

Tell public what's up at WVSL

An unpleasant episode for three Wallowa Valley Senior Living residents and their families appears to have reached a less troubling end as WVSL has suddenly backed off from requiring the residents to find new digs. Predictably, 30-day notices WVSL tendered the three — all of whom had moved over to the spanking new tax-funded facility from the worn-out former hospital annex across town where nursing care was offered — sparked public outcry.

EDITORIAL

The voice of the Chieftain

Although Senior Living has now been in business two years, it continues to encounter some mistrust from a public that never bought in fully to the idea that nursing care can no longer be part of the program here. So far, the episode that just played out only serves to confirm critics' most negative views, regardless of whether these were originally well-founded. And perhaps because the controversy involves questions about care levels afforded (or not afforded) to known (though not publicly identified) individuals, the Wallowa County Health Care District is appearing a mite tentative in its public response to the issues raised. The district allotted approximately 20 minutes to the matter at its June 22 board meeting — enough time for affected family members to air their grievances in some detail, at times reading from prepared statements — but it was clear that little of substance would be immediately forthcoming from district officials themselves.

It may be that liability worries keep officials from speaking candidly to the public, but that's unfortunate for all of us, because a few key questions just won't go away.

For instance: What was the deciding factor in rescinding the 30-day notices? Did state or local officials determine the facility indeed bore a kind of "grandfathering" obligation to these three residents because they had moved from the nursing home? Or were individual assessments of these residents' respective levels of needed care each in serious error?

And, most important: What has the district learned, and what steps are being taken to ensure that residents won't be wrongly notified in the future?

Sorry, health care district, but we do need to know. —RCR

Shame this ranch, please

Rancho Santa Fe, a well-heeled enclave in California's San Diego County, uses five times the water per capita as the rest of the state, according to the Washington Post. The Post found no shortage of residents on the ranch — as the town is known by residents — who are on record that the drought is for the little people who can't afford the water.

Steve Yuhans says no one should be forced to live with brown lawns, or golf on brown courses.

"We pay significant property taxes based on where we live," he said. "And, no, we're not all equal when it comes to water."

Gay Butler, an interior designer, told the Post that all the "drought shaming" of Rancho Santa Fe is unfair.

"It angers me because people aren't looking at the overall picture," Butler said. "What are we supposed to do, just have dirt around our house on four acres?"

The drought will cost the farm economy \$2.7 billion and almost 19,000 jobs. Livelihoods are being lost, but in Rancho Santa Fe it's about brown yards and golf courses.

Who isn't looking at the overall picture?



We are all racially mixed

What is this story really about? Take your pick. Hair color, hair style, skin color? Race? Whose race? Maybe it's about boxes, and checking the right ones. Maybe it's about integrity, lies, and deception.

Two weeks ago, I had never heard of Rachel Dolezal, the woman who recently stepped down from her post as executive director of Spokane's NAACP amid a swirl of media controversy regarding her race.

I have several confessions of my own to make about this story. First, I'm coming to despise "the media," whose main function these days seems to be public bullying. Second, I admit that my viewpoint might be atypical, in that the more I learn about Rachel, the better I like her. And finally, I have begun to realize that I too am partly African-American, and that you probably are as well.

In case you have been living in a cave recently (and if you have, congratulations — you've probably made a wise choice), I will give you a little background information. Rachel was raised in a family alongside four adopted black siblings. Her parents — whose reliability has been portrayed as unimpeachable so far by our national media — have said that Rachel was blond and fair-skinned as a child, and that she is of mostly German and Czech ancestry, with a trace of Native American heritage.

Rachel spent some of her childhood in Mississippi in mainly black schools, and some of it home-schooled with her family in Montana. By her account as well as her parents', she came to identify with



POLITICAL PHILOSOPHY

John McColgan

black children and black culture at an early age. She married a black man, has one son from that marriage, and has legally adopted one of her former adoptive black siblings. She also attended historically black Howard University.

Given her life history, it is small wonder to me that Rachel came to "self-identify" as black. She learned about hair-styling, and she chose to style her own with an Afro look.

I guess this is one of the things "the media" wants us to be outraged about. Somewhere in the Ten Commandments, there must have been a "Thou shalt not change thy hair style or hair color," but maybe Moses missed that one.

Along the course of her life, people began to make assumptions about Rachel, based on her looks, her family, and her lifestyle, and she did not correct them. Maybe she even misled them, by checking the "wrong" boxes. Did she self-identify as "Black" or "African-American" when she filled in job applications?

I've never liked having to decide which of those boxes to check. There's usually one for "Native-American," and I think I ought to qualify there, since I was born in the USA, but I know that's not what the designation means. I hate

checking "White," because I'm really two-toned, with tanned arms and face, and the rest of me peach-colored. They have no boxes for "Irish" or "Greek," which is my heritage. And the box for "Caucasian" makes me cringe, especially now that I have checked the definition on Wikipedia.

If you look up that definition, you will find largely discredited archetypes that sound uncomfortably like the foundation of "Mein Kampf." There is even a graph from a book published in 1920, entitled "The Rising Tide of Color Against White World Supremacy." And it turns out that being Caucasian actually includes being from Africa as one of its many subsets.

Knowing that one of my grandfathers was born on the island of Crete, I have no problem accepting that my naturally tanning skin probably dates back to some African ancestry. And if you believe in evolution, you too should accept that if you could trace your own roots back far enough, you probably have African bloodlines as well.

So has Rachel been lying to us? I'll say this: she never lied to me, and I wish her the best in life, which seems to be more than her parents do.

One of Rachel's sons reassured her this way. "Mom," he said, "Racially, you're human. Culturally, you're black."

Well said. And I recommend that we all start being more honest with ourselves about our own very mixed racial heritages.

