

The Heppner
GAZETTE-TIMES
VIEWPOINT

Editor's Note: The Gazette-Times encourages and welcomes letters from readers on any subject, however, the letter must be signed to be considered for publication. Writers names will be withheld from publication on request, but the original copy must bear the writer's signature.

LETTERS
FROM READERS

'Another option open to
concerned parents'

Editor:
Animals, but not with human instincts; a scary definition of our children's behavior here in Heppner. However, Mr. Ackley and Mrs. Paine are to be commended for their truthfulness and courage to speak out about a situation I've heard many parents express in private.
There is, however, one probable, irreversible outcome from the Legion Hall dance situation that might not have occurred to parents. Heppner is going to lose a good, competent and concerned teacher—and no one will be more to blame than the parents who have allowed their children to conduct themselves in the manner described in the letters. This is not an isolated occurrence—this is the general behavior of many, many of our Heppner children.
This is one of many reasons that a group was formed this last fall in which many parents are actively working and being educated in order to help the situation.
On Dec. 28, we held a drug abuse panel discussion with approximately 65 people present. The committee and the panel members...felt the problems discussed and information obtained were helpful to all present.
Our next meeting will be Thursday, Jan. 25, 7:30 p.m., Heppner Grade School multi-purpose room, at which time we will discuss the new discipline code being implemented in the junior high school. We issue an invitation to any interested person, parent, teacher, grandparent or concerned citizen to participate. Let's not close our eyes to the problems any longer.

Barbara James
Concerned Parents Group

'Law enforcement, parents to blame'

Editor:
I wholeheartedly agree with Judy Paine and Jim Ackley and their comments in last weeks "Editor" letters. I only hope that after these letters more people will begin to voice their opinions instead of just talking about problems in the privacy of their homes.
The conduct of the youth in Heppner has long been in neglect of doing something about it. People would rather let it go on being as is rather than saying something for fear of stepping on the wrong person's toes. I'm guilty of this myself, but when I think of my two daughters being subjected to indecent, filthy behavior and activities of others, I'm no longer concerned about stepping on anyone's toes or what the repercussions may be to myself.
The first thing I would like to know is where were the "fine" city and county police when all of these activities at the Legion Hall were taking place? They never seem to get in the right place at the right time, nor do they want to get involved in picking up "so and so's" kid because that might not be the "right" kid to arrest. Rather than do this they close their eyes to all of these actions. I can site an instance this fall when the county police were confronted with a situation and I was told, and I quote, "We don't have the time to get involved." Do we, the people of Heppner and Morrow County, have to put up with this type of elected officials? We elect them, yes, but we can also see that they don't serve any longer than need be. In most instances where drugs are concerned, I can see where state laws interfere with their legal rights as officers. But when it is common knowledge by most of the people on Main Street as to who is dealing in drugs, it seems like the city, county and state police could pick up on that knowledge.
As stated in Judy's and Mr. Ackley's letter, I, too, blame parents for not doing a better job of raising their kids with a little character and responsibility. Too many parents in this community don't know what their children are doing and in most instances are just happy to have them out of the house for a little peace and quiet. This world is moving at too fast a pace as it is. Kids in the fifth grade in Heppner are doing what I wasn't permitted to do until I was in the ninth grade. I don't count myself as a prude either, but what business do fifth and sixth graders have going to dances at the Legion Hall in the first place? Some parents will probably say: it is something for them to do, it keeps them off the streets. When did playing cards or games with your children or just plain watching TV at home go out of style? If our children are subjected to these outside activities at the early age of 9, 10 and 11 what is there going to be for them to do when they are 16 and 17? They will have done everything.
Discipline starts at home but it must also be carried out

'Must encourage a different direction'

