

# O EAST OREGONIAN PINION

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## OUR VIEW

# Tip of the hat, kick in the pants

**A** kick in the pants to federal and state authorities in the aftermath of the water crisis on the Warm Springs Indian Reservation in Central Oregon.

The reservation may be a sovereign nation but the water crisis there — which began in May — should be a subject that makes everyone stop and take notice.

The area has been without safe drinking water for a long time after a pipe burst and created a series of failures with an aging system, leaving nearly 4,000 people to make due. The list of problems related to the issue is long. Firefighters can't count on hydrants to work and sprinkler systems, cooling systems, air-conditioning systems, restrooms, toilets are all affected by lack of water.

The Oregon Legislature recently earmarked money to help alleviate the problem but federal authorities have

been slow to react to the crisis.

The Environmental Protection Agency has threatened to fine the tribe nearly \$60,000 a day if it doesn't get safe water pouring through faucets by October.

Whether the issue revolves around a sovereign nation or a local township, the fact that nearly 4,000 people have to rely on donations for water is a sad commentary on where we are as a nation.

Federal and state authorities need to work together to help the tribe solve this problem. Enough is enough. Surely, we can do better.

**A tip of the hat to all the volunteers and fair employees** that have worked to make the Umatilla County Fair the go-to place for fun this year. The fair has delivered on an unspoken promise to put a cap on the summer season with entertainment, fun and good food.

**A tip of the hat to the fire crews**



OPB Photo/Emily Cureton

**The Warm Springs Indian Reservation in Central Oregon has been without safe drinking water all summer. Some people don't have running water at all. In May, a burst pipe led to a cascade of infrastructure failures. That leaves around 4,000 people improvising for an essential human need. Mobile sinks and showers have been set up on the reservation.**

that worked to contain dozens of fires within the HK Complex south of Monument in the Heppner Ranger District. The fires consumed 2,455 acres before containment and the fire crews that battled the blaze should be commended for ensuring the fires did not scorch any more terrain.

**A tip of the hat to the crew from the Oregon Youth Conserva-**

**tion Corps's summer program** that recently finished a project to create a database of Pendleton's trees. The effort will help the Pendleton Parks and Recreation and Tree Commissions evaluate the health of our little urban forest. The four local teenagers involved in the program and their leader — Adam Charlton — made a difference for their community.



## YOUR VIEWS

### Letter title misstated writer's meaning

I'd like to apologize to Donna Biggerstaff if she got the impression that I insinuated that the public comments were intentionally omitted from the July 2 city council meeting. The *East Oregonian* changed the title of my letter, adding the "or something else," making it sound like omission could have been intentional in her part.

Rick Rohde  
Pendleton

### Recall efforts a waste of time, resources

The current recall against Gov. Kate Brown is a clear misuse of the recall process. The recall should only be used when there is clear evidence of serious wrongdoing, such as using your public posi-

tion for personal gain, using public funds for purposes other than their intended use, engaging in criminal conduct while in office, or other serious transgressions. However, policy disagreements and disputes do not justify a recall, nor does the current rationale of many of the recall supporters that the will of the people is "not being heard."

In our last statewide general election, "the will of the people" was to elect Kate Brown to be our governor for the term. Those that wish to see Kate Brown leave office need to get better organized and use their persuasion skills to convince Oregon voters to vote her out of office at the next statewide election. A recall will obviously redirect our current elected state officials' time and energy, and resources, from focusing on current statewide issues and concerns.

Bob Shippentower  
Pendleton

## CONTACT YOUR REPRESENTATIVES

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## OTHER VIEWS

# Michael the Basque

**C**owboy Kevin and I were rolling sheep wire off a cliff and into Mazzoni's draw on the morning of the Fourth of July. The other option was to be around the main ranch house helping the boss and her perpetual guests prepare for the gala party that was to be thrown that afternoon.

