

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.

"I never considered a difference of opinion in politics, in religion, in philosophy, as cause for withdrawing from a friend." —Thomas Jefferson (1800)



PHOTO BY NED HICKSON/SIUSLAW NEWS



Though we live in a time where the lines that divide us seem more clearly drawn than ever, this Memorial Day I hope we can unite in solemn appreciation for the men and women throughout our nation's history who sacrificed themselves so that we can live — and even disagree — as Americans.

As adults, we tend to complicate things and ideals. It's days like Memorial Day that I'm reminded how a child's pure, unbiased perspective is sometimes our best source of wisdom.

It's been 16 years since we introduced our oldest daughter to the meaning of Memorial Day. She was seven then, but I still remember the short gusts of warm wind on my neck, the earthy smell of

Sharing the meaning of 'Little Flags'

the fresh-cut grass, and the hushed snap of small American flags standing like sentries next to dozens of tombstones along the hillside at our local cemetery.

"How come some of them have little flags, and some don't?" my daughter asked.

From the Editor's Desk
Ned Hickson

It was near sunset as we strolled among the tombstones. Though we didn't have any family members buried there, I thought it would be a good opportunity to explain the meaning of Memorial Day to her.

"Do you know what war is?" I asked.

"When people fight," she answered, then clarified herself; "A whole bunch of people."

"That's right, but do you know why they fight?"

She thought a moment,

then shook her head.

"Well, they are usually trying to protect something," I explained. "Like where they live, or their beliefs, or the right to express themselves. These little flags are for people who fought for you and me — so that we could have all those things."

fabric of stars and stripes waved in the evening breeze. Hugging her knees to her chest, my daughter surveyed the hilly grass and the long shadows stretching away from the setting sun.

"There sure are a lot of little flags out there," she said finally.

"Yes, there are."

She was silent again, and I began to wonder if I had laid too much reality on her.

After a moment, she stood and brushed grass from the seat of her pants.

"C'mon, Dad," she said, and reached for my hand.

"You ready to go?"

"Uh-huh," she said. "After we fix those other flags down there. Some of them fell over. We need to make them straight."

This Memorial Day, take time to notice the little flags.

There are many.

And they all deserve our attention...

LETTERS

HELP DAMAGED BIRCH TREES

I was so sad to find the farthest west birch tree along 27th Street by the middle school stripped of all its bark along the base of the tree.

I have always been taught that when a tree is stripped of its bark, it will die. Several other trees are badly damaged as well.

I encourage some new plantings, some more education, and reminding the community that trees are alive and vital to our town and our health... for many reasons including cleaning the air, providing shade and habitat, preventing soil erosion, etc.

Step lightly upon the earth and she will sustain you.

Meanwhile, can the damaged area(s) be banded in an effort to save the tree(s)?

—Ivy Meadow
Florence

RAIN CAN'T DAMPEN RHODY DAYS SPIRIT
My wife and I moved to Florence 20 years ago, and

if I could place a bet on the weather twice a year, I would have an 80 percent chance of winning.

As I am writing this, it is our Rhody Days weekend — and it is raining. The other rainy time of the year is Halloween.

However, the liquid sunshine

during both celebrations does not seem to deter the web-footed Oregonians or visitors enjoying themselves.

Go Beavers, Ducks and flatfooted visitors.

—Win Jolley
Florence



WHERE TO WRITE

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