

EDITORIAL

Oregon Trail is a two-way street

The political leadership in the West needs to take note of the growing number of farm families that are picking up stakes and moving east.

In the 1840s, white settlers from east of the Mississippi River started making the arduous journey west, pushing up the Oregon Trail to the Pacific Northwest.

Others followed the trail to Fort Hall in present-day Idaho, then turned southwest on the California Trail to reach the gold fields of the Sierra Nevada and the farmland of the Central Valley.

Land was cheap and opportunity was within relatively easy grasp. The West offered fewer restrictions than were in place in the established eastern communities.

Many longtime farm and ranch families proudly point to their pioneer heritage.

But over the last decade or so, there's been a small but growing number of farm families picking up stakes and moving east of the coastal states to escape tough business climates.

It's a reverse Oregon Trail of sorts, with modern day emigrants moving to Idaho, Montana, the Plains and the Midwest.

While it hardly can be described as a mass exodus, people are noticing an uptick in the number of farm operations moving east.

"People have talked about moving for years and years, but now people are actually doing it," said Ryan Jacobsen, manager of the Fresno County Farm Bureau in California. "Statistically, it's still probably a blip on the radar. But it's crazy that it's actually happening."

Farmers cite several reasons for moving: seeking less crowded places; political concerns; COVID-19 protocols; estate taxes, regulations and associated costs; opportunities for expansion; "climate migrants" fleeing drought; and farmers seeking more secure water supplies.

The common thread is that farmers and ranchers are moving to places where they believe their businesses, and families, can better thrive.

The tax and regulatory climate on the West Coast has made it increasingly difficult for family farming operations.

Carbon policies have made fuel more expensive. COVID-19 regulations have reduced the availability of labor, and thus have reduced yield while increasing costs.

State legislatures have grown openly hostile to agriculture, proposing gross receipt tax schemes that would turn the already precarious economics of farming on its head.

They have adopted alternative energy policies that encourage converting farmland into wind and solar energy facilities. They've proposed increasing riparian buffers. They have restricted common pesticides, herbicides and fumigants.

Most farmers can't pick up and leave. But, they can sell out to bigger operations.

Through increased regulation and legislation, state governments will hasten the consolidation of the industry, and the ruin of the rural communities that depend on a viable population to thrive.

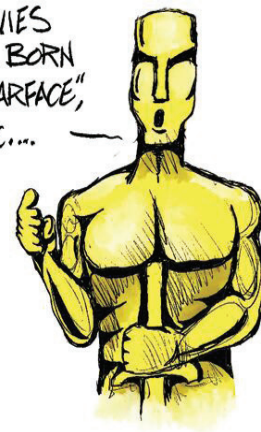
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WE REGRET THE INCIDENT AT THIS YEAR'S AWARDS!...



...DESPITE MOVIES LIKE "NATURAL BORN KILLERS," "SCARFACE," "KILL BILL" ETC....



...THE OSCARS DO NOT CONDONE VIOLENCE OF ANY KIND...



...BUT IF YOU'RE ONE OF THE TENS OF MILLIONS THAT DIDN'T WATCH THE OSCARS, YOU MISSED A GOOD FIGHT!



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YOUR VIEWS

Candidates should reject attempts to quell free speech

Isn't it ironic that a Republican candidate running on a freedom platform participated in a forum sponsored by Baker County Republicans with "rules" that violated basic rights?

I attended a local Republican Party event hosted for candidates for governor where "rules" were enforced: No recording audio/video, no livestreaming, and no voicing of support or clapping until the end. Penalty: eviction; no second chances. Rules were imposed with no consideration to out-of-towners, citizen journalists nor those with disabilities who might want to watch/listen to the event. Candidate McQuisten's folks were allowed to record and video as "officials" of the event. This twist was not articulated in their "rules."