Dear Editor:
We'd like to claim we don't have many problems at HHS, but Jim Ackley and Judy Payne in their letters last week showed us that the school isn't the only place kids are grinding gum into the floor, writing on the walls, getting stoned, spitting snoose on walls, ceilings, and floors, and smoking up the girls' restrooms.
Yes, a minority of kids are beginning to make going to our school a tough proposition. We're seeing an increase in vandalism. The grounds and lawns are beginning to look like a 4-wheel drive testing ground. The restroom walls are etched with insults meant to degrade anyone trying to maintain a little respect. A girl who goes into the girls' restroom three minutes reeks with smoke whether she's been smoking or not. The covered entrances in the upper building have become havens for smokers. When chased from there, they go behind the shop, up to the ball field, to cars, and finally, as the pressure grows, they skip and drive around downtown.
Pot smoking is a big problem here. Some kids tell us their parents condone it as long as they don't get caught. Catching a pot smoker red-handed is not easy to do. Our right to search is limited. When we do catch someone, it is often turned into a heroic event where the teacher is the bad guy out harassing the students.
To this minority, learning grades mean little. They complain that school is boring, like a jail, and that no one trusts them. They gain attention by notoriety: being late, noisy, generally disruptive in class. Some other students see this and are drawn in, model themselves after the trouble makers and soon find themselves in the same boat—low grades, poor attendance record, and a poor attitude toward getting an education. When the decent kids speak out against this, they are often threatened and attacked for being

in the schools. I know the laws today make it practically impossible for a teacher to use any force. Too bad we can't go back 15 years and use some discipline as was used when my husband and I attended Heppner schools. The old paddle worked wonders for the unruly show-offs. The school building didn't have to be locked at noon time and no one smoked in the restrooms, much less tried to burn them down. Granted, there are some wonderful teachers in our system, but there are also some merely "putting in their time" for pay. Today, in most cases, the child has the upper hand in the classroom. Why can't the teachers patrol the halls and restrooms at noon time rather than lock the building. When I went to school there were no "coffee breaks" or teachers-aids. And as for the parents overheard saying "We can't do a thing with our child," have you ever tried using your hand, a paddle or, if necessary, a belt on their backside to prove who still has the upperhand?

I know Heppner isn't an isolated case with its disrespectful, unappreciating kids, but we are a small community and it is common knowledge by many that something is vitally wrong and only the parents of these children can render the wrong that has been done. If you are one of the parents who says, "My child would never do anything like that," stop and think...where was your child last Saturday night and who was your child with, what was your child doing and when did your child come home? How many of you can answer all of those questions truthfully and feel satisfied?

My main concern is raising my children with good morals and in a community where they will be respected for their morals. Right now I'm not sure Heppner is that place. I certainly don't want them feeling they have to do the "in" things to be well liked and popular. It seems as though the majority is into doing the "in" things. Since when did urinating on the walls and floors, breaking furniture and writing on the walls become such a popular sport? In my view, it is only the mentally deranged or babies who are too little to be taught do activities such as these.

It seems to me that now is the time for the decent kids of this community to speak out against those few filthy individuals who are jeopardizing everyone else's rights. Don't condone them or you are just as guilty.

If nothing else has been said of any meaning, I would like to say thank you to Mr. Ackley for his time and effort in working with the young people of our community. I'm sure some kids appreciate what you have done. Not all the kids are bad weeds and I'm confident that with your continued

"goody-two-shoes." It's almost to the point where even the best kids consider it unethical to "narc" on another kid, regardless of the offense.

What can be done about this? We think the school is trying to curb this behavior. Our new discipline procedure assures a teacher who has continuing problems with a student that the student's parents will be asked to help. If the problem continues, the student will be removed from the class. These kids argue that school isn't their job, that grades aren't worth the effort—and yet strangely demand they be handed a diploma. Other penalties such as our three-to-five day discipline policy aren't being too effective. This is partly because the parents in some cases allow the suspension period to be a little vacation instead of a penalty.

