

## Hermiston Herald

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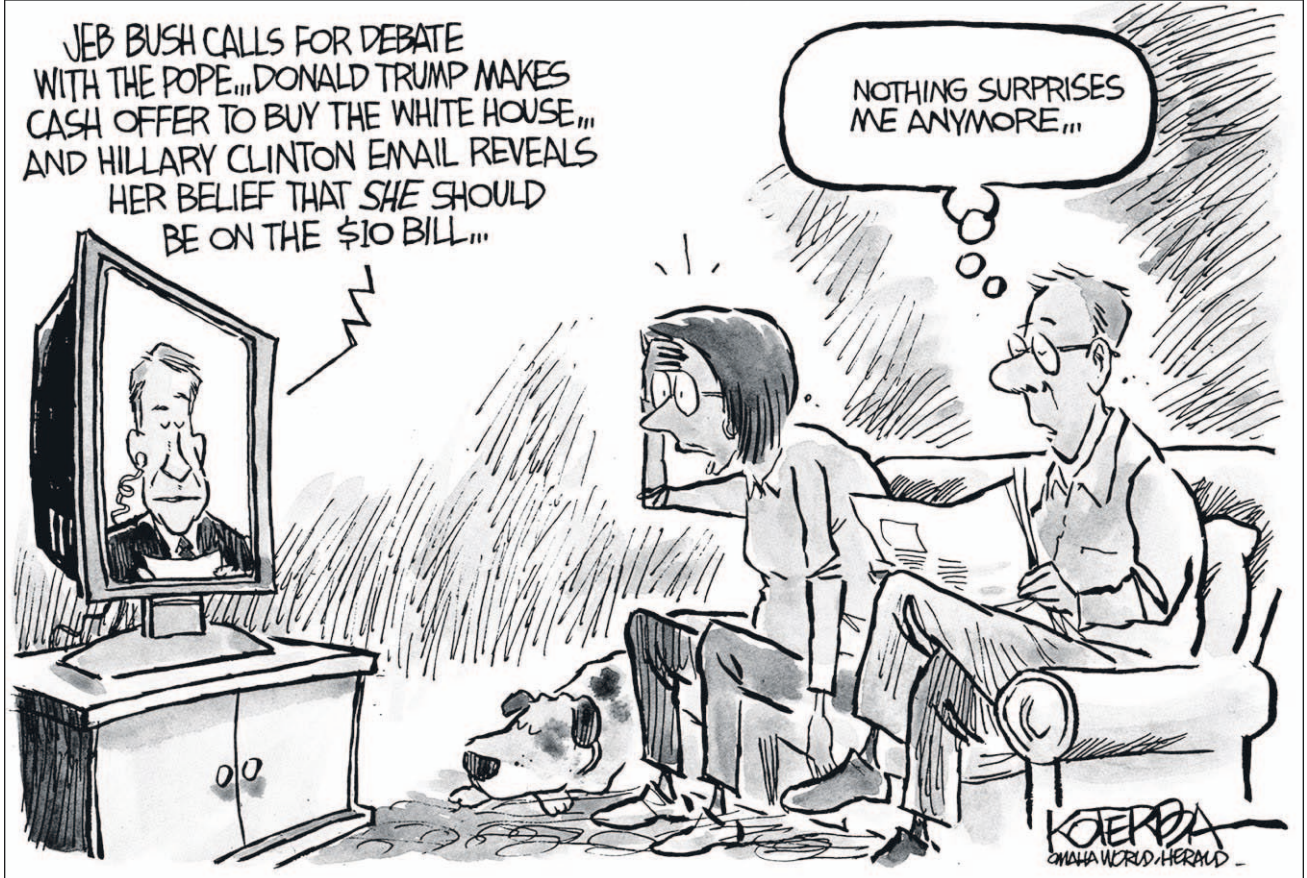
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## Gray zone — What the heck's coming?

Times, they are a changing. Of course, times always change, otherwise we'd be trapped in the Dr. Who episode, "The Wedding Of River Song."

