

**EAST OREGONIAN**  
Founded October 16, 1875

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**OUR VIEW**

**Where agriculture and sci-fi meet**

In 1977, when the first “Star Wars” movie premiered, few — if any — viewers thought it would predict the future of agriculture.

We should explain. In the movie, Luke Skywalker — “Our Hero” — first appeared as he was working on his uncle’s “moisture farm” on a desert planet. This farm captured its water directly from the atmosphere, which was unique enough, but only Luke and his aunt and uncle ran the whole operation. The rest of the “workers” were autonomous droids, or robots. As you will recall, they did all of the work on the farm, and Luke’s job was to repair them. He was going to town to get a spare part when he encountered Sand People and was rescued by Obi-Wan Kenobi, the Jedi knight.

While the rest of the story is well known, most people dismissed the idea of an automated farm as nothing more than the product of a fertile imagination and science fiction.

Fast forward 40 years, and the vision of a farm where robots and drones do much of the work no longer seems so far-fetched.

At a recent conference here in Pendleton, researchers, inventors and farmers got together to contemplate the future of farming. The ideas they have developed make “Star Wars” seem old-fashioned. In the not-too-distant future, they see robotic workers harvesting fruits and vegetables and driverless tractors and combines planting and harvesting crops. Drones and sensors will identify portions of fields needing irrigation or applications of fertilizer or pesticide and call in

other drones to do the job. Ranchers will use drones to monitor the location and health of their cattle on the range and, when needed, to chase off predators such as wolves or coyotes.

Combine that with other advances in agriculture, from genetic editing of crops to use less water, fertilizer and pesticide to orchards, vineyards and berry farms that are designed for efficient mechanical harvesting, and you have a hint of what the future of agriculture holds.

These advances will not happen solely because they represent “progress.” They will address problems that farmers and ranchers face. Among those problems are a shortage of labor, the need for the more precise use of resources and, most importantly, the need to feed 7.5 billion people on the planet today and more in the future.

The possibilities are endless. They are limited only by the imaginations of agriculture’s best and brightest innovators.

“There’s a clear path toward completely automated farming,” Jake Joraanstad of Myriad Mobile Solutions, a Fargo, N.D.-based tech company, told the Pendleton gathering. “To solve the hunger problem, we have to be going there, that has to be the future.”

As technology develops in every arena of agriculture, we will see farmers and ranchers adopt it as a way to grow the food a hungry planet needs.

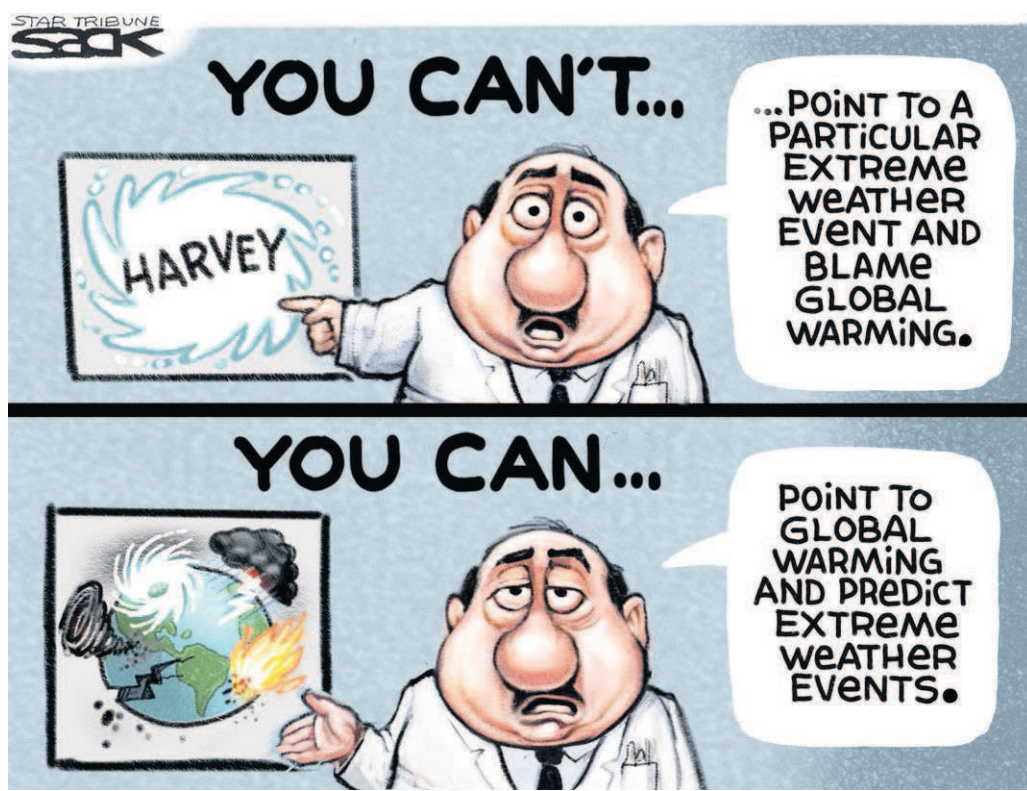
May the force be with us.



