



Salem Scene

By JACK ZIMMERMAN

Humility may be the most important trait for any holder of elective office.

This conclusion follows an early summer lull between Primary and General Elections, spent pondering goals of candidates and their ultimate assumptions.

The common goal, of course, is to win an election. That means receiving the greatest number of votes and being seated in public office.

Achievement of that goal is assumed a mandate—an order by constituents. Newly seated officeholders often declare they serve at the will of the people.

"The people have spoken and I am here to do their bidding."

A natural reaction—particularly during the flush of victory. But it's likely the least accurate and most hypocritical of any in our democratic process.

People in this case means the public—all the people.

Seldom, if ever, have all the people sanctioned any officeholder via the ballot box. All the people aren't even eligible to register to vote. Among the eligibles, many don't bother. And among the qualified registered, there are any number of reasons for self-disenfranchisement on election day by avoiding the polls.

Who really puts a candidate into office?

What motivates their choice?

How many even know for whom they're voting?

What is the significance of this analysis?

Anyone with all the answers would be capable of almost unlimited power in our society. Some answers are available. The fact others elude the most erudite perhaps lends strength to the system.

When you get right down to it, relatively few people put candidates into office. It's been said nationally about 60 of every 100 persons of voting age go to the polls. Half of those voting cast ballots for winning candidates, 18 vote for runners-up and 12 scatter their votes among others.

In actuality, the so-called mandate is even less significant. During the last General Election in Oregon the state boasted a population of 2,206,000. More than half—some 1,558,033—were of voting age. But only 75 per cent satisfying the age requirement were registered. And no candidate received all the votes possible.

In that off-year election's mostly hotly contested statewide race, Gov. Bob Straub received 444,812 votes. State Sen. Victor Atiyeh got 324,751. Another 1,011 votes were cast for write-ins.

Simply for the sake of example, Gov. Straub's mandate came from less than 20 per cent of all the people. Gubernatorial races doubtless attract a preponderance of those who vote. And if only one in five of all the people make that kind of decision, what does that tell us?

When it comes to deciding for whom we'll vote the reasons are many. Some are motivated by partisan leanings. Others seek candidates from either party who appear to embrace a particular philosophy. Some, we are led to believe, are influenced by charisma. And strategists usually seek name familiarity over everything else to catapult a candidate into office.

A scientific survey of voters emerging from polling places during an even earlier Oregon election tested voter awareness of the candidates for whom they voted only minutes before.

The candidates involved sought seats in the State Legislature. Fifty-seven per cent of voters questioned claimed they remembered names of the legislative candidates. Forty-three per cent had forgotten or never knew.

Of those who professed they knew, only 34 per cent actually passed the test by naming the proper candidate. Seventeen per cent knew the name of their particular Democratic candidate, 16 per cent named their Republican candidate, 10 per cent named some person not running in the race and 14 per cent had forgotten the name already.

None of the figures recited here come as revelations to candidates or to those deeply involved in the election process. Most of both are deeply aware and agonize considerably over the facts before making the decision to seek office and throughout campaigns once the decision to run has been made.

Humility. In light of the facts, every officeholder should emerge from the election process humbled by conditions under which the office was obtained.

It needn't destroy one's self-confidence. Indeed, achieving the goal should be an ego-builder. But only a colossal egotist permits conceit to rule modesty.

About the picture

Mel Boyer's crop dusting planes are right in tune with bi-centennial 76's.

(G-T Photo)



The Heppner Gazette-Times

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Communications

& Comments

Heppner vandalism

Many persons are reporting vandalism and theft in this community. Possessions are stolen from porches and lawns. Shrubbery was taken from the landscaping in front of the new medical clinic building. The county fair buildings and several church buildings have been damaged. The effort to perpetuate a little, pioneer, one-room school house as an annex to the County Museum has been set back several times by vandals.

Early in the history of the school house project—in fact as soon as the building was moved into the city park in the spring of 1975—persons seemed to be challenged to rob it, to deface it, to mistreat it. Windows were broken; loose furnishings were hauled away; the blackboards were ruined.

After the installation of the locking front door and new windows, the vandalism continued. The door was torn open recently and the building entered again. This last weekend persons picked the putty out of the newly installed window edges. It is hoped that the good citizens of the community will be watchful and protective of this pioneer, educational shrine.

Some children have asked, "What is that old wreck of a vacant house doing in the park?" Seems that their parents haven't explained that it is a special exhibit, a genuine pioneer school. It was set back in the park so that it does not take up too much of the picnic area or playing lawn—and it seems that its location has been a collecting spot for hoodlums, for people without pride in this community's fine pioneer heritage or in its outstanding, prolonged, educational development.

