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OUR VIEW

Tip of the hat; kick in the pants

A tip of the hat to the Hermiston School Board, who may rearrange their weekly meetings so they no longer conflict with Hermiston City Council.

Having the two most important boards in a city in session at the same time for each and every meeting is not a good idea, and one that is long overdue to be rectified. Yet the school board could even go a step further. Instead of just changing their meeting time, they are considering a liaison who would attend future city council meetings and represent the district.

That would be a great step forward for two groups that have been on conflicting schedules. Being in the room can help

them keep both boards on the same page. Expect both the city and the school district to benefit if the school district decides to make a positive change.

A kick in the pants to Portland Mayor Charlie Hales and his absurd response to news that his police chief drunkenly shot his friend in Eastern Oregon back in April. And an obvious kick in the pants to the police chief himself — Larry O'Dea.

The Oregonian and Willamette Week have each been reporting on this case, which looks now like a dangerous lapse in judgment followed by a clearly bungled cover-up.

O'Dea, who was allegedly intoxicated at the time, misled a Harney County sheriff's deputy about what happened. What is now being reported, by multiple witnesses: While drunk and sitting in a lawn chair shooting ground squirrels, O'Dea's gun accidentally discharged and seriously injured his friend, who had to be flown to a Boise hospital.

O'Dea made it clear he talked to his bosses about the incident — ahem, Hales — but no action was taken until the story leaked to the media, which only happened after Harney County Sheriff Dave Ward got to the bottom of who was involved in the shooting.

After making a mistake of this caliber, O'Dea should have been honest and humble and asked for forgiveness. He certainly should have been put on leave during the course of the investigation. That neither happened is unacceptable.

For urban tourists who treat Eastern Oregon as their outdoor Las Vegas — what happens here, stays here — let this be a lesson.

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

No middle ground on forest management

The Yamhill Valley News-Register

For decades, the federal Bureau of Land Management has been stuck between the rock of Northwest timber counties and the hard place of environmental advocacy coalitions.

In matters of public debate, the best solution is often somewhere in the moderate middle. In the case of federally owned O&C lands, that would entail some sort of forward-thinking plan providing increased logging on BLM lands and establishing and enforcing measures to better protect streams, forests and the habitat they provide.

The problem is, opposing sides become so caught up in their ideologies they are unable to work toward a viable solution. The battle over the BLM's latest draft plan to manage forests has begun. Environmental groups have filed an appeal, accusing the agency of failing to protect the public trust, while the Association of O&C Counties submitted a legal challenge arguing that the plan would fail to deliver mandated timber harvest levels.

Yamhill County commissioners loosed a deluge of criticism to BLM representatives at a recent meeting and took the "give back our lands" tone of

the movement — looking to force the government to relinquish all western holdings.

Environmental groups are blinded by their own ideology, of course, and to no lesser extent. They keep repeating mindless mantras like, "Clearcutting kills fish" and "We don't need more clearcuts" — rhetoric designed to convince the public that decades-old practices remain in play.

In fact, the BLM is employing ecological logging practices developed by regional scientists. They include clearcutting small patches and allowing habitat to naturally regenerate. That approach works better than thinning, which creates a falsified matrix of wooded lands, scientists argue.

The private business sector has been willing to meet somewhere in the middle.

It's too bad environmentalists are willing to go above and beyond to preserve the marbled murrelet, but refuse to consider any measures to preserve our rural communities and economy, the demise of which lead to poverty, drug abuse and child neglect. On the other side, county representatives would be better advised to avoid falling into a feud dominated by trite arguments.

YOUR VIEWS

We could all do with a little more music

The evening of May 24, I attended the year-end concert of the band and orchestra programs of Pendleton High School. As I enjoyed the excellent performances, several thoughts went through my head. I would like to share those thoughts.

The quality of the music played by those students was simply outstanding. It had to take many hours of dedicated practice on the part of the students and their teachers, Andy Gary and Emily Callender. Our community is fortunate to have such quality programs.

The number of students playing the final piece, which was a combination of both band and orchestra members, appeared to be around a hundred — amazing participation.

Equally impressive was the diversity of the kids. I saw every ethnic background from our area represented. There was short hair, long hair, no hair and colored hair.

All those kids from different backgrounds producing such beautiful

sound. I guess that is the beauty of music. It brings us all together.

Sitting there gave me hope for our future. In these troubled times, maybe we could all do with a little more music.

