

Siuslaw News
P.O. Box 10
Florence, OR 97439

Opinion

LETTERS

Remembering Shiloh

I was saddened to hear Shiloh Sundstrom was involved in an unfortunate accident that took his young life.

I had the pleasure and honor to know him as a student when I was appointed as superintendent of schools in Mapleton. After 31 years of teaching and working with students of all ages, Shiloh has always stood out in my mind as a very special person of strong character.

Early in my tenure I fondly remember Shiloh and I walking down one of those hallowed Mapleton High School hallways, just two strangers meeting and talking between classes. Since I was new to the district and this was our first conversation, he introduced himself and welcomed me to Mapleton.

Impressed and then in response, I thanked him and asked about his hopes, dreams and goals. I don't remember the specifics other than I was very impressed with this very articulate, confident, positive, but unassuming young man. I then asked him if he was going out for any sports this year and he smiled at me and said that absolutely he was going out for sports to support his friends and classmates.

"You see Mr. Wright," he stated, "I am not very good at sports, but if I did not go out we would not have enough players for a team. This is a small school Mr. Wright and we support each other."

It has been said that it is intellect that makes a person great. I believe it is character.

Gerald Duane "Boomer" Wright
 Retired Superintendent, Mapleton School District
 Florence

Friends of Florence

It is hard to believe that the Friends of Florence has been providing free transportation Monday through Friday to and from Eugene/Springfield for people suffering from



some form of cancer for over 30 years. The service was started in 1985 and formally incorporated on March 25, 1986, as a 501c3 charitable organization.

The late P.T. Smith was the idea man who started the operation. It is through his vision and legacy that the Friends of Florence was started. Since then, hundreds of volunteers have contributed to its success.

Another group of volunteers, the Van Fans, have worked tirelessly to help insure the success of the project, and through their efforts a large amount of money has been raised.

The Friends of Florence is funded entirely through donations. All drivers are volunteers and have driven over 1-1/4 million miles since the organization was started. All officers and administration are also volunteers.

At this time I am pleased to announce the election of two new board members to the Friends of Florence, Jon Thompson and Dave Forsberg. We welcome these two long-time community leaders into the Friends of Florence family.

Jon is co-owner of KCST Radio and Dave is a retired Lutheran Minister and currently works at Coldwell Banker.

These two join the present board members, Tom Grove, Dan Clements, Rick Yecny and Kerstin Johnsen. Please join us in welcoming these two individuals to our organization.

Thank you Florence and surrounding communities for your support and belief in our mission.

Tom Grove President/CEO/Director
 Friends of Florence

Name change again?

Is the Florence City Council again considering a motion to change "Columbus Day," a federal holiday, to "Indigenous Peoples Day"? We hope not. There must be a better way to celebrate the history and contributions of indigenous cultures. We are not overlooking the contributions of cultures that should be remembered or may have in its history endured discrimination or lack of recognition. But is this really necessary?

Our governments must practice due diligence when considering such a significant change. In this particular case, would we then be saying to our Italian American population that they do not matter? Where will all this end? It would be impossible to establish a holiday or day of recognition for each worthy or perceived worthy culture.

We are not implying anything against our American Indian population or other heritage in any way. What we are saying is that it is time to stop obliterating our history. Like it or not, right or wrong, it is our history and should remain in place for current and future generations to know their history and to hopefully learn from the mistakes and the accuracies.

We have not read whether or not our City Council has had any conversation with members or council of The Confederated Tribes of the Coos, Lower Umpqua and Siuslaw Indians of Oregon to obtain their opinion on this suggested change. And, we cannot help but notice how easily it would be to confuse "indigenous" with "indigent."

Jack Branson and Patricia Miller
 Florence

YESTERDAY'S NEWS

MOMENTS IN TIME The History Channel

- On Jan. 26, 1500, Spanish explorer Vicente Yanez Pinzon, who had commanded the Nina during Christopher Columbus' first expedition to the New World, sights the coast of Brazil during a voyage under his command, the first European explorer to do so.

- On Jan. 25, 1759, Scottish poet Robert Burns is born. The day is still celebrated by Burns fans with high-spirited "Robert Burns Night" feasts, featuring haggis and other Scottish delicacies, as well as enthusiastic drinking, toasting and speechmaking.

- On Jan. 29, 1936, in Cooperstown, New York, the Baseball Hall of Fame elects its first members: Ty Cobb, Babe Ruth, Honus Wagner, Christy Matthewson and Walter Johnson. Today it has elected 278 individuals, including 225 players, 17 managers, eight umpires and 28 executives and pioneers.