The total completion and furnishing of this educational shrine will move slowly. Persons who believe in it and who want to contribute furnishings, are now rather fearful that their gifts will be stolen or wrecked before the community sees their historic value and appreciates their worth.

Why should such destruction go on in Heppner?

JUSTINE WEATHERFORD
Head Librarian,
Heppner Public Library

Davidson letter rebuttal

EDITOR:

I am writing in reference to the letter from Greg Davidson that appeared in the Gazette Times last week. Maybe Greg should pick up his Gazette and read about concerned citizens who contribute to their community instead of only taking from it.

I believe that the present staff of the Gazette is trying to publish a straightforward, informative paper. At least no individual or group is ever intentionally hurt, as were many in the 1974 "Mustang" edited by Mr. Davidson.

SHANNON KELLY

Swim parents thankful

EDITOR:

As President of the Heppner Swim Team Parents, I wish to thank you for the excellent article in last week's Gazette concerning our Swimming Team and the coach, Doug Sams.

We appreciate the information on our swimming program and the excellent quality of instruction available.

The parents thank you for your interest and support.

DAN JAMES, Pres.
Heppner Swim Parents

THE GAZETTE-TIMES

Editorial & Viewpoint

Fascinating and disgusting

It's funny what the bicentennial will do to some people.

I guess it just drives some of them crazy.

Last Wednesday, vandals apparently shinned up the flag pole and stole the United States flag from the rodeo grounds.

The Heppner Lions put plenty of time, money and effort into the flag pole and 24 hour lights that let it wave proudly all hours of the day.

The flag wasn't just any flag, either. It had waved over the capitol in Washington, D.C. and only through diligent correspondence with Al Ullman, did Heppner gain the asset.

Now, un-bicentennially, un-proudly and absolutely un-Americanly, that flag is gone.

The Lions only hope the person or persons that took that flag will have the same amount of nerve and bring it back. No questions will be asked . . . just put the flag back where it belongs, waving proudly.

Maybe you haven't noticed. Maybe there's more trash on the streets. Somebody took two of the painted trash cans.

Now what can you do with a bicentennial trash can?

Fascinating and disgusting.

W.C.P.

A CITIZEN'S SALUTE TO HIS COUNTRY



The great body of Americans will be engulfed this year by the combined reverberations of the Bicentennial celebrations and the clamor of the forthcoming local, state and national elections.

The United States of America survived a frail infancy and grew to become the bulwark of the Free World and in this 200th birthday year it is fitting that its people should examine and reflect upon the basic causes of their nation's stability and leadership.

What are our characteristics as a nation? Have we accomplished all that we might in our span of two centuries? What do we look for in our elected officials? These are profound, complex inquiries and each might present a dozen answers.

Perhaps the most appropriate period for reflection upon America's attributes will fall in the 21 days between Flag Day, June 14, and Independence Day. This period was selected for an effort to deepen the familiarity of all citizens with the nation's cultural heritage, constitutional form of government and history and to commemorate the anniversary of American Independence.

Congress bestowed official sanction upon the Honor America concept by passing a joint resolution of approval on June 9, 1975, and the measure

was signed into law by President Ford four days later.

An interesting historical parallel occurs here. Since 1875 our country's presidential salute has called for the discharge of 21 guns. The American custom was adopted from the British, not only by the United States but by many other nations as the highest national honor, so that the 21-gun salute is now a widespread international practice.

So arises a unique opportunity for every American personally to dedicate the interval between Flag Day and Independence Day as a 21-day salute to flag and country. The grand climax of the Bicentennial celebration will fall on a Sabbath weekend, July 4th is on Sunday.

Every citizen who is concerned about the integrity and ethical purposes of the country should slip into his chosen church or temple to seek spiritual guidance so that he or she may shoulder a share of the burden in keeping the nation viable and progressive. The United States can't maintain its world leadership through guns and dollars alone. It must display moral fibre.

Those religious edifices will be ready, as they always are, to illumine the way, to buoy the fainthearted, to identify paths to our goals. It's up to you, as a thoughtful, concerned citizen to apply your spiritual and intellectual resources to Honor America in this manner.

Start arranging now—today—to make attendance at sacred exercises an essential part of your Fourth of July holiday program. Focus attention on the speakers in the pulpit who will read the Scriptures and enunciate the truths which weathered the test of time for centuries before 1776. America needs your presence.

Perhaps out of this contemplation the finer shadings of the Bicentennial story will emerge and will show clearly how and why the United States became the bulwark of the Free world. And for similar reasons the strengths, capacities and motivations of our political candidates may be more distinctly outlined.