

Quick takes

Union Pacific at fault for oil train crash

Union Pacific is equal to government owned. Nothing will happen to them except a token fine and blaming the oil industry.

— Kevin Watt

And that same train goes right next to my home. Very sad.

— Thomas Jameson

Fincum memorial removed

There are roadside memorials like this all over our highways commemorating lives lost. The state just doesn't want this one commemorated publicly to remind everyone that they were the ones responsible for the death.

— Kevin Shenefield

I actually believe Lavoy was the only honorable man of that group. Unfortunately I think he was being played as a pawn.

— Skip Cripe

Millions spent on Eighth Street Bridge project

They will probably put a statue on top and a speed bump in the middle.

— David Tricker

They are taking people's front yards and paying for it out of money for the streets. Would they stake their job on the promise?

— Troy Thomas

Mickey Mouse write-in votes

Mickey all the way!

— Teresa Thorpe Long

I told you I voted for Mickey Mouse!

— Cynthia Lynn Rickett

Ross Perot might of won this year.

— Jovanna Centre

One of the great lessons of the Twitter age is that much can be summed up in just a few words. Here are some of this week's takes. Tweet yours @Tim_Trainor or email editor@eastoregonian.com, and keep them to 140 characters.

Shootings part of a dark American tradition

BY KNUTE BERGER
Crosscut

In the wake of the tragedy in Orlando, the topic of massacres is having (another) 15 minutes of fame. When news outlets billed the shooting as the worst massacre in U.S. history, Facebook users went forth to correct the overstatement, reminding us of Wounded Knee, where the U.S. army butchered some 250 Sioux Indians in 1890. But Wounded Knee, horrendous as it was, was not the worst massacre in American history, either. It wasn't even the worst massacre of Native Americans.

Media outlets began to add qualifiers to coverage of Orlando: The murder of 49 unarmed people at a gay nightclub is the worst mass shooting in modern American history by a single shooter. Accurate perhaps, but hardly reassuring.

People might be forgiven for wanting to change subject: Our blood-bathed history is hard to look at. But can we really process Orlando without thinking about the past? Orlando was horrifying, but even more so if we allow historical amnesia to take hold.

Here in the Northwest, we have attached the name of massacre to a number of past events related to labor unrest (the Everett Massacre, the Centralia Massacre) and frontier attacks (the Whitman Massacre), and savage crimes (Seattle's Wah Mee Club Massacre). But the majority of mass slaughters have been against Native Americans, including attacks that haven't made it into school history texts, but were as bad as, or worse than, Wounded Knee and Sand Creek.

In his new history, "An American Genocide: The United States and the California Indian Catastrophe," historian Benjamin Madley, an assistant professor of history of UCLA, documents the systematic extermination of California Indian tribes between 1846 and 1873, including lists of every documented fatal encounter. The book rips the veil off the notion that the killing of Native Americans does not meet the legal and scholarly definitions of genocide.

One massacre detailed in this doomsday book: Bloody Island, where Northern California dragoons attacked a Pomo Indian village on Clear Lake in 1850.

They butchered men, women and children. Many others drowned trying to escape. The official death toll was 60, but two months after the massacre, a U.S. Army major visited the scene and concluded that the actual count was around 800.

Closer to home, in 1856, some 500 Washington Territorial Volunteers under the command of Benjamin F. Shaw went to find Indians to kill in Yakama country. The U.S. Army, already there, didn't require their help, so under order of Gov. Isaac Stevens, Shaw was instructed to "bring to submission the Cayuse and Palouse" Indians and told that troublemakers should be "summarily dealt with."

Shaw's orders from Gov. Isaac Stevens

In July of that year — 160 years ago this summer — Shaw and a detachment of Washingtonians turned south over the Blue Mountains and rode into the Grand Ronde River Valley where he located a peaceful village of Cayuse at a site near present day Elgin. Shaw's men killed at least 60 people, mostly women and children, captured 300 ponies, and sacked and burned the camp.

In 1863, in what was then Washington Territory (near Preston, Idaho), the U.S. Army attacked a winter village of Northwestern Shoshone at Bear River. The soldiers, many of them drunk Californian volunteers, destroyed the winter camp. Panicked Shoshone women and children ran into a ravine where soldiers shot at them from above from both sides, an event described as a "buffalo hunt." At least 250-500 people were killed, including least 90 women and children. Archaeologists have just recently located the actual massacre site.

Historical accounts of the Bear River Massacre, as it is called, fit a pattern: Such encounters are often described as "battles," the stories sanitized of rape, torture, mutilation. Body counts are downplayed — the killers often didn't stay around long

enough to count let alone bury the dead. Native American versions of events have been routinely minimized or dismissed.