To enforce their mandates against "nonofficial" attendees, Suzan Ellis Jones (Republican Party chair/candidate McQuisten's campaign manager/candidate McQuisten's mother) had a McQuisten campaign worker actively monitor the room for "violators." When one was spotted, Mrs. Jones ordered the police called and hometown citizens were threatened with forceable ejection in handcuffs. There was no heckling or boisterous behavior before the police

were called; the "violators" were seated on the side wall in the back of the room politely listening to the opening statements. The event became disruptive only after Mrs. Jones summoned the police on peaceful citizens exercising their Constitutional rights at an advertised gathering open to the public.

In an effort to spin this debacle, candidate McQuisten posted on Facebook about the event, further disparaging her hometown citizens and misrepresenting what really occurred that evening. She also claimed that the mandates were common practice, justifying the actions since a few other counties followed the same protocol at their own events.

I am an American. It's not OK to impose mandates limiting lawful behavior because other counties think it's okay to violate our legal rights. It's not OK for a candidate to hide from constituents by imposing such mandates. It's not OK to impose mandates because a candidate is afraid of differing opinions or her performance on stage with her peers.

No candidate should stoop to these measures to quell free speech. We should elect a real conservative Republican for governor, not an imposter.

Susan Bland
Baker City

City, county need to prevent cuts to fire department staff

With regards to the "city ambulance service contract" articles, I must respond! First, this city must not lose its ambulance service availability due to the "lack of delivery of a written county proposal!"

Only seems possible, that the delivery could have been phoned, emailed, texted, or even possible for a walking delivery, between the City Hall and the County Courthouse involved persons?!

What a terrible example of cooperation between community agencies not working well together for the good of the tax-paying citizens of the designated involved areas! Then to further complicate the subject involved, for the citizens to learn due to the "delay fault of delivery" that the situation now affects the status not only of the "ambulance service provider contract," but the possible reduction by 50% of the current fire department staff. This is NOT acceptable in any circumstance. Regardless of name, rank or serial number, there was a lack of responsibility/accountability on the part of the involved agencies. No excuses accepted. Just do your job.

Cheryl Gushman
Baker City

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

• We welcome letters on any issue of public interest. Customer complaints about specific businesses will not be printed.

• The Baker City Herald will not knowingly print false or misleading claims. However, we cannot verify the accuracy

of all statements in letters.

• Writers are limited to one letter every 15 days.

• The writer must include an address and phone number (for verification only). Letters that do not include this information

cannot be published.

• Letters will be edited for brevity, grammar, taste and legal reasons.

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COLUMN

Transfer 'portal' wreaks havoc in college sports

The "transfer portal" sounds like a cheesy prop in an even cheesier sci-fi film, something with lots of randomly flashing lights that allows people to leap dozens of parsecs in a single bound.

And perhaps it is. My knowledge of cheesy sci-films, and the names of their props that seem to have been assembled by a precocious 6-year-old who has more access to adhesives than a 6-year-old ought to, is rather less than encyclopedic.

But whether or not that term has made it into a B-movie screenplay, its definition today belongs solely to college sports — and to football and men's and women's basketball in particular.

And it seems to me that sports, and the way they keep myself and other alumni linked to their universities, will never be what they once were.

The transfer portal that clogs the sports section these days refers to the place, figuratively speaking, where college athletes can go when they're interested in transferring to a different school.

Although this movement, apparently inevitably, is described as "entering" the transfer portal.

It seems there is no other way to get in. You don't jump into the transfer portal, or plunge into it or slip through some concealed side entrance.

With the transfer portal, you just enter. You must.

The portal isn't as new as its recent ubiquity implies.

It actually debuted on Oct. 15, 2018.

The NCAA's idea was to create a clearinghouse where all players considering a transfer could put their names. Prior to the portal, athletes had to get permission from their coach to talk with other schools, and the athletes had to in effect make cold calls to schools where they were interested in enrolling.

But the transfer portal didn't become ubiquitous until the spring of 2021.

