

The Official Newspaper
of the City of Heppner and the County of Morrow

**Heppner
GAZETTE-TIMES**

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Morrow County's Home-Owned Weekly Newspaper

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April Hilton-Sykes Editor

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Guest Editorial

Support your local newspaper

By David P. Price, Ph.D.

National polls have indicated that a majority of Americans do not believe their politicians represent them. But beyond that, most Americans feel disenfranchised . . . even hostile. A hostility and frustration that transcends politics. Hard working, traditional Americans that feel no one is interested in their thoughts, values or ideals.

Most are concerned about it . . . some to extremes. The fringes join militia groups; believing that conspiracies are the root of the problem. The reality is quite different. The problem is very real, but it is not a conspiracy. It is an unfortunate coincidence.

The greatest problem facing this country today, is the fact that all our entertainment is based and broadcast from Southern California; whereas virtually all our news organizations are based and broadcast from the East Coast, primarily New York City. ABC, CBS, NBC, CNBC, API, and UPI are all based in New York. Even CNN primarily broadcasts from New York and Washington, D.C. The living rooms and youth of middle America (as well as Canada) are subjected to 24 hrs./day of Los Angeles morality; while news reporting is systematically interwoven with the social mores and political views in vogue with New York and Washington, D.C., based editors.

Middle America is left out. Indeed, among the elite who produce our entertainment and orchestrate our news reporting . . . Middle America doesn't exist. There is L.A. and maybe San Francisco; New York, Boston and Washington, D.C. All the rest is known as "fly-over" country:

With respect to political views, it is easy to see how an anchorman living in a metropolitan condominium cannot identify with the views and needs of Middle America; particularly Rural America. In a city such as New York, government is seen as a provider. Government provides and regulates transportation, water, power and gas; even picks up the garbage. Likewise, the reporter's perspective of government agencies typically stems from interviews with high level administrators; usually selected for their political and public relations skills. A perspective quite different than the small business owner who must deal with the same agency through low level bureaucrats; who see those they regulate as subordinant, and otherwise often take an adversarial attitude.

One of the most basic and primal of all issues is self-defense. The perspective in a city with 30,000 police officers is quite different than a suburbanite whose 911 call will have a response time of 15 minutes (or more) . . . an eternity when confronted with abject reality. Likewise, to an urbane media executive whose every need is attended to by others, the self-reliant ethic of Rural America is seen as arcane . . . even anti-social.

As mentioned previously, this is not a conspiracy; but it is deliberate. Media personnel genuinely believe it is their moral duty to select and editorialize news items so as to present the proper "politically correct" image. For example, gays in the military has been a divisive issue. The media takes every opportunity to report discrimination or abuse of gays in the armed services. To Middle America however, a much more insidious problem is senior gays making overtures to their young and naive sons and daughters. In at least two cases, senior enlisted gays have been court-martialed for forcible/unspokeable homosexual acts on recruits. The New York based media never reported these incidents; but they did get reported . . . in small town newspapers.

To go back to the self-defense issue, small town newspapers routinely report incidents in which citizens have used firearms to defend themselves against criminals. In New York City culture, self-defense is considered a form of vigilantism . . . and it is deemed irresponsible to report on firearms in anything but a negative manner. One might understand the media's position; except for the fact that the intense publicity given to school shootings (including the biographical notoriety given to the perpetrators), has created "copy-cat" tragedies.

Distorting issues alienates many Americans; but the media has actually created a feeling of despair. Honest, decent Americans of traditional values are told they are out of step. To return to the gay issue; most Americans have a strong sense of justice and do not want to see anyone abused. But if we don't want our children taught that homosexuality is a normal, "alternative lifestyle" . . . according to the media we are "homophobic". Likewise if you go to church, believe in school prayer and do not want condoms passed out in school . . . we are part of the "religious right".

If you don't like traditional American values characterized as extremist or intolerant . . . turn it off. News without political slant is available through your hometown newspaper. Except for the very largest cities, most newspapers are home-owned and edited. But beyond that, print journalism is much more professional. Professional in that a good journalist is supposed to report the news without injecting his or her views. If the reader wants opinion, it is available separate and apart; as editorials. This the time honored and respected tradition of abandoned . . . which has unfortunately been abandoned by the networks.

(Editor's note: The author is a professional agricultural consultant who has done work for the U.S. Grains Council; in cooperation with USDA's Foreign Agricultural Service; The Agency for International Development; The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations; as well as private work throughout the world. Based in New Mexico, Price has relatives in the Pendleton area.)

