

Siuslaw News
P.O. Box 10
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Opinion

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

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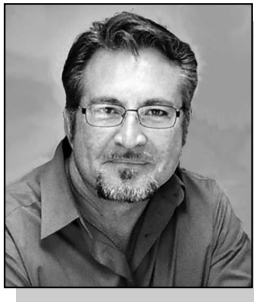
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An unexpected goodbye

The first column I received from Mapleton-area columnist Wesley Voth began like this:

This is my favorite time of year here: leaves turning color, harvest and abundance, frequent warm sunny days and clear nights, and salmon in the river. But I wouldn't feel the same appreciation if there were no seasons, and everything always remained the same.

Yesterday afternoon, almost a year to the day after reading those words from Wesley, we learned that our long-time columnist and friend had passed away just as the leaves he loved so much were turning color during his favorite time of year.

Wesley began writing for Siuslaw News years ago, offering his perspectives and insights twice a month through his "View from Upriver" columns, which always began with his appreciative descriptions of the natural beauty in his area.

His love for the land and keen observance of the intricacies of life around him were

often used as a creative metaphor reflecting — much like the seasons — the changing issues we face as a community.

It wasn't until becoming editor a little over a year ago that I had the pleasure of getting to know Wesley through our regular exchange of emails twice a month. I discovered a man who was what he wrote: Contemplative, insightful and always gravitating toward nature as a means of keeping perspective and, in no small way, his sense of self.

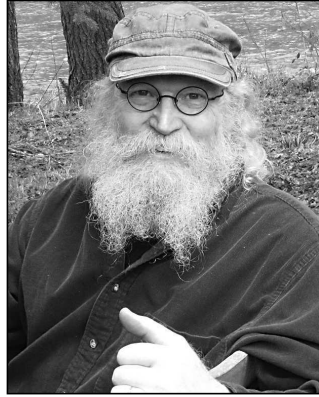
About a year ago, Wesley wrote the piece "Speaking Up" (Oct. 15, 2016), which was markedly different from his earlier pieces. Though he included his signature nature-based metaphor, his tone and message were inherently stronger:

We all have opportunities to stand up — and speak up — against abuse wherever we are. Who knows how many lives we improve by doing so?

Or how many we let down when we say nothing?

In his email, he was almost apologetic, explaining that he felt an obligation to speak out a little more, and beyond the parameters of life "Upriver."

"We all live along the river, so to speak," he wrote. "I feel the need to say more."



Wesley Voth

And he did, telling readers in his Dec. 3, 2016, column "The Challenge of Making a Difference:"

I feel a better sense of the scope of the problems facing our time, and the efforts underway to do something about them. I'd like to focus my efforts as I make my resolutions for the New Year.

I can start with an easy, but important one: Read and make use of the editorial page of my local newspaper.

In the months that followed, he utilized this space to help all of us gain a sense of scope on the problems facing our time, and did so with eloquence and a heart tempered with his keen appreciation for life and nature.

A week ago today, his final piece was published on this

page. He opened his column like this:

Here in Mapleton, it is the golden time of year. Our signature trees, the big-leaf maples, are turning the richest of yellows and are joined in this by alder and buckthorn, wild cherry and knotweed.

Cedar and redwood also shed a portion of their fronds in autumn, and this yellow brown detritus joins the leaves in covering another pumpkin-colored fruit of our woods, the chanterelles.

Upon hearing of his passing yesterday, it was a reminder of the fragility of not just life, but those within each of our lives who contribute to the moments of beauty we experience — even without our taking the time to appreciate them.

It brought me back to that column of Wesley's and his words from a year ago:

I wouldn't feel the same appreciation if there were no seasons, and everything always remained the same.

Though Wesley has moved beyond the earthly seasons of Mapleton, our appreciation of him will always remain ...

Write to editor Ned Hickson at nhickson@thesiuslawnews.com, or c/o Siuslaw News, 148 Maple St., Florence, Ore. 97439

LETTERS

VOTE 'YES' AND SLEEP BETTER

In a few seconds, with the stroke of pen, you can make a difference in the life of more than 1,350 children at Siuslaw Schools 97J by voting to renew Local Option Levy 20-281.

Though it's too late to mail in your ballot, there's still time to bring it to the Florence Justice Center drop box; it must be done by 8 p.m. this Tuesday, Nov. 7.

Help maintain smaller class sizes, fund electives, provide needed technology upgrades and ensure better safety and security for our Siuslaw K-12 students.

You'll sleep better at night knowing you said "yes" to a better future for our students, our community and our country.

—Rachel I. Pearson,
School Volunteer
Florence

HELP SERVE OTHERS THIS THANKSGIVING

The Kiwanis Club of Florence, which has been serving the Florence area for more than 30 years, could not accomplish its goals without help from local businesses and citizens. Its largest fund raiser is the Flag program, which raises about \$12,000 each year.

Kiwanis puts out about 450 flags 10 to 12 times each year, weather permitting. If there is a flag in front of a business, it indicates they are a sponsor and are committed to helping Kiwanis and the community.

