

O EAST OREGONIAN PINION

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OUR VIEW

Tip of the hat, kick in the pants



A tip of the hat to Wil Phinney, who is retired after a long career in journalism in the area.

Phinney has had a long and storied career, from editing the *Heppner Gazette-Times* to breaking news on the Wasco County commune of Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh in *The Dalles Weekly Reminder* to decades leading the *Confederated Umatilla Journal*. He also did stints at both the *East Oregonian* and *Hermiston Herald*.

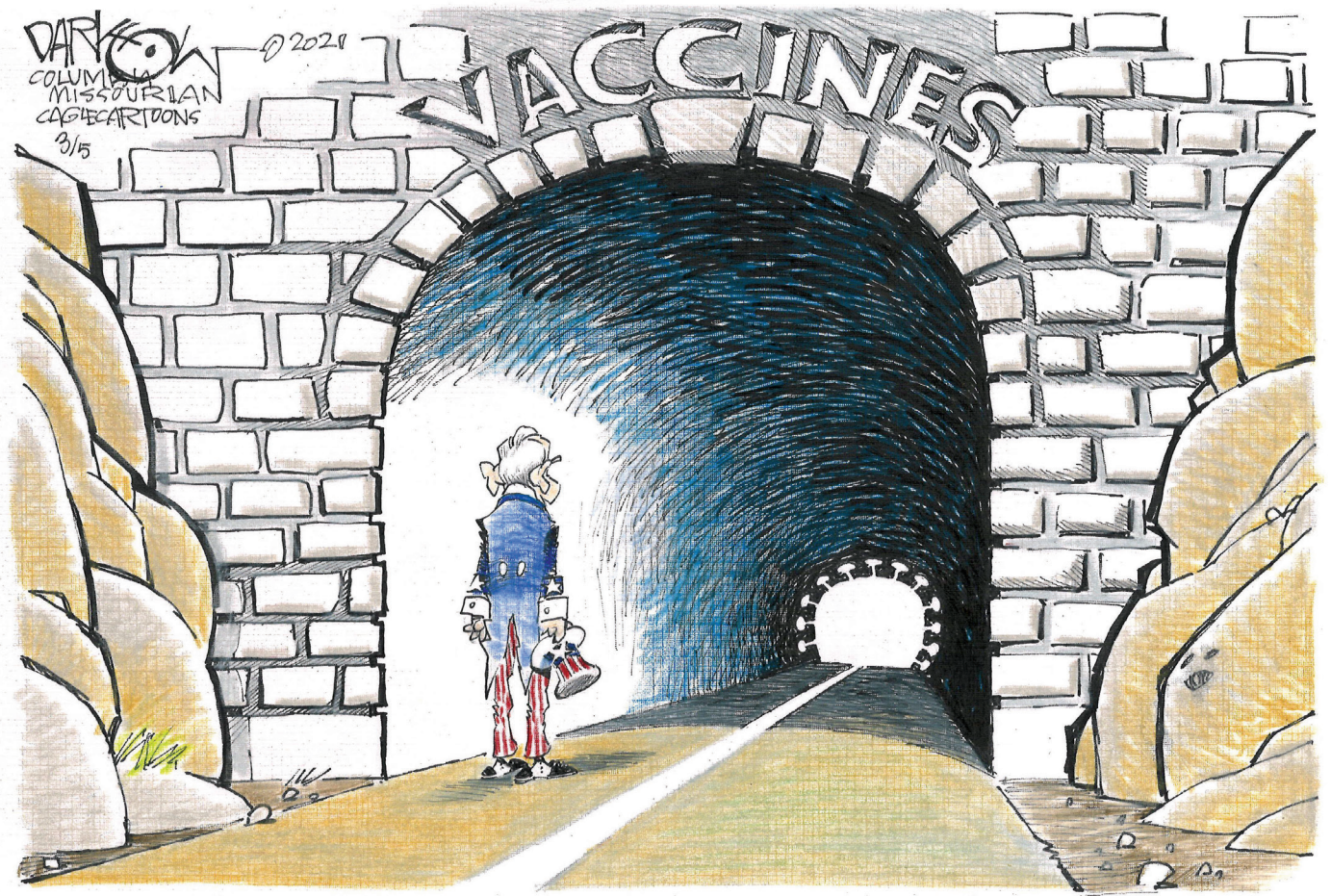
Many people have benefitted from his thoughtful, ethical reporting that has gained the trust of countless sources and readers over the years, and his presence in the pages of local publications will be missed.