Letters to the Editor

Editor's note: Letters to the Editor must be signed. The Gazette-Times will not publish unsigned letters. Please include your address and phone number on all letters for use by the G-T office. The G-T reserves the right to edit. The G-T is not responsible for accuracy of statements made in letters.

**County budget decisions
painful but necessary**

To the Editor:

As members of the Morrow County Budget Committee, we just completed four days of grueling deliberations over the Morrow County budget for fiscal year 2000-2001.

The effects of Ballot Measures 5, 47 and 50 are continuing to take their toll on our county. Over the last few years, county administrators have worked hard to reduce expenditures, increase revenues and adjust beginning and ending fund balances in order to delay the inevitable effects - loss of services. However, now with another year of virtually no-growth in property tax revenues, the budget committee was forced to make some serious cuts in services in order to balance the budget.

The effects of these property tax measures are especially harsh when it comes to taxing utilities. About 66 percent of the county's property tax revenues come from utilities - and the values of these utilities (like the coal fired plant) are depreciating. As a consequence of this and other factors, such as a limited amount of new construction, and the delaying affect of enterprise zones on the ability to tax certain types of new construction, Morrow County's tax revenues are not enough to sustain local government services. Add to that mix the decline in some other revenues, such as an 84 percent loss in timber revenues since 1990 (a loss of approximately \$300,000 per year) and the rising costs of doing business (like a 20 percent increase in asphalt costs, 20 percent increase in gasoline and diesel and 15 percent increase in health insurance) and you begin to see the problem.

As committee members we have seen this coming. We truly appreciate the county's efforts to

put these cuts in service off. But this year it just couldn't be delayed any longer. Starting the week, the budget committee faced a \$1 million dollar shortfall out of a total budget of \$18.1 million. Only \$3.7 million comes from property taxes received by the county. The balance of the budget funds are received in the form of fees and grants. To balance the budget, staff was cut for certain services that are not mandated by law such as the museum and geographic information systems, as well as some cuts in essential departments, like the sheriff's office and road department. A total of 7.3 positions were eliminated in addition to significant reductions in materials, equipment, etc.

The decisions we had to make were very painful and difficult. We are very unhappy about the loss of staff-and the service that goes with it -but there simply aren't enough funds to continue operating at the same levels the county residents currently enjoy.

As the lay members of the budget committee, we wanted to communicate to our fellow citizens that over the last few years we have seen the county exhibit a tremendous commitment to preserving as many services (and at the highest level) as possible. They struggled continually with the very difficult decisions of how to operate within their means without cutting services and ultimately with where to make the cuts that were necessary but represent the least effect on the services they are mandated to provide.

(s) Vern Frederickson
(s) Leann Rea
(s) Larry Mills
Members, Morrow
County Budget Committee

Cutting Vo-ag, FFA selling short

To The Editor:

I'm as much an advocate for quality education as anyone. So I too think it's unconscionable what state control and lack of funding is doing to our schools.

Supposedly the state's economic climate is healthy, although agriculture and agribusinesses continue to be the floor for the prosperity that others are enjoying. Yet again its producers that are asked to come up with more funding for schools through increased property taxes.

The recreation district was a good move to support sports, art and music to provide students with a well-rounded background. Aside from well-publicized sporting events, the strength and interest in music was well documented by the participation of three band units in the St. Patrick's parade.

But the lack of concern over losing the vo-ag and FFA at Heppner and Riverside flies in the face of our agricultural-based county. Aside from entities such as county or city governments and the school district employees there are mainly two industries, the coal-fire plant and Finley Buttes Waste Management, that are not agriculture related.

In addition to farms and ranches, most of the Port of Morrow industries are agribusinesses that employ

technicians and supervisors, not just assembly-line workers.

The point is that the background basics for the production of food and fiber begins with vocational-agriculture training in high schools. The skills obtained are applicable in everyday life as well as in agri-businesses. Not only are we selling short the most productive future citizens, it's encouraging students to look further afield at other types of careers as we continue to lose future local residents.

Too, this adds to the growing number of people who lose sight of the production of food and fiber upon which they depend. For instance, the eighth grade exchange between Heppner and Gresham student is an eye-opener to students who hardly have a clue as to what is involved in keeping them well-fed and clothed.

Therefore I believe we should wrestle with our conscience when supporting the actions of the school board or the passage of the upcoming bond levy that would delete this important school program and the two teachers who teach same. For again it has been the recreation district that saw the importance of helping to finance field trips, district meets and state-level career development events.