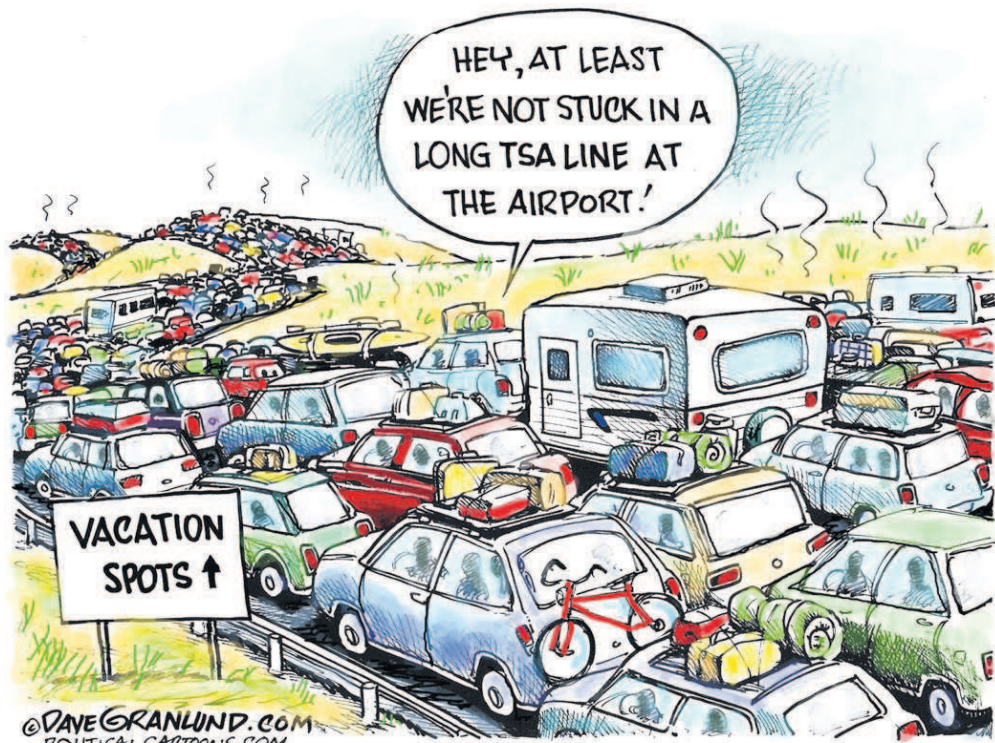
Ron Deutz (retired educator)
Pendleton

Small school track teams deserve coverage, too

In the Tuesday, May 24 sports page, the East Oregonian had a great article about the Pendleton and Hermiston track teams. Two pages, color photos and a list of all local winners. It was nice. That same weekend the Helix girls finished second and the Pilot Rock girls finished fifth at state. I must have missed the article about those teams.

By the way, the Pilot Rock girls team won fifth at state with only six girls. Come and meet them, they're great kids. The kids in Helix and Pilot Rock worked as hard as the kids in the big schools and their family and friends buy newspapers too.

Loal King
Pilot Rock



OTHER VIEWS

Sore, happy feet on the Pacific Crest Trail

ON THE PACIFIC CREST TRAIL, Calif. — Every spring or summer, in lieu of professional help, I ditch civilization for the therapy of the wilderness. I've just been backpacking with my 18-year-old daughter on the Pacific Crest Trail in California, abandoning our material world for an alternative reality in which the aim is to possess as little as possible — because if you have it, you lug it.

Our lives were downsized to 10 pounds of possessions each, not counting food and water. We carried backpacks, sleeping bags, jackets, hats, a plastic groundsheet, a tarp in case of rain, a water filter and a tiny roll of duct tape for when things break.

Few problems in life cannot be solved with duct tape.

OK, I know I'm supposed to use my column to pontificate about Donald Trump and global crises. But as summer beckons, let me commend such wilderness escapes to all of you, with your loved ones, precisely to find a brief refuge from the pressures of the world.

This isn't for everybody; astonishingly, some folks prefer beaches and clean sheets. But for me at least, a crazy jaunt in the outdoors is the perfect antidote to the absurdity of modern life.

In the 21st century, we often find ourselves spinning on the hamster wheel, nervously jockeying for status with our peers — Is my barbecue bigger than my neighbor's? Is my car flashier? — even as we're too busy to barbecue anything. We're like dogs chasing after our tails.