John McColgan writes from his home in Joseph.

No to fees for Joseph streets

To the Editor:

Here again comes the Blind Leading the Blind! Mr. Sands and Ms. Swart fit the description. Sands still thinks simple logic can be hidden by showing a lemon and calling it an apple. His method of presenting numerous schemes of debt applied to normal citizens of Joseph continues. By labeling such ruses under an array of different titles, we mortals might bite! Higher costs or fees or taxes still is just that, increased taxes. For Sands to continue trying to steal from us is an insult to our common sense. No sensible commoner would ever agree to his blind doggedness to raise taxes.

Ms. Swarts logic displays her utopian convictions. This being, if some folks can afford constant increases in taxes then let the commoners suffer for it. Her logic and Sands doggedness shows us all certain truths. This being all bureaucrats and politicians must justify their ignorance and positions held.

Hold fast mortals and vote against all such bills to steal from us.

Harlan Menton
Joseph

USFS doesn't want us to know

To the Editor:

The US Forest Service has sunk to a new low in Eastern Oregon, that is, they have decided that you are too dangerous a group of people to be informed as to what roads they plan to close in your mountains. How do I know that, because I have received a response telling me so.

While they put out propaganda of how they want to engage with you on the National Forest, but when I or anyone else requests documents to engage, we are told we may cause "injury to the quality of the agency decision." let me emphasize, we, the people of Eastern Oregon may cause injury because we received a document to educate ourselves with.

Much like the Mullahs' in the mosaics of Afghanistan, the US Forest Service means to keep you ignorant as to what is going on around you. Communities and citizens are easier to control if they

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

are kept from the truth of what's going on around them and the decisions a few are making for the larger population. See, you/we/I are too dumb, too backwards, too unenlightened to understand the complexities of such ecological process, or are we?

I have a college education in natural resource, I know that water flows downhill and that active management techniques play a greater role in meeting the public's needs than exclusion of use. I know that there is a "tread lightly" campaign being pushed by a small minority on the upper echelons of the US Forest Service where man is looked at as a disease on the landscape and not a part of it. But most importantly I know this. You and I are not dumb, backwards or unenlightened.

It's a lie, and we are dealing with liars in the leadership positions of the forest service, from the supervisor's office up. If you want to keep your mountains open you are going to have to dig in and fight, are you willing to do that? I hope so, because your kids and grandkids right to access depends on it.

John George
Bates

Let counties leave Oregon

To the Editor:

Rural Oregonians in general and East Oregonians in particular are growing increasingly dismayed by the manner in which Oregon's legislature and Oregon's urban dwellers have marginalized their values, demonized their lifestyle, villainize their resource based livelihoods, and have classified them as second class citizens at best. All the while they cover Oregon's most fertile and well watered farm ground with urban sprawl, gangs, illegal aliens, homeless camps, welfare tramps, and touchy feely politics that add little or no value to ru-

ral lifestyles. Meanwhile Oregon's rural residents carve out a resource based living on marginal farm ground and the left overs of Oregon's economic growth, infrastructure and technological innovation.

The Portland metro area is home to 47% of Oregon's voters and covers a mere 3776.41 square miles of Oregon's 98,466 square miles, that's less than 4% of its land mass, 3.83% to be exact.

Five of Oregon's 36 counties now control 100% of Oregon's legislative activity. None are rural. None are east of the Cascades. None are outside the Willamette valley.

It would appear to any rural resident or outside observer that most of Oregon's urbanites view Oregon's rural residents as nothing more than third world inhabitant's occupying their weekend and vacation playgrounds in what they advertise to the world as Oregon's unique diversity. The political diversity in this state is becoming unpalatable.

Since 1988 Oregon's urban dwellers have elected a group of individuals that represent nothing short of the aristocracy of political power, they have switched their role in democracy from servant to lord. These people have successfully disenfranchised and subjugated the people occupying everything not Portland or the Willamette valley. They have enacted laws with little or no debate and no amendments. They have stated they will fix admittedly flawed laws after they are enacted, this is backwards legislative procedure designed to exclude and silence opposition, often-times with out of state money from east coast power brokers.

Time for a change. Time to organize. Time to secede or succumb. Thirty-one counties need to put an initiative on their ballot that states, "Should (my) county secede from the State of Oregon and seek a more perfect union elsewhere"

Imagine for a moment Idaho's western border stretching to the Pacific and the State of Oregon shrinking to less than 4000 square miles of land locked river view property.

Grant Darrow
Elgin

Corrections

• The late Charlie Trump was a resident of Wallowa, not of Enterprise. The Chieftain regrets the error in last week's article about the Blue Mountain Old Time Fiddlers event.

• The Dulcimer Extravaganza Concert is scheduled for Friday, July 3, at 7:30 p.m. at the Joseph Center. The Chieftain regrets that it was listed under the wrong date in last week's calendar.

WALLOWA COUNTY CHIEFTAIN

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P.O. Box 338 • Enterprise, OR 97828
Office: 209 NW First St., Enterprise, Ore.
Phone: 541-426-4567 • Fax: 541-426-3921

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MEMBER OREGON NEWSPAPER PUBLISHERS ASSOCIATION

PUBLISHER Marissa Williams, marissa@bmeagle.com
EDITOR Rob Ruth, editor@wallowa.com
REPORTER Stephen Tool, stool@wallowa.com
REPORTER Kathleen Eilyn, kellyn@wallowa.com
NEWSROOM ASSISTANT Elliott Seyler, eseyler@wallowa.com
AD SALES CONSULTANT Brooke Pace, bpace@wallowa.com
GRAPHIC DESIGNER Robby Day, rday@wallowa.com
OFFICE MANAGER Cheryl Jenkins, cjenkins@wallowa.com

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