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OUR VIEW

Board races offer good choices

Interest in running for elected office has been unusually high in Umatilla and Morrow counties this spring, and we are pleased to see voters in Pendleton School District have so many choices for the Pendleton school board.

Position 1

Voters have a choice between two newcomers running for the seat currently held by Steve Umbarger. Beth Harrison is a community volunteer, part-time medical biller, homemaker and mother to seven children. Rodney Thompson is a retired locksmith who worked with the high school's foreign exchange student program for 20 years.

The school board could benefit from the perspective of a deeply involved parent of children at multiple grade levels in Pendleton School District, and we recommend voters choose Harrison.

Position 4

While voters will see three new names on the ballot for the seat currently held by Gary George, Chris Garrigues told the *East Oregonian* he has decided to drop out of the race. That leaves a choice of Preston Eagleheart or Joey GrosJacques. Eagleheart is managing director of Cayuse Government Services and an enrolled member of the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation. GrosJacques is director of TRIOS Student Support Services for Blue Mountain Community College and a former Pilot Rock school board member.

While both bring something to the table, we believe Eagleheart's experience, including directing a technology solutions center during a time when schools need strong online options, would be most beneficial to the district.

Position 7

Board chair Debbie McBee is not running again for Position 7, leaving a choice between Briana Spencer and Patrick Gregg. Spencer is currently a computer support technician, with a history of volunteerism and activism in the community. Gregg is an attorney at Corey, Byler and Rew.

Both are excellent candidates, and it is unfortunate that voters must choose one or the other. In considering which candidate to endorse, however, Spencer recently won a seat on the Nixyaawii Community School Board, and state law does not allow a person to sit on the board of both a charter school and its sponsoring district, meaning Spencer would have to resign from one if she won both. With that in mind, we believe the community would be best served by choosing Gregg for the Pendleton board, while Spencer serves on the Nixyaawii board for at least one term.

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COLUMBIA
MISSOURIAN
CAGLE CARTOONS
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A screwball wedding in north Maasailand



ANDREW CLARK
A SLICE OF LIFE

Last month I discussed experiences in the Peace Corps and the type of people who were involved — adventurous, dedicated risk takers — and how the Peace Corps brought together young men and women who shared those attributes. I also mentioned that a particular young woman had appeared on the scene.

After my Peace Corps stint was finished I was immediately hired back because there were very few Tanganyikan veterinarians and a qualified vet was needed for the Loliondo Division of northern Maasailand. Loliondo was an important posting because it is in the eastern part of the Serengeti ecosystem and there are many interactions between cattle and wildlife with potential spread of diseases.

Loliondo village is 220 miles from town, however, and very isolated in a very wild and remote place, so it takes a peculiar type of person to want to be there. For me it was living paradise. Good work to be done, good people to work with, and every species of African wildlife in great abundance everywhere you went.

Barbara Bainbridge was a Peace Corps teacher and on school vacation time teachers took on assistance projects of various sorts, and the particular project in this case was the World Health Organization eradication of smallpox. Peace Corps teachers were doing a smallpox vaccination campaign in Loliondo Division and using my house as their basecamp, while I was gone on leave.

Barbara had been working out in the bush near the Serengeti National Park boundary, walking between Maasai dwelling sites with a Maasai warrior as guide. He knew the country well,

could smell the buffalo and avoid them (African buffalo are the most dangerous animals of all the wildlife) and it was a good adventure for her. The work was finished and the whole group was at my house when I returned, getting ready to leave in a few days.

When I saw that girl in action it was like being hit in the head with a baseball. But before I could even have a serious conversation she was gone, done with Peace Corps, and traveling overland through Ethiopia, Lebanon and Syria and Iran, Afghanistan, Pakistan and India for nearly six months.

What could I do? Answer, write. So I wrote a long, detailed letter dealing with my thoughts about our potential future. When she arrived home and read that letter it was quite a surprise. Our romance was like something in the 1800s — almost entirely a series of letters except for three glorious weeks when she was able to take Christmas vacation from her teaching job and come to Loliondo.

I had sent her a check for airfare and we agreed to see if there was “chemistry” between us. We camped in a small meadow on top of the Nan’gasaakinoi peak (Maasai for “The Hill of Friendship”). We saw thousands of wildlife, including a herd of 69 giraffe and a herd of more than 200 elephant.

We drove over to Seronera to get petrol and saw 52 species of animals along the way. I shot quail for dinner roasted over a fire and we danced around the fire to music from my battery-driven phonograph playing vinyl records. We took blood samples from goats for a disease survey. And after those adventures and many more, at the airport in Nairobi as she was departing she answered “yes” to my obvious question.

The wedding was planned for July 6, 1968. I had attended only two weddings in my life and knew almost nothing about weddings. The bride was on the other side of the world and could have essentially nothing to do with it. So — I lined up the pastor, and the best man and the best woman. I invited various people

who were friends and most of them came in light airplanes. I invited the entire populace of Loliondo village.

I invited Maasai people from all over the Loliondo Division. And the wedding service was held in front of a large poinsettia bush in the front yard that was in glorious bloom for the event. As for the reception, the best thing you can serve at a gathering in Maasailand is goat meat, so my Maasai veterinary staff roasted seventeen goats, one sheep, and one wildebeest in the front yard. I had 500 beers and 500 sodas that were gone in about 10 minutes. About 300 Maasai attended along with the people of many tribes in the village. It was a wonderful event and so very peculiar that it was in the Nairobi newspapers and on the Voice of America.

At the end of the celebration an old Maasai elder came to me. He said that for many years, beginning in the 1800s, white people had “studied” Maasai culture, and attended Maasai events, and had been at rites of passage ceremonies. This wedding was the first time ever that Maasai people had ever been invited to attend an event of the white people — and he thanked me for the invitation and ability to celebrate with us. And for us — Barbara and me — that was the frosting on the cake.

The next day we went on our honeymoon, down into the Ngorongoro Crater where there is a little cabin in the grove of woods for wildlife researchers. The days were lovely and the nights were full of the African symphony of lions roaring and zebras wailing and jackals barking and hyenas braying and wildebeest grunting and all the other noises of that wild, wild place.

The screwball wedding in north Maasailand lives comfortably with us as a pleasant memory that is now 52 years old.

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

EDITORIALS

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LETTERS

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