

## NATIONAL AG DAY

# Local producers do their part in critical industry

Nothing is more thrilling to a farmer than planting a seed and waiting to see what happens, or a rancher, watching a newborn calf wobble to its feet in the winter fields. Every year about 2.1 million U.S. farmers and ranchers do just that.

Some do their work across thousands of acres; others sow patches of land the size of a small backyard. Still others take former industrial sites in places such as Detroit and Philadelphia and convert them into urban farms.

All are participating in a 12,000-year-old ritual that has allowed humans to escape the role of hunter-gatherer and create a society where big ideas can be pursued. Once crops could be grown efficiently and animals could be domesticated for milk and meat, humans were free to think beyond their next meal.

It's an historic, and international, phenomenon. In China, farmers have cultivated rice for more than 7,500 years. In Bolivia, another ancient crop, quinoa, attracts extraordinarily high prices among so-called foodies in the U.S. In Brazil, ranchers raise beef cattle similar to those first brought to South America from India.

Agriculture is important everywhere, but nowhere is it more important than in the United States. It was agriculture that helped a handful of colonies blossom into a booming economic powerhouse and world leader. Last year, U.S. farmers raised more than \$400 billion in crops and livestock on slightly more than 900 million acres.

U.S. farmers feed their fellow Americans — and much of the world. U.S. wheat, for example, can be found in noodles sold by a

Tokyo street vender, in flat bread baked in a stone oven in Algiers or in a steamed bun sold in a Jakarta restaurant.

Other crops and products fill the shelves of shops and stores around the world, helping to feed 7 billion people.

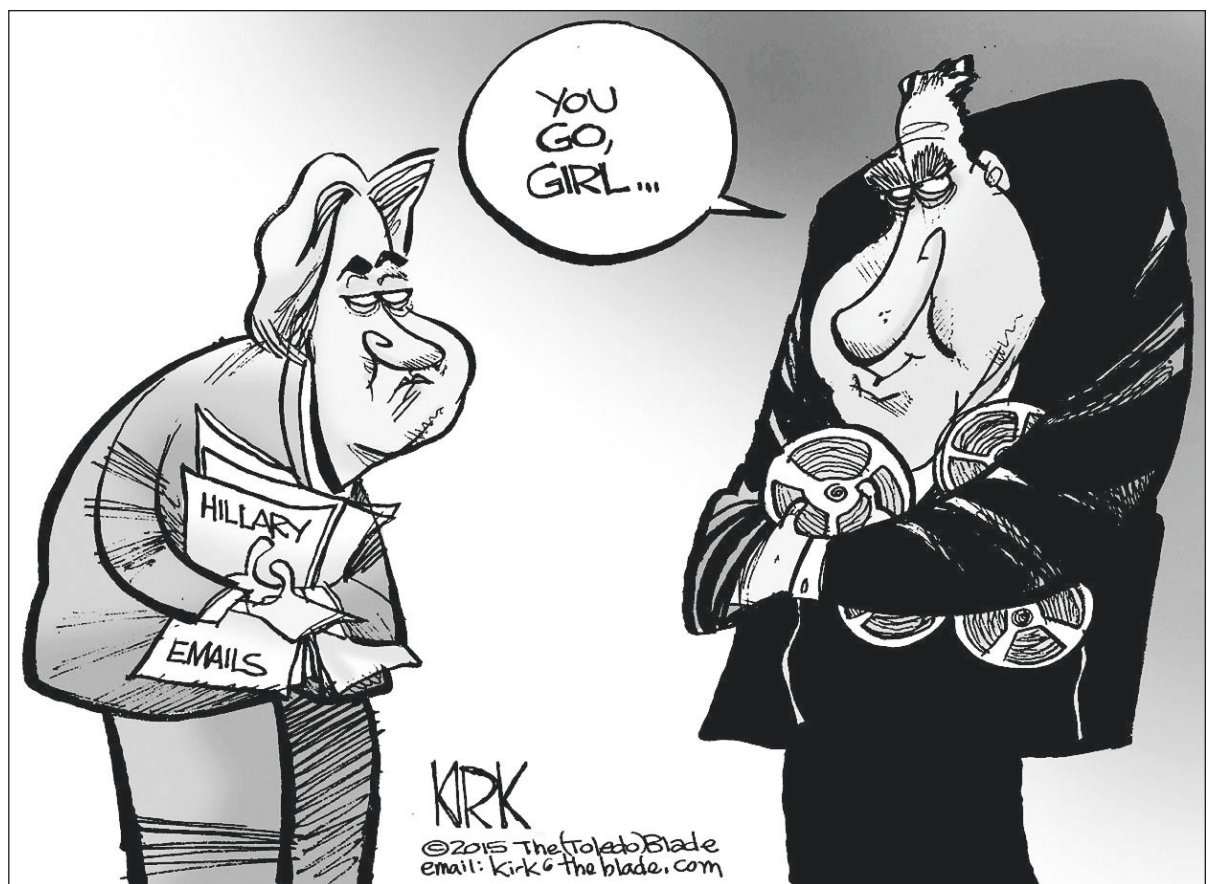
In Grant County, as examined in this issue of the Eagle, agriculture has deep roots in the history of the community. Our ranchers and farmers have long plied a land suited to cattle and livestock, hay production, and in certain areas, fruit orchards and row crops. Their work, cultivating while also conserving, is a keystone for our local economy.

