

O EAST OREGONIAN PINION

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Founded October 16, 1875

OUR VIEWS

A summer full of ‘git ’er done’

The summer of 2018 has been an eventful time here at your local newspaper. There was a time in my not too distant memory when the summer months were slow and provided a time to regroup and prepare for the busy times associated with back to school, fall sports and then the hustle and bustle of the holiday season.



CHRIS RUSH
Comment

All that is still true, but summers are not the time of rest and relaxation that they once were, at least not in these parts. There’s just so much going on — from the Umatilla County Fair and Farm-City Pro Rodeo coming up this week in Hermiston, Chief Joseph Days Rodeo, which just wrapped up last week in Joseph, the Wallowa County Fair going on right now, the Grant County and Morrow County fairs at mid-month, and a dozen other festivals and events around our region — there is plenty to do.

Your newspaper has been busily preparing to cover these events as thoroughly as we can, as they are an important part of our cultural fabric and equally important for the throngs of visitors they bring to power a large part of our local economy.

Of course, one of the biggest events of the year, Pendleton Round-Up and Happy Canyon, is still to come and the community is already gearing up for that. But we can



EO file photo
Round-Up volunteer Debbie Swenson greets attendees with a high-five prior to the start of the Pendleton Round-Up in 2016.

talk more about that next month.

What all of these events have in common, be they concerts, festivals, farmers’ markets, parades, rodeos, powwows, or fairs, is this: Volunteers — and most likely, lots and lots of volunteers.

The Cambridge Dictionary defines a volunteer as “a person who does something, especially for other people or an organization, willingly and without being

forced or paid to do it.”

I saw this volunteerism first hand last month during the Pendleton Whisky Music Fest, as several Pendleton area clubs like Rotary and Altrusa manned the numerous concession booths ringing Round-Up Stadium starting early in the hot afternoon until late at night as Blake Shelton crooned his last country song.

This is just one example. I could go on

and on. There are just too many events and organizations and individuals to name. But that is what defines a community and makes our towns so desirable to live and work — that willingness to pitch in and, as we used to say in my native Oklahoma, “git ’er done.”

I wish to thank recent *EO* letter writer June Whitten of Pendleton who offered a correction to last month’s column in which I misidentified the county road descending Cabbage Hill as Poverty Flat Road. Ms. Whitten points out that this winding stretch of slanted asphalt is actually known as “Old Emigrant Road.”

Since I last wrote, I’ve checked off a few more area communities from my to-visit list including Irrigon and Boardman. I’m bound and determined to make a swing through Heppner, Lexington and Lone metroplex before too long.

Finally, folks in Hermiston should be expecting a Reader Survey over the next few weeks in the Herald and online at www.surveymonkey.com/r/NF2C66C

We value your input as the East Oregonian and Hermiston Herald seek to better serve readers in Umatilla County’s west side.

Enjoy the rest of summer, everyone!

Chris Rush is the regional publisher for the *EO Media Group*, including the *East Oregonian* and *Hermiston Herald*. Contact him at crush@eastoregonian.com

OTHER VIEWS

Where mental illness and firearms cross

The Mail Tribune, July 29

People with dementia who own guns pose a threat to themselves or others, but removing their access to firearms can be easier said than done. As is often the case with guns, there is no simple answer, no piece of legislation that will remove every risk. Instead, family members must be prepared to take responsibility.

A recent story in the *Mail Tribune* from Kaiser Health News laid out the problem in detail. The report included accounts of a retired police chief in Oregon who accidentally shot his wife while handling his guns, and an Idaho man who shot his son-in-law in a fit of rage.

Those are anecdotes. The available data suggest there will be more.

While the rate of dementia is decreasing, the number of people over 65 is soaring. And a 2017 survey found that 45 percent of those have guns in their household.

In Washington state, an analysis of government survey data showed 5 percent of those over 65 who responded reported worsening memory and confusion and guns in their household. That could be as many as 54,000 people.

If that’s not alarming, consider this statistic: 1.4 percent of respondents over 65 said they had cognitive decline and kept their guns unlocked and loaded. That works out to 15,000 people in Washington state.

We don’t have the corresponding number for Oregon, or for any other state, because Washington is the only state that tracked those trends. The gun lobby successfully has blocked federally funded research into guns as a public health issue, so detailed data is not available. Not surprisingly, the National Rifle Association declined to comment on the Kaiser Health News story.

What the NRA and other gun-rights advocates routinely argue is that existing

laws should be fully enforced before new ones are adopted. Federal law already says people declared not competent to manage their own affairs may not purchase or own guns. But merely being diagnosed with dementia does not count.

