


**BETTE
HUSTED**
FROM HERE TO ANYWHERE

Rethinking the Whitman lie

Blaine Harden's book "Murder at the Mission: A Frontier Killing, Its Legacy of Lies, and the Taking of the American West" is dedicated to "The Tribes of the Columbia Plateau," but it tells a story important for every American, especially those of us who live in the Northwest.

A student in the first class I taught at Blue Mountain Community College wrote about the impact of the Whitman Mission story on his own life. On the school bus ride home from the traditional fourth grade field trip to the monument, he got in a fight with a non-Native classmate who taunted him about his Cayuse heritage.

Now the story told to visitors at the Whitman Monument has been modified, but when I hear people complaining that if schools discuss racism some nonminority children might feel "discomfort," I think of my own student and the impact of that field trip on his grade school years.

Harden's book probes the missionary story to its uncomfortable roots. We locals know the story of Marcus and Narcissa Whitman — or think we do — and why some Cayuse men attacked and killed the Whitmans after 197 people who had taken the doctor's medicine died (about half of their tribe at that time) and after it was clear that they were threatened with loss of their own land. We know about the trial in Oregon City, the five warriors who were hung; sacrificed, one of them explained, to save their people.

Some of us are aware of the terrible price the Cayuse had been paying and would continue to pay for the decision of a few, the suffering inflicted by volunteers and soldiers as they hunted down anyone they could find. I'll never forget the poem Althea Huesties Wolf read at First Draft describing a grandmother's memory of children's frozen bodies hanging in brush where they had been tossed.

But Harden's research taught me much about this story that I hadn't known. Apparently there was so much infighting among these Calvinist missionaries — Whitman and Spalding and their supporters — that the board decided to end both missions. Whitman made an arduous solo journey East to persuade the board to reconsider, thus saving his and Spalding's jobs.

However, the story taught in history books for decades was the one Spalding spent his remaining years trying to convince newspapers and eventually Congress to believe: that Whitman had made that journey to save America from the British.

Totally untrue, says Harden — and inspired mostly by Spalding's intense hatred of Catholics, against whom the anti-immigrant feeling of his era was directed. But popular "histories" echoed this Manifest Destiny version of what had happened: Oliver W. Nixon's book "How Whitman Saved Oregon" was subtitled "A True Romance of Patriotic Heroism, Christian Devotion, and Final Martyrdom."

Clearly, it was a history told by the victors, and a story with echoes of today's nativist views and fear of the effects of truth. And definitely a story of might makes right: In 1848 an official statement declared the Cayuse land "forfeited by them, and justly subject to be occupied and held by American citizens."

Harden's book, though, ends on a happier note, stressing not only survival but the resurgence of the contemporary Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation — stemming from rights their leaders preserved in the 1855 treaty and from an address to Congress by President Richard Nixon in the summer of 1970 "to create the conditions for a new era in which the Indian future is determined by Indian acts and Indian decisions."

Harden focuses on the work of tribal leaders whose names we recognize — William and Antone Minthorn, Les Minthorn, Bobbie Conner, Judge Bill Johnson — whose careful land use planning and legal work prepared the way for the recovery of water and fish, for Wildhorse Resort & Casino and a working economy for the Cayuse, Umatilla and Walla Walla people.

What about Whitman College, whose longest serving president saved the school from early bankruptcy by spreading Spalding's patriotic lie? Daring to trust students with the truth, a 2017 exhibit asked them to "think carefully about the appropriateness of any monument to the Whitmans — including the college itself."

Bette Husted is a writer and a student of tai chi and the natural world. She lives in Pendleton.



Improvements to city infrastructure


**DALE
PRIMMER**
OTHER VIEWS

Since 2016, infrastructure, specifically street repairs, have been a major focal point for the mayor and city council of Pendleton. To address these concerns, we began with distributing a survey to the residents of Pendleton. In addition, there were conversations with individuals and several meetings with civic groups to establish and prioritize goals for the council. The result of that effort clearly revealed that streets were the top concern. That led the city budget committee to allocate significantly more money to the street budget to tackle a problem that had grown over multiple decades.

In 2016, the estimated backlog of deferred street maintenance had built up to a sum of more than \$40 million. The city had increased its annual funding for streets to \$1.2 million, but it was determined, even at that level of commitment, that the problem would continue to grow. The estimate to arrest deterioration and to see improvements so streets could reach "good" condition over a 10-year period was \$2.2 million annually. As a result, the city council began a process of surveying and meeting with community members and civic groups, to identify funding sources that the community might support to raise the additional revenue to reach the annual \$2.2 million. The most popular responses were to impose a ticket fee for major events, to increase the hotel tax and to propose a 5 cent gas tax.

In 2019 those efforts began. A political action committee was established to support placing a gas tax on the ballot. Then came COVID-19. The closing of

public gatherings, obvious impacts to local economies and shutdowns, made it clear that these options were no longer on the table. Over the next year our efforts related to increase street funding mostly stalled, waiting for that elusive "return to normal."

In recent months, the Pendleton Development Commission allocated \$10 million in Urban Renewal District funds to address street reconstruction in the district. This infusion of URD dollars released general street funds to be used outside the district. This allowed the city to accelerate street repairs during 2021. The total amount of street repairs nearly tripled any year in our history with nearly \$3.4 million being spent on street maintenance and repairs. Looking forward, those amounts look to be \$5.7 million in 2022, \$4.5 million in 2023 and \$4.5 million in 2024. By the end of 2023, those URD dollars will have been spent and will require the council to return to the conversation related to how much is needed to maintain our street infrastructure, giving the additional spending infused by the URD.