Part of this money is spent on hosting the annual Kiwanis Thanksgiving Community Dinner. This event is free to all and requires more than 80 volunteers to serve about 600 dinners to area residents.

Kiwanis wants to thank the Elks Lodge 1858 and the Siuslaw High School Key Club for the volunteers they provide, as well as River Cities Taxi for helping people who need assistance getting to and from the dinner.

Anyone who wants to volunteer two to four hours on Nov. 22 and/or Nov. 23 is encouraged to do so because the event can use the help. I promise that the act of giving back to your community will be remembered forever. Those who would like to help can email gjvawter@yahoo.com or visit www.florencekiwanis.org

—Gary Vawter, Co-Chair
Kiwanis Thanksgiving Committee
Florence

DANGERS OF FALSE ARGUMENTS

In Ian Eales' Letter to the Editor (Oct. 28), he attempts to argue that gun regulations have no effect on gun violence.

He describes a period in which gun homicides in the age range 14-24 have increased, but doesn't relate that finding to regulations, and no study is identified. He adds that gun deaths outside that range have dropped.

Certainly, by inference one might suspect that that was because of regulations; and an appeal to our emotions by referencing the violence in "Miami Vice" does little to reaffirm this argument.

Finally, he jumps to England to argue his point based on a historical study by Joyce Lee Malcolm, a staunch advocate of the Second Amendment. The problem with this argument is that it's based solely on the opinion of one historical writer who leapt to the conclusion that gun restrictions led to more crime.

Gun control advocates argue the opposite.

Unfortunately, Mr. Eales does nothing to validate his argument by identifying well-researched studies published in journals with peer reviews that look specifically at the relationship between gun violence and regulations.

More and more university based studies are finding that regulations *do* reduce gun violence. Dr. Daniel Webster, director of the Johns Hopkins Center for Gun Policy and Research, in an interview with Media Matters, pointed to a growing body of research showing significant reductions in gun violence associated with permit-to-purchase laws.

In this society, when tens of thousands are slaughtered each year by guns, and three times more are seriously injured, it is dangerous to offer false arguments that regulations do nothing to help stop the carnage.

Congress needs to fund more valid research on the connections between gun violence and gun regulation.

One could benefit from Sir Francis Bacon's expression: "Knowledge is power."

—Michael Allen
Florence

TAX PLAN: MIDDLE CLASS SUBSIDIZING THE WEALTHY

With the terror attack in New York earlier this week fresh on our minds, the President and the Republican leadership

just announced their tax reform and budget plan. The proposed budget would cut \$156 million for the anti-terrorism program for the fiscal year beginning Oct. 1, 2018. Cutting the budget for anti-terrorism programs doesn't seem like the route we ought to be going.

Wealthy Americans, like our President, would benefit from the repeal of the alternative minimum tax and eventual complete phase-out of the estate tax by 2024; the estate tax only applies to estates worth \$5 million or more. This only helps the top one percent of American taxpayers; in short, it takes money out of the economy and allows the very rich to become even richer.

Corporate taxes under this "reform" will be slashed from 35 percent to 20 percent. This has been a demand by the President, with the theory being that corporations will use this extra money to raise wages and create jobs. In the 1980s this was referred to as "Trickle Down Economics."

It didn't work then and it won't work now. The corporations will use that money to pay higher dividends to already wealthy shareholders and pay higher bonuses (in the millions of dollars) to corporate CEOs

The budget would cut nearly \$1.5 trillion from Medicare and Medicaid over the next 10 years even though, throughout his campaign, the President promised he wouldn't touch Medicare and Medicaid.

Yet there it is on the chopping block.

Middle class Americans will lose a valuable deduction on state and local income taxes, also known as SALT. That means most of us will pay taxes on taxes already paid to another governmental agency. The child tax credit would be increased from \$1,000 to \$1,600, though the \$4,050 per child exemption would be repealed.

Additionally, it is estimated that this budget and tax reform plan would add somewhere between \$1.5 trillion to \$2.4 trillion to the nation's debt. In the past, Republicans have been all about eliminating the national deficit.

Once again, the middle class and the poor are being used to subsidize the very wealthy of this country. We should all feel betrayed and angry — and we should let Washington, D.C., hear our collective "No."

—Marybeth Marenco
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 only be published at the discretion of the editor.

POLITICAL/ELECTION LETTERS:

Election-related letters must address pertinent or timely issues of interest to our readers at-large.

Letters must 1) Not be a part of letter-writing campaigns on behalf of (or by) candidates; 2) Ensure any information about a candidate is accurate, fair and not from second-hand knowledge or hearsay; and 3) explain the reasons to support candidates based on personal experience and perspective rather than partisanship and campaign-style rhetoric.

Candidates themselves may not use the letters to the editor column to outline their views and platforms or to ask for votes; this constitutes paid political advertising.

As with all letters and advertising content, the newspaper, at the sole discretion of the publisher, general manager and editor, reserves the right to reject any letter that doesn't follow the above criteria.

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