

# Grateful for Peace Corps opportunities



ANDREW CLARK

A SLICE OF LIFE

The U.S. Peace Corps celebrated its 60th birthday on March 1. Happy birthday to a beloved organization that has done wonderful things all around the world. Since inception, the Peace Corps has fielded more than 240,000 volunteers for service in 141 nations doing all sorts of work and making significant improvements for many lives in the developing world.

I joined in 1964 and I clearly remember opening that envelope and the thrill of reading “You are assigned to Tanganyika.” I received my doctor of veterinary medicine degree on a Saturday in June and left for the Peace Corps on Sunday.

At that time, early in Peace Corps history, what did it take to be a Peace Corps volunteer — a PCV? The organization was quite new. Technically, you must have a serious work qualification of some sort — but what about who you are? What are your motivations? Why do you want to be a PCV? I think of several important factors.

First, a dedication to the idea that somewhere, somehow, something for somebody could be done to help them with their livelihood. Altruism was the word of the day.

But there had to be other elements too. An adventurous spirit for one, because if you were going to invest two years of your life in an idea you had to jump in feet first. And also, you had to be a basic risk taker as an attitude in life.

So, if you were a dedicated, adventurous, risk taker, how do you find a mate? Most of us were relatively young and single

was the decade of freedom for many African nations and lots of the colonial era government servants had cleared off. They would not work under a Black government, so there were massive holes in the civil service. We in Tanganyika 5 filled some of those holes.

My first job was in a senior government position because there were no Tangan-

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and we were all university graduates, but in a huge university (Michigan State where I went had 42,000 students) how do you sort through the myriad people to find someone with similar approach to life? Well, the Peace Corps did the sorting for us. A concentrated population of dedicated risk takers of both genders already selected. How can it get better than that? And there are thousands and thousands of Peace Corps marriages as a result.

I’m one of the so-called “Kennedy Kids” whose life was completely changed by the Peace Corps experience. The 1960s

yikan veterinarians at all. One of the basics of Peace Corps was that we would be paid approximately what a local Tanganyikan in the same job would be paid. So the salary on my first job as a qualified veterinary professional was \$120 a month. And in the economics of that time it was sufficient.

As soon as the Peace Corps was finished, I was immediately hired to stay on and was there for nine years. My most favorite posting was as a veterinary officer of Masailand. There were about 1 million cattle and 1 million sheep and goats and tens of thousands of donkeys — and I was

their vet. There was a good cadre of Tanzanian field staff, but no other qualified vets.

The concept of veterinary work there is quite different in that you treat populations of livestock rather than individuals. As an example, each year we vaccinated about 850,000 cattle against rinderpest, the worst cattle disease ever known, and many more than that through dipping vats for tick-borne diseases. These experiences led to another career here in Oregon ending up as a state veterinarian, which is essentially the same for livestock as public health is for humans, and then, after retirement, back to Africa and still working there today after 57 years.

Peace Corps completely changed my professional career. I am immensely grateful for the opportunities and work situations that have followed. But, back to mates. I was in Tanganyika 5 and in the Tanganyika 6 Peace Corps group, a bunch of teachers, there was one magnificent young woman whose name was Barbara Bainbridge, so her initials were “BB.”

In Swahili, my work language, the word “bibi” (pronounced bee-bee) means “sweetheart.” Is that serendipitous? A portent for the future? Or fate? Or divine intervention? Or all four put together? But that’s another story for another day.

*Dr. Andrew Clark is a livestock veterinarian with both domestic and international work experience who lives in Pendleton.*

## Oregon should not allow mink farms



SCOTT BECKSTEAD

OTHER VIEWS

Animal Wellness Action is supporting Senate Bill 832, a bill sponsored by state Sen. Floyd Prozanski that aims to close down the small number of industrial mink farms in Oregon and help the farmers transition to other commodities or lines of work. The legislation will be heard by the Senate Committee on Natural Resources and Wildfire Recovery on April 5.

It’s true that animal welfare advocates have long sought to end commerce in fur. As the grandson of an Idaho mink farmer, who spent much of my childhood and youth on mink farms, I can attest to the inhumane conditions on those operations and the undeniable misery endured by the animals.

But the legislative and regulatory efforts to regulate mink in Oregon have more to do

with protecting human health than ending inhumane mink farms. Mink are uniquely susceptible to the coronavirus, which they easily catch from infected farm workers. In Denmark, the world’s leading producer of mink pelts, scientists discovered the virus uses the mink to mutate into a pathogen that is transmissible back to people, and in a form that could be resistant to vaccines.

