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OUR VIEW

Tip of the hat,
kick in the pants

A tip of the hat to improving on a good thing.

We gave the nod to the Pendleton Round-Up last week for their second straight best in show award at the National Finals Rodeo, a feat accomplished by not settling for the status quo. Growing and changing surely isn’t easy for a rodeo over 100 years old.

We also witnessed a much improved downtown Hermiston Christmas celebration last week, thanks to a willingness by the city to ask for help decorating and planning the event. There was music, food, cookies, cocoa and Santa Claus, all in a seamless celebration of the holiday spirit. It made the idea of a festival block come alive.

Pendleton will launch its own Christmas celebration this weekend, an old-fashioned downtown stroll complete with — you guessed it — music, food, cookies, cocoa and Santa Claus. It’s a great way to make use of a great downtown. Hopefully organizers will watch closely, make adjustments as needed, and come back bigger and better next year.

No memorable community event happens by accident. From the Hermiston Farm Fair to the Pendleton Whisky Fest to Milton-Freewater Rocks and every festival, parade, shindig, auction and concert in between, it takes a committed core of leaders and supporters to make it happen and make it better.

We’re lucky to live in a place where there is no shortage of such volunteerism.

A kick in the snow pants to this nasty weather and all that comes with it.

Ice-coated windows, slick roads, dented fenders, longs lines at Les Schwab, slips and falls, shoveling sidewalks, runny noses, frostbite, busted pipes, shivering children, pent-up pets, canceled trips, cold bathroom linoleum and the eventual mushy melt.

A tip of the stocking cap to this winter wonderland.

Sledding, skiing, snowmobiling, snowflakes, snow angels, snowball fights, ice skating, Christmas lights, hot cocoa and snow days.

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

Republicans meant what
they said on health care

The Wall Street Journal

The belief among Democrats that a Republican could never win another presidential election was apparently so firm that they’re still in a state of shock. They’re even more stunned that Donald Trump has dared to name an ObamaCare critic as his health-care point man — which makes for an instructive moment.

Tom Price, a six-term Georgia Congressman and mild-mannered orthopedic surgeon, is an unlikely villain. But liberals are already saying the Health and Human Services nominee will shred the social contract, leave poor people and cancer patients panhandling for care, and jail women for their reproductive decisions. Cecile Richards of Planned Parenthood claims that Mr. Price “poses a grave threat to women’s health in this country.” Earth to the abortion lobby: Declining to mandate and federally subsidize birth control coverage is not the same as ‘banning’ it.

Meanwhile, the American Medical Association is facing an internal and social-media revolt over an anodyne statement that called Mr. Price “a leader in the development of health policies to advance patient choice and market-based solutions as well as reduce excessive regulatory burdens.” Supposedly this was a betrayal of doctors and patients, or something, but the big health-care societies always cater to power. They do so because so much of medicine is decided by government.

Mr. Price’s nomination is a refreshing signal that such state control isn’t an inevitability or necessity, starting with replacing ObamaCare. Most liberals are getting the bends coming up from their false triumphalism. They’ve spent years claiming the center-right vision for health care isn’t worth serious study while mocking Republicans for supposedly futile repeal votes. Maybe Republicans meant what they said.

You’d think that the people who designed and enforced a failed program might show more humility, or at least

stop lecturing others. Even Hillary Clinton’s staff recognized the law is imploding. In a private Nov. 23, 2015 memo published by WikiLeaks, Chris Jennings, a former Obama aide who joined the campaign, wrote that the law’s performance is “at best, disconcerting” and identified other “troubling” signs.

One of them is that only about eight million people have paid the tax penalty for violating the individual mandate to buy insurance, and another 12 million have received regulatory exemptions. In other words, more people who were supposed to benefit from ObamaCare have opted out than have enrolled.

Now Democrats are assailing Mr. Price for proposing alternatives to the mess they created. The Republican, who took over the House Budget Committee from Paul Ryan, is a thoughtful and well-informed problem solver. Unlike many of his colleagues, Mr. Price hasn’t dodged details and specifics. He proposed an alternative to ObamaCare during the 2009-10 debate and in the years since he’s put flesh on the bones, including with legislative language.

Mr. Price’s Empowering Patients First Act relies on fixed-value tax credits to stabilize the insurance markets outside of employer-sponsored coverage. The switch to a defined contribution from a defined-benefit model is based on the transition to 401(k)s from pensions.

The American Medical Association is also right about Mr. Price’s opposition to central health-care planning. ObamaCare says the HHS Secretary “shall” write more than 1,800 regulations, and HHS has put out tens of thousands of pages of rule-makings. The Bureau of Labor Statistics notes that employment among “medical and health services managers” has increased by 31.5% since 2011. These are administrative workers who don’t treat patients but merely ensure compliance with federal and state mandates, and they help explain why U.S. health care is so expensive.

OTHER VIEWS

Donald Trump warms up

What do you think the theme for Donald Trump’s appointments has been so far? Generals, generals, generals? Climate change deniers, climate change deniers?

Those seem to be the leading contenders, although there’s always the ever-popular Give Chris Christie a job. While still cooling his heels as governor of New Jersey, Christie made history when a recent Quinnipiac poll showed him with a 77 percent job disapproval rating. None of his predecessors had managed such a feat. We knew he had it in him.

When I want to be cheered up, I always think about Christie, who’s currently lobbying for head of the Republican National Committee. (Next week, the Surface Transportation Board.)

