

No bull when bulls go on sale

The wind shook the car as I glanced in the rearview mirror at my reflection. Why was I even attempting to push my hair the right direction? I looked away and scanned the parking lot for a sign of which direction my boys had gone while tumbleweeds seemed to be having races across the dirt.

The mud puddles were drying up quickly and the dust swirled up and around the makeshift barbecue area that was being assembled in preparation for lunch. Large smokers and propane tanks sat ready to give it their all, and the stack of aluminum pans near the edge of the table were eager to be filled. I smiled to myself as my mouth began to water just thinking of the delicious burgers that would be served at lunchtime with a large helping of mushrooms piled on top, along with the perfectly seasoned, home-style fries. It was tradition I was counting on, and I knew without a doubt that my memory would serve me right.

I situated the hood of my coat, slid a glove over each hand, and then reached for the sale catalog with the date and two of my favorite families' names in large, bold font across the cover.

This particular catalog had made its way to the top of the pile at our house over the course of the week, and been looked through, marked, and talked about over dinner almost every evening. There were photos of life at its finest inside, and a whole lot of numbers the men in my life understood much better

than I did. I giggled to myself thinking about the past month at our mailbox each afternoon — remembering the bets the boys had placed on how many catalogs would be arriving and who they would be addressed to. Yes, in the dead of winter, on the coldest of days, the greatness of a mailbox full of bull sale catalogs seemed to bring warmth to all of us.

I pushed the door open against the wind, and braced myself for the cold that I knew would find the tip of my nose. With my camera bag against me, I made my way toward the pens on the north side of the parking lot that were filled with fresh straw and groups of black bulls. These bulls — that had been raised from birth to be genetically sound and sturdy in every sort of way — were about to be sold to the highest bidders.

I couldn't help but wonder if they knew what was coming. Did they know how many people and families just like us had looked at their pictures and circled their birth weights and weaning weights, along with the expected progeny difference and calving ease direct written under every picture? Did they know that money had been put aside in hopes of growing a herd with their purchase? Did they know that they would be leaving their friends and making their way to "greener pastures"?

I held my camera tightly and pressed the shutter button over and over, capturing the day and the people the best I could, making my way through cattle pens, around

bleachers and through the auction crowd. There were cattlemen and women with clipboards and sharpie markers, and kids with soda pop cans and chocolate chip cookies jumping across fences and over bales of hay. There were families filling up chairs around an auction ring, hats being lowered, prayers being said, handshakes, smiles, and conversations captured forever.

New caps and gloves were handed to buyers, sorting sticks found new homes, and the smooth talking, fast-paced rhythm of the auctioneer's voice filled the room, along with shouts from the irreplaceable and valuable ring men who looked for nods and numbers to the best of their ability.

The photos were still, but emotion could be felt just looking back through them. I could see the mud on the boots, and hope in the eyes looking back at me, and I could almost feel the warmth of the smiles that were wrapped in wild rag scarves as if I'd been wearing them myself.

The event had been over for about an hour. The line at the payment office was down to just the last few buyers. Groups of people sat in the sale barn at long rectangular tables that were covered with green cloths. There was laughter, along with deep sighs of relief. There were thank yous spoken, and cheers given. Prices had been great, stress levels had lowered, and the sale catalog that I still held in my hand would now be a distant, yet fond memory.

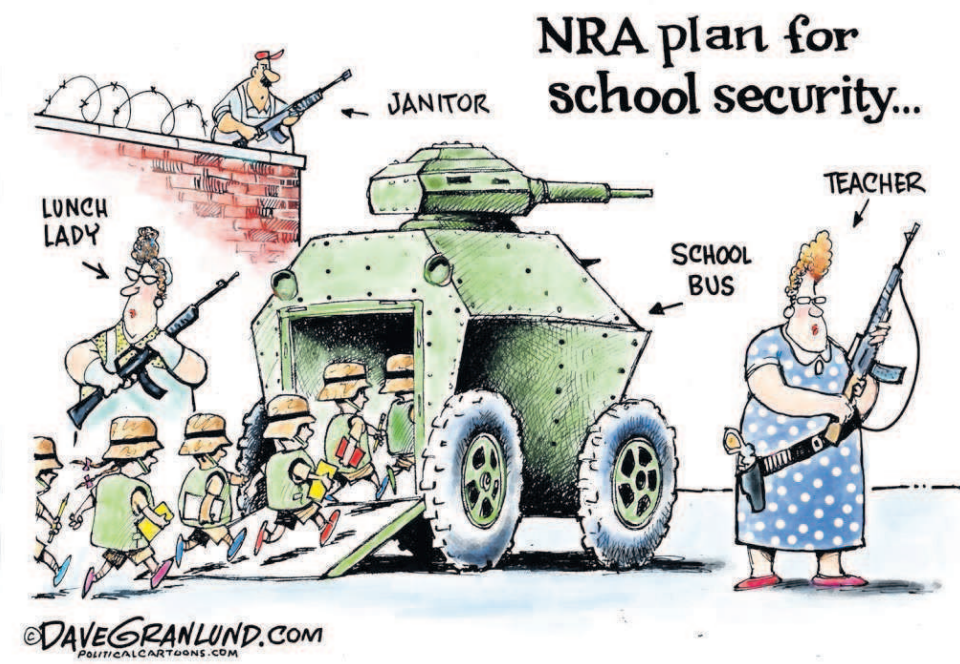
Bull sales offer so much more than bulls. They create and build cattle operations, they strengthen relationships, they allow for life to be shared around tables and sale rings.



