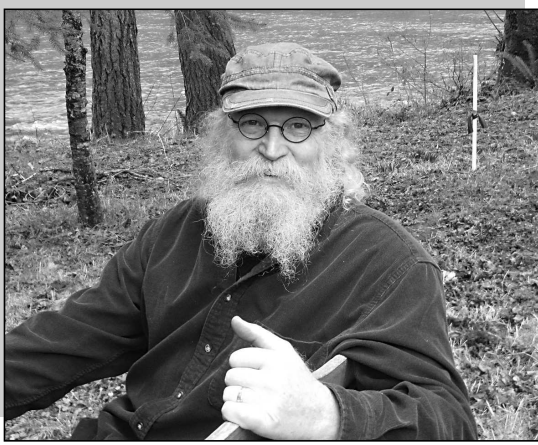


Siuslaw News
 P.O. Box 10
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Opinion

VIEW FROM UPRIVER



Blackberry bounty

WESLEY VOTH
 For the Siuslaw News

Here in Brickerville, morning and evening bird chorus is over for another year. The netting is off the blueberries, but there is such a glut of available food that the remaining fruit dries on the bushes. Branches bend to the ground on our unpruned apple trees, the leaves of Oregon ash begin to yellow. Nearly every morning so far this August my neighbor Dave Horn is out picking blackberries.

As I walk by with our daughter's dog — an animal that has been with us long enough to feel she's always been here — he chides me that I am not there picking as well. "They're free!" he says, and tells me what a bumper-crop year it is. We talk about making cobbler, and he says he freezes a lot of the berries, and later juices them and makes them into jelly.

I have noticed that he is right about it being an exceptional year here for blackberries, and chide myself for not having picked

enough yet to store in some fashion for winter. I check the weather forecasts to make sure I do so before it rains and the berries mold; when rain was predicted for this last Sunday, I grabbed some buckets and went out to pick along the river near the measuring station, far enough back from the road to be well beyond ODOT's spray line.

The berry crop is amazing — often 20 berries fully ripe to a single fruiting lateral — with that many again that are green or red. I easily got enough for our jam needs and another berry crumble in one spot, before the sun's intensity drove me home on a day predicted to be cloudy and wet. It makes me wonder how many things we decide to do or not to do depending on such; in this case, I am glad it got me out there while there was still time to get the best.

Most of the blackberries are a variety known as Himalayans; these may not be native here, but they've been here so long they're an integral part of western Oregon culture. Himalayan blackberries are ubiquitous along nearly every road, forest edge, field, waterway and trail in the western part of the state. By my grandmother's childhood in the late 1800s near Highlands and Marion

on the Willamette, these were already common, although she much preferred the taste of the native dewberry, or trailing blackberry.

Himalayans are also the example my father used as I was growing up to teach me about interconnections between plants and animals. The bushes respond dramatically to being cut or trampled, and it is along these disturbed edges that the plant offers its berries with their abundant seeds most profusely.

It is no coincidence that the birds and animals most able to benefit from human alterations to the environment benefit most splendidly from this abundance. I see the evidence in the scat of raccoons, coyotes, bears, skunks, fox and observe ravens, crows, jays, robins, waxwings and several species of sparrows carrying away berries. Something in the berries triggers gut responses that speed the seeds through, helping to ensure that some remain viable after they have passed on through in some new place.

Wherever we berry eaters go, if there weren't already blackberries there, there soon will be. Rabbits, rats and mice shelter in the thickets, small birds nest there and many species of spiders web the canes, including the goldenrod crab spider that waits on the blossoms and targets pollinators such as bumblebees. So we are among a throng that not only co-exist with blackberries, we co-thrive. Think I'll have another bite of crumble in appreciation.

LETTERS

The people's initiative

If the Lane County Board of Commissioners votes in late September to give themselves the power to yank duly approved initiatives from the vote of the people because they decide the initiatives are not "of county concern," there is at least one bright spot: the subsequent people's initiative to reverse that unconstitutional ordinance will most assuredly be "of county concern."

Commissioners Bozievich, Stewart, Farr and Leiken: The initiative process belongs to the people.

Keep your eye on Board of Commissioners' agendas at www.lanecounty.org/Departments/BCC/Pages/AgendaHome.aspx.