So who is the American farmer? Though statistics tell us that the average age is about 58 and the average farm is a little more than 400 acres, no farmer is typical. Just as every family is different, so too is every farmer. Some families have farming in their blood; they have tilled the land for generations. Others are new to it. Starting small, they add equal parts of inspiration and perspiration in an effort to grow new life and a livelihood from the land.

Ours is a society that reveres high technology. Smart phones, electric cars and all manner of computer-enhanced gizmos are seen as the wave of the future. Yet, without agriculture, without food and fiber, none of that would exist. Before there could be iPhones, there had to be plows and tractors and combines.

National Ag Day is March 18. It is a day to talk about how food is produced, and about the integral role farming and ranching play in society.

And to celebrate an industry that can be called the most important in our world.



## COMMENTARY

## Frohnmayer: Our last progressive Republican

By Steve Forrester  
EO Media Group

Like the death of Sen. Mark Hatfield, Dave Frohnmayer's passing last week reminds us of when Republicans were the mainstream, progressive party of Oregon.

Hatfield and Frohnmayer are an interesting pair, because both retooled universities. Hatfield funneled millions in federal appropriations into the University of Oregon Medical School, making it into the research giant we know as Oregon Health and Sciences University. During his years as president of the University of Oregon, Frohnmayer raised around \$1 billion — a jaw-dropping financial jolt that transformed that institution.

In Frohnmayer's 1990 campaign for governor, one sees the undoing of the Ore-



Dave Frohnmayer

gon Republican Party.

A religion-based Republican splinter candidate, Al Mobley, took 13 percent of the vote in Frohnmayer's race against Barbara Roberts. We've not had a GOP governor in the 25 years since. No Republican holds statewide office today.

Oregon is poorer because it's a one-party state. We miss the richness of legislative experience that produced landmark legislation such as the Bottle Bill and Senate Bill 100, establishing statewide land use planning.

A less observed aspect of Frohnmayer's legacy was his 10 years as Oregon attorney general.

Clatsop County District Attorney Josh

Marquis says that legacy was principally two things: "Frohnmayer remade the Criminal Division, making high-quality assistance available to district attorneys. He also created a really elite appellate unit."

Arguing before the U.S. Supreme Court, the winning percentage of that unit was very high, with Frohnmayer himself winning six of seven cases.

In describing Dave Frohnmayer and paying tribute to his very consequential life, we find ourselves sounding quaint, using words that are out of fashion in our poisonously partisan public arena. Character is one such word.

Steve Forrester is president and CEO of EO Media Group, which publishes 11 newspapers in the Northwest, including the Blue Mountain Eagle.

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### Fully fund FVO job

To the Editor:

A tribute to our veterans: "During the time when many fled, so many more stayed and raised their hands when their country needed them. That service should be celebrated. Their sacrifices should never be forgotten." (Rolling Thunder, Washington DC).

