

Letters Argue Pros and Cons on Riverside High School Site

Dear Editor:

Your paper recently published a letter written by an Irrigon resident regarding the Morrow County School Board's selection of the Boardman area as a site for the new Riverside High school. This letter is not being written as a retaliation for the letter "signed" by Mr. Wilson. His letter criticizing the Morrow County School Board for a decision made after much study does not even merit a reply.

Since, however, the letter contained only prejudiced thinking and at least one erroneous statement, this letter is being written in an attempt to give a better over-all picture of the relocation of Riverside High school.

The recommendation that Mr. Wilson speaks about was not a recommendation made as a result of any study, but was the opinion of one person connected with a similar Boeing Project. This person said, in his opinion, he felt that no development should take place within a 25 or 30 mile area. I might point out that if this opinion was followed it would also rule out the Irrigon area as that area also lies within the 25 to 30 mile radius.

More important than this, however, is the fact that the inundation of Boardman is making possible the funds for the construction of the new Riverside High school. I'm sure that it would not appear fair, in the mind of any impartial person, to rebuild the Riverside High school within the city limits of Irrigon. This would result in the Irrigon community having a new modern elementary school, plus the new Riverside High school. The Boardman area would in effect, through its having to relocate, be furnishing the Irrigon area with an additional new school plant and leaving its own community without a school of any kind.

It would seem that in light of the Board's decision to incorporate the two grade schools in Irrigon, the only fair and just decision they could have reached would have been to locate the high school in the Boardman area, thus leaving each community with a modern school plant.

Regardless of whether or not one agrees with the decision reached by the Morrow County School Board, it seems unfair to accuse them of making a prejudiced selection. The Board has spent many hours in research so they could make a decision based on knowledge not a prejudice. I feel the decision reached by the Board, was in their opinion, made for the best interests

of the children in Morrow county. Certainly there is not sufficient difference in the population of the two towns to warrant making a selection based on population alone.

Since Mr. Wilson saw fit to quote material included in an engineer's study, it would seem proper to look into this study a little farther. All the studies made on the relocation of the Boardman town site have projected considerable growth for this area. This would indicate that if the school is to be located in the center of the population, then it should and will be located in the Boardman area.

This engineering study, while only an educated guess on future growth, is at least an educated guess and it would seem to dispel any feeling that the school will be located in the middle of a sagebrush wilderness.

In light of the decision reached by the Morrow County School Board, it would appear that the best interests of the county would be served by an acceptance of the decision. Petty feelings should be forgotten and the entire county should attempt to develop a program that will best serve the educational program of the children of Morrow county. The primary purpose of the new school is to provide better education for our children. It is to this end that we should devote our time and capabilities.

Sincerely,
DEWEY W. WEST JR.
Boardman, Ore.

To The Editor:

The letter written by Mrs. Nathan Thorpe in the November 8 issue of the Heppner Gazette cannot be ignored. Her statement made of letting their elected representative speak for them, and her inference that the Irrigon delegation was mob representation is reprehensible. The fact that a good sized delegation of Irrigon citizens saw fit to attend a school board meeting, one that was 'courteous and co-operative' by the boards own statement, could hardly be termed 'mob representation'. These citizens are concerned for the welfare of their children and take an active interest in their community and attended the board meeting to hear first hand the boards decision on the location of Riverside High school.

Mrs. Thorpe's mention of factual material for the school boards consideration neglects to mention the factual information compiled by our elected representative that was presented to



RIVERSIDE HIGH school, now located at Boardman on land that will be covered by water when the John Day dam reservoir rises, is center of controversy between Boardman and Irrigon residents. Morrow County School Board R-1 recently decided that the school will be located on a site in the "Boardman area," a move that is contested by those in Irrigon.

the school board simultaneously. This information from qualified and authoritative persons recommending the high school be built as far from the missile as practicable. To even further bear out this recommendation a brief notice in the Parade supplement of the Oregonian of November 11 by Parade's Special Intelligence Report has this to say: "When the U. S. launches a moon rocket, it will have to blast the rocket off from some isolated, uninhabited site. The noise expected from the Nova moon rocket will equal the noise of 5,000,000 jet airplanes and will be intolerable at closer than 12 miles." No one can say whether the moon rocket will be launched from Boardman, but the possibility is there.