The point is: our young people, lovable or not, need our best efforts. We are trying, but we need to do more obviously. We agree with Jim Ackley that the "decent kids are going to have to pull together and stop encouraging the activities of the few that are jeopardizing everyone's rights." That includes the parents and adults in this community. The attitudes and activities described are spreading like cancer, and cancer seldom arrests itself. We have to find better ways. One solution tried successfully in other schools is to make the consequences for offenders more severe. For example, if every student caught smoking pot at school were suspended for a semester on the first offense, many would think twice before doing it. Now, they are suspended three days and are back in school doing the same thing while they and their friends laugh about it. We're pretty sure the school board would be glad to revise the consequences policies if enough decent kids and their parents requested it. The board's function is to make the school just as good as its community wants it to be, but they have to hear from us.

Strangely enough, the kids who will benefit most from putting the brakes on this behavior are the kids who are doing it. Whether the cause for their attitudes is unstable parents, T.V., drug peddlers, school failure, poor teachers, parents who don't care, or some other factor, our kids in these teen years have to grow to become responsible for putting meaning and happiness in their own lives. They have to wake up to see that they won't find happiness in going on another high, breaking windows, tearing out plumbing, writing obscenities on walls and in library books, spitting snoose in books and fountains, tearing out the ceiling tiles, heckling teachers, cheating, and on and on. Somehow there must be a way to show them a basic law of humanity: happiness comes from behaving decently toward other people and being willing to sacrifice to make others happy.

We admit with Jim and Judy that when you try all day to help kids and receive more and more of the lousy responses described above and see academic standards lowering, you feel, as they did, some desire to "phase out." But that's not the solution. The solution rests with all decent kids, parents, and teachers pulling together to stop encouraging the activities of the few, because by not stopping them, we are really teaching them that these activities are acceptable.

Concerned-but-not-phasing-out teachers,
Gordon Munk John Sporseen Les Payne
Jane Rawlins Ralph Schubothe

help and support the good will prevail. It's not every day a small town such as Heppner gets someone with your talent and concern. I just wish everyone would appreciate what we have in you.

A concerned parent,
Judy Wright

Jr. High council apologizes
for actions of others

Editor:
We, the student council of Heppner Junior High, wish to apologize for the behavior of the kids at the disco dances. It is not always our parent's fault, nor anyone's other than ourselves, as to what happens out of their sight.
We are as much to blame as the guilty ones, because we see these things happening and we are not brave enough to say, "Hey, knock it off or else leave!" The innocent ones should somehow change this and learn to become stronger and stand up to the ones doing wrong. What if some of the more dependable kids formed a committee to supervise these dances to support Mr. Ackley?

One of the first places we need to start is with all the bad language used. What we can't understand is a girl using foul language, but we have heard plenty of foul language from boys and girls. We ourselves are also guilty of this. Our first problem is—we don't respect ourselves like we used to. If we did, we would not have done what we did.

Even if we're not very old, we still know right from wrong. Each one of us kids knows when we are doing something wrong. It would be nice if the kids who caused this to happen had enough guts to come forward and apologize to Mr. Ackley. Then maybe we could have a second chance.

We would like to invite Mr. Ackley to our next student council meeting and maybe we could form a committee to supervise the dances as we mentioned before.

We know every one of the kids in our school respects Mr. Ackley. It is hard to understand why they did this when they tell us they respect him so.

It seems the people like Mr. Ackley are the ones who always get hurt.

It is sad when a few ruin things for everyone and hurt the ones who try to help us.

Sincerely,
Heppner Jr. High Student Council

Sifting through
the TIMES

W.P. Mahoney was elected president of the Oregon Wool Growers' Association, following a convention in Baker 50 years ago this week. Mahoney, a Heppner area sheep producer, succeeded K.G. Warner of Pilot Rock as leader of the statewide special interest group.