(s) Merlyn Robinson
Heppner

Voters can make a difference in schools

To the Editor:

On April 25, voters in Morrow County will finally have the ability to make a decision at the local level regarding the financing of our schools in Morrow County. The mail-in ballot that will be sent to you that date will ask you to approve a Local Option Levy that will allow the district to collect approximately \$500,000 each year in a serial levy to replace part of the 17 teaching positions that had to be cut because of dwindling revenue support from the state of Oregon to finance our local schools.

Morrow County School District's funding actually went down over \$600,000 in the last year, while student numbers and expenses continued to rise. If passed, this local option levy will add back 10 of the teaching positions that were cut in the district due to funding shortfalls.

All of us in Morrow County are disappointed about the teaching position cuts as a result of this funding crisis. Don't let your frustration over that prove to be short sighted by not voting for the Local Option Levy.

Join the residents of the Pendleton and Helix school districts who recently passed the Local Option Levy. Show support for your schools for lower class sizes and more instruction for our students. We have a quality program in Morrow County. Let's do everything we can to keep it that way.

(s) George Koffler
Heppner

**HHS cast rehearses for
Midsummer Night's Dream**



"The course of true love..." Abby Kahl and Jeff Currin are among the cast members who have recently begun rehearsals for *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. Heppner High School will present Shakespeare's romantic comedy on May 14 at 3 p.m. in the City Park.

Local Angus breeder recognized

Kathryn Healy, Heppner, Oregon, has been recognized nationally by the American Angus Association for having five registered Angus cows included in the American Angus Association's 2000 Pathfinder Report.

Only 1,933 of the more than 34,000 members of the American Angus Association are represented in this year's report, according to Richard Spader, executive vice president of the

American Angus Association with headquarters in St. Joseph, Missouri.

The Pathfinder Program identifies superior Angus cows based upon recorded performance traits that are economically important to efficient beef production. These traits include regular calving and heavy weaning weights, reports John Crouch, director of performance programs for the American Angus Association.

All registered Angus cows that meet the strict Pathfinder standards are listed, along with their owners, in the Pathfinder Report that is published annually by the American Angus Association.

The 2000 Pathfinder Report lists 7,551 individual cows. It is published in the April issue of the Angus Journal and extra copies are available from the American Angus Association.

Vote for Lundquist

To The Editor:

We would like to encourage your vote for Lynn Lundquist for Secretary of State.

Lynn has been state representative for the past several years and we feel he has represented our district well. We have always found him willing to listen to local problems and be part of the solution process when ever possible.

Lynn is a former president of the Oregon Cattlemen's Association and, as such, understands the problems with agriculture and has a good understanding of the problems of rural Oregon.

Please join us in voting for Lynn Lundquist for Secretary of State.

(s) Larry and Betty Mills
Heppner

Wants info, license plates

To the Editor:

Dear citizens of Oregon,

I am doing a state report on your state of Oregon. I wouldn't mind any old license plates that you don't need or want. I will get a better grade if you send any in. I also need any information on

early historical facts, like what kind of Indians you have and their culture and who and when explorers came and why. I would appreciate any of your information.

(s) Matt Wuestenfeld
10301 Hampton Drive
Anchorage, Alaska 99516

Allergies and Asthma Sufferers:
We are looking for 5 to 10 people to evaluate a state-of-the-art home air purification system at no cost or obligation to you.
To participate, call 1-800-336-9781.

April 20th - Thursday
FISHERMEN'S NIGHT: Oysters, catfish and BBQ beef with all the trimmings. Prizes Galore! Drawing for a fishing rod and reel, color TV and satellite system and more! Get there early for tickets. Dinner starts at 6 p.m.

April 22nd - Saturday
Annual EASTER EGG HUNT: preschool at the city park; grades 1-2 at the grade school lower field; grades 3-4 at Hager Park. Hunt starts at 10 a.m. SHARP! The Easter Bunny will be at the city park so have those cameras ready!

BINGO ON WEDNESDAYS! NOW STARTING AT 7:00 p.m.

HEPPNER ELKS 358
676-9181 "Where Friends Meet" 142 North Main

Willow Creek Water Park
Family Season Pass: \$125 • Individual Season Pass: \$60
• Spa Pass: \$25 Layaway Plan Available
Call 676-5752, leave message; or call Bobbette at 676-5217