Mrs. Thorpe's inference that the delegation's express purpose was to 'pressure' the board for a decision in their favor is unreasonable. As to 'pressure', this writer has wondered since attending that meeting how a county supervisor finds it ethical to whisper in the ear of the chairman when a motion is on the floor, a vote of three for the high school in Irrigon and three for a delayed decision, the chairman obviously in a quandary as to his decision, how is the supervisor justified in whispering in the ear of the chairman. One can't help but wonder where the 'pressure' is.

Mrs. Thorpe's statement of not hiring lawyers raises a question. Boardman hired lawyers and even went to the Supreme Court to try and prevent their seventh and eighth grade students coming to Irrigon when they elected to have the high school in Boardman. In all likelihood they will send the boards decision to the elementary school children to Irrigon if they went

so far to keep their seventh and eighth grade students in Boardman. It seems reasonable to assume they won't want their first grade children travelling twelve miles by bus and will do all they can to keep them there.

One point that has not been discussed to any extent is the safety factor involved in having a school so close to the missile site and bombing range. In the November 8th issue of the Heppner Gazette a news item interested me considerably. The headline, "Navy Plane Bomb Hits Cecil Ranch," the article goes on to say and I quote, "the bomb, which does not carry explosives dug a crater 12 feet long, eight feet wide and three feet deep, sizable steel chunks were scattered about the area." Further on the article quoted Sheriff Bauman as saying, "We're just thankful it didn't hit anyone and that no one was killed." One of the sites chosen by Boardman is in the vicinity of the bombing range, one shudders to think of what could happen if the above episode were to occur in a school yard.

Mrs. Thorpe asserts Boardman will relocate and needs a school, we in Irrigon are well aware of that fact, every town of any size needs an elementary school, but with the nebulous future in store for Boardman it hardly seems necessary to place a high school somewhere in the Boardman area. One of the reasons given for the boards decision was that Morrow County didn't warrant three schools, if that be the case, we would be far better off to consolidate with Umatilla for our high school and not have to tolerate the 'poor relation' attitude we seem to have to combat with south Morrow County.

Yours truly,
Mrs. Ernest Jorgensen

To The Editor:

It is with a feeling of uncertainty that I am writing this letter. It is not now my intention, nor has it ever been, to engage in a personal letter writing debate with any Irrigon citizen. However, I feel that some answer must be made to Mrs. Jorgensen's letter of November 14th, that appeared in the East Oregonian. This letter will be the last one written by me. Any ensuing correspondence will go unanswered by this writer.

Mrs. Jorgensen's letter intimated that I said Irrigon attended the school meeting in a mob representation. Upon referring back to my recent letter I find no mention of Irrigon in the letter. This statement was made because we, the Boardman people, feel that a large group of people attending the school board meeting might give the School Board the impression we were trying to sway their way of thinking with our apparent interest. That is the reason we stayed away from the meetings. This sparked the rumors that we lacked interest in the relocation of the high school.

The factual materials presented to the Board were strictly Boardman's views and opinions on the issue and we had no reason to mention any other prepared reports that were sent to the Board. We didn't attend any of those meetings so we were unaware of any other reports presented.

In connection with the Navy plane inadvertently dropping a practice bomb on a ranch near Cecil, I would like to say that accidents can and do happen any time and place. I have heard it mentioned many times that there is a certain amount of hazard and noise present from the Ordnance Depot which is located in Irrigon's backyard.