Time also seems to be moving in a big circle. What goes around, comes around, so to speak. The Hermiston Herald is moving back to the content it had when I first began writing columns for Timm Collins' "lifestyle paper." The Herald will now be "a redesigned newspaper, celebrating Hermiston's past, present and future."

This has me wondering what this column should focus on. If the paper is going to look more toward historical celebration, maybe a move to a more pedantic history discussion would be in order. It'd give me a chance to put my undergraduate history degree to use, something you don't see every day.

On the other hand, this is supposed to be an opinion column. It's a bit difficult to have an opinion about history. It's like having an opinion about water. Maybe there's room for opinions on what it was and what it will be, but history's not the best topic going forward.

Perhaps "celebrating" would be better. Certainly, in my opinion, celebrations tend to be good. Music, food, drink, fun, revelry with wild abandon ... but those are kind of difficult to work into a written column. Descriptions, yes. But the actual music, etc., not so much.

A shift back to educational columns might be in order. New subscribers may not have seen the "how to run your court case" series. Or the condensed version of the series that ran sometime later. Yet another flavor of column would be a mild-mannered "brain droppings" one. Those columns are an aggregation of five or six lead paragraphs that are "good ideas, but just can't be stretched out to 600 words all that well." The serious version of stand up observational



**THOMAS CREASING**  
OFF THE BENCH  
Herald columnist

comedy, as it were. "Hey, how about that new ethics law coming out of Salem this week?"

The other complication will be that the publishing schedule will change to once-a-week. Will there be a need for two columns a month, arguably celebrating history, as occurs with the current column? Will only one be needed? Or none? A 50-percent cut in column-inches means something — or things — is going to have to go, after all. And my understanding is that it's the Saturday edition that's going away. This is likely to accommodate the Wednesday coupons and grocery fliers.

Nothing wrong with that advertising — advertising is money, and a paper not making money is not going to stay in business, after all. But there is that small part of me that has "Journalism" on his high school class ring (do they even do that any more?) that wonders if maybe they're going the wrong way. Maybe a newspaper should be something more than a means for finding out what's on sale at the local grocery this week.

A good way to decide just what the heck I need to be doing here would be asking the readers of the column what they would like to see, given the new formatting. Education? Discussion? Pedantry? Humor? Reader input with a nod to what the editor wants to see, naturally. In the meantime ... I'll wonder. And ponder.

Ah, the mystery. I can live with it. Until I can't. That's just the "whither now?" opinion of an opinionated guy. Share your opinions and ideas in response! Letters to the editor or by email to hermistonheraldoffthebench@gmail.com. Names of the terminally shy will be withheld on request.

— Thomas Creasing is a Hermiston resident, municipal court judge and Herald columnist

## Personality tests: Jobseekers beware!

“There’s no such thing as a stupid question — but we’re doing our best.”

That seems to be the motto of thousands of companies, judging by revelations in the cover story of the June 22 “Time” magazine.

In hopes of reducing worker turnover and increasing productivity, Human Resources departments are rushing to embrace a new generation of personality tests. Job applicants must give true-false answers to a gazillion statements (say, “I sometimes shop at thrift stores” or “I have been known to straighten a picture frame”). The data is crunched via an algorithm, producing what “Time” calls an “X quotient”, and (before any face-to-face interview) the applicant is pegged as a keeper, a maybe or toxic waste.

HR staffs don’t even care if the applicants tell the truth; they can supposedly divine something from how the applicant tries to outwit the system. So, you can get fired for playing Farmville or Bejeweled



**DANNY TYREE**  
TYRADES!  
Cagle columnist

Blitz on the job, but you get HIRED on the basis of HR playing MIND GAMES with you.

HR directors modestly refer to the analytics as a “tool.” Yeah, like when you walk into your local ACE Hardware and announce, “I’m looking for a tool that can forever change the life of someone who is nervous using tools. Say, do you think the safety could be removed from this skill saw?”