In the past few weeks, the council has been reviewing goals related to infrastructure and has established the goals related to street condition. The decision was made to maintain our streets based on an objective evaluation tool called the "Pavement Condition Index" or PCI. The city has adopted the goal of maintaining its arterial, collector and residential streets in the "good" category. What is not known at this point, is what is the needed revenue to reach and maintain that PCI condition given the contribution of URD funds. In early 2023 the city will receive an updated Pavement Condition Index report based upon an assessment done in 2022. This report will demonstrate the effect of the increased spending and how much improvement has been realized by that additional spending. That data will reveal

what is needed to continue to improve and maintain our street system. At this time, we do not know if any additional revenue will be received from the passage of the Federal Infrastructure bill.

In the near term, the city will move forward without requesting additional local revenues. We still believe there will be need for additional revenues to maintain the street system once the currently allocated dollars have been spent, but that amount is not yet known.

Beyond streets, the city has also updated its goals related to deferred building maintenance. Currently, the city has deferred maintenance on buildings estimated at \$5.2 million. The council has asked our facilities department and our city manager to itemize and prioritize those needs. The city of Pendleton has available \$3.4 million due to the American Rescue Plan Act stimulus funds covering other city needs, this will be allocated to this maintenance backlog. Once those repairs are made, the city council has asked that 2% of each building's value be set aside annually and budgeted for future maintenance. Regarding utilities, we have also asked city staff for a list of planned infrastructure projects slated for completion out of the city's master plan. These projects are related to water, sewer, storm, the airport and the UAS test range.

Major improvements are being made in our local infrastructure. The amount of work we will see in the next three years will far surpass anything our community is accustomed to seeing and this will come with other challenges. What it takes to maintain our infrastructure over the long term is still an issue to tackle, but for the next couple of years, the city will be working at capacity to make the improvements based on current investments.

Dale Primmer is a Pendleton city councilor representing Ward 3.

Pharmacy closures causing troubling ripples


**RON
WYDEN**
OTHER VIEWS

Rural Oregonians have long counted on local pharmacies deeply rooted in their communities for quality service.

But those community mainstays now face a growing threat from an unfair practice by big insurance companies and pharmaceutical benefit managers — PBMs — that's threatening the pharmacies' ability to stay open.

And that threat in turn undermines rural Oregonians' access to prescription drugs, patient education, management of chronic disease, preventative care and life-saving vaccines.

In recent weeks, the fallout from the announcement by Bi-Mart that it's begun closing 37 pharmacies in our state — in part because of that unfair practice — has cast troubling ripples throughout Eastern and Central Oregon.

News reports have detailed how Umatilla County Public Health has raised concerns about diminished capacity to offer COVID-19 vaccination clinics with fewer local pharmacies; Baker County health officials referring to a local "pharmacy health crisis" with longer wait times to get prescriptions filled at remaining pharmacies and a lack of critical infra-

structure for people seeking flu shots and COVID-19 boosters: and longer wait times as well in Central Oregon with Bi-Mart closing its pharmacy services in Sisters. And I heard similar problems firsthand last week from pharmacies in Ashland and Corvallis.

This is not a minor inconvenience in rural Oregon when families and seniors must drive longer distances for prescriptions and other pharmacy services, especially over snow- and ice-covered roads in the upcoming winter months.

Here's what's going on, and what I'm doing as chair of the Senate Finance Committee to get relief for rural Oregonians who deserve reliable and accessible pharmacies in their communities.

Goliaths such as Big Insurance and the PBMs put the squeeze on small pharmacies by charging them something called a DIR fee. That stands for direct and indirect remuneration fees, and PBMs demand that pharmacies pay up, or they'll take their business elsewhere.

To be sure, DIR fees are not likely to come up in conversation around too many dinner tables this Thanksgiving. But they're a big deal because they skyrocketed 91,500% from 2010-19, and doubled from 2018-20. They contributed to the permanent closure of 2,200 pharmacies nationwide between December 2017 and December 2020.

Why do PBMs charge these fees? In short, because they can. This disturbing development should sound loud alarm bells, because PBMs can use mechanisms

like DIR fees deliberately, to starve independent pharmacies of revenue. When these stores close, large chain pharmacies owned by the same plans and PBMs that forced them to pay up, reap the benefits. These fees are unfair and they're anti-free enterprise.

I've asked the Center for Medicare and Medicaid Services to use its existing legal authority to propose and finalize rules that make it impossible for PBMs to use DIR fees to force community pharmacies to close their doors.

In my recent letter to CMS Administrator Chiquita Brooks-Lasare, I noted that Bi-Mart's announcement of the 37 pharmacy closures in Oregon and 19 others in the Northwest cited "increasing costs and ongoing reimbursement pressure."

I wrote, "These fees do nothing to lower the amount Medicare beneficiaries must pay for their drugs each time they fill a prescription and seemingly serve only to pad plan and PBM profits."

Bottom line: The use of DIR fees is unfair and unjustly enriches big insurers and PBMs.

For the benefit of Oregonians in small communities throughout our state, I'm all in to preserve their lifelines to local Oregon pharmacies and knock these "Goliaths" down by a peg or two so that local rural pharmacies can continue to stay open.

Ron Wyden is a Democratic senator from Oregon.