Mrs. Jorgensen's letter also contained a statement saying in effect "The noise element of the proposed missile site has been emphasized repeatedly." This statement is very true as it has been mentioned over and over again by the Irrigon community in a desperate attempt to find a reason why the school should not be replaced in the Boardman

area. If the noise factor is that important then perhaps Ione should be moved since they are closer to the Boeing missile site than Boardman. Also Lexington is approximately the same distance from the site as Boardman. Studies indicate that there will be only a sound decrease of about 10 decibels between Boardman-Irrigon and Lexington-Heppner. Ten decibels difference in sound is hardly audible to the ear as stated in the studies of the rocket test site in relationship to the new town of Boardman made by the planning firm in 1962. It would appear then that if sound is to be a big factor, there is no good school location in all of Morrow County.

These excuses presented for placing the school someplace other than the Boardman area are about as foolish as doing away with a large city because an airplane accidentally crashed on a house or doing away with Seattle because of the Boeing plant and noisy wind tunnel there.

We are not asking for three schools in North Morrow county. All we are asking for is one school to replace the one we are losing because of the John Day Pool. This school has adequately taken care of our needs for the last 40 years plus and would have continued to satisfy our needs for many years to come.

Three years ago Morrow County passed a serial levy that was to have provided Heppner with \$130,000, Ione with \$130,000, Irrigon with \$130,000, and Boardman with \$130,000 to be used in each area for building purposes. Heppner and Ione used their money under the serial levy, then earlier this year the Irrigon and Boardman share was incorporated into a bond issue with additional money for a high school plant in Heppner. Now Irrigon has used their \$130,000 dollars from the bond issue. They have constructed a new addition which gives them a beautiful elementary school plant. This school plant is an excellent building and will be quite adequate to handle the first eight grades from both the Boardman and Irrigon area. All

the Boardman community asks is that the \$130,000 for the Boardman area be used here and not someplace else in Morrow county. We have paid taxes to provide money for buildings in the other areas, now we would like our share.

Mrs. Jorgensen's letter also indicates that they realize an elementary school should be constructed in the Boardman area. Her letter seems to infer that three schools in North Morrow County would be the answer. That is an elementary school in each area with a high school in Irrigon. This statement taken in connection with the rest of her letter would seem to say that the noise and safety factor would be all right for an elementary school but would be too noisy and dangerous for a high school.

One thing that is apparent, if the school is located in the Boardman area we are only retaining what we now have. But if the high school is to be located in Irrigon then they have gained a complete new building plus an addition, while we have lost what we now have with the money received for the school plant being used to benefit Irrigon.

In connection with the rumors that no new townsite has been selected for Boardman I would like to submit the following facts: Approximately three years ago Boardman had a new townsite selected with tentative approval from the Corp of Engineers. Then last fall the Corp decided that the water table might be too high in this area and asked that another townsite be selected. The Boardman planning committee working with an engineer from the Corp then went to work and selected two more townsites. A first choice site and an alternate choice in case the Corps would not approve their first choice. These two plans complete with blue prints for the commercial area, residential area and a possible school site are now being reviewed by the Corps of Engineers at Washington D. C. for approval. I feel sure if the army engineers felt that the "noise and danger" of the Boeing

testing site and the Bombing range in the Boardman area a detriment to the public they would not be planning to replace present facilities.

Conversations with Corp members at Walla Walla strongly indicate that one of these plans will be approved right away. These sites contain over 600 acres of land which will be available for development as soon as the plans are approved.

One more comment and I will terminate this lengthy dissertation. Mrs. Jorgensen referred to Boardman's hiring a lawyer to try to prevent the seventh and eighth grades from going to Irrigon. This statement in a sense is not true. The case was to test the Constitutionality of the 1957 school re-organization law. This suit was entered into jointly with Lexington and Hardman. It was actually a challenge to the School Boards authority to transport grade school students from one school to another without a vote of the people involved. We found out they did have the authority to do this so why should we fight the decision of the school board that was recently made. Here it would appear that Irrigon could profit from our experiences.

Sincerely yours,
Mrs. Nathan Thorpe



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