



WIL
PHINNEY

OTHER VIEWS

Passing the time in long lines

On Nov. 17, a pair of Korean War veterans flanked me to the north and south. On Nov. 18, the guy behind me was the third Navy vet, but I'm guessing he served during Vietnam.

We were standing next to the frozen turkeys when conversation started with Kenneth Garrett, leaning on a shiny wooden walking stick, and Keith Stanton, in line for his wife, waiting with at least two dozen others queued up to pick up meds at Pendleton's Safeway pharmacy.

I waited an hour and 40 minutes only to find out my prescription wasn't ready. Fortunately, there was one for my wife, although she didn't know what it could be and once she found out she said it must have been an automatic refill that she no longer needs.

Garrett, wearing a Korea War cap, will turn 90 in December. A 24-year veteran of the Pendleton Fire Department, he's lived in the same house here for 53 years.

Stanton was wearing a Muddawgs Lacrosse hat with a big H on the front. He didn't know until he received the hat that Hermiston High School had a lacrosse team, of which his granddaughter is a member and presumably the person who gave him the hat. With the exception of a couple of years living at Nye Junction, Stanton has lived in Pilot Rock for 83 years. He's a few months younger than my own father.

Those poor folks behind the counter. The demise of Bi-Mart's pharmacy has hit home in Pendleton, where we have been so long spoiled by relatively short lines whether waiting to buy fuel or waiting at a red light. Long gone, I'm afraid, are the days when you could call in a prescription in the morning and pick it up that afternoon.

Stanton's wife, Karen, was shopping while he kept a spot in the meds line. She circled by a couple of times to remark that he hadn't moved much. After her third roll by, she took her purchases to the checkstand, then returned with the bagged groceries for Keith to take to the car. Karen took over in line and Keith stayed in their vehicle. In the ensuing discussion, this time with Karen, we learned that Kenneth and Keith had worked at the same time — in the 1950s — at the lumber mill in Pilot Rock.

Nov. 18 I arrived 15 minutes before Jamie pulled open the plastic accordion curtains trumpeting the opening of the pharmacy. Tyler was soon there, as usual, with a few unfamiliar faces as well. Fifty minutes later I picked up the meds I'd waited for the day before.

The guy in front of me was wearing a camo baseball cap with TRUMP embroidered on the crown. He was wearing a red-white-and-blue striped mask, a Carhartt jacket and you could tell when he rubbed them together that his hands were used to hard work.

The pony-tailed guy behind me was wearing a red-white-and-blue parka under a denim jacket. His mask resembled an American flag and if I'm not mistaken, the laces in his shoes were also red, white and blue. From what I gathered, the best part of his military service was his training to be a nurse. He recently retired after 44 years of helping sick and injured people. He offered me some good advice about signing up for Medicare.

The guys on either side of me that day knew each other and, if I deduced correctly, lived perhaps on the same North Hill block. The guy with the TRUMP hat was bitter about the cars that speed up and down a narrow 11th Street because 10th has been under construction. The guy with the Americanized parka commented about the big bull elk head and antlers that had been sitting in front of his neighbor's house, apparently ready for the taxidermist, which was no longer sitting out in the rain. It was a huge bull, the guy in front of me said, with the rack stretching from one side of the pickup bed to the other.

