

# VIEWPOINT EDITORIAL LETTERS COMMENT

Yes I am Angry

Guest  
Editorial

This letter, signed by the "Cop Down the Street" was written by a policeman from Molalla. We don't know who he is and, in the final analysis, it probably doesn't matter. As he says in the letter, he represents and is a symbol for "every officer in every city, county and state in the U.S."

For years we have heard parents complain about police harassment because some officer has stopped one of their children who was "only drinking a little beer" or smoking a little pot. We've heard these same parents say "all the kids are doing it now" or "kids will be kids".

We have witnessed parents who would refuse to believe that their children would do such a thing...A mother screaming at a police officer that her daughter wouldn't drink while the daughter sat there in a drunken stupor giggling "oh yes I would."

The letter that the Molalla police officer wrote answers those parents movingly and with much more eloquence than any editorial writer could muster. The police officer's writing is from the heart.

Parents in this state owe that unknown "Cop Down the Street" a debt of gratitude for reminding them of the responsibilities that are theirs and their children's. They owe him a debt of gratitude of caring.

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Central Oregonian

This is an open letter to the parents of all young people everywhere. I am writing in response to some of the many questions that you ask me daily. I am not one police officer, but I represent every officer in every city, county, and state in the U.S.

You may only know me as the cop who gave you a ticket last summer for doing 45 in a residential area but I am much more than that. I am also the guy who lives down the street from you in the yellow house with the brown trim. I am a parent of three children and I share with you the same hope, ambition, and dreams that you have for your children. I am faced with the same problems you are in trying to raise my children to be responsible citizens and leaders in an irresponsible, permissive society. I share with you those same moments of agony and ecstasy associated with a son or daughter's first big love. My eyes brim with tears of pride as do yours when a son catches a touchdown pass that wins that big game. I share with you the feeling of shame, guilt and disappointment when my boy or girl gets into trouble.

You ask me why do I harass your kids for speeding down city streets. Why do I make such a fuss about kids drinking a little beer? What is the big deal over smoking a little pot? Curfew violation!! Big deal!! These are only a few of your complaints but they deserve an answer so I will try.

Each of these complaints, although they might be minor, have something important in common. They are violations of the law. The real harm done in each case is that the law has been violated and respect for those rules and principles that regulate and great society are disregarded. To show contempt for these minor laws may eventually lead to a disregard for all law. When that happens, everyone is a loser. I am in no position to teach respect for the law. That is your job as a parent. You are morally responsible for teaching your young people proper principles. Your failure to do so will invariably result in bitter disappointment, grief and feelings of guilt. You say you are too busy; you don't have time, because you are struggling to make ends meet in an inflated, runaway life style. I would remind you that there is no achievement or worldly success that can compensate for your failure as a parent. You are angry with me because I called you down to the station at 3:00 in the morning and all he was doing was drinking a little beer. Sure he is a little drunk now but he'll be O.K. in the morning. Besides that, everybody does it so what's the big deal! Well I am a little angry, and sick inside when I am called out to an accident scene

involving liquor. Let me tell you about one I covered.

The scene is a long stretch of highway with a sharp curve at one end. It had been raining and the roads were slick. A car traveling in excess of 80 mph missed the curve and plowed into an embankment where the car then became airborne and struck a tree. At this point, two young people were hurled from the vehicle; one into the tree, the other onto the roadway where the car landed on him, snuffing out his life like a discarded cigarette on the rough asphalt. He is killed instantly and is the lucky one. The girl thrown into the tree has her neck broken, and although she was voted queen of the senior prom, and most likely to succeed, she will now spend the next 60 years of her life in a wheelchair. Her white satin formal, blood spattered and crumpled, could have been a wedding gown, but there will be no wedding bells in her future now.

Unable to do anything else, she will live and relive that terrible moment over again many times. When I arrive, the car has come to rest on its top, the broken wheels have stopped spinning. Smoke and steam pour out of an engine ripped from its countings by terrible forces. An eerie calm has settled over the scene and it is deserted except for the lone traveler who called it in. He is sick to his stomach and leaning against his car for support. He is retching weakly and unable to be of any help. The driver is conscious but in shock and unable to free himself from under the bent, twisted steering column. His face will be forever scarred by deep cuts from broken glass and jagged metal. Those cuts will heal but the ones inside cannot be touched by the skilled surgeon's scalpel. The passenger has almost stopped bleeding; the seat and his clothing are covered with blood from an artery cut in his arm by the broken bone end that protrudes from his forearm just below the elbow. His breath comes in gasps as he tries desperately to suck air past his blood-filled airway. He is unable to speak and his eyes, blue and fixed on me pleadingly, are the only communication that he is terrified and wants my help. I feel a pang of guilt and recognize him as the boy I let off with a warning the other night for an open container of alcohol in a motor vehicle. Maybe if I had cited him then, he wouldn't be here now. Who knows? I don't. He dies soundlessly in my arms, his pale blue eyes staring vacantly as if trying to see into the future he will never have. I remember watching him play basketball and wonder what will happen to the scholarship he will never use. Dully my mind focuses on a loud screaming and I identify it as the girl who was thrown from the vehicle. I race to her with a blanket but am afraid to move her. Her head is tilted at an exaggerated angle. She seems unaware of my presence there and whimpers for her mother like a small child.

In the distance I hear the mournful wail of the ambulance

winding its way through the rainy night. I am filled with an incredible grief at the waste of so valuable a resource: our youth.

