

O EAST OREGONIAN PINION

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OUR VIEW

Shopping small is a big deal

You know the drill. Before your Thanksgiving meal is even fully digested, you’ve already got a dozen sales circulars spread out on the coffee table touting unbelievable deals, doorbusters, or holiday savings!

Determined to fulfill your capitalistic duty, you make a strategic plan to leave the house before dawn in order to be in line at Big Box Store X in time for the doors to open and purchase that certain gadget or gizmo at an insanely low price before supplies run out.

Over the past few decades, “Black Friday” shopping has become just as much a part of our annual Thanksgiving ritual as the turkey and stuffing. Bricks-and-mortar retail establishments and now, online business models, largely depend on this annual eruption of consumerism to determine their financial fortunes for the year.

In fact, competition for holiday spending has become so fierce over the past decade that Black Friday often begins on Thanksgiving Day itself, if not sooner.

With few “big box” choices to choose from in Umatilla or Morrow counties, this means many Oregonians will be crossing the big river this weekend to fill their SUVs with wares from retailers in the Tri-Cities or Walla Walla.

No need to apologize. There is no shame. We all do it. But now seems as good a time as any to be reminded of why we choose to live in small towns like Hermiston, Umatilla, Boardman, Pendleton, Milton-Freewater and Pilot Rock. No, we may not have the big national chain stores. But we are surrounded here in northeast Oregon by dozens upon dozens of local “mom & pop” retail and eating establishments owned by our friends and neighbors.

These stores often cater to their customers in ways the big national chains simply can’t or won’t. They know their inventory and they often know their customers by name. If good old-fashioned customer service is what you’re after, you will likely find it at the little shop or restaurant just down the street.

So, after you’ve fully recovered from



EO file photo

Shoppers Cathy Michael, center, and Marilyn Gardner, right, talk with shop owner Brandi Howard about shoe styles while shopping at Andee’s Boutique in March 2017 in Hermiston.

the mayhem at the mall or the brouhaha at the big box retailer this Black Friday, take time to consider supporting a local mom & pop shop during Small Business Saturday.

You’ll find the pace is slower, but the interaction genuine, and you may even find just that perfect gift item and make new friends in the process.

Remember, it’s very likely when you “Shop Small” that you’ll discover that your kids go to school with their kids, they’re in your Rotary, Lions or Altrusa club, and they’re likely dues-paying members of the same local

chamber of commerce. They’re also the ones supporting the local school cheerleading team or marching band fundraiser.

Since Small Business Saturday started in 2010, U.S. customers have reported spending an estimated total of \$85 billion at independent retailers and restaurants. Some of that was spent right here in Eastern Oregon.

When you invest your dollars by shopping at a local establishment, you’re actually helping your town, your schools, and your community to become stronger.

OTHER VIEWS

Et tu Jim Mattis?

If almost any other member of President Donald Trump’s Cabinet had sought to justify his deployment of thousands of troops to the border by talking about the threat of Mexican revolutionaries more than a century ago, it probably would have sailed right past me. Hyperbole,



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Comment

hysteria and convenient invocations of history are the native tongue of this administration, whose members were either fluent in it beforehand or picked it up quickly.

But Defense Secretary Jim Mattis, who recently evoked that specter, was supposed to speak a better language. He was known to be a saner sort — not just the proverbial adult in the room but the conscience amid the corruption and the barricade against disaster. I like to think that millions of American parents instructed their children to expand their bedtime prayers. Watch over Mommy. Protect Daddy. And don’t let anything bad happen to Gen. Mattis.

Well, something bad happened to Gen. Mattis.

On Wednesday he traveled to southernmost Texas to visit those troops. The trip was a good and necessary thing. Trump, for all his lip service to venerating the military, doesn’t go out of his way to mingle with or pay tribute to servicemen and servicewomen; somebody has to make them feel appreciated and important. That was Mattis’ noble goal. He was trying to assure them that if they missed Thanksgiving, it wouldn’t be for naught.

But that wasn’t doable without dabbling in deception, because the propping up of this president requires it.

In Mattis’ case, it required Pancho Villa. Pancho Villa was a Mexican revolutionary who, along with hundreds of armed followers, attacked an American border town, burning houses and killing people, before retreating back into Mexico, where President Woodrow Wilson ordered him pursued. Mattis revisited that episode in remarks to reporters on his way to Texas.