**Nathan Stein with senseFly launches an eBee fixed wing imaging drone August 16 during the Future Farm Expo at Echo West Ranch & Vineyard.**  
Staff photo by E.J. Harris



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**OTHER VIEWS**

**Why can't we get cities right?**

The waters are receding in Houston, and so, inevitably, is national interest. But Harvey will leave a huge amount of wreckage behind, some of it invisible. In particular, we don't yet know just how much poison has been released by flooding of chemical plants, waste dumps, and more. But it's a good bet that more people will eventually die from the toxins Harvey leaves behind than were killed during the storm itself.

Oh, and if you trust the current administration to handle Harvey's aftermath right, I've got a degree from Trump University you might want to buy. There are already signs of dereliction: many toxic waste sites are flooded, but the Environmental Protection Agency is conspicuously absent.

Anyway, Harvey was an epic disaster. And it was a disaster brought on, in large part, by bad policy. As many have pointed out, what made Houston so vulnerable to flooding was rampant, unregulated development. Put it this way: Greater Houston still has less than a third as many people as greater New York, but it covers roughly the same area, and probably has a smaller percentage of land that hasn't been paved or built on.

Houston's sprawl gave the city terrible traffic and an outsized pollution footprint even before the hurricane. When the rains came, the vast paved-over area meant that rising waters had nowhere to go.

So is Houston's disaster a lesson in the importance of urban land-use regulation, of not letting developers build whatever they want, wherever they want? Yes, but

To understand that “but,” consider the different kind of disaster taking place in San Francisco. Where Houston has long been famous for its virtual absence of regulations on building, greater San Francisco is famous for its NIMBYism — that is, the power of “not in my backyard” sentiment to prevent new housing construction. The Bay Area economy has boomed in recent years, mainly thanks to Silicon Valley; but very few new housing units have been added.

The result has been soaring rents and home prices. The median monthly rent on a one-bedroom apartment in San Francisco is more than \$3,000, the highest in the nation and roughly triple the rent in Houston; the median price of a single-family home is more than \$800,000.

And while geography — the constraint imposed by water and mountains — is often



**PAUL KRUGMAN**  
Comment

offered as an excuse for the Bay Area's failure to build more housing, there's no good reason it couldn't build up. San Francisco housing is now quite a lot more expensive than New York housing, so why not have more tall buildings?

But politics has blocked that kind of construction, and the result is housing that's out of reach for ordinary working families. In response, some workers engage in extreme commuting from affordable locations, spending as

much as four hours each way. That's no way to live — and no way to run a city.

Houston and San Francisco are extreme cases, but not that extreme. It turns out that America's big metropolitan areas are pretty sharply divided between Sun Belt cities where anything goes, like Houston or Atlanta, and those on the East or West Coast where nothing goes, like San Francisco or, to a lesser extent, New York. (Chicago is a huge city with dense development but relatively low housing prices; maybe it has some lessons to teach the rest of us?)

The point is that this is one policy area where “both sides get it wrong” — a claim I usually despise — turns out to be right. NIMBYISM is bad for working families and the U.S. economy as a whole, strangling growth precisely where workers are most productive. But unrestricted development imposes large costs in the form of traffic congestion, pollution, and, as we've just seen, vulnerability to disaster.

Why can't we get urban policy right? It's not hard to see what we should be doing. We should have regulation that prevents clear hazards, like exploding chemical plants in the middle of residential neighborhoods, preserves a fair amount of open land, but allows housing construction.

In particular, we should encourage construction that takes advantage of the most effective mass transit technology yet devised: the elevator.

In practice, however, policy all too often ends up being captured by interest groups. In sprawling cities, real-estate developers exert outsized influence, and the more these cities sprawl, the more powerful the developers get. In NIMBY cities, soaring prices make affluent homeowners even less willing to let newcomers in.

Paul Krugman is a columnist for the New York Times and professor of Economics and International Affairs at Princeton University.

**YOUR VIEWS**

**Let's hear it for the benchwarmers**

An East Oregonian “Tip of the Hat” should go out to Tom Melton and all his years of effort to recognize former outstanding athletes of Pendleton. Many also appreciate his more recent efforts to recognize good Pendleton athletes who were outstanding in other sports besides football. Even some well deserving ladies are being honored now by the group. Although I am not one of these stars, I did go to school and play on teams with the likes of Dick Jones, Steve Bunker and Clarence Cowapoo. I had Don Requa for a math teacher and his son Billy was a good friend of mine before he died. Kenny Milton was one of my early coaches, and I always valued the lessons I learned from him. His son Steve was also a good friend of mine and one of the toughest guys I knew on the ballfield as well as a great coach. I even had the honor of watching the great Bob Lilly play in his early years at PHS.

