

Quick takes

Pendleton playgrounds will close for years

Funny how when I was kid if you got hurt on the playground or at the park ... you got hurt! There wasn't people suing and it gave kids a place to play. Bring back the playgrounds!

— Kelli Stewart

It's not the playground's fault that kids are kids and fall off of things. I did, everyone did. Rub some dirt on it and quit crying.

—Dean Roy

I am very sad to see the park closed so long. We have played at Kiwanis park many years. It is sad that it may take so long to have them repaired.

— Danelle Springer

Boardman coal plant tries biomass for a day

OK, as a bridge. Not cost effective for market size. Burning biomass reduces compost material so soils do not replenish. Longer term solution is batteries of various types to meet the time of production matching times of consumption. Current utility infrastructure not incentivized in that direction.

— Mark Lind

I have a peripheral interest in this from observing the work that PGE has put into looking for alternatives. The task is daunting, but I, for one, am hoping it is successful.

— Jim Harris

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.

The Malheur occupation continues

By STEVE HERMAN
Writers on the Range

Now that the focus has shifted to the upcoming trials of the outlaws who took over the Malheur National Wildlife Refuge offices last January, we might recall that the actual, physical occupation lasted for a total of 41 days. In many ways, however, it never ended, and there is every reason to conclude that the occupiers won.

The refuge's headquarters are still closed, federal cops guard the area, and no one answers the phone. At least six staff members have left, including the fisheries expert and the ecologist. They have not been replaced.

The refuge is drier now than I have ever seen it; the usually flooded ditches along Center Patrol Road are without waterfowl. Only two ponds hold water and the birds that depend on it.

The Malheur Refuge website cautions prospective visitors: "Buildings and grounds are active work sites and are closed for safety reasons." When I found a refuge employee in a pickup on the side of the road, I asked him what "active work site" meant. He smiled wryly and answered "That answer would have to come from a higher pay grade."

I first visited the Malheur Wildlife Refuge in 1966, and I started teaching in the vicinity in 1973. Virtually every Memorial Day weekend since then, I have gone birding on the headquarters grounds, along with other bird watchers from the Northwest birding community and beyond. I teach a summer ornithology class now on nearby Steens Mountain, and every August I tour the refuge with my students.

But this year, we were not allowed in; in fact, a federal truck stood by the blocked entrance to keep us out. Yet

nearly a hundred days had gone by since the last occupier left, and the site had been safely visited by U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Director Daniel M. Ashe and even Interior Secretary Sally Jewell. Both hosted the press on the "active work sites,"

and no problems were reported. Ashe said that the occupiers had done damage estimated at \$6 million, and now the rumor is that this venerable and beautiful oasis — once a showplace visited regularly by Supreme Justice William O. Douglas — will undergo a fancy facelift.

That makes me fear that the old buildings, built by the Civilian Conservation Corps out of pink Dufurrena sandstone in the 1930s, might be sacrificed to some Washington, D.C. architect's vision of modernity. I doubt that the occupiers, slovenly though they reportedly were, could have done that much damage.

Meanwhile, all is not quiet on this Western front. Some or all of the 13 ranchers with grazing privileges on the refuge were going full-bore when my students and I drove north along the refuge on Aug. 12.

Thousands of acres of the Blitzen Valley part of the refuge had been mowed. Three huge double-flatted trailered semis passed us going south, ready to welcome on board the valuable hay bales. Ranchers apparently pay with "in kind services," which in this case means that the hay is paid for by mowing, baling and hauling it off. Because the mowing is considered beneficial to wildlife, it is considered a "service" to the refuge and to wildlife, so little or no cash

changes hands.

So ubiquitous was the haying activity I saw that it is hard to believe that it had only been going on for two days. Aug. 10 is the first day any haying efforts are allowed, in part because that is the date that most, but

not all, young sandhill cranes are believed to be out of danger of being baled, along with the hay. A young crane, faced with an advancing piece of machinery, will crouch down instead of fleeing, and thus get macerated by a combine.

The first of the thousands of cattle that will graze there for the better part of nine months were visible, but I was concerned with some trespass livestock I had seen on Aug. 5,

about a mile south of headquarters. I find trespassing cattle almost every year — there were cowpies last year right in front of refuge headquarters — but this year I was unable to report them, because nobody seems to be at work.

