

OPINION

WRITER'S NOTEBOOK

Steve Forrester



Let's relearn how to live together

It is a curse to live in an era you do not understand. It is a fair bet that many Oregonians, across the political spectrum, harbor that anxiety.

In the recent Oregon election, five Eastern Oregon counties voted in favor of joining Idaho. This is a movement that's been around for a while.

Although differing from the concept of the State of Jefferson, conceived in 1941, to form a new state from counties in southern Oregon and Northern California, it flows from the same sense of marginalization.

Oregon is not unique in how its economic and political cultures are frequently divided. Joel Garreau gave the most complete explanation of this reality in his 1981 book, "The Nine Nations of North America." State borders are artificial lines that group together populations with discordant priorities. If we were starting from scratch, all state lines might bear little resemblance to what they are.

As with the State of Jefferson, Idaho annexing elements of Eastern Oregon is unlikely to occur. It would take agreement within the Salem and Boise statehouses, as well as in Congress. Approval of such a reconfiguration would give license to an avalanche of similar efforts around the country, setting a precedent few state and national leaders would welcome.

While I don't think the Idaho plan is good for Oregon, I understand the emotional motivation among Eastern Oregon voters. An author of the separation concept, Mike McCarter, of La Pine, has said: "Rural Oregon is in an abusive relationship with Willamette Valley." McCarter is the former president of the Oregon Agribusiness Council and the Oregon Association of Nurserymen.

Much of what chafes at rural people is Salem's and Portland's ignorance of what lies east of Hood River. That eventually comes down to natural resources management.

Animosity toward Salem revolves around how land uses are prioritized. In the broadest terms, Oregonians who live beyond the state's northwest urban center too often are made to feel like bumpkins for pursuing the economic opportunities at hand, which despite impressive diversification, still often revolve around agriculture and wood products.

Conversely, the state's urban zeitgeist is to see other Oregonians as mired in an outmoded attachment to traditional extractive industries — and under the sway of Trumpist grievances.

One does not have to live in the broad dry expanse of Eastern Oregon to feel the brunt of Salem's ignorance. Here at the mouth of the Columbia River, Salem's myopia was apparent in 2012 with former Gov. John Kitzhaber's needless, scientifically baseless and boneheaded attack on gillnet fishermen. Gov. Kate Brown has lacked the guts to undo Kitzhaber's stupid policy.

Meanwhile, Portland's largest city has become a place that many of us no longer recognize. For me, the transformation began years ago when *The Oregonian* debased its product. Like it or not, a metropolitan area is a media center. But that is no longer the case with Portland.

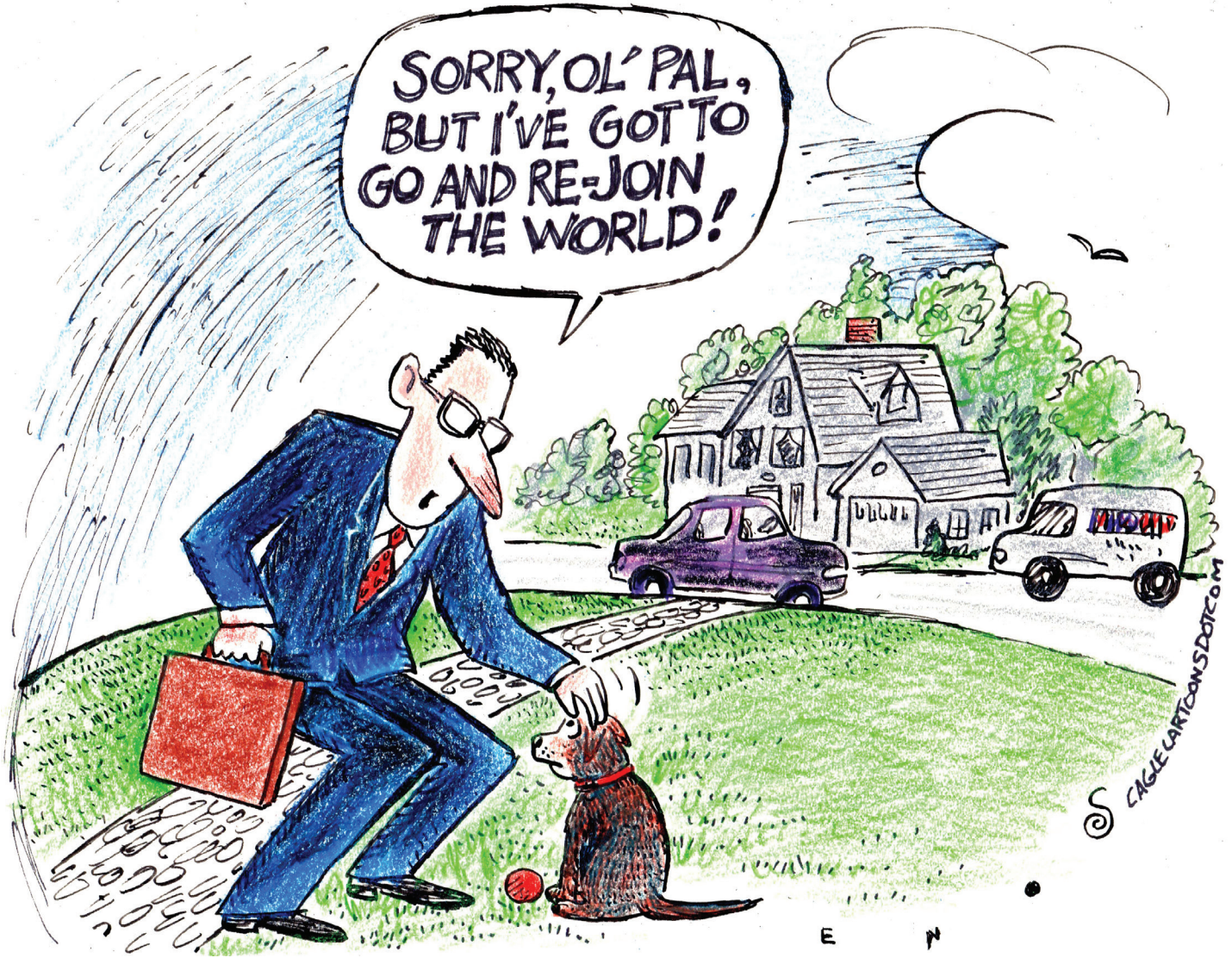
The riots and vandalism have given downtown Portland, sheathed in plywood, an ugly and bereft look. The city's weak political leadership has enabled a catastrophe that has gone on about a year, perpetuating a sense of a place not in control of itself, and certainly in no position to lecture or dictate to others.

