

Quick takes

Confederate flags on display in Pendleton

First Amendment protects the things we don't agree with. That's how it works, we cannot expect equal protection and want to ban the other side of the coin.
— John E. Thomas

It is disgusting and offensive. And I 100 percent support any moron's right to sell, buy, own and fly that stupid flag.
— Kate Chastain

There's nothing more un-American than the Confederate flag. Get that hate out of here.
— Addison Schulberg

We're in America, home of the free. Even if I don't agree with Nazis or KKK or whoever, they don't have to agree with me either.
— Carol Hernandez

Nothing the matter with that flag as long as it is not flying over our government buildings. Otherwise fly it, wear it, sell it, burn it, who cares?
— Malvin Jamison

Ignorance is our right. Flying garbage is way better than having a conversation.
— Benjamin Caldwell

I have seen that booth down there every year that I can remember. And just now they are bringing it up. Way to be pathetic like the rest of the media, *East Oregonian*.
— Roy Schuening

Remind me again why I should attempt to understand people who are offended constantly and make a big stink about it. What's next? Green shoes? Red cars?
— Susan Goodnow

I want one.
Kristina Ream

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 uses of patriotism

This column is directed at all the high school football players around the country who are pulling a Kaepernick — kneeling during their pregame national anthems to protest systemic racism. I'm going to try to convince you that what you're doing is extremely counterproductive.

When Europeans first settled this continent they had two big thoughts. The first was that God had called them to create a good and just society on this continent. The second was that they were screwing it up.

The early settlers put intense moral pressure on themselves. They filled the air with angry jeremiads about how badly things were going and how much they needed to change.

This harsh self-criticism was the mainstream voice that defined American civilization. As the historian Perry Miller wrote, "Under the guise of this mounting wail of sinfulness, this incessant and never successful cry for repentance, the Puritans launched themselves upon the process of Americanization."

By 1776, this fusion of radical hope and radical self-criticism had become the country's civic religion. This civic religion was based on a moral premise — that all men are created equal — and pointed toward a vision of a promised land — a place where your family or country of origin would have no bearing on your opportunities.

Over the centuries this civic religion fired a fervent desire for change. Every significant American reform movement was shaped by it. Abraham Lincoln wrote, "If ever I feel the soul within me elevate and expand to those dimensions not entirely unworthy of its almighty Architect, it is when I contemplate the cause of my country."

Martin Luther King Jr. sang the national anthem before his "I Have a Dream" speech and then quoted the Declaration of Independence within it.



DAVID BROOKS
Comment

This American creed gave people a sense of purpose and a high ideal to live up to. It bonded them together. Whatever their other identities — Irish-American, Jewish American, African-American — they were still part of the same story.

Over the years, America's civic religion was nurtured the way all religions are nurtured: by sharing moments of reverence. Americans performed the same rituals on Thanksgiving and July 4; they sang the national anthem and said the Pledge in unison; they listened to the same speeches on national occasions and argued out the great controversies of our history.

All of this evangelizing had a big effect. As late as 2003, Americans were the most patriotic people on earth, according to the University of Chicago's National Opinion Research Center.

Recently, the civic religion has been under assault. Many schools no longer teach American history, so students never learn the facts and tenets of their creed. A globalist mentality teaches students they are citizens of the world rather than citizens of America.

Critics like Ta-Nehisi Coates have arisen, arguing that the American reality is so far from the American creed as to negate the value of the whole thing. The multiculturalist mindset values racial, gender and ethnic identities and regards national identities as reactionary and exclusive.

There's been a sharp decline in American patriotism. Today, only 52 percent of Americans are "extremely proud" of their country, a historical low. Among those 18 to 29, only 34 percent are extremely proud. Americans know less about their history and creed and are less likely to be fervent

believers in it.

Sitting out the anthem takes place in the context of looming post-nationalism. When we sing the national anthem, we're not commenting on the state of America. We're fortifying our foundational creed. We're expressing gratitude for our ancestors and what they left us. We're expressing commitment to the nation's ideals, which we have not yet fulfilled.

If we don't transmit that creed through shared displays of reverence we will have lost the idea system that has always motivated reform. We will lose the sense that we're all in this together. We'll lose the sense of shared loyalty to ideas bigger and more transcendent than our own short lives.

If these common rituals are insulted, other people won't be motivated to right your injustices because they'll be less likely to feel that you are part of their story. People will become strangers to one another and will interact in cold instrumentalist terms.

You will strengthen Donald Trump's ethnic nationalism, which erects barriers between Americans and which is the dark opposite of America's traditional universal nationalism.

I hear you when you say you are unhappy with the way things are going in America. But the answer to what's wrong in America is America — the aspirations passed down generation after generation and sung in unison week by week.

We have a crisis of solidarity. That makes it hard to solve every other problem we have. When you stand and sing the national anthem, you are building a little solidarity, and you're singing a radical song about a radical place.

■

David Brooks became a New York Times columnist in 2003.

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Staff photo by E.J. Harris

Will Denner is the *East Oregonian's* summer intern.

Eastern Oregon made wet-sider feel at home

By WLL DENNER
East Oregonian

Before I begin this goodbye, allow me to preface by saying that I had doubts about living and working in Eastern Oregon.

Through the University of Oregon's Snowden Internship Program, I was selected as one of 19 aspiring journalists to intern at a select media outlet in the state.

When interviewing for the program in February, internship coordinator Kathryn Thier asked if I'd be willing to go to Eastern Oregon. I said yes without a moment's hesitation, but deep down I wasn't sure. Not because I had anything against Pendleton.

I simply didn't think I, a city kid from Portland and lifelong Willamette Valley resident, would blend in with the small town, cowboy culture that was completely foreign to me. When I learned that I had been picked as the *East Oregonian's* news reporting intern, I was elated because I had a plan for the summer, but nervous at the prospect of moving to Pendleton.

