

# Oil-train accident won't be the last

It is unsurprising that a train hauling Bakken crude oil from North Dakota to West Coast refineries had an accident. After last Friday's derailment and explosion of such a train in the small Columbia River Gorge town of Mosier, the only uncertainty is whether lawmakers and regulators will finally start to give the issue the level of attention it deserves.

**EDITORIAL**

*Voice of the Chieftain*

Though only a small fraction as bad as it might have been, the accident was plenty serious enough to warrant reforms. Toxic clouds of oily smoke fouled the sky as crude oil seeped into the ground — though thankfully not into the Columbia or one of its tributaries. Mosier residents were evacuated. Thousands of motorists were inconvenienced. Emergency responders were placed in harm's way. The cost of the response and cleanup will easily be in the millions.

This accident won't be the last. A minimum of 26 oil trains have been involved in major fires or derailments in the U.S. and Canada since 2006. One of them cost 47 lives.

Our economy and way of life still depend on petroleum — a fact of life we will accommodate for the immediate future. The Mosier train wreck must, however, generate thorough examination of oil-train routing. Immediate steps must be taken to enhance their safety. This will necessitate revamping an antiquated and unresponsive bureaucracy.

Outmoded federal laws place rail companies largely beyond state oversight. This system sets up an untenable relationship. Pacific Northwest residents are at risk. But they are unable to do much about it. The Federal Railway Administration has "a real passive way of regulating. They don't have standards. It's sort of self-regulation," a Washington state official noted in 2014.

The Mosier wreck only confirms that rail companies operate as a law unto themselves, with minimal communication and advance planning with key state and local officials. Rural fire departments along the oil-train routes lack much of the special foam needed to combat intense petroleum fires. In Friday's crash, the nearest source of flame retardant foam was Portland International Airport, which needs the stocks for emergencies.

Some Bakken crude shipments are starting to be chemically treated to lower the potential for explosion. It's clear that all must be. Obsolete rail tanker cars must be phased out more quickly. Trains either must be removed from the vital Columbia River corridor, where a single accident could spoil water quality and fisheries, or else far more money must be spent on emergency preparedness.

The essential bottom line for all these proposals, and development of any kind, is to make sure that costs and benefits are appropriately allocated. Spills and other impacts must be planned for, insured against and there have to be enforceable legal mechanisms to make sure expenses are borne by the companies, not by taxpayers or downstream neighbors.



"WE CAN GO FURTHER!"

## Memorial Day and mental fortitude

I watched with interest as President Obama laid a wreath on the monument for the people of the Hiroshima atomic bomb drop in 1945. This just days before Memorial Day. I hope this helps diplomatic relations with Japan.

I recall my uncles, who along with 10,000 other POWs, were in a camp somewhere in the area at the time telling me they saw the flash and heard the sound of the bomb. They knew something big had happened. A few days later a Navy dive bomber flew through the canyon and the pilot wrote a note and put it in a match book and as he came back over the camp he threw it out. He told of the bomb and that the war was done.

That day the prisoners took half the guns from the guards and the next day they took the rest.

A few days later food and supplies were parachuted into the camp. The prisoners had been captured in the Philippines on Bataan and Corregidor. They survived the Bataan Death March and the ride across the China Sea in the hold of a ship that reached such high temperatures the prisoners were marched continually out of the hold and across the deck and back into the hold to cool off. If you were too sick or weak to make the circuit you died. They had been



**OPEN RANGE**

Barrie Qualle

prisoners for 42 months and worked in a zinc mine on poor rations and the last year were down to a bowl of barley soup a day. They suffered from malaria, scurvy, vitamin deficiency and malnutrition.

My uncle Cordie said that when the supplies landed they feasted and he drank some coffee. Due to his weakened condition, when the caffeine hit, his heart nearly jumped out of his chest. Daryl drank a can of condensed milk and it came right back up. A little too rich, he thought. A few days later they commandeered a train and were on the first ship out of Yokohama headed for home.

I was 5 years old at the time and remember thinking those two are awfully skinny. I also remember thinking they were two of the happiest and most fun guys I had ever seen. These two picked up their lives and away they went. I would have thought they would have had bad feelings toward the Japanese, but this seemed absent. Cordie did say they were very hard on the prison-

ers, but they also were hard on each other. If you talked to one by themselves they were not too bad. They felt the bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki had saved a million lives.

It sometimes seems a guy can't get a break. Cordie married a wonderful woman and they had three kids. His wife later suffered from Schizophrenia and took her life. He was left to raise the three kids, ages 1 to 4, by himself.

Daryl married a girl and she contracted a terminal illness and died seven years later. These two, who were partners in a construction business, had lived their teenage years through the Great Depression of the 1930s, were POWs for 42 months under cruel conditions, then lost their wives.