Cathy Barr
 Deadwood

Money made from fear

The other day I was walking by a salesman that was showing a young woman how to load a semiautomatic pistol. Standing behind her was her husband holding two small children. I don't think she had ever shot a gun.

My point is unless a person comes from a family that hunted ducks or big game and has been around guns or people that were hunters, they have no business buying an automatic pistol. A background check is not going to do much good.

More times than not, the gun is not used to shoot an intruder, it kills an innocent person.

Virgle Bechtold
 Florence

Liberty and justice for all

What kind of democracy do we have that the witnesses to questionable killings by police are treated like criminals? Aren't the killings disgusting enough?

In the case of the killing of Alton Sterling in Baton Rouge, the storeowner who witnessed the killing was detained by police against his will, his security equipment seized without a warrant and he has received death threats.

Chris LeDay, who also received another video of Sterling's killing and posted it on



Facebook, was later detained when he was returning to work at a military base. He was handcuffed, shackled and booked into jail for traffic tickets.

We need transparency and oversight of the police. Although many killings have gone undocumented, past and present, the videos that do exist lead to demand for necessary change. Those videos also can't help but let us "white folk" see that there is a double standard — that people of color are not treated with the same respect and fairness by police that we are.

And, finally, in our wonderful country, we are not free until everyone has the same freedoms and justice is applied evenly to all of us, regardless of color, race, religion or gender.

Julie MacFarlane
 Florence

Gold Star cartoon

Your political editorial cartoon on Aug. 6 comparing Gold Star families' struggles through losing a child with Donald Trump's struggles to build his businesses is very disappointing, and quite frankly, very insulting to Gold Star families.

The cartoon showed Gold Star parents looking out the window of their home with the caption, "Yes we only have one star on our home. But think of the 'YUGE' sacrifices Donald Trump made to get a five star rating on the Trump Towers!" Losing a child in battle is not even in the same realm as working hard to build a business. Not one Gold Star family wanted to earn that star.

How dare you use their devastating losses to push your political agenda? No matter your political preferences, this is just plain cruel and wrong. I expected much, much better from my local paper.

Joni R. Holton
 Florence

Editor's Note: The editorial cartoon in question was created by Joe Heller, a nationally syndicated cartoonist, in response to the recent comments made by Donald Trump during an interview in which he compared his own sacrifices with constructing buildings to those of Gold Star families, who have lost loved ones in war. We believe there was no intention to put down Gold Star families, and we apologize for any confusion this may have caused.

YESTERDAY'S NEWS

MOMENTS IN TIME The History Channel

- On Aug. 16, 1896, while salmon fishing in Canada's Yukon Territory, George Carmack reportedly spots nuggets of gold in a creek bed. His lucky discovery sparked "Klondike Fever," the last great gold rush in the American West.

- On Aug. 17, 1915, Charles F. Kettering, co-founder of Dayton Engineering Laboratories Company (DELCO), is issued a U.S. patent for his "engine-starting device" — the first electric ignition mechanism for automobiles. Prior to his invention, drivers had to use iron hand cranks to start their engines.

- On Aug. 20, 1920, seven men, including legendary football star Jim Thorpe, meet in Canton, Ohio, to organize a professional football league, the forerunner to the National Football League.

- On Aug. 19, 1953, the Iranian military, with the support and financial assistance of the United States, overthrows the government of Premier Mosaddeq and reinstates the Shah of Iran. Iran remained a Cold War ally of the U.S. until a revolution ended the Shah's rule in 1979.

- On Aug. 15, 1961, two days after sealing off free passage between East and West Berlin, East German authorities begin building the Berlin Wall to permanently close off access to the West. For the next 28 years, the heavily fortified Berlin Wall stood as the most tangible symbol of the Cold War.

- On Aug. 21, 1971, antiwar protestors associated with the Catholic Left raid draft offices in Buffalo, New York, and Camden, New Jersey, to confiscate and destroy draft records. The FBI and local police arrested 25 protestors.

- On Aug. 18, 1991, Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev is placed under house arrest during a coup by high-ranking members of his own government, military and KGB secret police. The coup collapsed three days later, but Gorbachev's days in power were numbered. He resigned in December 1991.

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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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