Analytics is touted as a cure for cronyism. Companies can supposedly get away from the limitations of the “old boys network.” And how will it play out in reality? (“Wow! I’ve got the testing budgeted and now hundreds of analytics software vendors are fighting for my business. Hmm...I wonder which vendor knows the secret lodge handshake?”)

Analytics is all about detecting “correlations” and “patterns.” I wonder what patterns we would

find if we interviewed the parents or spouses of some of the HR professionals? (“Yeah, she’s a smug, lazy, trend-chasing pain-in-the-rear at home, too.”)

I suspect that some employers are getting a kickback for embedding advertisements in the tests. My first tip-off was tests including true-false questions such as “I’d like to teach the world to sing,” “I deserve a break today” and “Sometimes I feel like a nut — sometimes I don’t.”

The aspirations of the HR people really trouble me. (“We just want to know our employees — and our former employees, and the people we didn’t hire — better than they know themselves. But not in a CREEPY way! No, more like the way you know your best friend, whom, apparently you have homoerotic feelings for but can’t acknowledge such to yourself.”)

The tests are worshipped as the no-brainer wave of the future. Of course, up until we fought a little civil war, the no-brainer formula for

“hiring” “employees” was to judge them on “Good teeth, strong back, wide child-bearing hips...”

HR directors insist that this is not a fad. (“Now complete your test while sitting on this flagpole and swallowing goldfish.”)

If the personality tests do hang around, I have no doubt that the human factor will eventually be eliminated altogether. As artificial intelligence supplants flesh-and-blood HR departments, we can expect some nightmarish “2001: A Space Odyssey” scenarios.

For instance, the HR chief picks Hoyt Clagwell to be center fielder at the company softball game, only to hear a metallic voice insist, “I’m afraid that’s something I cannot allow to happen. Daisy, Daisy, give me your answer do...”

— ©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

### LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

#### Coverage of special needs community appreciated

Editor,

I am writing to express my appreciation for the wonderful coverage that has been given by the Hermiston Herald to the various organizations in our community that strive to meet the needs of people with intellectual and developmental disabilities. Various articles on the accomplishments of the local Special Olympic athletes, activities provided by The Arc Umatilla County and other events such as the recent Epilepsy Walk have all shed a light on this important segment of our population. I enjoy reading about the good that people are doing to make our little corner of the world a better place!

I would specifically like to thank Jessica Keller for her attention to detail and commend her for thoroughly researching and reporting on issues of interest in our area. I have had the pleasure of being interviewed by both Jessica Keller and Sam Barbee, two fine journalists, who are able to capture the essence of a story and share it in an interesting and succinct manner.

While I do prefer to read my newspaper in a printed version, I also understand the importance of providing more information via the digital format. I am grateful that the Hermiston Herald will continue to provide a weekly printed newspaper. I would

encourage all people who are in support of our community to express that support by continuing their subscription to the Hermiston Herald.

KRISTI SMALLEY  
HERMISTON

#### Computers aren’t a necessity for seniors

Editor,

I do, indeed, strongly agree with the Connie Fisher letter of June 20, 2015, regarding the many senior citizens and many others that do not have computers and do not need them.

Hermiston, the largest city in Eastern Oregon, should not be a once-a-week newspaper city. There is news out there.

I do agree that some need computers, such as the organizations we do business with which rely 24 hours a day on computers. And for what we pay them, they best be proficient in doing so.

However, case in point, we stopped in Boardman last week for directions. We visited a business office for directions to a bank. The receptionist did not know the location. By using her computer for several minutes, it failed to help. Yes, this was downtown Boardman. Oh well, we were in no hurry and found our own way. So much for Boardman computers.

### ELECTED OFFICIALS

#### STATE

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### Letters Policy

The Hermiston Herald welcomes original letters for publication on public issues and public policies. Submitted letters must be signed by the author and include the city of residence and a daytime phone number. Phone numbers will not be published. Letters may be mailed to the Hermiston Herald, 333 E. Main, Hermiston, OR, 97838; or emailed to editor@hermistonherald.com