In July 1856, the U.S. Army killed at least 60 American Indians — mostly women and children — near present-day Elgin.

In some respects, these old massacres are scarier than today's shootings. What's worse, a crazy lone gunman or what the Indians faced, legally sanctioned well-armed death squads?

But these historical massacres have some things in common with Orlando: they take place against vulnerable populations — marginalized or targeted by age, race or social conditions. Also, like recent mass shootings, we tend to be horrified

briefly, then move on. The sheer number of Bear Rivers or Wounded Knees helps us gloss over them. There are too many to count, too many to reconcile.

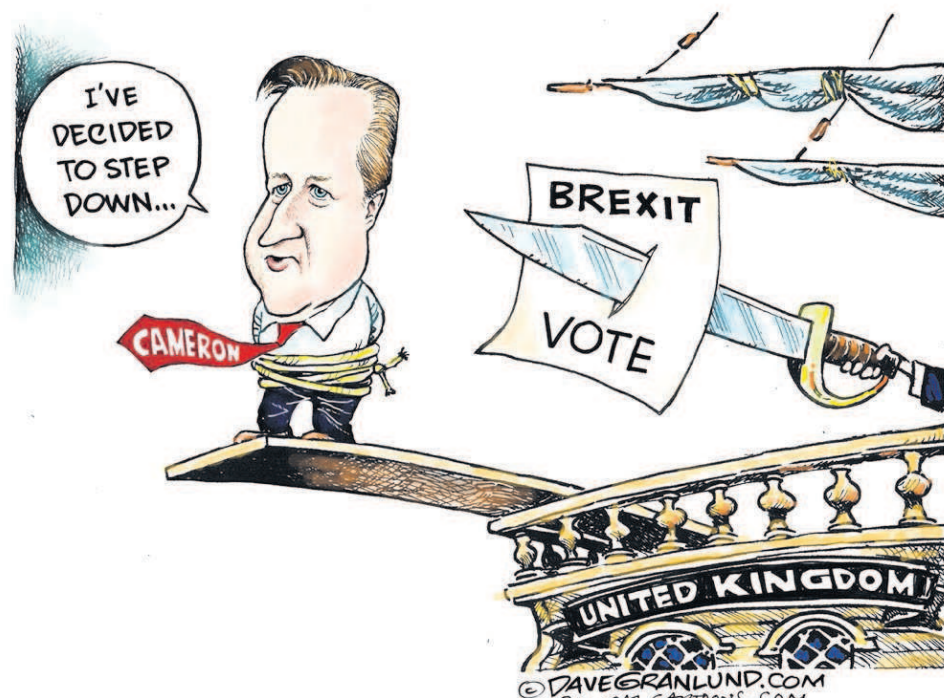
In America, moving on is a virtue, remembering mere baggage.

It is notable, too, that modern mass-killings tend to be executed by well-armed white men. Perhaps it should come as no surprise that the people most determined to hang onto their assault weapons are not the descendants of the victims of these cruelties, but the descendants of the perpetrators. A big difference today is that modern weaponry allows a single person to have the firepower of a company of cavalry.

Many want to believe that modern massacres are singular events carried out by deranged individuals. But beyond present-day pathologies and ideologies, these incidents are connected to an American shadow — the dark place we'd like so much to suppress, that keeps bubbling up in a hail of bullets.

That shadow can only be reckoned with if we acknowledge it.

Knute Burger is Crosscut's chief Northwest native. He also writes the monthly Grey Matters column for Seattle magazine and is a weekly Friday guest on Weekday on KUOW-FM (94.9).



Go ahead, control my guns

By AMY FRYKMAN
Writers on the Range

Recently, I completed an all-day field course for archery hunting, a necessary prerequisite to purchasing a license to hunt elk, deer and other big game with a bow during the season in Montana.

To earn the right to acquire a license to hunt with a bow, I had to demonstrate sufficient knowledge of the history of archery, safe bow-handling techniques and principles of shot selection, all this to show that I would be able to avoid hurting myself or my hunting partners and that I was capable of a quick, humane kill of the hunted animal. The field course was preceded by an online course and mandatory exam.

When all was said and done, I easily spent 18 or so hours getting certified, and I was happy to do so because a bow and arrow is a deadly weapon, and hunting is a privilege.

Then came the news of the mass murder in Orlando, Florida, and I was left contemplating a bitter irony. While it took me days to prove I was capable of hunting wild animals in Montana, I could — without a minute of training or background check — enter any number of stores across America and walk out minutes later with a fully loaded, high-capacity, semi-automatic rifle that could mow down humans.

This experience has put the question of rights and responsibilities at the forefront of my mind. When people talk about gun control, they talk a lot about gun rights. But if owning guns is a right, it also comes with responsibilities. It boggles my mind that this is a contested principle.