That’s why Denmark culled all 17 million of the mink raised on over 1,100 mink farms and provided farmers with a generous relief package. Other European nations, responding to outbreaks of their own, have similarly moved to shutter their mink farms.

While other countries have moved swiftly to eliminate the threat posed by mink farms, authorities in the U.S. and the states where outbreaks have occurred, including Oregon, have largely shrugged off the threat and taken a “wait and see” approach. Their ho-hum attitude was matched by an alarming lack of transparency; after the coronavirus outbreak on an Oregon mink farm, state agencies refused to disclose to the public

many important details, including the location of the farm where the outbreak occurred. In Oregon, as in other mink-producing states, agencies appear more concerned about protecting the viability of their mink industries than in informing and protecting the public at large.

The Oregon outbreak was anomalous in a couple respects. First, while mink in other countries and states quickly succumbed to COVID-19, the Oregon mink got sick, but then recovered. Officials also noted that captive mink that escaped from the farm and were later trapped, tested positive for the virus. Farmed mink that escape (a frequent occurrence on factory mink farms) pose a major threat to our native wildlife, including wild mink and other mustelid species, such as fishers, martens, and badgers. Should those creatures catch the virus, they could potentially transmit the disease to a trapper or other human who comes in contact with them.

It would be one thing if mink were being raised to supply a much-needed product for

consumers in the U.S. But they’re not. Americans have largely sworn off fur as a luxury fashion item, so the pelts being raised on Oregon mink farms are destined for China, where a small segment of the population still wears fur. Why should Oregonians be expected to tolerate a grave public health threat for the sake of a product destined for the very country where COVID-19 started?

The global pandemics that have resulted in millions of human deaths started as a direct result of our unhealthy relationship with wildlife, especially wildlife raised on factory farms. Scientists are warning that if we don’t move to eliminate this threat, COVID-19 might look like a comparatively benign precursor to a far deadlier pandemic. Thankfully, some Oregon lawmakers are heeding that warning and moving decisively to mitigate the threat for the people of our state.

*Scott Beckstead is director of campaigns for Animal Wellness Action. There is more information about the group at animalwellnessaction.org.*

## Oregon Republicans must stop saving Democrats from themselves



EVAN BRYAN

OTHER VIEWS

Oregon Senate Republicans have engaged in four legislative walkouts in less than two years. Democrats and Republicans alike have used quorum denial as a negotiating chip when all else has failed, but this nuclear option should not be used frivolously.

The first Republican walkout in 2019 occurred over a reprisal of the gross receipts tax, deceptively dubbed by Democrats as “The Student Success Act.” The proposal completely disregarded the will of Oregonians, who killed a similar ballot measure in 2016 by over 350,000 votes. When Republicans said the bill should be decided by Oregonians instead of politicians, Democrats said “no.” The first walkout of 2019 ensued.

The bill easily passed the Oregon House, but in the Senate, Democrats could not afford to lose any support — needing all 18 of their members to vote “yes.” In some cases, common-sense Democrats were threatened with expulsion from committee assignments and other political “punishments.” To get Republicans back, Democrats agreed to kill their own gun safety measures and a vaccine mandate. Democrats then passed the tax hike and denied Oregonians a say.

Republicans had a small “win” by Democrats dropping some of their agenda, at the cost of a tax hike. Senate Democrats did not have the votes to pass the vaccine mandate, as it was very controversial in many of their districts. The gun legislation, including banning pepper spray in public buildings, would have also been massively unpopular and likely challenged in the courts or forced to the ballot. Had these passed, it would have encouraged Republican turnout in the coming election. In talking with a former Republican leader, who served in the majority, they remarked, “Republicans just saved the Democrats from themselves.”

Following the gross receipts tax debacle, Democrats were intent on pushing through a phony climate proposal, known

as cap and trade. Many who have worked at the Oregon Capitol for years had never seen such opposition to attempts to refer an impactful policy change to voters. A little less than a decade before, Democrats, with some Republican support, referred tax measures (66 and 67) to the ballot.

At the time, it was unclear if Democrats would fall short of the 16 votes needed for passage, so Republicans walked. That walkout generated international media attention and gave rise to historic grassroots engagement at the Capitol. After several days of a standoff, the Senate president announced that cap and trade didn’t have the votes to pass and the session concluded over a marathon weekend at the Capitol. Democrats and the governor then blamed Republicans for the failure of their own cap-and-trade climate proposal — they didn’t actually have the votes within their own party to pass it.

