

# O EAST OREGONIAN PINION

CHRISTOPHER RUSH  
PublisherKATHRYN B. BROWN  
OwnerDANIEL WATTENBURGER  
Managing Editor

Founded October 16, 1875

## Tip of the hat, kick in the pants



A tip of the hat to the young musicians and their sage counselors at this week's Rock & Roll Camp at the Pendleton Center for the Arts.

It's startling to note that most Americans were born after Elvis Presley's death 41 years ago this week, and yet the rock 'n' roll spirit he and so many of his forebearers brought into the mainstream lives on.

It's a musical form that often finds itself encumbered by excess and elitism, but is born anew each time a person picks up an instrument or microphone with the intention of sharing their vision with the world. The result may sound like Elvis Presley or Frank Zappa, Chubby Checker or Sleater-Kinney, Fugazi or Aretha Franklin, or maybe like nothing that's come before it.

And you've got a chance to get in

on the ground floor. Friday at 7 p.m. on Main Street, the young bands and performers who have been working all week will share their songs from the stage. We encourage you to go support them and maybe hear the future of the genre.

Long live rock 'n' roll.

**A tip of the hat to the community supporters** who make the Hermiston Agricultural Research and Extension Center a force for good in the world of agriculture.

A new rock monument was dedicated in the entryway of the station this week, commemorating more than 100 businesses, organizations and individuals who have played instrumental roles at the station.

Director Phil Hamm spoke about the



Staff photo by E.J. Harris

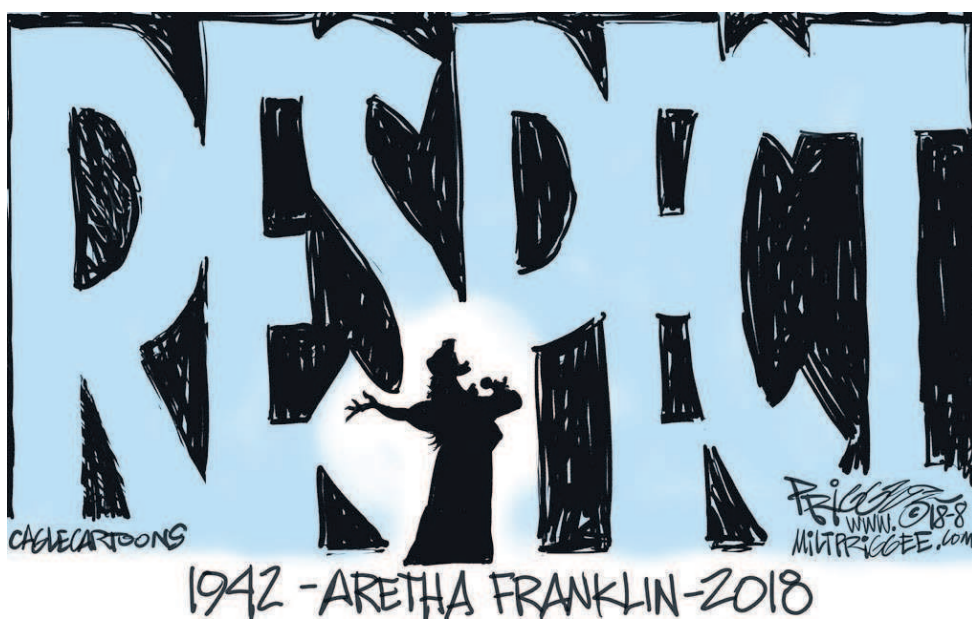
Counselor Gus Epstein, right, helps camper Justin Carey, 13, with a keyboard part to a song as camper Andi Bates, 16, looks on Wednesday at the Rock & Roll Camp in Pendleton.

countless hours and substantial financial contribution spent making the center what he calls the best in the state. U.S. Rep. Greg Walden also applauded the station's accomplishments.

The average citizen may take for granted that improving yields, irrigation

efficiency and treating crop disease have a real impact on the world, but the researchers on staff and those in the farming community sure don't.

Because of the research at the station and others like it, we're able to share our bounty and feed the world.



### YOUR VIEWS

#### New fairgrounds aren't living up to hype

After two years in the new facility, it is glaringly obvious that the only things the Umatilla County Fair Board are interested in are the carnival and rodeo.

I don't have any acquaintance with the livestock show portion, so won't comment on that. But stuffing exhibits formerly housed in Thompson, Price and Hoeft halls into the undersized "Event Center" shows exactly what the board thinks about these former mainstays of rural county fairs. They have shortchanged everyone who enters any non-animal displays.

Fine arts, creative arts, photography, needlecraft, clothing, foods, and creative kids entries are all smashed together in hallways and corridors. Open class clothing is not so much displayed as just shelved. Neither the creators who entered their work nor the people who, once upon a time, came to the fair specifically to see these examples of fine craftsmanship can see anything beyond perhaps a square of folded fabric.

The board's attempts to kill these categories so that they don't have to bother with them any more have pretty well succeeded. "Don't worry about these displays — nobody enters them any more." That's a self-fulfilling prophecy.

And when the makers go away, the lookers go away.

But the board doesn't care, obviously, because they've still got a carnival that blows into town, sucks thousands of dollars out of local pockets, and goes down the road to the next little village hungry for overpriced "thrill" rides and greasy food. Local food booths, by and large, are either in remote parts of the grounds (out by the livestock barns) or behind the fence around the rodeo grounds — so if you have mobility issues that make it difficult to get across the carnival area, or if you can't afford the price of a rodeo ticket, that means you don't get to support your local service organizations by buying a meal or beverage from them.