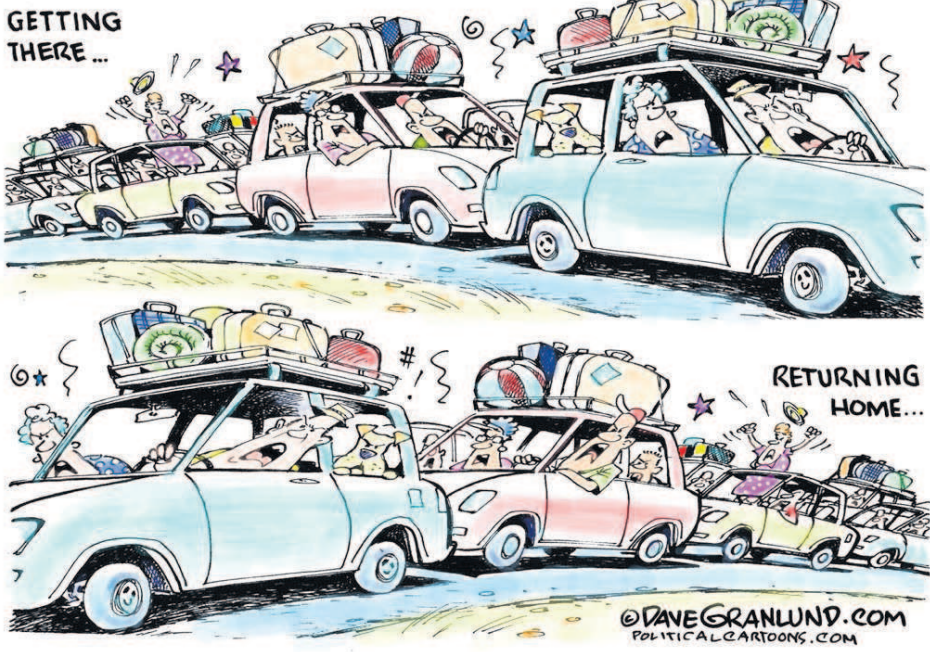
And so the occupation continues, even though most of the occupiers are safely tucked away in jail cells. The headquarters compound may be off-limits to human visitors, but the refuge is wide open for the grazing "treatments" that are allowed in order to "meet management objectives." Sadly, the wildlife meant to find refuge in this place no longer seem to count for much.

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Labor-Day WeeKend Travel...



Time to end the endless war on drugs

The Tuscaloosa (Ala.) News

Recently, a prominent Tuscaloosa attorney was arrested and charged with trafficking methamphetamine. He was released within hours on a \$250,000 bond and is awaiting trial. Authorities with a regional drug task force say he and an accomplice had possession of materials, some presumably highly toxic, to manufacture the highly addictive and deadly drug.

A few days earlier, the manager of a Tuscaloosa tire store was arrested on charges of trafficking marijuana from the business. Police say he sold three pounds of marijuana to a confidential informant for \$3,000. He was released on a \$1.5 million bond and is awaiting trial.

Then on Friday, two brothers in the south Alabama town of Florala were found guilty of drug trafficking after an Alabama Law Enforcement Agency helicopter spotted marijuana plants growing on their land and on other land nearby. It took three years for the brothers to go to trial, and the trial lasted just three days, according to the *Andalusia Star*. The newspaper also reported that the two brothers, ages 60 and 56, face sentences of up to life in prison.

Meanwhile, heroin laced with what is believed to be an elephant tranquilizer caused nearly 80 overdoses this past weekend in Indiana and Ohio. Cincinnati had more than 30 overdoses just last Monday alone. It made news but really shocked no one. After all, someone died of a drug overdose every two hours and 52 minutes on average in 2015 in Ohio. That's eight people a day, every day, all

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year long.

The return of heroin as a popular street drug can easily be traced to the legal pharmaceutical industry and the prescribing of opioids by unscrupulous doctors. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, more than 14,000 people died from overdoses involving prescription opioids in 2014.

