

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)

LETTERS

INCLUSIVENESS, COMPASSION AND POSITIVITY

I'm sure that in Bruce Jarvis' letter ("Honest Debate Needed For Better Decisions," 1-9-21) he didn't really mean that if anyone wants "inclusiveness and positivity" that they need to leave Oregon or Florence.

He mentions that "our town" was built by loggers and fisherman. That is certainly true but this country was also built by robber barons who had little compassion or concern for those very loggers and fishermen — only for their own pockets and bottom line.

I don't know exactly which letters to the editor Mr. Jarvis is referring to, but I hope it's not those recent letters objecting to the annexation of Oceana Drive and certain parcels into the City of Florence.

If it is, then I don't see any strong debate that he mentions allowed by COF Planning Commission. In fact, any comments and evidence allowed in (virtual hearings and meetings) on that subject have been cut off in mid sentence or not audible to the hundreds of residents that have no say or vote in the matter and are being totally ignored.

So all, and especially the Florence City Council, let's have some inclusiveness, positivity and compassion for the hundreds of older citizens that are going to be so negatively impacted by this possible annexation that not one resident of the Oceana and adjoining streets and subdivisions wants.

Even though we do live north of Oregon's southern border, don't you think we're entitled to that ?

—Jeff Talbot
Florence

LIKELY ONLY THE BEGINNING OF THE MAYHEM

I had always thought of Florence as a very liberal town, so I was shocked to see in the *Siuslaw News* general election results that Trump was so heavily supported by those in the community.

It is interesting to consider that, statistically, a neighbor randomly spouting off about Trump may very likely be complaining to a Trump supporter. The theory that the election was stolen may not get as much legal traction as the Russian collusion theory, but it is very real in the minds of tens of millions of Americans.

What we saw in the Capital last

week may likely be only a beginning of the mayhem. Many of the 74 million Trump supporters are very angry and unlikely to yield.

Biden cannot unite the country as Americans by bashing them and Trump. One must remember that Weather Underground bombed many federal buildings in an angry attempt to push the country left.

Imagine what might be done to push it back? Those gloating about a win may want to consider the prize they have won, an attempt to govern a very divided people.

—Bill Shepard
Mapleton

SHOW SOME RESPECT

I find it telling that even the local PUD had the awareness to lower the flag out of respect for the officer murdered while defending the capital building from domestic terrorism.

But not our City Hall.
So Mayor, *do* blue lives matter?
Show some respect for those who have fallen defending our Democracy.

—Edward Gunderson
Florence



As I've mentioned before, I lived in the South for 10 years, with six of those years spent in the suburbs of Atlanta. In the early 1990s, I was a restaurant chef operating in one of Georgia's largest shopping malls — three stories of glass, sale banners and merchants spanning six football fields' worth of mall space.

As you can imagine, I've dealt with as many personalities as there are seats in a 280-capacity dining room. The fact that Rufus Valentine dug such a deep groove in my memory should tell you a little something about the man's character.

The first time I saw Rufus Valentine was during the Atlanta Braves' heyday in February of 1992, when all of Atlanta was anticipating the spring — and a run at the World Series.

Essentially, you could be completely naked; but as long as you had a Braves cap on you were considered properly attired by most Atlantans.

So, when Rufus appeared in his red tights, heart-shaped wings, and Braves cap at the west entrance of the Lenox Square mall, I and most others assumed he was there to express his love for Atlanta's baseball team — at least until I saw the bow and arrows.

But even then, I could see that he was harmless. The arrows in his quiver were tipped with foam rubber — red, of course — and in the shape of hearts.

Considering the date, I made the connection and realized we had a Braves-loving Cupid on

The message of Rufus Valentine

our hands.

I'd dealt with worse things.

The complaints started soon after we opened. Since our restaurant was

dried to the point of splitting. He gave me an appreciative nod and sipped, then blurted "fettuccini Alfredo." He laid the menu down and pointed to the

Valentine, that's exactly what happened.

When my shift ended, it was near dusk. Along the sidewalks, automated lamps had started humming to life. As I approached the parking tower, I noticed flashes of red and blue spilling from the shadows of the underground level where I was parked. The closer I got, the more patrol cars I saw.

At the edge of the drive, yellow crime scene tape had been strung. Taking a spot among a crowd of onlookers, I saw a white sheet — and the callused hand of Rufus Valentine protruding from beneath it. Next to him, his wings lay in a crumpled pile.

I later learned that Rufus Valentine — born Rufus Jones in 1936 — had left the mall that day and taken his message to the parking garage. It was there that he encountered a street gang and attempted to "spread the love."

He met the faces of prejudice and hatred instead.

With the approach of Martin Luther King Day, he always comes to mind.

And, also, no small measure of guilt. Had I left him alone to do his work, or brought him lunch, things might have turned out differently.

Even though he's no longer here to sling his arrows, I hope we can take his message to heart — and spread the love: one brother, one sister at a time.

Note: I originally wrote this editorial in 1998 during my first year at *Siuslaw News*. It's my way of honoring Rufus Valentine and carrying on his message — a message that seems particularly important on many levels at this moment.

From the Editor's Desk

Ned Hickson

situated closest to the mall entrance, we got the brunt of unhappy mall dwellers.

"Hey, there's some guy shooting people with rubber arrows out there," one of them said, brandishing the arrow in question and rubbing his cheek.

With security nowhere to be found, I decided to settle the matter myself and strode out the door — and was immediately tagged.

"Got you! Spread the love, brother," Rufus said, as if he'd tossed me a box of chocolates instead of nailing me with a rubber arrow.

"Excuse me, but you'll have to stop with the arrows. My customers are complaining," I said.

In that same instant, he plugged a passerby who turned and gave *me* a dirty look, spouting something about restaurant promotions getting out of hand.

A sudden ebb in the shopping current allowed me to grab his attention.

"Hey, it's almost noon. How about lunch on me?"

"What'cha got?"

"Come in and find out," I said, ushering him inside and up to the counter in hopes of containing him through the lunch rush.

Sitting there at one of the stools, his wings protruding from either side of the chair back, he drew more than a few stares.

item, as if I wouldn't know it otherwise.

"Coming right up," I said, and took the menu. As I turned to ring in his order, I saw him reach for his quiver.

"Hey," I said, one hand on his drawing arm. "Here's the deal. No matchmaking until after lunch."

He studied me for a moment, then set his bow on the counter. "I'm no matchmaker. I'm just tryin' to spread the love — one brother, one sister, at a time."

"That's a nice sentiment; just don't do it in here, OK?" I said and released his arm.

I think everyone has said things that they wish they hadn't. In the top 10 of my own regrettable phrases, that one ranks right up there. First, because of my tactics to control him. Second, because he called me on it. And third, because I wouldn't get the chance to take it back.

With the smell of parmesan and cream sauce in the air, this obviously hungry man stood from the counter, grabbed his bow and quiver, and left the counter.

"People need love more than I needed fettuccini Alfredo," he said, and exited the restaurant. When he kept going, I considered myself lucky.

He could become someone else's headache.

Unfortunately for Rufus

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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.

Letters that are anonymous, libelous, argumentative, sarcastic or contain accusations that are unsourced or documented will not be published.

Letters containing poetry or from outside the Siuslaw News 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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