LINDSAY MURDOCK
FROM SUN UP TO SUN DOWN

But most of all, I feel that they offer hope. The kind of hope we all want. The hope that speaks to our souls — reminding us that we live in a great community, with some pretty amazing people who are working very hard to build a sustainable future, not just for themselves, but for the world they live in — one herd at a time.

Lindsay Murdock lives on an Echo ranch and teaches in Hermiston.



What does a forester do?

What is the true mission of a forester? It seems appropriate to start by explaining that we haven't met a forester who isn't proud of the work they do. There have been many advances in the field of forestry in the last 30 years and the enhanced knowledge and technology is one of the many reasons we enjoy coming to work every day.

But we're often asked what a forester does. Usually we try to turn that question around and ask "What do you think a forester does?" The responses usually involve something about logging, growing trees, or something about wildland firefighting. The true answer, like most complicated topics, is ... it depends. It depends on who you work for and what the forest management objectives are. One thing is certain though — these days being a forester almost always has something to do with sustaining and promoting healthy forests.

The western United States is filled with people who love forests. Whether it's to visit the woods to escape the city, harvest food, go skiing or sledding, float down a river, cut firewood, make memories, gather spiritual wellbeing ... the list could go on for quite a while. If you enjoy indulging in any of these or the many other opportunities the forest has to offer, you can thank a forester.

Foresters today are tasked with guiding the condition and development of forest stands. Sometimes this does mean a commercial harvest of some type or a well-timed, non-commercial thinning or fuel reduction project to reduce tree densities to match what a particular site can sustain. And then other days we're planting trees to get the next generation started. The work of a forester is literally never done.

In the past few years, however, there has been an increased urgency to much of the work we do. Megafires (a term often used to describe uncharacteristically large and severe wildfires) have created a new situation for forest managers. There hasn't been a year in the last decade where a megafire somewhere in the country hasn't made top headlines.

So how do we manage forests to mitigate the megafires we seem to be experiencing every summer? Fire suppression is a small piece of the puzzle and we would be negligent if we did not point out that fire isn't all bad. In fact, the presence of wildland fire is desperately missing from our forests.

A little more than 100 years ago, we got really good at suppressing wildland



RICHIE GARDNER
Comment



JAMIE KNIGHT
Comment

fires and since that time we changed the game. Removing the disturbance of fire from fire-adapted and fire-dependent forests is not natural. Many of the forest ecosystems thrive and rely on fairly regular fire intervals to keep them healthy and robust. Many forest types in Eastern Oregon are not meant to have dense canopies and shaded undergrowth.

The lack of fire and a subsequent lack of forest management has set our dry forests up for failure. As foresters, it's our job to ensure that we are mimicking natural processes as closely as current science and management techniques allow.

All forests require some kind of disturbance, with intensities and frequencies of the disturbance varying depending on forest type (example: ponderosa pine vs. mixed conifer forests). Since allowing forest fires to burn within the historic range of variability isn't always practical, we have to do our best to work out other ways of mimicking fire. This is where the dynamic field of forestry comes into play.

There are many very talented foresters and scientists working together each day to make sure that we are applying the best known science in our management decisions.

We are constantly learning about how forest insects and diseases operate and ways tree densities affect this type of disturbance (especially with the extreme weather events we seem to be experiencing these days.) We are learning when the appropriate times for harvest in a particular stand is. We are learning new techniques to keep foresters safe in the field. We are learning more about the benefits of prescribed burning and timing our fires and smoke emissions to make less of an impact to sensitive populations.