“I think many of you are aware that President Wilson 100 years ago — a little over 100 years ago — deployed the U.S. Army to the southwest border,” he said. “The threat then was Pancho Villa’s troops, a revolutionary, raiding across the border into the United States — New Mexico — in 1916.”

Interesting. Also irrelevant. There’s no Pancho Villa in the caravan of migrants proceeding north through Mexico. Trump



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has admitted as much. He didn’t say so explicitly, but it’s beyond obvious in his near-total silence about the situation since the midterms.

Before Election Day, the caravan was a Trojan Horse for jihadis. It was an “invasion” of such menace that soldiers might have to respond to any rocks thrown by the invaders with bullets. Trump used such overheated imagery in an effort to activate his base. To lend credibility to this scaremongering, he dispatched the troops.

Now they’re not twiddling their thumbs, and Trump has pretty much stopped mentioning the supposed enemy heading their way. Just like that — poof! — the caravan ceased to be an emergency. Apart from a rare, terse reappearance Friday night, it exited his tweets.

Many journalists have noted that, correctly deeming it proof that the deployment was a baldly, cynically political move. So Mattis told the troops on the border to ignore them. “There’s all sorts of stuff in the news,” he said. “If you read all that stuff, you know, you’ll go nuts.” Yes, because it’s true. And to hint otherwise is to bolster Trump’s dangerous demonization of the media and his branding of reporters as the

“enemy of the people.”

Mattis knows better. According to Bob Woodward’s book “Fear,” he sees Trump clearly because he has seen Trump in private situations where his ignorance and recklessness were bare. Mattis had to explain to Trump that the U.S. military presence in South Korea was a deterrent to North Korea. He had to ignore Trump’s suggestion that American officials set in motion the assassination of Syria’s president, Bashar Assad. He compared Trump’s comprehension and acuity to those of “a fifth- or sixth-grader.”

And then he felt Trump’s lash, which confirmed for him what a petty creature the president is. On “60 Minutes” last month, Lesley Stahl asked Trump about Mattis’ future in the administration, and Trump answered dismissively. “I think he’s sort of a Democrat, if you want to know the truth,” he said, as if that designation discredited any opinion — especially of him — that Mattis held. “He may leave. I mean, at some point, everybody leaves.” Que sera sera. He’s only the defense secretary. Only the most seasoned, qualified member of a Cabinet whose average talent level is raised exponentially by his presence.

Mattis, who subsequently told reporters

that he doesn’t belong to either political party, has stuck with Trump for what seem to be the best reasons. More than his predecessors, the president needs competent, even-keeled people around him, and there’s no surfeit of A-list takers for even the administration’s highest-ranking jobs. The working environment leaves something to be desired. So does the boss.

But there’s a fine line between taming the president and enabling him — between tempering the way he governs and implicitly validating it. To stand beside him is to signal assent. To gloss over his motives is to launder them. And that’s what Mattis did during his visit to the troops, who no doubt yearned to hear that their presence made sense but could be told that only if Mattis lied for the president and to all of us.

Or fibbed, at least. Misdirected. Blabbered. He suggested to the troops that they were really there at the behest of Kirstjen Nielsen, the secretary of homeland security, to support the Border Patrol. “What does that mean?” he said. “It means that her people do all the work, but we’re standing behind them as a confidence builder, and that sort of thing.”

A confidence builder? That sort of thing? He couldn’t hide the dubiousness of their charge even as he tried to sell it. “A moral and ethical mission” was how he described it to the journalists who accompanied him. If that were so, Pancho Villa wouldn’t have had to ride in.

Mattis didn’t lurch anywhere near as far into fiction as others in the administration routinely do. But the spectacle was somehow sadder for its subtlety, which underscored the bind that even the most cautious and conscientious administration official is in, the impossibility of finding some honorable balance of principle and obeisance, prudence and deference.

It’s not true, as Republican strategist Rick Wilson wrote, that everything Trump touches dies. But everything wilts, at least if it’s in his employ long enough. That’s why Nikki Haley announced that she’d leave her post as ambassador to the United Nations around the two-year mark. Miraculously, she has managed to fill a big hole in her résumé without putting a big dent in her reputation, and she knows that the longer she stays, the more she tempts fate.

Mattis just proved her right.

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Frank Bruni, an Op-Ed columnist for The New York Times since June 2011, joined the newspaper in 1995 and has ranged broadly across its pages. He has been both a White House correspondent and the chief restaurant critic.

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