The divisiveness illustrated by the Greater Idaho idea is part of a larger nostalgia for the decades immediately following World War II, when Oregon viewed itself as overcoming petty differences in the pursuit of sensible accommodations that generated mutual success. Like most nostalgia, this rosy view minimizes the hard negotiations — and occasional hard feelings — that set the stage for a prosperous and egalitarian period of progress.

Rekindling these conditions requires a deliberate and well-executed process. Respectful discussions coupled with concrete follow through are what it will take to bridge Oregon's urban-rural divide.

While each of the 36 counties can't go its own way, or find greener political grass across the Idaho border, Oregonians can and must do a better job of listening to one another.

Steve Forrester, the former editor and publisher of *The Astorian*, is the president and CEO of EO Media Group.



LETTERS to the EDITOR

No money for trails

I have been interested in the terms and conditions of the Forest Legacy Program grant that landed the Wallowa County \$3,900,000 to purchase the 1,533 forested acres on the East Moraine of Wallowa Lake.

These tenets shall become part of the conservation easement for the East Moraine. A governmental agency must own the land, the land will not dispose of, modify the use of or change the terms of the real property title without permission. It requires that no less than 75% of the lands are in forest cover or will be reforested in 10 years, 25% of the protected land may be in compatible non-forest uses, including cultivated farm land, pasture, grassland, shrub land, open water and wetlands.

Require that the land be managed with the purposes intended for farm and forestry and shall not convert the property to other uses (no recreation uses listed). Generally prohibit extensive surface disturbances, that the conservation easement must clearly describe the location and use

of these disturbances in advance.

Ironically, the commissioners approved a legal summary of this proposed "conservation easement" outlined inside a Baseline Document Report (BDR) which appears to violate the WCLUP Appendix 8, #3 — limit conflicting uses, allowing the landowner to construct new roads for recreational activities when they deem necessary. Appendix 8 prohibits new access roads, bicycle paths, pedestrian paths, driveways on the Moraine because of the wildlife funnel and increased human density. Stop the new recreational trails.

Mildred Fraser-O'Callaghan
Joseph

What's in a name?

Over the past few years I have noticed a disturbing trend in the Chieftain, where our beautiful mountains are being referred to as the Eagle Cap Mountains or Eagle Caps, rather than their proper name, the WALLOWA MOUNTAINS.

The most recent example was in the June 2 edition, Northeast Oregon Artisans insert, where one of the advertisers refers to them as the Eagle Cap Mountain Range. In the May 26 edition of the Chieftain the new district ranger called them the Eagle Cap Mountains even though the introductory paragraph of the Wallowa-Whitman National Forest home page contains the following sentence, "The Wallowa-Whitman National Forest includes 2.3 million acres of public lands extending from the Blue Mountains and rugged WALLOWA MOUNTAINS down to the spectacular canyon country of the Snake River." In addition, on the same page, the very office he will work out of is called the WALLOWA MOUNTAIN OFFICE.

Eagle Cap is a single peak located in the Wallowa Mountains and the Eagle Cap Wilderness lies in the heart of the Wallowa Mountains, but the mountains are still correctly know as the WALLOWA MOUNTAINS. In the future let's try to refer to them as such.

Mike Crawford
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