- On Jan. 30, 1948, Mohandas Gandhi, the world's chief advocate of non-violence, is assassinated in New Delhi, India. Assassin Nathuram Godse was hanged in 1949 against the wishes of Gandhi's sons, who argued that the execution stood against everything Gandhi believed in.

- On Jan. 31, 1950, President Harry Truman publicly announces his decision to support development of the hydrogen bomb. The discovery of a Soviet spy in the U.S. nuclear program forced Truman to approve massive funding to build the world's first "superbomb."

- On Jan. 27, 1965, the Shelby Mustang GT 350 is launched. The Shelby, a Mustang modified for racing, featured a 306 horsepower V-8 engine and today is a valuable collector car.

- On Jan. 28, 1973, a cease-fire goes into effect in Saigon, Vietnam, but military operations quickly resumed after each side claimed the other had violated the truce. What resulted was an almost endless chain of retaliations, averaging 2,980 combat incidents per month.

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VIEW FROM UPRIVER



Highest use of public lands

WESLEY VOTH
 For the Siuslaw News

January, the immediate past and present of it at least, is nearly as wet as December was. Outside my office window I watch a Steller's jay work its beak along the edge of a concrete block like sharpening a knife on a whetstone, the river running high and the color of tea flecked with cream behind it. A varied thrush camouflaged in orange and black flips the leaves of big-leaved maple, searching beneath for insect larvae. Come summer this bird will be feeding crane flies to its fledglings on the arctic tundra.

Around the other side of the house in the ditch by the road, marsh candle, aka skunk cabbage, are unfurling their saffron flames, and newt and salamander thrash passionately in the marshy waters among that bright thong. The basics of this could have been observed this same time of year by humans living in this place many thousands of years ago, and this thought strengthens the kinship I feel with them all. May we do nothing to rob those who will come in another thousand years from observing this same scene.

The debate concerning the best use of public land, especially federally owned land in the west, has a few current hotspots, one in Malheur — ostensibly about grazing cattle — and the other in our own watershed in the Indian Creek basin. Such debates are healthy, not the stand-offs but the discussion, as long as in the end this leads to better understanding and conservation of what is at stake.

Malheur Bird Refuge was set aside more than a century ago to protect birds against plume hunters, one of the countless short term exploitations that can drive entire species to extinction. Preservation of this land now protects hundreds of species of birds, many of which are migratory and depend on such habitat as they pass north and south, some beyond our national borders, and affect insect life and seed dispersal and soil fertility and the health of other species over vast areas. My father was among a number of biologists connected to Northwest colleges and universities who set up a field station there in 1971, and brought classes of students and conducted research in that incredible place.

Thousands of people come each year to watch and study birds and that unique place at no small economic benefit to the area; millions who can't visit enjoy the videos and photography, and we all benefit from this part

of the web of life remaining viable. All this while some cattle grazing continues, and is managed cooperatively with input from all stakeholders.

The way timber was unsustainably harvested on public lands in our area until environmentalist claims in the courts put a halt to it, was rapidly converting our forests to tree farms. This forest "genocide" — killing hundreds of species and chemically suppressing the ones that tried to continue to live in favor of one tree species thought to have the most commercial value, Douglas-fir — was killing the goose that laid the golden egg. We don't even know enough to understand the nature of the golden eggs that are lost in obliterating forests, but they include water quality and the health of salmon.

Using money retained from the sale of thinned timber in some of these tree farms to make them somewhat more forest-like, and restore fish habitat within and downstream from them, is not a waste of those funds.

Public lands are a public treasury, and in the west help protect clean air, water and habitat that benefits all of us. If any practice ultimately diminishes that treasury, it is looting, and at least irresponsible if not criminal. Framing the debate as choosing say, "owls over people," is like saying it is irrelevant to humans if the canary in the coal mine dies.

It does not matter to me who your god is, you do not honor that god if you do not care for the earth. It does not matter to me what your political party or beliefs are, but you do not honor this country if you do not protect and guard this sacred treasury.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR POLICY

The Siuslaw News welcomes letters to the editor concerning issues affecting the Florence area and Lane County.

Emailed letters are preferred. Handwritten or typed letters must be signed. All letters should be limited to about 300 words and must include the writer's full name, address and phone number for verification.

Letters are subject to editing for length, grammar and clarity. Publication of any letter is not guaranteed and depends on space available and the volume of letters received.

Libelous and anonymous letters as well as poetry will not be published.

All submissions become the property of Siuslaw News and will not be returned.

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