That said, there is one very important semi-athletic group that has been sorely left out of the accolades and honors bestowed upon past Pendleton athletes. After careful thought and consultation with some of those guys who shared this vital spot with me, I am hereby suggesting the formation of the “PHS Bench Warmers Club.” This important group never receives the attention and recognition it deserves. No team — and none of the athletes inducted into the Linebackers Club Hall of Fame — would have ever made it without them. In fact, I am going to be very bold here and suggest myself to be the very first inductee. I might even go a step further and offer my old bench warming buddy, Larry Sweek, to join me as a double induction for the first go round. Larry and I spent many hours, over a four year period, warming the bench for our high school coach. His general rule was that Larry and I would get to play if our basketball team was either twenty points

ahead, or twenty points behind. The other golden rule was that we were allowed to play no more than two minutes in each game — just barely enough time to get the adrenalin under control and begin to calm down enough to play with some confidence. Then it was back to our starting position — First Team Bench Warmer.

I know there are many others out there who feel the same, so I will be holding an exploratory meeting for membership at the Rainbow Cafe in the near future I don't see why we can't have a nice dinner, good speaker or two, induction ceremonies and have just as much fun as the Linebacker's Club does each year. We deserve it!

**David Burns**  
Pendleton

**Good work by MSC to deny symbol of oppression**

Compliments to the Main Street Cowboys for denying the application to the vendor wanting to sell Confederate flags on Main Street. The Confederate was not the official flag of the Confederate Army. While it wasn't the Confederate states' official flag, several Confederate Army units flew the battle flag. The most notable among them was Gen. Robert E. Lee's Army of Northern Virginia. And even Lee distanced himself from divisive symbols of a Civil War that his side lost. “I think it wiser moreover not to keep open the sores of war,” he wrote in a letter, declining an invitation by the Gettysburg Battlefield Memorial Association. There were no flags flown at his funeral, Confederate or otherwise.

Slavery was a big part of why the South wanted to secede. In their declarations of secession from the Union, many Southern states expressly mentioned slavery as a reason for their departure. After the Civil War ended, the battle flag turned up here and there only occasionally at events to commemorate fallen soldiers.

The flag exploded into prominence

in 1948 when Strom Thurmond ran for president under the newly founded Dixiecrats. The party's purpose was clear: “We stand for the segregation of the races,” said Article 4 of its platform. At campaign stops, fans greeted Thurmond with American flags, state flags and Confederate battle flags. But desegregation progressed, and as it passed milestones like the Supreme Court ruling on Brown vs. Board of Education, which gave black American children access to all schools, the Confederate battle flag popped up more and more.

The South seceded to preserve the violent domination and enslavement of black people and the racist Confederate flag only exists because of that secession.

**Chuck Wood**  
Pendleton

**Let Round-Up vendors sell whatever they want**

I am totally amazed by the blatant hypocrisy demonstrated by the Main Street Cowboys in their declining the vendor's permit to Liberty Flags and Gifts. It was just fine last year when they were driving their golf carts around during Round-Up sporting big Stars and Bars flags, but now because the liberal social media thinks it is not “appropriate” they are banning vendors because of the merchandise they sell.

If you do not like the Stars and Bars Flag, DON'T BUY ONE! You can also tell the vendor you personally think it is in poor taste to sell them, but you do not have the right to stop them from selling, if they meet the

standard requirements of all vendors.

I never saw any uproar when a statue of a whorehouse madam was put up on Main Street. This is all part of our country's history, including slavery and the Stars and Bars flag. Get over it and move on!

We have enough hypocrisy, doublespeak and half-truths in our government already. Let's try to keep it honest and real here at home. As has been said many times and in many ways, “If we forget (or bury) the past, we are doomed to repeat the same mistakes.” We should try to be open and learn from the past and those mistakes that were made. We already have people in our local governments who are trying to push their own personal agenda and to hell with “the people.”

Your personal feelings toward the Stars and Bars flag are your business, but it should not be the grounds for blocking a vendor from trying to make a living.

**Robert Park**  
Helix

**It takes a hike to watch soccer**

So Thursday evening there is a soccer game at the new [high school] field. The parking lot is on top of the field and the only gate that is open is on the bottom. People had to carry their chairs and other stuff 100 yards down the hill and back up to within 50 feet of their cars to watch the game. When done they had to go back the same way. When they drove out of the parking lot they had to look at a locked gate right in front of them. So much for hospitality.

**Jim Harvey**  
Pendleton

**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. The phone number will not be published. Unsigned letters will not be published. Send letters to managing editor Daniel Wattenburger, 211 S.E. Byers Ave. Pendleton, OR 97801 or email editor@eastoregonian.com.