Now that there is a crackdown on the prescription drugs, heroin is cheaper and easier to come by than most of the prescription drugs that launched addictions. And it is hitting hard in places where prescription drugs used to be the norm. According to the CDC, non-Hispanic whites aged 18 to 44 had the highest rate for heroin overdose death in 2013, the last year final figures are available.

In 1971, President Richard Nixon started the so-called "War on Drugs." Since then, presidents, legislatures and the justice system have been doubling down, spending billions of dollars to wage the war, through eradication, enforcement, prosecution and incarceration that includes increasingly harsh prison sentences. All the while, cartels from foreign countries and street gangs have waged war over the billions of dollars in proceeds from the black market.

After 45 years, it is safe to declare that drugs have won the war. What we're doing isn't working. We should never give up. But it is time for our nation, our states and our communities to start having some real, open and honest conversations about drugs, legal and illegal, prohibition, addiction treatment and where our priorities lie.

Clinton failed to maintain firewall between foundation, state department

By LNP (Lancaster, Pa.)

On its website, the Clinton Foundation says it "builds partnerships between businesses, NGOs, governments, and individuals everywhere" to find lasting solutions and to "transform lives and communities." It's focused on global health, climate change, economic development, health and wellness, and improving opportunities for women and girls. Recently released emails suggest a potentially troubling relationship between the foundation and Hillary Clinton's State Department.

We don't subscribe to the where-there's-smoke-there's-fire school of thinking. In this election season, there's smoke everywhere.

Still, there's a rule of journalistic ethics that we think ought to apply to government officials, too: Avoid not just conflicts of interest, but the appearance of conflicts of interest. Because in the public's eye, they're all the same.

That's certainly the case with the Clinton Foundation and the State Department during Hillary's tenure as secretary of state.

When she took the position, Clinton promised to establish a firewall between the foundation and the State Department. She signed an agreement pledging that she would not participate "personally and substantially in any particular matter involving specific parties in which The William J. Clinton Foundation (or the Clinton Global Initiative) is a party or represents a party."

As the *San Francisco Chronicle* reported, the Clinton Foundation also "signed a memorandum of understanding promising to disclose donors regularly. But it violated that provision on several occasions, including when it failed to report a \$500,000 donation from the Algerian government in 2010."

Recently released emails requested by conservative organizations show that Clinton Foundation officials sought access for donors to Hillary Clinton and other State Department officials.

So far, there's no evidence of any significant favors being granted in exchange for donations — no hard evidence of any pay-to-play arrangement — but donors did get access to Clinton and her top aides, including Huma Abedin.

An Associated Press report last week found that "more than half the people outside the government who met with

Hillary Clinton while she was secretary of state gave money — either personally or through companies or group — to the Clinton Foundation."

The AP excluded from its analysis meetings with federal government employees and foreign diplomats; its analysis covered roughly half of Clinton's tenure as secretary of state.

Clinton supporters attacked the AP report, saying it focused on a narrow subset of people the secretary of state met, and said it had unearthed no evidence of any quid pro quo. It didn't need to. The appearance of it is bad enough; one can make an argument that the access itself is the payoff.

And if there is a special favor we don't know about, consider this: Even the Clintons wouldn't be brazen enough to put it in writing in an email.

We know that people with money and influence often are granted meetings with leaders in power. But the United States shouldn't be viewed as one of those countries where money will buy you influence with the government.

And the Clinton Foundation — and more importantly, Secretary of State Clinton — shouldn't have permitted the perception to take hold that foundation donors would be granted access.

It wasn't exactly "Press 1 to make a donation, then press 2 if you wish to leave a message for Huma Abedin," but it may as well have been.

The Clinton Foundation has done important work — notably, its affiliate, the Clinton Health Access Initiative, has negotiated lower prices for HIV/AIDS medications across the globe.

But that's not the issue. The issue here is that the former secretary of state failed to maintain the promised firewall between the Clinton Foundation and the State Department. It was more akin to a revolving door.

Clinton should cut all ties with the foundation immediately, and make it crystal-clear to her aides that foundation donors should not expect any special treatment from her should she become president.

But even that won't do much to erase the perception that once again, Hillary Clinton ventured too far down an unethical path for her to be trusted.

There's no adequate explanation or defense of the unholy alliance between the Clinton Foundation and the State Department.

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