In hindsight, my reservations were irrational. Getting placed in Pendleton gave me the best chance to grow professionally and personally.

That growth started my first day on the job, when a quiet day at the office turned into reporting on a grass fire that threatened to burn homes near Interstate 84 on Southeast Sixth Street. It continued as I investigated the circumstances that led to the Yoga Round-Up getting canceled in favor of the Pendleton Whisky Music Festival.

When city leaders subsequently mentioned my article during a meeting

discussing booking policy as it pertained to Round-Up Grounds and the Pendleton Convention Center, I felt like my work, at the very least, had started a conversation.

I was pushed further as I helped put together features for the *EO's* annual Round-Up Magazine. This year's theme focused on the Happy Canyon Night Show celebrating its 100th anniversary, which provided me with plenty of stories to tell about North America's longest running Indian pageant.

The likes of Corey Neistadt, Steve and Susan Corey patiently answered my novice questions as I attempted to wrap my head around Happy Canyon without yet having seen its magic in person.

I also gladly accepted the occasional sports assignment whenever it came my way. Much of my college experience came working as a sports reporter for the UO campus newspaper *The Emerald*, and sports reporting is ultimately where I'm hoping to end up.

With that being said, I am unsure what my next career move is as of this writing. While that unpredictability is trying for the time being, wherever I end up, I will count on a large part of what I learned this summer to build upon. I owe a huge thanks to everyone in the *East Oregonian* newsroom because of that, as well as the people who make up this wonderful town.

So thank you, Pendleton, for welcoming me from day one and being hospitable all summer long. I'm saying goodbye for now, but have no doubt we'll be reacquainted soon enough.

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Contact Will (for one more day!) at wdenner@eastoregonian.com.

Never say die when hunting for a rare species

By PEPPER TRAIL
Writers on the Range

We don't look like ghost hunters. We're not dressed in ectoplasm-resistant overalls. We're out in broad daylight and look pretty normal, not like those glowing-eyed TV guys who are always whispering into night-vision cameras. We're a typical group of Oregonians gathered at a trailhead, men and women, old and young, with a couple of young kids racing around waving butterfly nets.

The ghost that we're chasing is — we hope — not a ghost at all. It's a bee. To be specific, it is Franklin's bumblebee, *Bombus franklini*, the rarest bumblebee in the world. Always restricted to a tiny range in southern Oregon and northernmost California, the species has seemingly disappeared. Despite many searches, no one has seen a Franklin's bumblebee since 2006, and experts fear that it is now extinct — a ghost.

The search for ghosts — animals and plants that are so rare that they are thought to be extinct — is sadly becoming a common activity for conservation biologists. The most famous search is the decades-long pursuit of the ivory-billed woodpecker. That magnificent bird, a symbol of the primeval forests that once covered eastern North America, retreated as the forest fell before the axes and torches of the early settlers.

The last undisputed sighting of the species in the United States was in the late 1930s, but tantalizing reports have continued to trickle in, most famously in 2004, when a blurry and much-disputed video was made in the Big Woods of Arkansas. Intensive surveys of the remote swamp were undertaken, only to be abandoned five years later with no further sighting. But still, every year or two comes word of an ivory-bill sighting in some new location. As Emily Dickinson

said, hope is the thing with feathers.

Our hunt for Franklin's bumblebee didn't require travel into the depths of the wilderness. We just organized a carpool from the town of Ashland up into the nearby Cascade-Siskiyou National Monument on a beautiful sunny day. Once there, we crowded around Robbin Thorp to get our instructions and last-minute pointers. He's the University of California expert who was the last person to see a living Franklin's bumblebee, just a few miles from our meeting-place.

Dr. Thorp believes that the disappearance of Franklin's bumblebee populations since 1998 is due to diseases spreading from commercial colonies of bumblebees. Bumblebees are important pollinators of greenhouse crops, especially tomatoes and sweet peppers, but studies show they suffer from higher rates of disease than colonies of wild bees. If they escape greenhouses, which they do occasionally, they can transmit those diseases to wild bees.

In addition to Franklin's bumblebee, its close relative, the western bumblebee, has also experienced catastrophic declines across the West since the late 1990s. Other wild bumblebee species seem to be doing fine, so the decline of the Franklin's and western bumblebees can't be blamed on general factors like habitat loss or wildflower decline.

With this sobering tutorial, we set out on the hunt, bumblebee identification sheets in hand. My team headed south on the Pacific Crest Trail toward a spring where I expected an abundant display of wildflowers, and thus plenty of bumblebees. The

flowers were there in abundance — butter-yellow monkey flowers, dark pink checkerbloom, purple coyote mint — and we spent the next several hours netting and releasing yellow-faced bumblebees, yellow-headed bumblebees, two-form bumblebees, fuzzy-horned bumblebees, and indiscriminate cuckoo bumblebees. But no Franklin's bumblebees.

The known range of Franklin's bumblebee covered an area only about 190 miles north to south and 70 miles east to west. It may be that the species simply did not have a large enough population to allow resistance to a new threat to evolve, a situation that, unfortunately, is well documented in both human and animal populations.

The western bumblebee, a formerly abundant species with a range covering most of the western United States and Canada, is far more likely to be able to evolve resistance. In fact, two individuals were recorded on Mount Ashland during this year's surveys, a hopeful sign for that species' recovery.

But I haven't given up on the Franklin's. Its small range is mostly in the Siskiyou Mountains, where there are plenty of little valleys far from roads that have never been surveyed. If you're out hiking the area someday, and spot a distant figure with a white butterfly net stalking slowly through a field of flowers, well, that might be me. Still hunting for our local ghost, still hopeful, always.

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