A tip of the hat to Hermiston Parks and Recreation's recreation supervisor Brandon Artz, who was recognized by the city of Hermiston this week for taking action during a shooting incident that took place near city hall in Hermiston on Feb. 10. According to the city, Artz stopped to ask a man in distress if he needed help and ended up calling 911 and keeping the alleged shooter away from a dropped firearm until police could arrive and secure the scene. A dog that was injured protecting its owner on the scene, and the dog's owner also deserve a tip of the hat for their actions that helped prevent a worse outcome.

A kick in the pants to the mess that has been caused by the U.S. Census Bureau's announcement that the census information needed for states to redraw district boundaries for state legislatures and Congress will not be coming until September.

In Oregon, the state Legislature is going ahead with public hearings on the matter despite having no data or proposed maps to show voters. In fact, legislators don't even know yet who will drawing the lines, because Oregon's constitution gives legislators until the end of July 1 to redistrict before the job is kicked to the secretary of state, who has until Aug. 15 to submit maps. The census bureau's timeline makes meeting either deadline impossible. Other states face similar constitutional quandaries.

The makeup of legislative and congressional districts are key to shaping politics for the next decade. Perhaps the pandemic really has made releasing the needed population data before September impossible, but if there is any way to speed up the process while maintaining the same accuracy, the Biden administration needs to make sure that happens.



YOUR VIEWS

Letter: Recognize the truth about COVID

There is a question I would ask, if given the chance to confront the myriad people who demand the rollback of COVID restrictions, demand the "right" to go maskless, demand a return to in-person instruction, demand that they be allowed to gather in large groups in churches, etc.

The question is, "How many people must die to satisfy your demands?" Is it the case that these people, at some level, just don't understand what a pandemic is? More than 500,000 people have died in the U.S., but they just don't get it?

Right-wing politicians don't get it. They have always pushed purported rights over lives, but the "rights" they're pushing in this regard seem very much like privileges.

Even the Supreme Court (or at least the conservative wing) don't get it. Religious rights require that more people die, just so religious people can gather together indoors and breath on one another? Really? So, when those people go home and infect their friends and neighbors, and people die, we're supposed to say, "Oh well, it was their right"?

The news media don't seem to get it. They treat all these issues in much the same way they treat purely political issues. He said this, and she said that. But no analysis. Thousands of pages of coverage, but no one has the guts to mention the obvious truths of the matter? Just once I'd like to read, "Of

course, this move would result in more COVID-19 deaths."

David Shoulders
Bend

Natural disasters should be planned for, not forgotten

Lessons learned! Sound familiar? It's commonly followed by "never again" in the aftermath of one of Mother Nature's temper tantrums. Once the initial shock subsides and recovery commences, the conversation turns to cause and prevention. Committees are formed, studies are undertaken, and a final report is completed with suggestions on how to prevent the recurrence of another "once-in-a-lifetime" disaster.

As time passes and memories fade, for whatever reason, be it cost or the feeling that it won't happen again in this lifetime, the study ends up on some shelf gathering dust like so many others. That's kind of what happened recently in both Texas and the Portland Metro area with those massive power outages.

Whether it be a natural phenomenon or the result human activity, changing weather patterns look to be a reality. In Texas, utility management felt the costs to winterize power generating equipment wasn't warranted because the previous severe cold snap was a "once-in-a-lifetime" occurrence. In the Portland Metro area, trees were the main culprit. Utilities ignored warnings that disaster lurked if overgrown trees around

power lines weren't trimmed or removed.

Has our city management learned anything from past missteps? They certainly haven't learned a thing about how trees damage concrete and power lines, planting new trees under the power lines and in the new sidewalks on Southeast Eighth Street.

Building on a floodplain was once acceptable to early settlers, feeling that a flood during spring runoff was just a part of life. As our city grew, residents became weary of the annual flooding, and the levee was constructed to bring that to an end — not, as some believe, to provide a public walkway. Much later, construction was approved along the banks of the McKay Creek floodplain, setting residents up for a "once-in-a-lifetime" flood, with Mother Nature obliging, several times over.

Lessons learned? Ignoring Army Corps of Engineers standards for levee maintenance proved costly. The city and county have addressed that issue, for now. Undertaking a project by the city to remap the floodplain provides little comfort for those rebuilding in Riverside on that same floodplain. McKay? A change in the function of McKay Dam from irrigation to flood control would be helpful, since the Columbia River has become the major source for irrigation. As it now stands, those "once-in-a-lifetime" disasters have already morphed into at least "thrice in a lifetime," with no long-term solution in sight.

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