That's why I find it so cathartic to run away from home. My parents took me backpacking beginning when I was about 7, and my wife and I took our three children on overnight hikes as soon as they could toddle.

Don't tell Child Protective Services, but when my daughter was 4, I took her on an overnight trip on Oregon's Eagle Creek Trail, carrying her most of the first day on my shoulders, on top of my backpack. The next morning, I bribed her: If she would walk by herself all 13 miles back to the car, I would buy her a spectacular ice cream in the nearest town.

So we set off for the car. At every rest stop, we conjured that ice cream and how cold it would be, and, fortified, we trundled on down the trail beside glorious waterfalls. When we reached the car, we were both proud of her heroism, and she beamed tiredly as I buckled her into her car seat.

When we arrived at an ice cream shop 20 minutes later, she was fast asleep. I couldn't wake her.

Thus began our hiking partnership,



NICHOLAS KRISTOF
Comment

sometimes undertaken with the whole family, sometimes just the two of us. At home we're all busy, but on the trail we're beyond cellphone coverage or email reach and we're stuck with each other.

So we talk. Even as we're disconnected, we reconnect. And on rest breaks and at night, camping under the stars, we read aloud to each other: On this trip, my daughter and I have been reading Adam Johnson's brilliant Pulitzer Prize-winning novel, "The Orphan Master's Son," and talking about what it means.

No self-respecting teenage girl would normally allow her dad to read to her, but out in the wilderness, it's a bond we share.

A crazy jaunt in the outdoors is the perfect antidote to the absurdity of modern life.

It's true that not everybody can get time off, the cost of equipment can add up and it can be a hassle to get to and from a trail. (When I've tried hitchhiking out, drivers see a bedraggled, unshaven hobo and speed up!) Still, costs are modest: While car campgrounds often charge, backpacking in the great

outdoors is almost always free. And day after day, there is simply nowhere to spend money.

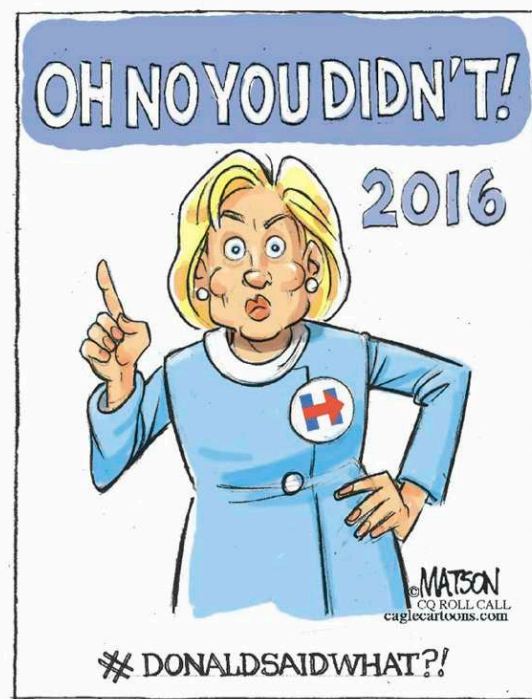
I can't pretend it's glamorous. We've been scorched by the sun and chilled by rain, hail and snow. Sure, in trail conversations we bare our innermost thoughts, but we also spend plenty of time whining about blisters, rattlesnakes and 20-mile stretches without water. We curse trail designers for PUDS, or pointless ups and downs.

And let's be blunt: I stink. When you're carrying everything on your back, you don't pack any changes of clothing. We bathe our feet in creeks (hoping that anyone drinking downstream is using a water filter), and on this trip we luxuriated in the Deep Creek hot springs beside the trail. We commiserate together, and we exult together in America's cathedral of the wild, our stunning common heritage and birthright.

My daughter and I have now hiked across Washington and Oregon and hundreds of miles of California, and eventually we'll have limped the entire Pacific Crest Trail from Mexico to Canada. Nothing is as different from my daily life, nor as treasured, and that is why I suggest the wilderness to friends.

For members of my family at least, these spring and summer hikes are a reminder that what shapes us is not so much the possessions we acquire but the memories we accumulate, that when you scrape away the veneer, what gives life meaning is not the grandest barbecue or the sportiest car. It's each other.

Nicholas Kristof, a columnist for The New York Times, grew up on a sheep and cherry farm in Yamhill.



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. Send letters to 211 S.E. Byers Ave. Pendleton, OR 97801 or email editor@eastoregonian.