

# O EAST OREGONIAN PINION

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SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 27, 2021

Founded October 16, 1875

A4

## OUR VIEW

# Tip of the hat, kick in the pants

**A tip of the hat to those recognized at the Hermiston Chamber of Commerce's Distinguished Citizens Awards.**

In any community, there are people who do a disproportionately large amount of the work. Some have an extensive list of committees and volunteer leadership positions to their name, others haven't held as many official titles but work tirelessly behind the scenes to take care of the details and people that would otherwise slip through the cracks. All are making a crucial difference to those around them, and it is nice to see a few given their deserved moment in the spotlight each year.

Man of the Year Ken Huber, Woman of the Year Cindy Middleton, Business of the Year M&M Potato and Merit Award winner Doug Alvarez deserve a round of applause for their contributions to Hermiston, each as unique as the winners themselves.

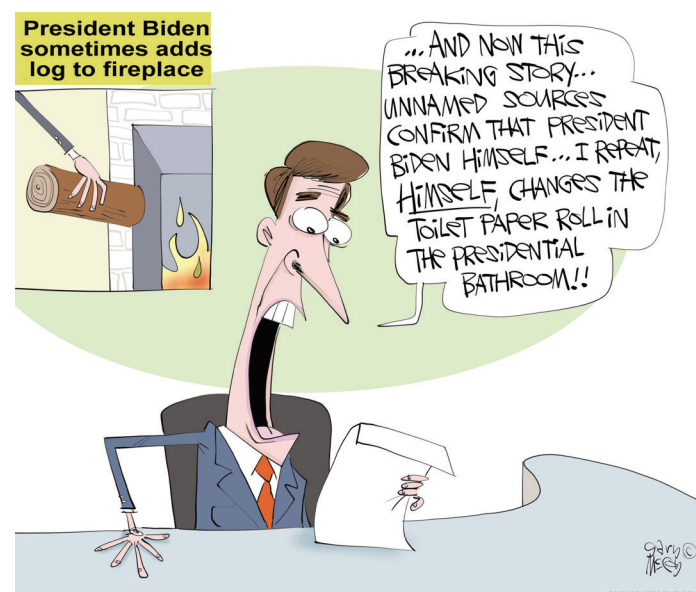
**We also tip our hat to Hermiston School Year's educators of the year**, who were recognized via video at this year's banquet. It has been a difficult year for teachers and other school staff, but the praise heaped on the 10 educators recognized by their colleagues shows many are still going out of their way to connect with students.

**A tip of the hat to the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation, the National Guard, and all who were involved in this past week's COVID-19 mass vaccination clinic.** The clinic added hundreds of area residents to the rolls of those vaccinated, helping protect all of us.

**A tip of the hat to all Umatilla County residents** who did their part to help the county qualify for a move from extreme risk to high risk for COVID-19, allowing restaurants, gyms and other businesses to start the reopening process. Lower COVID-19 rates have also helped schools reopen.

Bringing COVID-19 numbers down so significantly in what has been Oregon's hotspot for most of the pandemic has not been easy, and we're grateful for those who have made a concerted, good faith effort to follow scientists' guidance to get the county where it is now. We're also grateful to the Oregon Health Authority for recognizing that a state error in not reporting a set of old test results until last week should not count against Umatilla County's reopening efforts.

Let's not let students and businesses down by hosting risky gatherings or letting other safety measures slide that would jeopardize these reopenings.



## YOUR VIEWS

### The city should work for all of us

Why doesn't the city of Pendleton clear all of our sidewalks of snow? Not once in 15 years has the city of Pendleton shown "us" residents that they work for "us."

We have had more than two big snowstorms. My husband is 84 and I am 77 years old. I'm sure there are many more of "us" around these ages.

Clearing the sidewalks would be great for the "all of us" and we could see where our property tax goes.

Joyce McKee  
Pendleton

### Life on Mars still a questionable theory

We are back on Mars with NASA's newest rover, Perseverance. This mission is tasked with answering the age-old question of whether Mars has ever harbored life. We should remember that all the previous robotic visitors since the 1970s have had this same objective.

The theory of abiogenesis or chemical evolution, that biologic systems evolved from nonbiologic chemicals, is strongly embraced by most of the theorists and designers of the Martian rovers. Their mission, in part, is to validate the theory of evolution. Beyond accessing the geologic history of Mars, the rovers, using onboard spectrometers, search for the molecular vestiges of past life on Mars. In doing this, they look for chemical signatures that can be made only by biological processes.

For example, what is true on Earth is true on Mars. On Earth the average natural abundance of carbon 12 to carbon 13 is 90 to 1. But if you were to analyze the residue from something that was once alive, the ratio would be 92 to 1, a definite biosignature. Think about this: Had there been even microbial life on Mars in its past, molecular evidence,

like the carbon biosignatures it left behind, would be discoverable in the airborne dust found everywhere.

Their absence should be more than enough to lead secular scientists to conclude that chemical evolution of life is an invalid hypothesis for Mars, and that the "message from Mars" should lead to the same conclusions for Earth.

Pastor Kent Knight (retired)  
Hermiston Seventh-day Adventist Church

### Both sides are necessary for democracy to thrive

It is disappointing when our side loses. Because of this, we tend to believe it when people say we've been cheated. This is called confirmation bias, and politicians on both sides of the aisle are very aware of it. Recent letters to the editor have reflected the effect. Whether you are a Republican or a Democrat, you should not allow yourself to be manipulated by politicians.

It is an objective fact that there was no widespread fraud in the presidential election. The "what about" queries that have been raised by well-meaning contributors on these pages have all been thoroughly debunked by officials from the right as well as the left. There would be no controversy if self-serving politicians had not saturated the media with false allegations and stirred up divisions.

As Americans, we owe a huge debt of gratitude to those who are inclined to conservatism. Without that inclination we would be less powerful economically and less connected to our roots. We also are indebted to progressives; they have helped instill values of fairness, adaptation, and equity.

If we begin to speak to each other and compromise again, America's greatest days are before her. If we keep demonizing, sadly, our "Grand experiment" will fade. As John Adams said, "Remember, democracy never

lasts long. It soon wastes, exhausts, and murders itself. There never was a democracy yet that did not commit suicide."

Please notice that Adams says "yet."  
Joseph Brusberg  
Hermiston

### School taxes still necessary for online education

I was disturbed by a recent letter to the editor suggesting we should be refunded our tax dollars designated for education. I do not currently have school-aged children, but am providing "Nana School" (online school) in my home for as many as five grandchildren while their parents work.

First, let me say that I agree this is not ideal — it is difficult, awkward and sometimes downright frustrating. Obviously, for most children/young adults, in-person learning is best. But suggesting we are being cheated out of our education tax dollars is shortsighted.

Are we asking teachers to teach for no pay? Or suggesting we just not provide any kind of learning at all this year? Asking custodial staff to stay home and not maintain the buildings/campuses in which we have invested millions of dollars? The nicest word I can think of to describe such action is silly.

I have listened in on my little's online learning sessions, and must say I am impressed. Can you imagine trying to hold the attention of as many as 30 school-age youngsters via video? Let alone trying to maintain any kind of discipline when kids are in homes with siblings, parents, pets or televisions? I say, "good job, and thank you" to these teachers and staff who are having to work in a whole new way.

Let's be a little more supportive and appreciative and a little less critical, shall we?

Ginger Linkel  
Hermiston

#### EDITORIALS

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.

#### LETTERS

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