Kevin was a buckaroo, good with horse flesh, wore his pants tucked into his boots, and didn't take kindly to stirring marinade or folding paper napkins. I'd seen a couple of holidays come and go on the ranch. Risking a hernia was better than listening to 10 performance artists trying to invent the ultimate wine cooler.

Kevin's boon companion was a 3-year-old raven named Bro that he'd incubated and hatched somewhere in the Musselshell country of central Montana. Bro was a full-fledged bird and could fly as well as a wild one, but seldom needed to take wing, preferring instead to ride on Kevin's right shoulder. Kevin's shirt pockets were always full of sunflower seeds and Bro helped himself. They both dipped Copenhagen. Kevin changed shirts often.

By mid-afternoon we had tired of watching rolls of wire bouncing down through the boulder patch, and were sitting in the shade discussing the fact that we hadn't died young after all, when the big triangle dinner bell on the ranch house porch called us to make an appearance at the party. We hopped in the work truck and granny-gear down off the precipice.

In keeping with the bosswoman's theme of the week, the guest of honor at this party was Michael the Basque, a 75-year-old retired sheepherder who was a living library of sheep information. ("No be 'fraid sheep. We be lucky. Sheep no can bite.") I had partied with Michael the Basque before, and warned Kevin to go light on Michael's "sheepy punch," which did bite, being composed of equal parts of Wild Turkey, vodka and lime Koolaid.

Michael was a good, honest, generous person, but, like all of us, he packed around a couple of minor personality flaws. One was in his choice of dogs. He kept Chihuahuas, bred the critters, and was always accompanied by an entourage of six or eight of the yappy, asthmatic, hairless little speed bumps.

His other quirk might have evolved from his having been born on the French side of the Pyrenees. When he was half-full of sheepy punch and there was a human female within 40 acres, Michael the Basque

transformed into Michael the Rather Crude.

At this particular gathering there were three gallons of sheepy punch, five types of guacamole, hillocks of mutton kabob, a spud salad, pasta in several permutations, and rice-o-rama, all garnished with a first-rate assortment of human females.

Michael fired up his act. I had seen it before. The first installment involved going behind his truck and rearranging his clothing so that a stick and a glove took the place of his left arm and hand. He began with a whirling dance, singing the French national anthem and accompanying himself on air fiddle. At the apex of emotion in the song, when the French nation was surviving all turmoil, Michael stopped whirling, stood in front of the women in his audience, and out of his green gabardine pants fly came his left index finger, which then conducted the rest of the song.

Ah, that wacky sheepherder humor. Kevin and Bro turned their backs to the stage.

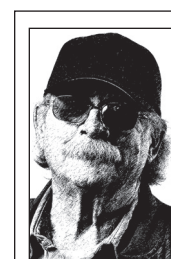
The second act involved a pantomimed sheep castration wherein Michael, with the assistance of his dogs, jumped a phantom lamb, flipped it over, cut the scrotum with an imaginary knife, then stretched out the testicles, bit the chord in two with his Medicare teeth, and came up smiling, with his tongue pushing a big lump in his cheek.

At this performance, though, things backfired a little on Michael. Just as he stood up with the pretend sheep oyster in his mouth, wide-eyed and checking for hardening nipples in his audience, Bro crapped down the back of Kevin's shirt. This hit a hidden nerve in Michael the Basque's stomach. He gagged hard and sprayed second-hand sheepy punch all over the food table. The domino effect set in, and half the guests began to wretch. Bro took advantage of the confusion to attack the Chihuahuas.

That pretty much ended the party. By the time the boss lady had sorted out the mess, Michael the Basque was passed out in the front yard, his dogs were locked in the chicken coop, the guests were in their cars headed out of the ranch, and Kevin had packed his gear bag, drawn his wages, and split for Montana.

Last I heard, he and Bro were working an auction yard somewhere near Helena. I finished the cross fence by myself.

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



J.D. SMITH  
COMMENT