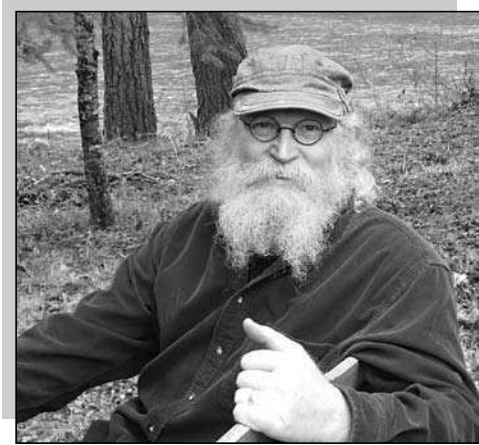


Siuslaw News
P.O. Box 10
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Opinion

VIEW FROM UPRIVER



What kind of nation are we going to be?

WESLEY VOTH
For the Siuslaw News

could — and that we did so without student debt.

He seemed driven to try and be worthy of — and pay back — what society, his culture, his family had invested in him, giving himself relentlessly to teaching, to science and to volunteer effort. His example, high expectations and belief in me continue to make me want to live a life of service to others.

I want to live by the belief that one works not to build up money for one's own, but to improve the life of all, which includes protecting the natural world; a social contract by which I try to live.

I did not expect to be a father myself, having neither the belief in the world around me nor in my own abilities that it would be a good idea. But the time came when my thinking changed, and I'm so glad it did. My own two children and three step-children have enriched my life immeasurably, and despite my parenting blunders, they are loving and forgiving, patient and tolerant. Those are characteristics I most hoped to foster.

Well, that and trying their hardest to make the world a better place.

Susie and I have been able to spend wonderful time with each of them in the last couple of months, and it has been incredibly heartening.

I realize that by the time you read this, Father's Day will be past. But the mantle of responsibility remains year round, and any day is the right time to talk about it. The day

is a reminder that what benefits my children also benefits me in every way that matters.

In the same way, what hurts or threatens my children is of great concern to me. Our children and their partners have educations; some still have student debt; most have poor or no — or extremely expensive — health insurance.

Only one of our children has a job that will result in a pension if enough years are given, while most have no retirement accounts at this mid-to-late 30s point in their lives.

The prospect that Social Security and good national healthcare and Medicare won't be there for them even to the degree that it is now for us is something I find unacceptable. Four of five of my children are female, and there is what I would describe as a religious war in Congress against women's healthcare and reproductive rights.

I don't understand why we are allowing Congress and the current administration to shift programs designed to care for people and broadly share costs to either stop doing so entirely, or do so in a way that mostly benefits the wealthiest among us — including themselves and their children and/or top financial backers.

What kind of nation are we going to be if the expectation is that we each get all we can for ourselves?

I have been reading the "brief history" of how we came to have the safety nets and the Social Security system we do at the SSA website (www.ssa.gov/history/briefhistory3.html). I recommend for anyone interested; it

is easy to skip to the parts of most relevant interest. Especially striking are the comments made by Franklin D. Roosevelt as the originating 1934 legislation was enacted:

"Security was attained in the earlier days through the interdependence of members of families upon each other and of the families within a small community upon each other. The complexities of great communities and of organized industry make less real these simple means of security. Therefore, we are compelled to employ the active interest of the Nation as a whole through government in order to encourage a greater security for each individual who composes it... This seeking for a greater measure of welfare and happiness does not indicate a change in values. It is rather a return to values lost in the course of our economic development and expansion..."

President Roosevelt said that to Congress on June 8, 1934. Then, after signing the Social Security Act, he noted something that I find particularly insightful more than 80 years later:

"We can never insure 100 percent of the population against 100 percent of the hazards and vicissitudes of life, but we have tried to frame a law which will give some measure of protection to the average citizen and to his family against the loss of a job and against poverty-ridden old age."

Is it any wonder why our parents had more optimism about the future of their children than many parents have for theirs today?

I'm writing this on Father's Day, from the front range of the Rocky Mountains just west of Denver, where our only grandchild, now 7, lives. I'm looking out a window, watching prairie dogs foraging in an open grassy area, while taking turns keeping watch for hawks and anything else of concern. Researchers have found that these creatures use a language of alarm calls that differentiate between varying levels and types of threat.

The rapid coordination of who is watching and who is eating is a study in group benefit. Each adult serves watch in turn, and each one gets to eat in turn — and the young work at getting this cadence right.