The premise of the archery course that I took is that there's a broad public interest in ensuring safe, ethical bow hunting. No one wants people wounding wildlife or slicing open their fingers on sharp, broad-head arrows. So we make hunters take a course to get certified, demonstrating that they've learned how to stay safe in the wild.

The same principle is involved in driving a car. There's a broad societal interest in ensuring safety on the road, and so we all have to take a written test plus a driving test to get a license to drive.

Why is it so hard to accept the idea that society has the right to erect parameters around gun ownership, especially in light of the broad public interest in preventing the death and injury of innocent people? Gun violence last year killed over 12,000 people in the United States. That number is breathtaking. Compared to any other developed country in the world, U.S. gun-related murder rates are orders of magnitude higher.

I don't for a second think that gun laws alone will prevent malicious or mentally unstable people from doing horrible things. But suggesting that the easy availability of firearms in the United States — including semi-automatic weapons designed to kill anything moving — is not a factor, is delusional.

The game warden who taught my course explained that the certification requirements and laws designed to keep bow hunting ethical in Montana came from the bow-hunting community itself. The bow hunters wanted to protect their experience, and so they worked with Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks to come up with intelligent regulations.

Compare that to the controversy over any proposed gun control laws, and the way that gun manufacturers and the National Rifle Association instantly act to obstruct any and all reasonable requirements for gun ownership. It's long past time for the gun community to devise solutions to help keep dangerous weapons out of the hands of criminals, terrorists and anyone else intent on committing violence.

Until they step up, I find the NRA's stance unconscionable and the whole debate about gun rights ridiculous. If you really believe that the government is out to take away all guns from average Americans, or that freedom means that individuals have the right to stockpile military-grade weapons for Armageddon, then I say you've been hoodwinked. You've been fooled by an industry that, much like the tobacco industry, has everything to gain by selling more and more of its lethal products.

If tougher gun control laws require people to jump through more hoops to get a gun, is this really a problem? The inconvenience that legitimate gun owners might face when they want to buy weapons pales in comparison to the hardships endured by families that suffer the horror of losing someone to an armed attacker.

The Second Amendment talks about a "well-regulated" militia alongside the "right to bear arms." We have erred on the "right to bear arms" side of the equation for decades. It's high time we paid attention to the well-regulated part.

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We can be armed, polite and still do this

Corpus Christi (Tex.) Caller-Times

Gun restriction isn't a popular topic in South Texas.

Only a year ago the state's Legislature approved open carry of firearms. The people of this region of the state cherish their guns and their rights, and we respect those rights. What we are about to say doesn't contradict our respect for those rights.

Further sale of military-style high-capacity firearms to civilians should cease as soon as possible, by congressional action. Congress, further, should limit the number of bullets that can be loaded into those guns by the civilians who already possess them. And gun purchasers should undergo a federally mandated background check to make sure they're not fugitives or otherwise prohibited from gun ownership.

If the background check complicates person-to-person sales or sales at gun shows, so be it. A background check wouldn't be any more an invasion of privacy than the requirement to show identification to purchase liquor or verify oneself as the holder of the credit card being used in a purchase.

These all are reasonable restrictions whose time came long before Sandy Hook. They also are constitutional. Last week, the Supreme Court declined to hear challenges of capacity limits and bans on the sale of military-style rifles in New York and Connecticut. The Supreme Court has acknowledged governmental authority to place reasonable restrictions without violating the Second Amendment.

These recommendations wouldn't prevent gun users from hunting, sport-shooting or

protecting themselves and their homes from attack by anything short of a military force.

Proponents of military-style rifles such as the ones used in seven of the eight most recent mass killings argue that there is little difference between them and semi-automatic hunting rifles. That would be true if the magazine capacities of the military-style rifles were limited to the four- or five-round capacities of the hunting rifles. Do that, and put a scope on the military-style rifle, and, voilà, the owner has a hunting or long-range target rifle that only looks sinister.

In each issue of the National Rifle Association's magazine is a section reporting incidents of successful self-defense against criminal attackers — always with a firearm, usually a shotgun or small-caliber handgun. These are stories even a pacifist would love. They also affirm the NRA's philosophy of having the right to use a gun to defend oneself.

But they also show that it doesn't take a military-style semi-automatic rifle capable of firing 30 rounds in a matter of seconds to defend oneself and one's home.

If anything, firing that kind of gun inside one's home or from one's doorstep endangers the lives of those in neighboring homes. It's a real possibility with a high-powered rifle fired multiple times, but highly unlikely to happen with a handgun or shotgun because of their limited ranges.

We recognize that with so many of this type of weapon already in mass civilian circulation, years would pass before they became scarce if their distribution were restricted to the military and law enforcement. The longer we wait, the bigger that problem becomes.