes. City manager feels this action will send a message to those darn recreational pot smokers to switch to alcohol, meth, or even tobacco, or move. Council deems profit sharing program offered by state not needed with expected windfall from utility fee and proposed gas tax.

Rumors: Dedicated dog run planned under Bedford Bridge. The same unreliable source has uncovered an alleged plot to replace horse poop with dog poop under the bridge. Experts report poop produced with PDA-approved processed dog food produces a better aroma and is more pleasing to the eye, some resembling Tootsie Rolls. This is expected to be a major draw for tourism.

This just in: The updated city transportation plan was presented to a standing room-only crowd by the Angelo Planning Group. The 29-page document now includes not only instructions on how to get from point A to point B in Pendleton, it includes points C, D, E, and F.

These unsubstantiated stories provided by your on scene reporter.

Rick Rohde  
Pendleton

### Comparison to John Day and Coos Bay doesn't bode well

Robb Corbett: What you failed to mention in your letter to the editor (*Other cities struggle with gas tax dollars too, EO, Oct. 24*) is that you chose Coos Bay because it is one of the worst — or the worst town besides us — in Oregon for its city infrastructure problems. They are not willing to put their citizens at risk by putting heavy taxes on everything.

Why don't you give us a complete breakdown on Pendleton's budget? Please remember that there are several other assets to our budget that maintain our roads, not just the gas tax revenue. Then look around Pendleton and tell me you're spending that revenue money on curbs and sidewalks.

I will use your comparison with Coos Bay but only opposite. Hermiston is growing by leaps and bounds, yet their water and sewer is far less than ours. Even their garbage bill is far less than ours. Their streets are better than ours and businesses are flourishing.

The city not only deserves but has a right to an accounting right down to the last nickel of where that \$1.2 million in gas taxes are going. Until then you are just spewing rhetoric. There are a lot of towns in Oregon that are doing way better than us in every way with a balanced budget and reasonable taxes.

Pendleton leaders need to quit passing the buck and quit riding the backs of our citizens. Excuses will not make Pendleton healthy and neither will heavy taxing. Proper money management and innovative thinking will. In addition I suggest everyone read the *East Oregonian* article titled "Lawsuit, unbuilt projects checker Makad's past." This should open peoples eyes to how Mayor Phil Houk, Corbett and city council are spending our money and making unwise decisions on businesses that should not come to Pendleton.

Chris Hallos, Pendleton