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The end of the Civil War: The 150th anniversary

When we were teenagers, my “the South’s gonna do it again” younger brother bought into some weird conspiracy theory that Gen. Robert E. Lee didn’t really surrender at Appomattox Courthouse, Virginia. Lee supposedly thought he was merely handing his sword over to someone for cleaning. (The deniers who concocted the theory apparently also believed that Europeans never really landed in the New World but just filmed it out in the desert somewhere.)



DANNY TYREE
TYRADES!
Cagle columnist

been more passionate. A disturbing number of Yankees just can’t fathom lingering Southern pride and animosity. (“Why can’t they just get over it? Hey, is that Benny Dinglewicz coming out in his front yard? That *&%\$# scratched my snowplow back in ‘93. He’s dead to me, I tell you — DEAD!”)

I rush to get this into print because April 9 marks the 150th anniversary of Lee’s surrender, which for all intents and purposes ended the American Civil War.

One must be careful to specify “the American Civil War,” because civil wars remain a dime a dozen around the globe. Thank goodness we’ll never see another “brother against brother” conflict in this country. No, it would be “brother against sister trapped in a brother’s body” or “blue against gray trapped in a turquoise uniform” or...

Ahem Well, at least there’s no more chance of a full-blown War Between the States, with all its sacrifices and upheavals. Or is there? (“Please! We’ll wear rags on our feet and eat rat-on-a-stick! Just please ignore our neighbors and give our state that professional sports franchise!”)

The string of 150-year milestones over the past four years has given teachers an opportunity to excite students about history. Many young scholars have had a lot to learn. (“That marching song ‘Eatin’ Goober Peas’ — it goes all the way back to Hootie and the Blowfish, doesn’t it?”)

Yes, students have learned to pay rapt attention to descriptions of the horrors of war. (“Yeah, yeah — amputated legs, shrapnel in the eyes ... We want to hear about the coping mechanisms of the poor soldiers who had their texting thumbs amputated!”)

People from all parts of the country have been interested in the Civil War sesquicentennial, but Southerners have probably

After sesquicentennial festivities die down, we’ll hear less and less about regiments, blockades, ironclads, raids, massacres, charges, campaigns and the like. People suffering from vicarious combat fatigue will welcome the change, but others will suffer withdrawal. (“It was nice to hear about a few ‘campaigns’ that the Koch Brothers didn’t have any money in!”)

Civil War reenactors will find slimmer pickings, but the more dedicated ones will still pour their hearts into their hobby. Maybe drifting public attention will at least weed out some of the ones who didn’t really belong. I mean, if you think “secession” was how your new niece entered the world, you probably shouldn’t be a Civil War reenactor!!!

In a perfect world, interest in the Civil War would now segue smoothly into widespread acknowledgment of the sesquicentennial of various Reconstruction milestones, but I don’t see that happening. It’s a shame. Reconstruction lasted 12 years, cost millions and produced uneven results. (“TELL me about it,” lamented one aging actress.)

Go out and celebrate heroism and peace on April 9. But be careful about handing over your keys to a valet parking attendant. It could be a trick! (“The South did it again! D’oh!”)

— ©2015 Danny Tyree. Danny welcomes email responses at tyreetyrades@aol.com and visits to his Facebook fan page “Tyree’s Tyrades.” Danny’s weekly column is distributed exclusively by Cagle Cartoons Inc. newspaper syndicate

Q. When Will Hillary Announce for 2016 ?



LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Support BMCC bond

Editor,
The following quote by T. H. White, from “The Once and Future King,” is one of the many reasons I am voting “Yes” on the upcoming BMCC bond:

“The best thing for being sad... is to learn something. That’s the only thing that never fails. You may grow old and trembling in your anatomies, you may lie awake at night listening to the disorder of your veins, you may miss your only love, you may see the world about you devastated by evil lunatics, or know your honour trampled in the sewers of baser minds. There is only one thing for it then — to learn. Learn why the world wags and what wags it. That is the only thing which the mind can never exhaust, never alienate, never be tortured by, never fear or distrust, and never dream of regretting. Learning is the only thing for you. Look what a lot of things there are to learn.”

I live in an average home. By my calculations the bond will cost about “a

dime a day.” That seems to be a bargain for the many benefits of having a vibrant community college in our region.