Cap and trade then returned in the 2020 Session. Republicans requested to schedule the proposal toward the end of the session to consider immediately pressing legislation. Democrats refused and would not compromise. Senate Republicans, joined by House Republicans, walked and the 2020 session never resumed.

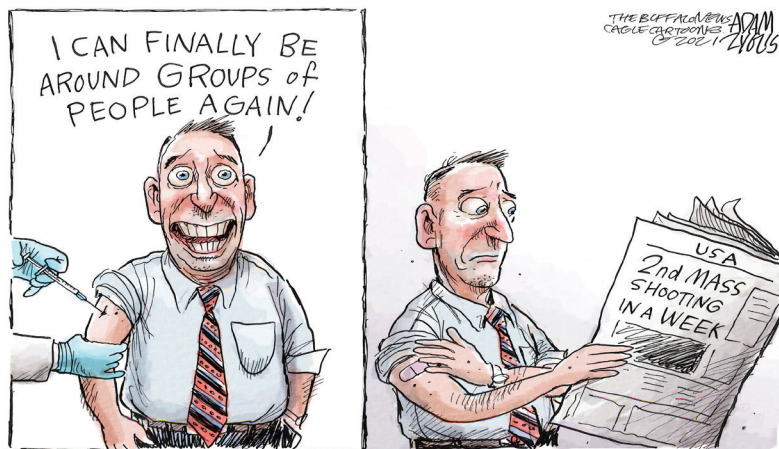
Denying quorum can be a useful, short-term tactic for a minority party, but it is not a strategy and the long-term consequences are dire. It is blunderous.

I am alarmed the politics behind the walkouts are still occurring during a pandemic. It must end.

As Oregonians, it’s time to elect new leaders who don’t consider compromise a dirty word. Having the longest serving Senate president and House speaker in state history might sound impressive, but the current reality says otherwise.

Democrats run the show in Salem. It’s time for Republicans in Oregon to make a strong case to Oregonians with solutions to improve lives and livelihoods. They need to stop giving Democrats cover. It’s time for the party in charge to be held accountable.

*Evan Bryan served as a Legislative Director at the Oregon State Senate. He holds a master’s in Legislative Affairs from George Washington University.*



## Key changes shape sports coverage



ANDREW CUTLER

FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK

As an editor, nothing strikes so hard and so quick as the notion you must make changes to the existing product in order to meet economic realities.

I sometimes wish being an editor was like it was back in the day when the man in charge of the newsroom wore his Fedora and sat with his sleeves rolled up and dealt strictly with the “news.”

That paradigm, if it ever existed, is long gone from this business. Editors must wear a number of different hats in today’s shifting economic landscape. Yet, this job, as editor, as a journalist at a small town paper, is truly rewarding. If you are good at what you do, you get to make a real difference in the community nearly every day.

And that fact overshadows almost all of the negatives that are attached to this particular vocation.

In past columns, I’ve talked about the impact COVID-19 has had on the *East Oregonian* and our parent company, EO Media Group. It forced our hand on a few fronts and accelerated some timelines into decisions that — at the time — seemed unthinkable.

So what does all this mean, Andrew, you may ask.

Well, for one, it has meant the way the *East Oregonian* is covering the return of sports is starkly different than it was prepandemic.

Prior to COVID-19, Annie Fowler and Brett Kane worked as hard as any other sports department in the state, covering games all

across Umatilla County and finding those interesting athletes with unique stories to tell. Once the virus brought sports in Oregon to a screeching halt, Fowler and Kane, along with a number of other employees all across EO Media Group, were casualties of some tough financial decisions. Both were laid off.

As we navigated through a COVID-19 world, Fowler provided stories as a freelancer to make sure the *East Oregonian* had a sports presence every Saturday. Now that sports is tiptoeing back into existence, Fowler is back on a part-time basis.

Having Fowler back on staff is good news. However, the way we report on local sports isn’t going to look like the way we reported on sports before COVID, and before the *East Oregonian* began publishing in print three days a week.

Our digital news coverage is 24-7, reported as it happens. Game updates will be reported in real time, giving you your local sports results in the most timely manner. Print reporting will recap scores, but focus more on features and upcoming matches than on game coverage. Our sports pages will be devoted to telling unique stories on the athletes or teams in the area and preview some of the bigger games.

These changes to our sports coverage matrix will take a little getting used to for all of us, but offers the best of what the *East Oregonian* offers — timely coverage and unique local stories in print and online. If you’re a subscriber and haven’t yet taken advantage of activating the digital features included in your print subscription price, call our customer service center at 800-781-3214 and activate your digital access.

*Andrew Cutler is the publisher/editor of the East Oregonian.*