That's when the NCAA started allowing Division I athletes in all sports to transfer one time, as undergraduates, and be eligible to play immediately at their new school.

Previously this sort of school-swapping was discouraged, and quite effectively so, by the penalty that undergraduate transfers had to sit out one year before playing (students who had already earned their degree were exempt, in certain instances, by a rule that dates to 2006).

Most conferences also required athletes transferring from one school to another in the same conference to miss a year of competition.

But those restrictions no longer exist.

The change naturally had the greatest effect on the sports that are vastly more popular, and profitable, than the others — football and men's basketball.

The transfer portal is so widely used today that if it were an actual structure it would need to be stadium-sized.



Jayson Jacoby

More than 1,400 football players from the FBS — which includes major conferences such as the Pac-12, Big 12 and SEC — have inhabited (I'm already tired of writing, much less hearing, the verb "entered") the portal during the current eligibility period, which started Aug. 1, 2021.

I'm ambivalent about what is likely the most significant change in college football since the NCAA instituted the limit of 85 scholarships for Division 1 schools (prior to the limit, the top schools could in effect stockpile talent, leaving relatively few of the best players for other schools and ensuring a top-heavy situation).

On the one hand, college athletes, who don't get paid, now have more options to, in effect, market their talent.

(Players are now allowed, through another recent rule change, to profit from their "name, image and likeness," but the new NIL policy isn't likely to benefit anywhere near as many students as the transfer portal is.)

Yet the transfer portal and the much less restrictive transfer rules have also wrought such drastic changes in college football that fans — not to mention coaches — have scarcely had time to adjust to this suddenly unfamiliar situation.

The circumstances at my alma mater, the University of Oregon, epitomize the upheaval.

Just a couple years ago, I would have spent most of the (terribly) long offseason, between the bowl game and the start of fall camp in August, pondering the Ducks' returning players and being able to predict, with a certain degree of certainty, which positions would thrive, due to returning starters, and which might struggle come September.

No longer. Earlier this year, Oregon acquired one high-profile player through the transfer portal — former Auburn quarterback Bo Nix — and lost another — Travis Dye, who was the Ducks' top running back and most consistent offensive player in the 2021 season.

Prior to the portal, Oregon's running back situation would have been set, barring an injury to Dye.

More recently, three key players from Oregon's women's basketball team declared their intention to transfer (I'm fatigued with typing "entered the portal") in little more than a one-day span.

I'll concede that these frequent transfers enliven things, and provide consistent fodder for the dwindling sportswriting departments at media outlets.

Had Nix not moved from Auburn, the major topic of discussion among Duck fans this spring and summer likely would have been the candidates to play quarterback, all of them inexperienced, when Oregon travels to Atlanta to open the 2022 season against defending national champion Georgia on Sept. 3.

But with the veteran Nix in the mix,

it's probable that the young quarterbacks will remain on the sideline.

And, as must be considered all but inevitable, one of those quarterbacks opted for the transfer portal not long after Nix committed to Oregon.

Committed, of course, is the word typically used when a player decides which school to attend.

But it is a word that no longer means what it once did.

In the carefree days before the portal opened, fans could reasonably expect that a player who committed to their favorite school would be around for at least a few years. Players get hurt, of course. And some of the best leave school early for the NFL.

But situations common today would have been unthinkable then.

Dye, the former Duck, is an example. Not only will he not don the Oregon uniform this fall. But after leaping into the portal he committed to one of the Ducks' main rivals in the Pac-12, Southern Cal.

I don't begrudge Dye, or any other athlete, for deciding that they would do better at a different university.

But the portal, and the liberal transfer rules, are quite enough to give fans whiplash, uncertain about who they ought to be rooting for.

In a world where Ducks became Trojans overnight, and Tigers turn into Ducks, the formerly useful team roster rather suddenly seems as useful as a telephone that, like a dog which is prone to roaming, is forever tethered to a cord.

Jayson Jacoby is editor of the Baker City Herald.