

Jury duty: An American tradition

I am rolling toward service to my country as a prospective juror while my right leg feels as though there is a high-voltage buzzer strapped to its instep. I am grouchy and sore. Why me? Why should I waste a day of my life in support of the American judicial system when I don't believe it is fair? I should've opted out. I can barely walk. I hope I don't collapse in a screaming fit in the courtroom. Oh, woe, pitiful me.

That is when the Great Spirit moves in to call my bluff. As I begin to chant Tuesday's mantra, "*nolite iudicare ut non iudicemini*," ("Judge not that ye not be judged", Mathew 7.1) a snow-white raven soars up from the borrow pit and flies parallel to the pickup truck.

My brain vacillates between "I must be getting too close to the Hanford Nuclear Reservation" and "This is a clear sign that I should fast for 20 days while flogging myself with willow sticks," then the medicine bird performs an in-flight shimmy, shimmy cocoa bop, shakes the frost from its feathers and emerges as a regular black raven. Things might not be all that bad after all. At least I didn't sleep under a tumbleweed blanket last night like the bird did, and it looks as though the diet can wait until tomorrow.

My first thought when I hobble into the courthouse is "Wow, I'm glad that I am not the janitor in this joint." Everything is too new and shiny and waaaay clean. The floors are tiled in pink marble, the curved banisters are oaken, the informational papers on the bulletin boards are level and plumb, and even the glass partitions around the metal detector are spotless.

Note to government architects: If you wish to serve regular people, then use people-friendly building materials. I and millions of others would prefer linoleum and pine wood, maybe a bullfight poster or two.

By 8:30, we are twenty disgruntled citizens sitting on hard metal chairs in a space that is smaller than the restroom. The guy over there is reading "Freakonomics." The woman on my left is chatting with her friend about her sister's job in the trailer factory. The guy on my right keeps checking a wristwatch that is running ten minutes faster than mine. A young fellow along the far wall is wearing a total NASCAR outfit with sponsorship patches sewn down both legs. The woman beside him is snapping Juicyfruit and pushing back her cuticles with a paper clip.

A power-suited woman passes out three sheets of copy paper and one cheap ballpoint to each of us. The forms ask whether we wish to donate our mileage payments (27 cents per) and daily stipends (\$25) back to the state of Oregon. In a pig's eye.

We go through a singlewide door into a brand new courtroom. I can smell the carpet adhesive. Seated at a conference table is a brown-skinned fellow in a black vinyl jacket wearing earphones.

On either side of him are a short man whispering into a microphone and a man in a brown tweed sports coat who is studying a clipboard. At another table are two guys whose skin tones look as though they sleep in hotel barrooms.

We are seated on long benches in the peanut gallery. All stand as the judge climbs

up to his bench, a padded chair with six inches of headroom between his comb-over and the tile ceiling. He thanks us for coming and briefs us about the issue.

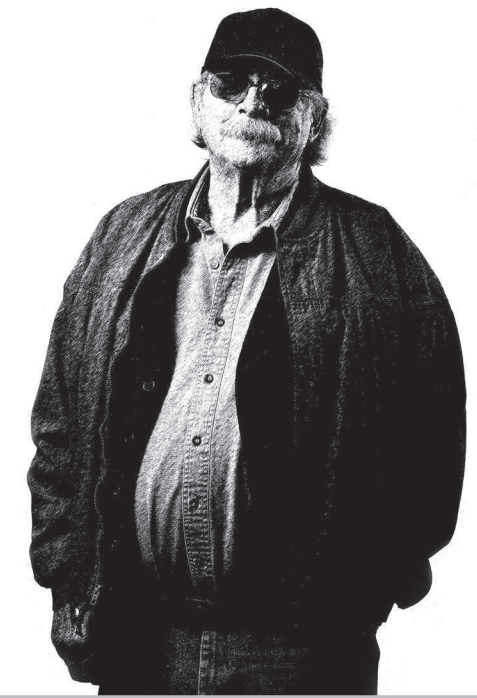
This is to be a civil case. The guy in the black coat claims that his Toyota Tundra was stolen then set afire in a field not far from the courthouse, a total ruin. The insurance company has refused to pay for his claim so he has brought suit against the company in the amount of \$22,000 to pay for the truck. Does any of us know the plaintiff? No. Does any of us know any of the attorneys involved in the case?

When the tweed-coated lawyer for the plaintiff stands and turns to smile at the jury, I know that I won't be serving on this panel. I recognize him. We spent a recent Sunday in a friend's media center watching the Vikings get their butts handed to them. I confess to the judge that I have a friendly basis with the attorney for the plaintiff. Soon I can limp back to my Tylenol stash.

First though, we must be questioned by both sides. The plaintiff's representative asks if any of us have been burned by an insurance company, (two yesses) whether we have any bones to pick with the migrant worker program (no response), whether we have ever had a car stolen (Mr. NASCAR says twice).

The insurance company guy leads with a cheap shot, the disclosure that the plaintiff is an illegal alien. The guy beside me with the runaway Timex grunts under his breath. Then he asks if any of us feels like there are too many frivolous lawsuits being filed (two), whether any of us are customers of his insurance company (one, former), whether any of us is a certified locksmith (nope), and if any of us know each other (several point at each other and say things like "I buy my tires from him" or "She and I play cards on Thursdays).

After half an hour of this, the judge calls the lawyers into his chambers, where they



J.D. SMITH
FROM THE HEADWATERS
OF DRY CREEK

will attempt to pick 12 from 20. The plaintiff sits with his hands folded on the table. His interpreter leaves for a drink of water. The second guy at the insurance table yawns, stands and stretches. The rest of us sit and stare at nothing until the court reconvenes and 12 new jurors are identified and assigned, by number, their seats in the jury box.