I am sick with anger and frustration with parents and leaders who think that a little bit of alcohol won't hurt anything. I am filled with contempt for lawmakers who propose lowering the drinking age because they will get booze anyway, so why not make it legal. I am frustrated with laws, court rulings and other legal maneuvering that restrict my ability to do my job in preventing this kind of tragedy. The ambulance begins the job of scraping up and removing the dead and injured. I stand by watching as hot tears mingle with the rain and drip off my face. I would give anything to know who furnished those young people that lethal portion of booze. As I clear the scene, I will spend several hours in reports and several months trying to erase from my memory the details of that night. I will not be alone—the driver will recover and spend a lifetime trying to forget. I know that eventually the memory of this fatal accident will be diluted and mixed with other similar accidents I will be called upon to cover.

Yes, I am angry and sick at heart with trying to do my job and being tagged as the bad guy. I pray to God that I might never have to face another parent in the middle of the night and say your son, Bill, or your daughter, Susan, has just been killed in an auto accident involving liquor, or pot, or drugs, or whatever symptom of social disease they were in possession of.

You ask why did this happen? It happened because a young person stoned out of his mind thought he could handle two tons of hurtling death at 80 mph. It happened because an adult trying to be a 'good guy' bought for or sold to some minor a case of beer. It happened because a powerful alcohol lobby can buy votes in the legislature by approaching those certain lawmakers whose moral intensity is so low, that they are easy prey for special interest groups. It happened because you as parents weren't concerned enough about your child to know where he was and what he was doing; and you were unconcerned about minors and alcohol abuse and would rather blame me for harassing them when I was only trying to prevent this kind of tragedy. It happened because, as people always say, you believe this sort of thing only happens to someone else. For your sake, I hope it doesn't happen to you, but if you continue to permit bad legislation, continue to regard alcohol abuse as a part of growing up, then please keep your porch light on, because some cold rainy night, you may find me at your doorstep; eyes downcast, staring at my feet with a message of death for you.

The Cop Down The Street

## Letters to the Editor

Editor:

I am writing this letter in response to the pamphlets I and others have been receiving about our pets. We would appreciate a public response to the accusations aimed at us through this mail!

Thank you

I and other dog owners thank you, Mrs. Winchester, for the literature on proper dog care we have been receiving! I'm sure each pamphlet is of great importance toward proper care and exercise of our pets.

"So why don't you read any of them?" These pamphlets deal mainly with shelter, feeding, watering and exercise of dogs.

When I exercise my dog two or three times daily, with the same amount each of food and water, and have it considered by you to be not enough, I say come up and help me. You will of course supply your own dog food. Or better yet, steaks, if that is the main staple of your pets. I'm sure my pet would love it. After all, my 10-month old Lab only weighs 96 pounds. Now that's really underfed!

Not having an air-conditioned car, my dog would rather run to his favorite watering hole, which I'm sure your pets wouldn't visualize even in their worst dreams.

My dog is very contented just to learn the doggy manners of heeling, sitting, fetching, or holding.

Have your dogs learned even the first? Or have you been to busy teaching them to be people?

If you Lois Winchester, truly be the guardian angel of the underprivileged creatures on this earth, then please come care for me. Your dogs have it better than I!

William D. Baker

Editor:

In view of the decision of the Heppner City Council to eliminate funding of the Heppner Public Library for fiscal year 1977-78, the Library Board has been researching alternatives for permanent financing.

Of the four choices of public funding available, i.e., city budget, city serial levy, county library and library service district, the fourth choice is the most equitable and by far the most complicated.

The Board envisions a library service district that would encompass the geographical territory included in the Hardman, Heppner and Lexington precincts as designated for general elections. This is basically the area now served by the Heppner Public Library that has been funded primarily by the city of Heppner. A broader base, as this area would provide, would equalize the tax rate for library support among all those currently being served by the library.

The Library Board is presently conducting a random survey to obtain the thoughts of residents of the proposed district. A member of the Board may be contacting you by phone within the next few days to visit further with you about a library service district. We hope that you will respond with a few minutes of your time.

Anyone who does not happen to be reached by telephone and has an opinion they wish to express, is invited to contact any of the Board members as soon as possible.

Sincerely,  
Heppner Public Library Board:  
Myrna Johnson  
Pauline Winter  
Mary Pat Lande  
Bill Rawlins  
Bill Kuhn

## Deadline change

Because Monday is a holiday, the Gazette-Times asks readers to turn in news and social items by Friday at 5 p.m. if possible.

Classified ads and news items that occurred over the weekend will be accepted until noon next Tuesday.

The Gazette-Times will be closed Labor Day.

## Rountree promoted

Kevin Rountree, a salesman at the Heppner Les Schwab Tire Center, has been promoted to assistant manager of the local store, it was announced this week.

An employee of Les Schwab Tire Centers for the past five years, Rountree came to Heppner earlier this year from Ontario when the Schwab organization purchased Miles Tire Center.

Rountree and his family, wife Ramona and son Brandon, reside in Heppner.

## Farley receives award

James J. Farley, owner of Farley Motor Company, was the recipient of a 25-year award from the Buick Motor Division of General Motors recently.

A sterling silver engraved plate was given to Farley by Zino DeZan, district manager for Buick, at the dealership office in Heppner.

**Wagon Wheel**  
CAFE & LOUNGE  
OPEN SEPT. 5<sup>th</sup>  
**LABOR DAY**  
AND  
OPEN SUNDAY, SEPT. 4  
CLOSED  
SATURDAY, SEPT. 3

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