Oregon is one of a handful of states that has adopted so-called red flag laws, which allow law enforcement or family members to seek a court order to temporarily seize guns from people who pose a threat to themselves or others. That requires family members to take legal action against a loved one who may resist their efforts. That’s not an easy thing to do.

A better approach would be to address the issue early, when the person’s dementia is first diagnosed. Families can draw up a “gun trust” that spells out how firearms will be transferred to family members as the affected person’s dementia progresses — essentially an advance directive for guns. If the discussion happens soon after the diagnosis, and the gun owner cooperates, that can make the process easier.

Doctors, too, should routinely ask about guns in the home when they discuss a diagnosis of dementia with patients and their families. But violence prevention researchers say doctors are more likely to discuss driving than guns. That’s not acceptable.

Yes, we know: Driving is a privilege, and gun ownership is a constitutional right. But both can become deadly in the wrong hands, and people with advanced dementia should not have access to either.

Any suggestion that the government should assess gun owners’ cognitive abilities raises the specter of a totalitarian state trampling their freedom. So that leaves family members to do what must be done.

Most people don’t think twice about taking away Dad’s car keys for his own protection and that of others when his mental condition deteriorates. It should be no different for his guns.

YOUR VIEWS

Fire crews appreciate support in heat of battle

Thank you to all the area firefighters and farmers who have helped the East Umatilla County and Helix volunteer firefighters protect lives and property. For everyone, it’s been a busy fire season. For our volunteer staffs, it’s been very difficult. On June 12, we had a fire that threatened several Weston homes. We received help from 17 different agencies and over 33 units. With

structure engine support, the Tribal Fire Department, the Athena Fire Department and the Pendleton Fire Department literally helped us save homes. Each of the officers and firefighters in those responding units really made a difference.

I can’t thank you enough.

Whenever it’s possible, we will be good neighbors and answer your call for help.

Dave Baty, fire chief
Helix RFPD
(Acting) East Umatilla County RFPD



OTHER VIEWS

Nebraska farmer won’t stay silent

By CHRISTOPHER GIBBS

Let me be clear. I want to be supportive of the president and his policies. As a farmer, we voted for the president because he purported to represent a “can do, just get it done” attitude. That attitude is the core of farm folks. But the president’s trade war, now being supported by hush money to keep agriculture sedated, is a bridge too far for me. Recently the president announced he is offering \$12 billion of borrowed taxpayer monies to continue to “have farmer’s backs.” These dollars are nothing more than verification that the president’s protectionist’s trade policies are folly.

Let me tell you a riddle. “I slept with a billionaire because he said he loved me. I expected to make love, but in the morning I realized I was getting screwed. When I went to tell the world, I was offered cash to keep my mouth shut.” Who am I? No, I’m not a model or someone named Stormy. I’m the American farmer.

In the mid-1980s we were awash with overproduction in the corn and soybean sectors. Agriculture got busy, boarded planes, trains and automobiles and started building markets around the world, one handshake and one relationship at a time. We used our own funds through our checkoff dollars and trade associations to build markets in Mexico, Canada, Latin America and the Pacific Rim. And we didn’t stop there. In partnership with the U.S. taxpayers, we built an ethanol industry to ensure another renewable energy source for U.S. consumers.

The world markets, which the president

is now tearing down in the name of fairness, were built and paid for by farmers to ensure agriculture had outlets for our production so we didn’t have to come to the American taxpayer for support.

We keep hearing about the “Art of the Deal.” I’m waiting for the “Art” portion. Using a club to bludgeon our trading partners and allies is not negotiating. It’s nothing more than a playground bully stomping around to see who will flinch.

These pay-off dollars will do little more than put a target on agriculture’s back and make agriculture no better than those who come hat in hand wanting something for nothing. Farmers historically enjoy goodwill from the American public and taxpayer. This scheme will result in non-farm state legislators turning their back on agriculture when we need real help.

I spent 30 years administering federal farm programs with the USDA. I’ve administered and supported disaster programming, conservation programming, and price and supply stabilization. I believed in those supports because I believe a strong agriculture is directly related to our national security. I’ve never administered hush money designed to make me sit down and shut up about a ridiculous protectionist trade policy that has destroyed in a matter of months what my industry built with our own hands over decades.

The president calls ’em like he sees them, and so do I. I won’t be silent any longer.

The writer and his family own and operate 560 acres in Nebraska, where they raise corn, soybeans, hay, and cattle.

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