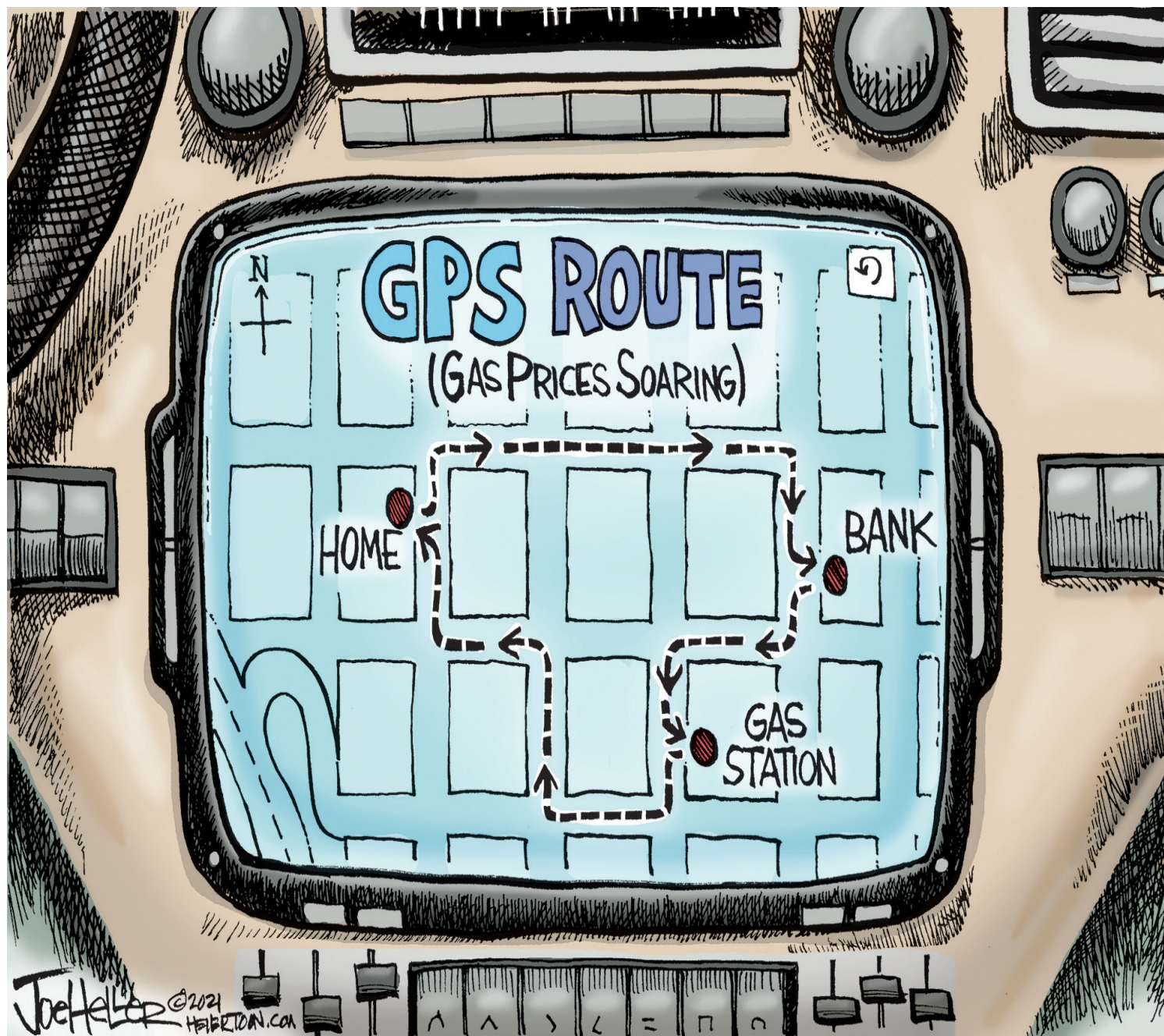
As we plodded along, city council busybody Rex Moorehouse, in front of us by a half dozen people, stepped out of line into the aisle twice to take a picture of the long line, which by then was stretching into the chicken section toward the bulk foods, with his camera phone.

The recent closure of Bi-Mart pharmacies has definitely affected our hometown prescription shopping. Walmart's lines are supposedly just as long and Rite Aid, someone said, isn't accepting any new med customers.

Regrettably, we can count on longer lines, the kind of longer lines that irritate some people. But the folks in the lines Nov. 17 and 18 didn't seem to be annoyed. A big guy wearing a SFPD hat said it was like waiting in line for free Rolling Stones tickets.

If you find yourself in this line, and you will, strike up a conversation with the people in front and back of you because there are no free concert tickets. The clock still ticks at the same tedious tempo, but the time seems to pass quicker. And you may learn something about your neighbors.

Wil Phinney retired in January 2021 after a 44-year newspaper career. He lives in Pendleton with his wife Carrie. They have three daughters.



Merkley's thinking is wrong on thinning



GEORGE
WUERTHNER

OTHER VIEWS

I recently got a message from Oregon Sen. Jeff Merkley announcing he supported more thinning and logging of our forests to reduce large wildfires.

The irony is that logging/thinning is a primary source of greenhouse gas emissions that is contributing to climate warming, ultimately driving large fires. U.S. emissions from logging are up to 10 times that of wildfires and insects. For example, the wood products industry contributes to approximately 35% of the GHG emissions in Oregon, more than the total contribution of the transportation sector.

Promoting logging under the guise this will reduce large fires is counterproductive. Since climate warming is the primary driver of large wildfires (not fuels), adding to anything that increases drought, high temperatures, low humidity and wind only contributes to more wildfires.

There are good paleoclimatic studies showing a correlation between severe drought conditions and wildfire. The West is experiencing some of the worse drought conditions in centuries, and no surprise, there are large fires occurring. Furthermore, we have abundant

evidence that thinning and other "fuel reductions" like prescribed burning fail under extreme fire weather conditions. And extreme fire weather conditions are the only situations that count because nearly all large blazes occur only under such climate/weather circumstances.

It doesn't matter if thinning or prescribed burning might work under low or moderate fire conditions since fire occurring under these conditions typically self-extinguish or are quickly suppressed.