During the same week in 1929, Thomas A. Hughes of Heppner arrived in Tucson, Ariz., where he planned to recuperate from a respiratory ailment. Meanwhile, back in Ione, Cole Smith was recuperating from the painful effects of an eye infection, caused by a windborne wheat kernel. Heppner High School teacher Grace Fleming was in a Portland hospital recuperating from influenza.

Thirty years ago this week, the Hugh Samples family of Kinzua began entertaining their neighbors with impromptu radio shows broadcast from a home-made transmitter. The Samples featured the electric steel guitar of Don Brock, backed by the singing and strumming of Sonny Matteson. Third grader Tommy Samples was also a popular local entertainer, as the youngster was able to play the guitar and sing request numbers.

The new indoor radio show was especially popular in light of the fact that the Kinzua community was experiencing temperatures as low as 23 degrees below zero during that week in 1949.

A fund drive by the Heppner post of the Veterans of Foreign Wars succeeded in raising enough money to order a new, fully-equipped ambulance to serve the community, and Hodge Chevrolet in Heppner had taken delivery of its first spanking-new 1949 Chevy.

Morrow Countians 25 years ago were no strangers to unseasonably cold weather such as we have recently been experiencing. The mercury dipped to 15 below zero in Lexington. Heppner had about three inches of snow on the ground, but in Cecil and Boardman, depths of up to seven inches were reported. As it was last week, the Columbia Gorge highway was covered with a solid sheet of ice during this week in 1954, bringing traffic to a standstill.

Bobby Weems of Spray was found guilty in Heppner Justice Court of stealing two sheep from the Frank Wilkinson place near Heppner, then selling the animals at the Hermiston Livestock Auction. The confessed sheep thief received two years probation, and was ordered to repay Wilkinson for the rustled mutton.

It was also a bad week for George Reed, Heppner's newly hired night duty policeman during this time 25 years ago. Reed was moving his personal belongings from Umatilla to Heppner when his truck caught fire a short distance below Butter Creek Junction. The truck and all the new officer's household goods were lost in the blaze.

The heaviest one-day snowfall in 40 years blanketed Heppner during this week 10 years ago. A total of 10 1/2 inches fell on the city during the course of a night, and the following morning, a Saturday, temperatures rose into the 40s, creating a carnival atmosphere for local youngsters.

But the snowfall caused headaches for telephone and power company servicemen. The weight of the ultra-moist snow broke lines and even toppled poles, disrupting power and phone service in scattered locations.

At that time, the heaviest one-day snowfall on record occurred on Dec. 10, 1919, when 12 inches fell on the city. The most snow on the ground at any one time was 23 inches, back in February of 1916.

The 1969 snowfall was so heavy, it broke off an awning covering the entrances to the Wagon Wheel Cafe and Lounge and the Heppner Auto Parts building. It was so deep that a rig used to plow the white stuff off the streets failed to see a fire hydrant at May and Chase streets, and sheared it off. The snow was welcome by area skiers, as it brought the total covering at the Arbuckle Mountain ski area to 48 inches.

Snow was also a problem during this week five years ago, when chinook winds brought temperatures from 10 degrees to 40 degrees in less than an hour. Willow Creek overflowed between Lexington and Heppner, flooding fields and forcing ranchers to move their livestock. Mud and water flowed over the highway in spots near the Ken and Mike Palmer homes, and tons of ice jammed dams and bridges at the Harrison, Way, Palmer and Jones ranches from Lexington to lower Willow Creek.

In Ione, water rushed down Rietmann canyon, sending mud and water down Main Street. The runoff water followed the railroad tracks past Beecher's Cafe and Hubbard's warehouse, on past the Independent Garage and Pettyjohn Oil. Straw bales were used to divert the water from going on down Gooseberry Road.

The sudden thaw prompted the Morrow County Court to impose 10 ton weight limits on county roads, to prevent damage.

...have something
to say?

The Gazette-Times welcomes
letters from readers on any subject
of general interest...letters should
be not more than 250 words

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