

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Changes needed at highway intersection

To the Editor:

Recently I witnessed a potential accident that haunts me still today. I was stopped at the light on Highway 395 waiting to turn East onto Elm Street. A flatbed semi and trailer was slowly turning East onto Elm Street. At the curb there were two girls, probably middle school age, waiting to cross Elm Street northward. One of the girls seemed engaged in texting. As the semi part of the truck combo passed, the girl texting stepped off the curb. The truck stopped and the other girl grabbed her texting friend and pulled her back. The truck then proceeded slowly with the rear tires missing the curb by inches. If the truck driver had not been so alert, I feel quite sure I would have witnessed the third fatality at this intersection in the past couple of years.

After the second fatality at the intersection of Highway 395 and Elm Street the children of the first fatality made an impassioned plea for the Oregon Department of Transportation to route trucks away from the Diagonal/Elm Street route to a designated truck route following Highway 730 and Highway 395. This route would increase travel only

4 miles. It would remove trucks from the Diagonal Road which is primarily residential and place them on the 730/395 route which is mostly commercial. It would also make it possible for children along the Diagonal Road to once again be able to use bicycle lane ODOT promised them when they improved the road and placed lanes along the route.

After the second fatality I spoke with an ODOT official about the likelihood of ODOT requiring trucks to use the 730/395 route. His response was they had spent a lot of money improving the intersection of Elm Street/Highway 395, and he doubted they would be interested in making this change. He did say that ODOT had been known to make changes if enough pressure was brought to bear.

After this conversation I wondered at what level of mortality would it take to have ODOT move the trucks off the Diagonal/Elm Street route to the Highway 730/395 route. We know that two deaths in the past couple of years have not done it. Would the death of a child have made any difference?

CARLISLE HARRISON
HERMISTON, OR

So long, Buckaroos, it's been great

There are many ingredients to a great sports rivalry.

First, something has to be at stake. The pride of winning carries some weight, but there has to be an extra motivation. A perfect example are the Los Angeles Lakers and Boston Celtics, two teams from opposite coasts whose ongoing rivalry was borne solely out of both teams' excellence. They've faced off 12 times for NBA titles and both boast deep Hall of Fame rosters.

Proximity is a helpful ingredient, though not necessary. If two teams are based near each other then a win is more than just a "W" in the sports pages. It's a merit of accomplishment a fan can bring up over (and over) in mixed company, and people who live in the area

are often forced to pick a side. Think Duke/North Carolina, two college basketball powerhouses separated by about 10 miles of road.

And for a rivalry to be truly great, there must be some parity. Nothing in sports is as exciting as regular clashes between two teams that defy the odds and expectations each time out, and can bring even non-sports fans into the fray.

By these standards, the Hermiston/Pendleton football rivalry has become a great one in recent years. There have been surprises and upsets, twists and turns as the teams have traded home fields and bragging rights. Hermiston fans



Daniel Wattenburger

are well aware of the decades of frustration through most of the 20th century, but that era certainly made the first few Hermiston wins even sweeter.

So it's a shame that we're going to have to close the book on this rivalry after Friday. The reasons are clear and understandable — the schools are no longer really in the same size bracket, and Hermiston is a better fit with the Tri-Cities and Walla Walla than Bend and East Portland. But it's still hard to picture a football season when the Bucks and Bulldogs don't face off.

We will still see our cross-county friends (foes?) in other athletic

arenas as the rivalry will continue to play out in non-league action. But we won't see, at least in the next four years, a do-or-die game where both teams are playing for their postseason lives. We won't have the reason to travel to Pendleton on a cold October night, or welcome their buses to Kennison Field and get together to cheer on our team.

Maybe there's a natural rival for Hermiston somewhere in the Mid-Columbia League. I sure hope so. But for now we've got our purple on and our banners ready for one more trip to Round-Up Stadium. We hope it's one for the ages.

Daniel Wattenburger, a former sportswriter, is the interim editor for the Hermiston Herald.



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