Grant County needs an accredited Veteran Services Officer (VSO) to meet the needs of our veterans. What is required is an appointment minimum of 1,000 hours per year and an opportunity to receive training and testing for the accreditation. An accreditation allows a VSO to function as an attorney-in-fact to represent a veteran to the Veterans Administration.

Without the authority exercised by an accredited VSO, the VA can ignore veterans' claims on a whim or minor technicality and a veteran's claim will fail more often than not. In the opinion of many VSOs and anyone dealing with the VA, it is the largest bureaucracy in the United States with predominantly unmotivated and underpaid employees who would just as soon not extend the effort to help veterans get their entitlements. The VA has plenty of highly paid attorneys representing them, always looking for ways to cut costs to the detriment of the veterans.

It is vital that the local VSO be a well-trained advocate to assist veterans. The Grant County Court needs to be made aware that a potential VSO needs more than 19 hours per week to meet the 1,000-hour goal and be fully trained to meet the needs of our veterans. Like many accredited VSOs in neighboring counties, such a person could also extend the helping hand to those outside our county if the need arose and time allowed. Instead of providing funds to assist the federal government in rewriting their failing forest plan as Commissioner Britton proposes, that money should be budgeted to our incoming new VSO. As it ap-

pears, our County Court is selling our veterans out cheaply.

Judy Kerr  
Canyon City

### The three Cs

To the Editor:

A recent front page article has stirred some spirited conversations in the county, so I'm guessing there are others out there who don't understand the importance of proper terminology when talking about contracts and legal obligations.

Collaboration and cooperation both imply that one party is going to do the work that is prescribed by another party. It implies submission by the party that agrees to cooperate or collaborate.

United States Code Title 16, Chapter 36, Subchapter I, Section 1604 outlines the requirements regarding forest management plans and states that the Forest Service must coordinate (on an equal basis) with the local government's forest management plan. In other words, the act of Congress that created the Forest Service also requires the Forest Service to check with local government plans before implementing any plan or regulation of it's own.

All the County Court has to do is come up with their own plan for managing our forests and the Forest Service is already bound by law to coordinate with that plan.

When someone asks about your involvement, would you rather be a collaborator or a coordinator?

Larry Maplesden  
John Day

### Board too hasty

To the Editor:

I am disappointed with the reporting by the Blue Mountain Eagle, and dismayed by the lack of transparency by the Grant School District No.3 School Board.

The Eagle reported on Page 1 March 4 that Mark Witty had accepted the superintendent position

at Baker School District 5J, and on Page 10 gave a notice of a special meeting of the District 3 school board.

To be discussed was the acceptance of Mr. Witty's letter of resignation and options for hiring a new superintendent. The article failed to mention who was being considered, how the board was going to act, what the board was going to consider and the timetable for the considerations.

At the meeting, Chris Cronin recommended hiring Curt Shelley as the new superintendent.

Item 4.0 of the agenda was to discuss the hiring of a new superintendent. Several new people were there and spoke highly of Curt Shelley and why he should be hired. By their attendance, it appeared they had information the general public did not have.

I told the board I had personally contacted three individuals about their willingness to serve as an interim superintendent. One was not qualified; one was willing, but had prior commitments; the third did not get back to me. I suggested the board consider Grant County superintendents first, and contact the OEA to find retired superintendents who could serve temporarily. This would save money while allowing the board to conduct a thorough search. One board member agreed a rushed decision was not good.

It was alleged that if Mr. Shelley was not hired then, he would accept a position at another district, and he needed to make a decision by Thursday.

The board never discussed the qualifications for a superintendent, nor did they ask Mr. Shelley about his qualifications or goals.

The board voted 5-1 to hire him pending salary negotiations.

I am disappointed that no qualifications were discussed, and no applicants were considered. The public was misled; the board failed to be transparent about how they were going to go about hiring a superintendent.

The board should not be so hasty and be more transparent with the citizens of District 3.

Charles G. Amling  
Mt. Vernon



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