The rodeo is a fine event and draws top-quality competitors and stock ... but the rodeo really doesn't need the fair. (What it needs is a way to get attendees out of the parking lot at the end of the show in less than 45 minutes, but I digress.)

The citizens of Umatilla County in general, and Hermiston in particular, have been royally hornswoogled by this white elephant of an Event Center, whose backers promised pie in the sky and delivered little more than a pocket full of crumbs.

Lynda Carragher  
Umatilla

### CONTACT YOUR REPRESENTATIVES

#### U.S. SENATORS

**Ron Wyden**  
221 Dirksen Senate Office Bldg.  
Washington, DC 20510  
202-224-5244  
La Grande office: 541-962-7691

#### Jeff Merkley

313 Hart Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510  
202-224-3753  
Pendleton office: 541-278-1129

#### U.S. REPRESENTATIVE

**Greg Walden**  
185 Rayburn House Office Building

Washington, DC 20515

202-225-6730  
La Grande office: 541-624-2400

#### REPRESENTATIVES

**Greg Barreto, District 58**  
900 Court St. NE, H-38  
Salem, OR 97301  
503-986-1458  
Rep.GregBarreto@state.or.us

**Greg Smith, District 57**  
900 Court St. NE, H-482  
Salem, OR 97301  
503-986-1457  
Rep.GregSmith@state.or.us

### OTHER VIEWS

## This is your brain on Omarosa

There will be no mention of Omarosa in today's column. None. There are things that matter — the parlous military situation in Afghanistan, for example — and Omarosa and her explosive new tell-all, "Unhinged: An Insider's Account of the Trump White House," which is published by Gallery Books, a division of Simon & Schuster, just isn't one of them.

Period.

Look, I'm not saying it wouldn't matter if it turned out, as Omarosa alleges in "Unhinged," that there could be a tape of Donald Trump using an infamous racial slur. That, indeed, would be newsworthy, assuming it's true.

I'm also not saying that Omarosa's claim to NBC's Chuck Todd that she personally heard the tape of him using that slur after her book went to press should be dismissed out of hand. But so far it's just hearsay and speculation, and hence not worthy of a column.

I mean, at least it's not worthy of one yet. This is why this column will stick to Afghanistan, where hundreds are dead after the Taliban nearly overran the strategic city of Ghazni.

Granted, it is interesting that White House press secretary Sarah Huckabee Sanders "can't guarantee" that the president had never used the notorious epithet. Is this not a non-denial denial? If Sanders isn't unwilling to give the president the benefit of the doubt on some of his other dubious claims, why would she be willing to be less-than-categorical now?

But this, too, remains to be confirmed. Meanwhile, Pakistan, with its expanding nuclear arsenal, deteriorating economic situation, and ever closer ties to China, appears set to get a prime minister with pronounced sympathies for the Taliban. How should U.S. policymakers respond?

That's a significant question, with serious implications for long-term U.S. strategy in Afghanistan and throughout South Asia. And the last thing anyone should want is to have it obscured by the still-unproven allegations from Omarosa.

I don't mean to suggest that Omarosa hasn't been able to corroborate some of her claims with surreptitious audio recordings of conversations with Trump, Chief of Staff John Kelly, and assorted campaign aides. Nor would I claim that doubts about Omarosa's credibility shouldn't be weighed against graver doubts about the credibility of the president and his senior advisers.

On the contrary, I'll be the first to acknowledge that we urgently need to have a national conversation about all this,



BRET STEPHENS  
Comment

especially as it relates to issues of race, gender, power, and media credibility. But — and I'm saying this only for the narrow purposes of this column — shouldn't we care that U.S. airpower had to be called in to dislodge the Taliban from Ghazni after elite Afghan army commandos were routed by the insurgents?

OK, we might as well admit we don't care. Not now. Because,

if what former campaign spokeswoman Katrina Pierson says on the Omarosa recording from 2016 is true, then what Pierson said the other night on Fox isn't true, which doesn't necessarily mean there is a tape, but does mean that he — that is, Trump — said it. At the very least, it means that she, Pierson, said he said it, even if she now says he didn't.

And this should be of interest to all Americans.

Well, maybe not for the 14,000 or so U.S. troops currently sweating it out in Afghanistan, with nary a notice from the country that sent them there. But they're the ones who volunteered to be in Trump's Army. Who volunteered the rest of us?

We're stuck living in a nightmare in which the president spends his time on Twitter saying terrible things about all sorts of people, including Omarosa. And while we used to think of her as a conniving celebrity-seeker who would scruple at nothing to get her way, we are prepared to forgive her. Because she is an eyewitness. A victim. A whistleblower. A weapon for our cause.

In a word: a Resister.

At some point in the future — give it a month or two — the Resistance will have to ask itself whether its interests were well-served by presenting, as a key witness for its side, perhaps the only person in the White House with less credibility than the president. The Resistance might also wonder whether the obsessive focus on which racial slur Trump might or might not have uttered many years ago matters to the average American. If "grab them by the p—" didn't sink Trump as a presidential candidate, why should "n—" sink him this time?

For now, however, the biggest single beneficiary of the Omarosa obsession is, of course, the president. Carnival shows are his preferred form of politics, and Omarosa (in her latest incarnation) is the fresh new act. We elected Donald Trump to keep us jittery and entertained. He's delivered.

Afghanistan and other hard subjects will have to wait for another column. Another administration, too.

Bret Stephens is a columnist for the New York Times.

Unsigned editorials are the opinion of the East Oregonian editorial board. Other columns, letters and cartoons on this page express the opinions of the authors and not necessarily that of the East Oregonian.

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. 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.