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OUR VIEW

Wyden wins long struggle with NSA

Americans can have freedoms and defend against terrorists

The best hope for a nation is that it may grow smarter. Learning from the past — not making fatal errors — is essential.

Presidential campaigns often have carried a measure of demagoguery. This year's Republican candidates are setting a record.

In the scramble to win the race to war against ISIS, Sen. Lindsay Graham of South Carolina hit a home run by promising to commit 20,000 ground troops to Syria. Sen. Graham has a short memory. The physical and financial cost

of U.S. occupations of Iraq and Afghanistan was huge and yielded relatively little. So the senator thinks we ought to do that again.

In the midst of such madness, it was refreshing to have news last week that the National Security Agency will cease its sweep of telephone records that began secretly in the wake of the World Trade Center attacks. The USA Freedom Act, which became law in June, forced the NSA to shut down the operation.

Oregon Sen. Ron Wyden played a leading role over 10 years to bring

the NSA's secret operation into the open.

In the wake of the NSA announcement last week, Sen. Wyden brought the recent terrorist attacks on Paris and Mali into the discussion. "After every such

attack, politicians who would play to Americans' fears call for liberty to be sacrificed in the name of security. I reject those calls. And as long as Americans continue to demand that their government protect both their security and their liberty, I am confident that

our country can deal with these threats without sacrificing our most cherished rights and values."

In standing up for the Constitution and exposing the NSA telephone records dragnet, Wyden emulated his legendary predecessor, Sen. Wayne Morse, who opposed the Gulf of Tonkin Resolution that led to escalation of U.S. involvement in Vietnam.

Unlike Morse, Wyden has the collegiality to draw others to his cause. That is why the USA Freedom Act passed the Senate by a vote of 67-32.

Sen. Ron Wyden played a leading role over 10 years to bring the NSA's secret operation into the open.

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.



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

Young lives interrupted

The second paragraph of Ernest Hemingway's short story, "A Way You'll Never Be," describes a cluster of dead Austrian soldiers encountered during World War I: "They lay alone or in clumps in the high grass of the field and along the road, their pockets out, and over them were flies and around each body or group of bodies were the scattered papers."

That's the whole paragraph, 37 words of telegraphic description. Yet the detail — the flies, the papers and especially "their pockets out" — captures the scene. Somebody has already looted those pockets. Hemingway was also a war reporter with an unerring eye.

Later in the story Hemingway writes of the "guns hidden under screens of mulberry leaves to the left of the road," visible "by the heat-waves in the air above the leaves where the sun hit the metal."

With almost adjective-free economy, he has placed you there, in the carnage of a century ago, where the hot weather, indifferent to corpse of friend or foe, has "swollen them all alike regardless of nationality."

Around the dead are "stick bombs, helmets, rifles, intrenching tools, ammunition boxes, star-shell pistols, their shells scattered about, medical kits, gas masks, empty gas-mask cans, a squat, tripod machine gun in a nest of empty shells, full belts protruding from the boxes, the breech block gone, the crew in odd positions, and around them, in the grass, more of the typical papers."

Show, don't tell, goes the old writer's maxim.

The papers — in this case prayer books, smutty postcards, and "letters, letters, letters" — stopped me. "There was always much paper about the dead," Hemingway writes, "and the debris of this attack was no exception." My late uncle, Capt. Bert Cohen of the Dental Unit of the Sixth South African Armored Division, 19th Field Ambulance, had said the same of the dead he encountered as he fought his way up the Italian peninsula in World War II.

I guess there won't be any letters in the next war, just cell phones in the dust, the sand or the mud, their batteries dying.

Bert told me more than once of a column of Nazi dead he found on a bend in the Penaro River, north of Modena, on April 24, 1945. From his words and war diary, I wrote this description:

"Intestines of gutted animals ballooned from their carcasses. A squad of South African infantry marched through the ruins, bringing a bullet of mercy to animals that still agonized. One dead German in particular caught Bert's



ROGER COHEN
Comment

eye: a blond, square-jawed young man with a long straight nose, hair flecked with blood and smoke, legs twisted grotesquely, abdomen ripped open, coils of gut spilling through a ragged gash into the dust, sightless blue eyes gazing at infinity. Beside the corpse lay scattered letters from the soldier's mother in Hamburg. She wrote about Der Angriff, the Allied bombardment of the city that killed more than 42,000 people. Uncertain what to do, Bert returned the letters to the dead man's

pocket."

Until his death last year at the age of 95, my uncle remained haunted by that single dead German and his letters. He dwelt on them as if he, a Jew from South Africa, might somehow have brought this handsome young man, Hitler's model Aryan, back to life; and he wondered if he should have kept the letters to return them to a bereaved mother in Hamburg. He was a link in a circle that never closed.

I've been thinking of young lives interrupted, of the papers fluttering from the Twin Towers toward my Brooklyn Heights apartment 14 years ago, of the young Parisian who did not go to the Bataclan on Nov. 13 because his wife was pregnant and a dead friend who did, of the ways luck can run out. As a war correspondent I always thought you did not need

good luck. You needed the absence of bad luck.