Another factor ignored by proponents of thinning and other fuel reductions is that logging releases GHG emissions now. While forests charred by high severity fires continue to store carbon in snags, roots, and charcoal buried in the soil. So, logging the forest today contributes to greater CO2 emissions when we must reduce these emissions.

To justify more logging, Merkley cited the 2017 Milli Fire near Sisters as an example of effective thinning, which he asserts "saved" Sisters. It is questionable if thinning treatments "saved" Sisters. Most of the area burned had been previously logged. Furthermore, the Milli Fire burned through two recent previous burns: the Black Crater and Pole Creek blazes — which are also, essentially, "fuel reductions."

If fuel reductions are the key to stopping the advance of fires, why didn't all these other previous fuel reductions "save" Sisters?

I can't rule out fuel reductions as the

proximate cause of the halt of the fire's march toward Sisters. However, weather conditions may provide a better explanation. When the fire advanced toward Sisters, the wind shifted directions, blowing the blaze back westward on the previously burned areas and into lava fields in the Three Sisters Wilderness.

As a generalization fuel reductions are ineffective at altering fire progression under extreme fire weather conditions. For instance, logging and fuel reductions had occurred on some 75% of the Bootleg Fire that burned across more than 400,000 acres in southern Oregon during the summer of 2021.

The same is true for most of the acreage influenced by the 900,000-acre Dixie Fire that raced across northern California. And lest we forget, the Labor Day 2020 blazes that burned the western slope of the Oregon Cascades sprinted through the many clearcuts on private commercial lands.

Fuel treatments should be strategic and focused primarily near communities and homes. Typically fuel reductions more than 100 feet from a structure provide no additional protection.

Rather than promote more logging of our public lands, we should set aside all these lands as carbon reserves and stop the leakage of CO2 that results from "fuel treatments."

George Wuerthner is an ecologist who specializes in fire ecology and livestock issues.

Do schools have the best interests of children in mind?



SCOTT
SMITH

THE EDUCATION CORNER

What a question.

Society has, for the most part, consistently assumed that our school systems operate for the best interests of our children and know what our children need, just as our medical doctors. Have they been operating under a ruse?

In the past couple of weeks, Oregon dropped the requirements for substitute teachers. Over the years, they have also dropped other conditions to become teachers, such as doing away with the basic skills tests. The state has different requirements that are good, yet overall students' scores are not higher. The 2019 data from the Nation's Report Card found Oregon ranked LAST in attention to teacher preparation in reading.

Over the past two years, there is no question, education and life have been difficult. For years we have seen the "Mathew Effect" happening in our schools (the smart get smarter as the rich get richer). We are now starting to experience the "Peter Effect" in our schools (you can't teach something you don't know). Thus putting substitute teachers in the classroom just out of high school probably won't solve the problem. The problem is much more significant and

more profound.

Public education has always seemed to be underfunded. Our students' needs are often not provided for unless the parents can provide outside funding sources for special instruction. Legislative laws have passed expecting schools to provide services yet many are not providing them. Oregon is possibly at a tipping point. Teachers have left the profession or moved, perhaps because they are not feeling supported. The expectations of our teachers have reached a breaking point, and people who chose the profession are opting out.

Oregon has allowed transitional licenses for several years. Sometimes this is good, and other times it is a disaster as students take over control of the classroom. Just because you are outstanding in another profession doesn't mean you will be an exceptional teacher.

There is an art to teaching, just as there is an art to being a medical doctor. There are skills you need to master to provide instruction to students. Simply assuming that they are as interested in the content you are teaching as you are might possibly equal behavior problems in the classrooms because most are probably not.

Instructional coaches working with teachers often hear, "If they just did what I told them, they would be passing." It's not that easy.

Teaching today isn't like teaching back in the 1960s. The expectations have

changed, but public assumptions have remained, such as; summers off are paid summers. Most teachers are paid for the days of their contract but that pay is divided over 12 months. Also, teachers take classes, often at their own expense, so they can better serve their students.

Teachers have also had more expectations placed on them, such as larger class sizes, students with special needs, untrained classroom support, changing curriculum and meeting many levels of individual student needs.

All of that said, teachers are finding other professions possibly because the job expectations don't align with the compensation. Lowering the requirement to provide more teachers doesn't mean our children are receiving the quality of instruction that comes with a highly trained educator.

Some questions you might consider could include, would you fly in an airliner flown by an 18-year-old pilot with a high school diploma? How about allowing a heart surgeon to operate on your heart with a general education bachelor's degree? Why are we allowing our children to go into classrooms with unprepared educators?

There is not an easy answer for sure, yet change has to happen. So what is best for our youth?

Scott Smith, doctor of education, is a 40-plus year Umatilla County educator and serves on the Decoding Dyslexia Oregon board as its parent/teacher liaison.