On the downside, we had the heartbreaking saga of Al Gore, who happily emerged from a meeting with Trump this week, telling reporters about the “lengthy and very productive session” he’d had with the president-elect on climate change. It was, Gore added hopefully, a conversation that was likely “to be continued.”

Then Trump turned around and named Scott Pruitt, the attorney general of Oklahoma, as head of the Environmental Protection Agency. From Gore’s perspective, this would be like the judge in a divorce case naming the aggrieved husband as marriage counselor.

Pruitt is best pals with the oil and gas industry, and he knows the EPA mainly as an entity to be sued. Under his watchful eye, his state has allowed so much natural gas fracking that Oklahoma now has way more earthquakes than sunrises.

Why do you think Trump went to so much trouble to set Gore up for heartbreak? The most likely answer is that he was only pretending to listen to what Gore was saying about climate change, while he waited for the chance to break in and talk about how tremendous, enormous, historic and stupendous his election victory was. This seems to happen a lot.

Also, it’s perfectly possible that by the time Trump sat down with Gore, he no longer remembered who he was appointing to the EPA. Perhaps he didn’t remember that Gore cared about the environment. The key to this man’s success, you understand, is failure to recall anything that happened before his most recent meal.

The selection of a Trump administration has been sort of mesmerizing in its own awful way. Ben Carson will be running Housing and Urban Development — Ben Carson, whose associate recently said he wouldn’t be taking any Cabinet job because “he’s never run a federal agency. The last thing he would want to do was take a position that could cripple the presidency.”

And our new national security adviser is going to be Michael Flynn, a very creepy retired general whose son/former chief of

staff has been promoting stupendously false stories about Hillary Clinton’s involvement in a child sex ring at a pizza restaurant.

Trump says he’s discussed his talent hunt with President Barack Obama, who thinks “very highly” of some of the people on his list. Who do you think they are? Probably not the general with the son who tweets about Democratic child abuse. Maybe retired Gen. James Mattis, who Trump wants to make secretary of defense? Mattis is a pretty popular choice, possibly because his nickname is “Mad Dog.”

Do you think if Christie had a nickname, it would help his chances? What about “Growling Gerbil”?

And then there’s secretary of state. Trump seems to be looking at 9 million possibilities. By next week you may be in the mix. Think about it. You’re far better qualified than Rudy “Rabid Rabbit” Giuliani. And unlike David Petraeus, I’ll bet you are not currently serving out probation after pleading guilty to sharing highly classified government information with a lover.

Lately, it appears Trump has gone back into the field to drag in a whole new bunch of State Department contenders. My favorite is Rep. Dana Rohrabacher of California, a person you have probably never heard of even though he’s been in Congress since the 1980s and is currently head of the prestigious Subcommittee on Europe, Eurasia and Emerging Threats.

Rohrabacher is also a surfer and former folk singer who once claimed global warming might be connected to “dinosaur flatulence.” He’s told transition officials that if he gets the nod, he’ll make the terrifying John Bolton his deputy, so the nation can get a crazy warmonger plus a guy who knows how to play old Kingston Trio music.

Also in the running: Rex Tillerson, the CEO of ExxonMobil. Unlike Rohrabacher, Tillerson seems to believe that humans have had an impact on the climate; he just doesn’t care. (“What good is it to save the planet if humanity suffers?”)

Another name being bandied around is Democratic Sen. Joe Manchin III of West Virginia, who first ran for the Senate with a famous ad in which he shot a hole in federal environmental legislation.

Do you see a pattern here? Apparently the next secretary of state will be somebody who likes smog. Perhaps this is an opening for Christie. New Jersey has had a lot of environmental problems. Maybe he could invite Trump to a football game for some bonding. They could talk foreign affairs, and then pollute something on the way home.

■

Gail Collins joined The New York Times in 1995 as a member of the editorial board and later as an Op-Ed columnist. In 2001 she was appointed editorial page editor — the first woman to hold that post at The Times.

YOUR VIEWS

God’s grace, love covers all

Ron Gavette’s “Christian in name, but not so much in outreach” editorial, where he “wonders what a Christian is suppose to be,” deserves an answer, especially as we approach Christmas.

Is it an oxymoron for a Christian to support Donald Trump, oppose the socialist global agenda of the liberal left and still serve Christ? Jesus gave the answer to what we are suppose to be. “Deny yourself, pick up your cross and follow me.” The fact that Jesus, the very son of God, was willing to humble himself as a new born babe to bear the price of all mankind’s sins is the epitome of grace.

Mr. Gavette writes I have violated that spirit of grace. That judgment stems from a misunderstanding of God’s grace. Grace must be bestowed because all men have violated God’s laws. God’s grace is the only remedy for our violations, and all men have sinned. God’s grace is the undeserved merit and forgiveness all mankind has been granted

through the shed blood of Jesus Christ. How can mortal man grasp that kind of love? Behold again the Lord Jesus Christ this Christmas. “He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief: and we hid our faces from him ... But he was wounded for our transgression, he was bruised for our iniquities.”

Yes, Ron Gavette, in response to God’s amazing grace, I desire to follow him and build bonds across no-mans-lands. It starts at the cross. It begins with a personal relationship with the son of God who hung on a cross for your sins and mine. It begins with personally acknowledging my sin forced God to sacrifice his only begotten son. Building bonds across no-mans-land can only be accomplished by forgiving those who have transgressed against us.

May the gift of God, Jesus Christ, the bond across-no-mans-land, be received and worshiped in every household this Christmas.

Stuart Dick
Irrigon

LETTERS POLICY

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