Please join me in passing the bond.
KIM B. PUZEY
HERMISTON, OREGON

BMCC bond passage critical for companies

Editor,
Our community is fortunate to have a fantastic educational resource in Blue Mountain Community College. Many high school students, graduates and those already employed in our community are getting educated in a variety of methods through this local resource. Like me, you probably know many persons in our community that have received education through BMCC, and I am proud to help support the future of this resource.

BMCC is a vital asset to our region, and an investment in this bond would

continue to allow many members of our community to further their educations in a high-quality setting with a regional impact.

Support of this bond is critical to the future success of the companies that have invested and have created jobs and opportunities for our local workforce. Your support can help ensure that education programs are available to meet the needs of this ever changing and technical workforce. Did you know that nearly 82 percent of BMCC graduates stay in our local region? Let’s ensure that our local students and employees have access to this training right here in our community.

I have lived and worked in this community for over 23 years and understand the importance of educational opportunities for our area.

Please join me in voting YES for the BMCC bond!

DEBBIE RADIE
VP OPERATIONS
BOARDMAN FOODS, INC.

Common Core tests are failures



JASON STANFORD
Cagle columnist

A sixth-grader in east Texas recently challenged state lawmakers to do what she and every other public-school kid have to do during testing season: “Sit in a room for up to four hours, without talking, writing, drawing, reading, or using your cell phone.” Because millions of children are taking Common Core standardized tests this time of year, I did her one better. I took a fourth-grade English Language Arts practice test. The good news is I passed.

The bad news is that the test is basically worthless, highlighting the folly of using standardized tests to measure a child’s ability to read and write. And to the Texas sixth-grader’s point, in no way whatsoever was I able to quietly sit still for that long. Of course, it didn’t take me four hours to complete the sample test. I don’t want to brag, but I’m very advanced for a fourth-grader.

I took a sample test from the Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium, one of two groups doing the Common Core testing. Twenty-one states belong to the SBAC, mostly on the west coast, the Black Hills, New England and some of the Great Lakes area. Other states, such as Alabama, Alaska, Kansas, Pennsylvania and Utah, have voted to pull out of SBAC mostly because their legislatures have political differences with President Obama, and not for any pedagogical reasons.

Common Core — originally a state-driven guideline to make sure Americans got a good education — isn’t a bad idea. Unfortunately, trying to measure the growth of a child’s mind with a standardized test just corrupts the whole process.

To get students ready to take an English Language Arts test, they don’t do what you and I would recognize as reading and writing. An education that prepares a kid to take a standardized test is a perversion of the idea of education.

Completely absent from the sample test on English Language Arts was any literature, A.K.A. the art of the English language. A 9-year-old in the English-speaking world is heir to a cultural fortune, including “James and the Giant Peach” by Roald Dahl, C.S. Lewis’ “The Chronicles of Narnia,” and “Charlotte’s Web” by E.B. White, among many others. Sadly, this canon is not aimed at our children.

Instead, a prepubescent test-taker will have to read antisepic “selections.” In one passage that recalled Native American folk tales but was not described as such (depriving the student of any cultural appreciation of literature), a coyote dresses up like a bear to steal honey. It was so boring I had to make blinders of my hands to force myself to focus on the text.

Then there were the questions, some of which seemed confusing for a 9-year-old and some that puzzled a middle-aged columnist. One question asked which sentence out of a paragraph “best supports the inference that Coyote uses his imagination.” A kid could get tripped up on the word “inference,” and it was irrelevant to the concept being tested. Asking what “best shows

Coyote uses his imagination” would have worked better.

Then there were the questions that made me want to strangle the committee that wrote this test. None of the possible answers for what “best describes the lesson Coyote learned” had anything to do with the real meaning of the parable, and a student is asked to decide whether a particular metaphor about a “tree’s belly” is humorous, playful or surprising, even though humor is often playful and surprising. Maybe I shouldn’t be surprised that people who write standardized tests do not fundamentally understand humor.

The writing portion of the test was ludicrous. Students were given a business card-shaped rectangle in which to record their analysis. You could replace this entire test with a book report and come out ahead. Actually, you could probably buy every child in America first editions and come out ahead. The price tag on SBAC tests in California alone is \$1 billion.

We’re so focused on measuring children that we’ve stopped developing them. These tests don’t measure what we want our children to learn and are a waste of money. That Texas sixth-grader has a point. I can’t sit quietly. This test is failing our children.

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