The Great Spirit is with me. The jury is sworn in, and the judge dismisses eight of us. I don't know how the case ended, but my leg didn't hurt nearly as badly on the way out of the building.

J.D. Smith is an accomplished writer and jack-of-all-trades. He lives in Athena.



Saving the world for democracy: Pendleton soldiers join the Great War

City changed dramatically as young men shipped off

By BRIGIT FARLEY
For the East Oregonian

One hundred years ago, a powerful U.S. fighting force was assembling and shipping overseas to the battlefields of France, Belgium and beyond. There they would provide much-needed assistance to British and French forces, whose defenses were sagging after four years of total war against Imperial Germany and its allies.

One thousand and twenty-six men from Pendleton and Umatilla County formed up with the "Sammies," Uncle Sam's fighting men, to do their part. As we remember this great effort during its centennial, Pendleton's contingent certainly has earned a few moments in the spotlight.

Among the first Pendletonians to march to the sound of the guns was Joe Despain, who had fought with the U.S. Army in its campaign against Pancho Villa in Mexico. His own country was sitting on the sidelines in 1915, but Despain wanted to put his soldiering skills to good use, so he went north and enlisted with Canadian forces. He joined a hardy group of Americans, notably the daredevil flyers of the Lafayette Escadrille, determined to get into the action despite U.S. neutrality. Despain fought all the way through the Armistice, managing to survive several brushes with death. He regarded the war as an adventure and assured Pendleton readers in letters to the *East Oregonian* that the war was "more exciting than 10,000 Roundups" and that the war was "the place for a man to be."

After President Woodrow Wilson committed U.S. forces in April 1917 to "make the world safe for democracy," community leaders began making preparations to join the fight. Pendleton's mayor, Dr. James Best, took a leave of absence from City Hall to put his medical expertise to work in the Army Reserve Medical Corps.

Dr. Fred Lieuallen followed suit, leaving his surgical practice



William Lorenzen (third from right) of Pendleton, posed with some children behind the lines in 1918 during World War I in France.

to become an army doctor. The Pendleton Round-Up was well-represented among the volunteers. Two directors, James Sturgis and future U.S. Senator Fred Steiwer, joined the Army and became field artillery officers. Round-Up President and Sheriff Til Taylor took command of local defenders, the Umatilla County Home Guard.

Round-Up champions Lee Caldwell and Dell Blacett recruited Round-Up competitors and adventurers for Pendleton's own "Rough Riders," Cavalry Troop D, Oregon National Guard. Even after Troop D dismounted to become field artillery, Caldwell and the leading Round-Uppers found roles that made use of their talents. 1915 bulldogging champion Frank Cable was a "stable sergeant," in charge of the care and feeding of some 5,000 Army horses. And Caldwell managed a remount station near the front lines in France.

High school students answered the call, too. The *EO* reported in

May 1917 that only a handful of senior boys remained at Pendleton High School. Two star athletes, Clell Brown and Sheldon Ulrich, led the way to war. Brown excelled for the Buckaroos in football and track, and his teammate Ulrich had kept the community apprised of Pendleton High School happenings as student reporter for the *EO*. Fittingly, both enlisted in the Marines, then as now the "Leathernecks," the force thrown into the toughest fights.

Another local grad, William Lorenzen, would take up arms against the country from which his family had come quite recently — Germany.

Even though volunteers proved plentiful in the early weeks, President Wilson worried their numbers would be insufficient to meet the challenge of a global war. For just the second time in U.S. history, therefore, the country would draft a percentage of its manpower.

East Oregonian editor E.B.

Aldrich sensed that the draft might cause consternation in a country to which a murky, faraway war had come home quickly. He emphasized the "selective" in Selective Service, presenting the draft as a rare opportunity for young men to change the world.

For draftees who did not quite see it that way, Aldrich made clear that Sheriff Taylor was standing by to catch "slackers," the all-purpose term of abuse for anyone not 100 percent behind the war.

In any event, the summer of 1917 saw a steady stream of men called to service, including local rancher Robert Ingalls, who left a young bride for France early in 1918.

Many immigrant draftees in the area — Greeks, Italians, Portuguese and Spaniards — barely knew English. In fact, Camp Lewis, Wash., received so many men whose English was poor that authorities had to arrange language classes for them during training. Here in Pendleton, draftees

could look forward to an elaborate send-off, typically including a march down Main Street, rousing speeches from local officials, a band playing and warm wishes from local high school girls as they boarded trains for induction points near and far.

In 1917, the country thought first of white men as it tried to build a large army virtually from scratch.

Troop D members probably thought their Round-Up standout comrade, George Fletcher, would ride to war with them. But African-Americans were destined mostly for non-combat roles in segregated units, because the authorities feared the consequences of arming black soldiers as well as the reaction of whites.

By contrast, Indians would fight alongside whites. They had long since proven their ability as warriors. Besides, Bureau of Indian Affairs officials declared, the experience of the armed forces would move Indians away from the old ways and towards what the Bureau termed "civilization."

Some 80 Umatilla Reservation residents presented themselves for service, including Grover Minthorn, Louis Shippentower, Gilbert Conner and Isaac Patrick, who ended his war with American interventionist forces in deep Siberia. *East Oregonian* editor Aldrich praised the Reservation soldiers, noting that there were no slackers among them.

In early 1918, Pendleton and Umatilla County joined the overseas exodus charged with bringing the "world war" to an end. Ahead lay many unknowns: would they make the decisive difference in the struggle? Could the world be made safe for democracy? How were you going to, in the words of a popular song, "keep them down on the farm, after they've seen Paree?"

One thing was clear from the start: they were taking their country onto the international stage, a place it had never been.

Brigit Farley is a Pendleton resident and professor at Washington State University-Richland.