I never saw two more mentally tough people in my life. They gritted out whatever life handed them. Through it all they never felt sorry for themselves and even kept a good humor.

Bud Botts' attitude reminded me of them. I guess adversity either crushes you or makes you tougher.

The VFW post in Hughson, Calif., is named after Cordie and Daryl, and they are who I think of on Memorial Day.

*Columnist Barrie Qualle is a working cowboy in Wallowa County.*

## Can Eastern Oregon attract Portland refugees?

Like most Americans, I used the long Memorial Day weekend to enjoy our wonderful country.

I traveled to Montana to enjoy the sights and lack of sounds, and along the way met some curious Portland refugees.

One of them was BT Livermore. Livermore is a well-known and talented sign painter, illustrator and designer who has lived and worked in Portland since 2005. Originally from Minnesota, Livermore moved to Rip City because artist space was affordable and the city appreciated and supported his work. While there, he made Portland a better place — visually, culturally and economically.

But rising costs are pushing Livermore, and people like him, out of Portland. The large spaces needed for collectives like Magnetic North, which he helped start, are quickly becoming too expensive. Letterpress operators and creators of all stripes are unable to make a go of it as rents rise and rise again.

Livermore thinks he will leave Portland — that he doesn't have much of a choice — and is considering options. He thought about heading back home to Minneapolis, but the pressures that are exploding in Portland are doing the same thing there. He considered Butte, Montana, where vacant historic buildings can be had for back taxes, but finding customers can be difficult in an economically depressed town of 30,000. He considered Los Angeles, where far-off suburban locales can still be expensive, but the pool of potential customers is much larger even than Portland.

He hasn't made a decision. The next step is unknown — which offers feelings of anxiety and excitement.

But it's worth considering if Livermore and other pushed-out Portlanders would want to relocate in Eastern Oregon, where populations and economic development have been stagnant or dropping for decades.

Because it's not just mustache wax companies who are fleeing Portland prices. There are restaurateurs and brewers and other entrepreneurs — the people

**GUEST EDITORIAL**

Tim Trainor, East Oregonian

who helped Portland become Portland. That of course has its pros and cons, and no one wants Eastern Oregon to turn into the Willamette Valley. That would be terrifying.

But there is no denying Portland is rich and getting richer, a growing metropolitan area where housing prices are rising faster than anywhere in the nation and more than 1,000 people a month move to town.

Travel Pendleton realizes that the Round-Up City has lot of the things that the young people are flocking to Portland for. It has authenticity, history, a lively downtown, arts, music and makers — leather and boots and hats and more. Pendleton has proven to be an excellent stop to drop some money, whether at the Woolen Mills or Hamleys or the Great Pacific.

But could it become home to Portland refugees? People like Jordan Schnitzer think so. The successful developer and arts magnate invested \$152,000 in a long-vacant Main Street Pendleton building and said he thinks climate change and overcrowding will cause the populations of places like Seattle, Portland and San Francisco to scatter inland to more livable cities — especially young families and middle-class entrepreneurs. Sounds exactly like the kind of people Eastern Oregon would love to have, right?

Yet, local governments have taken a mostly antagonistic stand against young professionals, voting and acting against bicycle lanes and marijuana businesses — even things as overwhelmingly positive as Pendleton's weekly farmers market. Many of our cities pride themselves on being "business friendly," but these votes show that quite the opposite is true. They may be friendly to the businesses and industries of a generation ago — the Great White Whale of American manu-

facturing — but they turn their back to the kind of slow, community-based development that will dictate the future.

Perhaps eastern Oregonians aren't interested in people like Livermore. Certainly there is no interest in becoming Portland, where the culture is completely different, growth has changed the fabric of the city and many of its long-time residents are having a difficult time keeping pace.

Yet nearly every Eastern Oregon city needs to upgrade its streets and infrastructure, and not unduly burden its residents with overwhelming taxes while doing so. There is a desperate need for revitalization, and we shouldn't be too picky about where it comes from.

Recently, the East Oregonian shared on its Facebook page an important story from The Atlantic magazine titled "The Graying of Rural America." It spotlighted Wheeler County, where the median age of residents has jumped from 48 to 56 in just 13 years. The county has seen a 42 percent decrease in wage and salary employment since 1970 and is slowly heading toward oblivion.

No one wants Pendleton to become Portland, but no one can be excited about oblivion, either.

Some talented people are going to be saying goodbye to Portland in the next few months and years. We can stand to benefit, or again watch growth from afar.

*Tim Trainor is opinion page editor for the East Oregonian in Pendleton, a sister publication of The Chieftain.*

### Corrections

A June 1 article about the new city sign at the west entrance of Enterprise listed an incorrect title for GEMS Chairwoman Margie Shaw.

A June 1 article about Enterprise's School of Rock incorrectly identified student David Salim.



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