I learned how to watch and think about wildlife from my own father, Elver Voth. Although much about his life remains a mystery to me, I am very grateful that he, and not anyone else, was my dad. I never doubted that he loved me, and was trying very hard to do what was right. He valued education and life-long learning above all else, and made great sacrifices to see that all of his children went as far academically as they

LETTERS

REMEMBERING HARLEY

There was real sincerity in Harley Youngblood's velvet voice on local radio that will surely be missed here in his beloved Florence.

I know because I had the honor of writing radio news copy for this famed broadcaster;

while also serving as Harley's adjutant back in early 2000 at our Florence VFW Post.

As a radio personality and leader of local veterans, Harley was seamless in how he transitioned from his folksy monologue into reading radio commercial messages with real passion. This translated as fierce loyalty to fellow citizens and veterans who joined this wonderful man in celebrating patriotism; because "our" Harley was all about duty, honor and country.

He was the real deal and this veteran will miss his always-friendly greetings when running into Harley around our town.

—Dave Masko
Florence

ALLOW OUTREACH EFFORTS TO CONTINUE

Hunger is alive and present right in Florence. Food for the weekends is provided to hungry children because of the kindness of a church in our midst.

Lunch is served to hungry folks at the United Methodist Church through efforts of several churches in town, as well as the Helping Hands Coalition.

I have been a volunteer at Helping Hands for several years. I know many of the folks who come for a noon meal. Most are food insecure due to a disability and/or lack of income to provide the funds for food, shelter, medicine, etc.

I am hopeful that the City of Florence will

allow Helping Hands a place to continue its outreach to serve those in need.

I can't imagine how any caring person would object.

— Jan Hirsch
Florence

REACHING OUT NOT THE SAME AS A 'HANDOUT'

My son-in-law works for the USAID extension within the State Department. He has visited more than 40 cities in 17 countries. I asked him what his definition of a vagrant was. He talked about the millions of people who live in the illegal slums around the cities in Pakistan, Mexico and South America. He said those governments have given up trying to disband these communities, and churches have set up schools for the children.

Sanitation is minimal and electricity is scarce.

What is the American version of a slum?

Inner-city tenements and subsidized housing are only available for some of the people who need them. Where do the rest of the homeless people live here in our country?

Wikipedia defines the word "vagrant" as: The condition of living without a home or regular employment.

The terms "handout" and "humanitarian aid" are both defined by Wikipedia as: "Something given freely to those in need."

The true definition of each is determined

by human perception and belief.

Should disabled veterans who live in their cars be defined as "vagrants?"

How about families who have lost their home because of medical bills from extensive hospitalizations?

Shall we categorize teens who have been forced out of their homes from abuse or drugs as "vagrants?"

Let's come up with a term for young couples struggling to pay rent and utilities while working minimum wage jobs.

Helping Hands Coalition for the homeless has been tirelessly searching out a building in Florence in which to serve hot meals for these same types of "vagrants."

I hope our community and the Florence Planning Commission will reach out in support of these efforts.

— Sue Thornton
Florence

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR POLICY

The Siuslaw News welcomes letters to the editor as part of a community discussion of issues on the local, state and national level.

Emailed letters are preferred. Handwritten or typed letters must be signed. All letters need to include full name, address and phone number; only name and city will be printed. Letters should be limited to about 300 words. 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, argumentative and anonymous letters or poetry, or letters from outside our readership area will not be published.

Send letters to:
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The First Amendment

Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press, or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances.

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Siuslaw News

Published every Wednesday and Saturday at 148 Maple St. in Florence, Lane County, Oregon. A member of the National Newspaper Association and Oregon Newspaper Publishers Association. Periodicals postage paid at Florence, Ore. Postmaster, send address changes to: Siuslaw News, P.O. Box 10, Florence, OR 97439; phone 541-997-3441; fax 541-997-7979. All press releases may be sent to PressReleases@TheSiuslawNews.com.

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DEADLINES:

Wednesday Issue—General news, Monday noon; Budgets, four days prior to publication; Regular classified ads, Monday 1 p.m.; Display ads, Monday noon; Boxed and display classified ads, Friday 5 p.m.
Saturday Issue—General news, Thursday noon; Budgets, two days prior to publication; Regular classified ads, Thursday 1 p.m.; Display ads, Thursday noon; Boxed and display classified ads, Wednesday 5 p.m. Soundings, Tuesday 5 p.m.

NEWSPAPER SUBSCRIPTION RATES:

In Lane County — 1-year subscription, \$71; 10-weeks subscription, \$18; Out of Lane County — 1-year subscription, \$94; 10-weeks subscription, \$24; Out of State — 1-year subscription, \$120; Out of United States — 1-year subscription, \$200; E-Edition Online Only (Anywhere) — 1-year subscription, \$65.

Mail subscription includes E-Edition.
Website and E-Edition: www.TheSiuslawNews.com

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