Perhaps if Bert had returned the letters he would have made a friend in Hamburg and seen something of the rebirth of that handsome city.

It seems, as we grow older, that we are haunted less by what we failed to do, whether through lack of courage, or inattention, or insufficient readiness to cast caution to the winds. The impossible love abandoned, the gesture unmade, the heedless voyage untaken, the parting that should not have been — these chimera always beckon.

What's done is done but the undone is another matter.

David Bromwich, in *The New York Review of Books*, drew my attention to the Hemingway short story and wrote of the author's "method of description that becomes a record of repressed emotion."

There are too many words today, too much emotion, and too few letters. Truth is more often the fruit of diligence than revelation, of discipline than inebriation, of discarding than accumulation.

Roger Cohen joined *The New York Times* in 1990. He was a foreign correspondent for more than a decade before becoming acting foreign editor on Sept. 11, 2001.

YOUR VIEWS

Pendleton, family support BMCC coach

I rarely do this. Most of my thanksgiving is done face to face (it just seems most appropriate). However, when you reach a milestone as many have pointed out, well it might be time for public thanks.

I became the women's volleyball coach at Blue Mountain Community College in March 2008. Since then I've been fortunate to teach volleyball to countless gifted young ladies who have progressed with fruitful lives, degrees and families.

We are lucky these terrific kids chose to start their college journey at BMCC, amplifying the values every coach and professor teaches up there on the hill.

This season my daughter Jessica took on full-time head coaching duties and co-coached with me. She was a brilliant teacher, tactician and steward of the game. Jessica sees more and has the intuition as a former D-1 player and can out-coach me any day of the week.

We couldn't have had the 2015 season without some huge help. In the athletic office every day was

Jayne Ann Patterson, our athletic administrative assistant at BMCC; she is simply wonderful.

Our athletic director, Brett Bryan, has been great in helping our program, the other sports and expanding the department to include soccer next fall. Brett's tough, but he rewards loyalty, dedication and hard work. That's just like his new boss, Diane Drebin.

As vice president of student affairs, she has been in our corner from day one. President Cam Preus has also been a very positive force to have as our leader. She sees the hard work done and rewards by ensuring the program has what it needs to succeed.

There are many other people who selflessly gave to help our volleyball kids — instructors, success coaches, BMCC staff — but the one who gave more than anyone is my wife Barb.

She has been the song of passion, patience and love in my heart for almost 29 years. None of this happens if she says "no" back in 2008.

So thanks to everyone — and those not mentioned here. Four NWAC championships in a row and five of the last six ain't bad for

"little ol' Pendle-tucky Oregon" — my home.

Dave Baty Pendleton

Pilot Rock councilor's past isn't newsworthy

Every now and then I get a big knot in my stomach when I read that the newspaper has once again kicked someone or some entity in the gut. Sometimes it's in the Tip of the Hat editorial, sometimes it's a headline — recently, "Discredited chiropractor."

Sometimes it's just the way an article is written, leaving out key elements so that the reader becomes more incensed. This is the newspaper that reported on an amphibious pitcher and often misspells headlines, let alone the words buried in its stories.

I've lost faith in the *East Oregonian's* ability to report in an even and unbiased manner. What does "discredited chiropractor" have to do with the content of the story, except to twist the knife in the back one more time? Then there are all the inflammatory stories regarding city spending. No mention that many of the improvements or projects around

Pendleton used grant money that could only be spent on economic development, public art or other restricted areas.

I'd like to know when the editorial staff is going to kick themselves in the pants. Better yet, when will they drop the attitude and print the whole story?

Alan Feves Pendleton

Audiologist needed for better communication

Breaking news from city hall: The city manager has announced that they can't get the message out to the people effectively so they intend to create a public information office.

Initial concerns that the city could never use the available space with the relocation of City Hall to Helen McCune have now been put to rest with creation of another department. Funding has yet to be determined, but with the expected population projected to soon reach 35,000, possibilities are endless.

Oops, stop the presses, this just in: Noted local audiologist solves communications problem. He recommends hearing aids for city council members interested

in listening to public concerns. Details to follow.

Employment opportunity: The city of Pendleton is currently seeking a full-time public information officer. Due to the large number of perceived missteps by city administrators and staff, city officials are seeking a scapegoat to deflect the amount of undeserved criticism away from the staff and council. Qualifications: Thick skin and absolutely no previous experience of any kind.

Commentary: Current and planned projects such as new airport sewer and water lines, the Bedford dog run, the River Parkway extension and the Main St "parklet" committee formation should successfully keep that darn street repair program on the back burner due to funding shortfall.

Rumor has it that an ATM will be installed on the bus to La Grande and the line be renamed the Mary Jane Express. City of La Grande expected to formally recognize Pendleton City Council for the contribution to their expected budget surplus.

Rick Rohde Pendleton