Contrary to what it might sound like here, foresters don't have all the answers. Foresters are, however, individuals that appreciate the environment and all the benefits it has to offer. Foresters believe in the sustainable use of forest resources while supporting our local economies. Foresters believe in constantly learning and adapting so that we can do our very best to preserve our forests for generations to come. And lastly, foresters love what they do.

So the next time you head to the woods to enjoy some of what the West has to offer, remember to thank a forester.

Richie Gardner and Jamie Knight are members of the Blue Mountain Chapter of The Society of American Foresters.

Building America great again

In his campaign, President Donald Trump proposed rebuilding America's infrastructure with a trillion dollar program. In his State of the Union address, he increased the amount by \$500 billion.

America has always been a building nation. Federal land grants helped support the building of the transcontinental railroads. Skyscrapers made New York a world-class city. During World War II, military facilities sprang up around the country and around the world.

Pendleton was part of that effort when Works Projects Administration funds upgraded the Pendleton airport. Doolittle's warriors made good use of the airport as they trained for the famous raid on Tokyo.

After the war, President Eisenhower took the lead in establishing the interstate highway system. The system knitted regional economies into a national economy that opened up economies of scale, added competition and drove innovation.

America badly needs to upgrade its 20th century infrastructure. A few years ago, water flooded into several buildings on the UCLA campus. Why? A 100-year-old wooden pipe had finally burst. There was a flurry of interest after a bridge collapsed in Minnesota, but the country did not pursue a systematic approach to upgrading its infrastructure.

America has been living on investments made long ago. Our civil engineers routinely grade the state of the country's infrastructure. What have they said recently? Depending on the type of infrastructure, most grades ranged from D- to C+. Only rail transport scored a B. The ten-year cost to improve all the grades for the types of infrastructure would be an estimated \$4.59 trillion.

Umatilla County has a stake in maintaining and improving transportation infrastructure. It produces more wheat than any other county in the state. The international competition for wheat and other grains is growing.

Better roads and port facilities will help give Umatilla and other wheat growers an edge in global competition. Umatilla also harvests more melons than any other place in the Pacific Northwest. Good infrastructure helps them reach regional and national markets.

Oregon will also benefit by the extension of high-speed internet to the smaller towns and rural areas in the country. Graduates of BMCC and EOU with an entrepreneurial bent will find access to the added connectivity an advantage in reaching national and even global markets. The entire Oregon delegation is supporting programs to upgrade internet connections in Oregon and elsewhere in rural America.

On Feb. 12, President Trump released his infrastructure plan. He hopes to achieve the promised \$1.5 trillion by combining a \$200 billion federal contribution with much larger state, local and private contributions. This is a sharp departure from the past. For instance, in building the interstate highway system,



KENT HUGHES
Comment

the federal government contributed 90 percent with the states providing 10 percent. Under the new Trump program, the states will be expected to provide the bulk of funding with tax revenue, bonds, or partnerships with the private sector.

Because the recent tax bill limits the deductibility of state and local taxes, it could make it more difficult for some states to raise their contribution. For instance, Oregon, with no sales tax, might have to add to the tax burden of the average Oregonian.

The president does keep an earlier promise by setting aside \$50 billion, or a quarter of the federal total, for rural America. It will be up to governors to choose what specific projects to support. Oregon's congressional delegation is pushing for support of a major effort focused on bringing high-speed internet to rural America.

The president is confident that public-private partnerships will support much of the infrastructure. Around the industrial world, public private partnerships have been adopted for roads, water works, and other projects. In the United States, the National Governors Association provides best practice advice for forming public/private partnerships.

The form of the partnership can vary from building a road and relying on tolls to full private ownership of the project. Not all of the partnerships have worked out. Nor is it clear how the program will generate needed investments in schools or other public investments that do not lend themselves to tolls.

The President's proposal faces some added congressional hurdles. Deficit hawks are already concerned about another spending initiative following a major tax cut and added spending approved in the recently adopted budgets. Some economists are raising a red flag that more spending coupled with low unemployment will lead to an overheated economy and inflation. If the Federal Reserve responds by raising interest rates, growth could slow.

Still, America needs the long-term investment in infrastructure (and other fields as well).

The right kind of investments in infrastructure can raise productivity growth and add to the economy's growth potential. Every truck forced to drive miles to avoid a rickety bridge or a sub-par roadway adds to costs. Broader access to high-speed internet can facilitate innovations that improve productivity, create new jobs, and even lower the trade deficit.

America is in a long-term competition with China for international standing, leadership in innovation, and global markets. Building America Great Again is one part of a needed response.

Kent Hughes is a public policy fellow at the Woodrow Wilson Center in Washington, D.C. He is a 1958 graduate of Pendleton High School.

