

OUR VIEW

# Kudos to Hermiston for planning ahead with open house

Planning for the future is always a good idea and the effort by Hermiston city officials to craft a viable way forward through the 2040 survey makes sense.

An open house earlier this month at the Grace Baptist Church allowed city elected and appointed leaders the opportunity to answer questions and gather input from the public. City leaders know through the 2040 survey that area residents want key pieces of infrastructure —

such as an indoor pool and aquatic center and more stores — to be part of the city's future.

Those are admirable goals and city leaders should use a laser focus to ensure both can happen.

For now, the best part of the plan is the willingness of city leaders to involve the public.

For many that may seem like a no-brainer but often across the nation elected and appointed leaders will crash

ahead with infrastructure projects without involving the voters. That's always a bad idea. Elected and appointed leaders — whether they choose to recognize it or not — work for the people, or the voters.

That means any idea regarding a potential expenditure of public funds must involve input from voters.

The open house session earlier this month regarding the 2040 survey was an excellent idea by city leaders and a way to allow residents to ask questions. Such

open house events are important because they gather buy-in from the public before moving too far down the road on an ambitious plan.

It may seem easier to just develop a future blueprint and then move toward its execution but, in the end, public involvement is a critical piece to any such plan.

We sincerely hope the goals outlined in the 2040 survey are attainable and we tip our hat to city leaders for taking the time to get the public involved.

PETERSON'S POINTS

## John Perkins is the real Santa Claus

It seems increasingly common for people to favor Thanksgiving, it seems. At least, I think I hear it more and more. Friends and family are just part of this new trend. Also, I hear it on television, in print and in social media posts. I, however, expect to always enjoy Christmas more than any other holiday, and in part it is because of Santa Claus.

Santa is a symbol that I admire — a character of joy and generosity. He is above ugliness and does not discriminate, except when distinguishing from people who are naughty and those who are nice. Santa is moral.

Given my fondness for the jolly old elf, I was saddened by a phone call I received recently. John Perkins, of Umatilla, a man I had never met before, called me to say he was probably making his

last appearance as Santa. After years of playing the character, he was scheduling a performance at perhaps the highest profile event in the area — the Hermiston tree lighting.

And, he said, he has stage four pancreatic cancer.

John followed up the phone call by visiting my office later in the week. He said he wanted to tell his story as he was facing a major challenge. The story I wrote about him is on the front page of last week's paper.

My feelings about John are colored by my impressions of Santa, no doubt. They are also likely influenced by my thoughts of my mom, the most giving person I have ever met, a person who, through poverty, always managed to make Christmas bountiful. Still, when I met John, I had a good impression of him, and I think it was because of the man himself, apart from my thoughts of others.

When we first met, he had just returned from his first chemotherapy session. He seemed surprisingly strong. And he talked of strength. He told me of the ups and downs of his life, his difficult childhood, the death of his mother, his military service, his marriage, his time as mayor and more.

He spoke of his cancer diagnosis and his feelings about it. He wanted, he said, to tell people that they should not fear treatment. He also said that people should not be afraid to cry. He cried, and he did not feel lesser because of it.

Over the course of an hour, in my office, John shared his life story with me, and I did my best to share it with readers. I hope I did well by him, while also trying to maintain some amount of professionalism and journalistic integrity. I have to admit though, in the spirit of full disclosure, I almost cried while both speaking with John and later seeing him as Santa.

Now, after having gotten to know John, Christmas remains my favorite holiday and Santa is still a large reason for that. In fact, my feelings have grown even deeper. John is Santa, and Santa is real.

*Erick Peterson is the editor and senior reporter of the Hermiston Herald.*



Erick Peterson

PAST AND PROLOGUE

## Pearl Harbor is emphatically not forgotten

Tuesday, Dec. 7, 2021, marked 80 years since the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor. It is hard to imagine a more fateful event in 20th century history.

As the last veterans of World War II pass on, there is no time like the present to revisit the day that "will live in infamy" and assess some of its impact.

The most immediate result of the Pearl Harbor attack proved to be the U.S. entry into World War II. President Franklin D. Roosevelt declared war on Japan the next day, Dec. 8, 1941. Meanwhile, Nazi Germany had nearly conquered all of Europe, leaving Great Britain holding out alone.

Despite the obvious danger a Nazi-dominated Europe posed to the U.S., Roosevelt had no pretext for intervening in the European conflict. But perhaps believing the U.S. would not easily recover from the attack, Adolf Hitler forced the issue by declaring war on the U.S. four days after Pearl Harbor, on Dec 11.

Eighty years later, the question remains: Would the isolationist U.S. of 1941 have entered the European conflict without Hitler's decision for war? As U.S. intervention proved crucial to the defeat of Nazism, the what-ifs loom large. The world was fortunate that Hitler ignored history.

Provoking U.S. intervention in World War I was fatal to Imperial Germany in 1917-18. Awakening the sleeping giant in 1941 would help destroy Nazi Germany as well.

Pearl Harbor meant big trouble for Japanese-Americans living along the West Coast. The attack immediately cast suspicion on that community as a potential fifth column-spies for Japan. Roosevelt eventually responded by issuing Executive Order 9066, mandating the "relocation" of citi-

zens deemed a security risk.

In part, this was born of panic and fear, but there also emerged an element of greed and self-interest, as some Americans coveted the lucrative businesses and farms their Japanese-American neighbors had to leave behind after being "relocated" to internment camps. There was racism in the mix.

The U.S. warred with Nazi Germany and Fascist Italy as well as Japan in 1942, yet very few Americans of Italian or German descent faced indefinite confinement, or became targets of appearance-based abuse. Japanese-Americans endured both. In spite of this, thousands of young Japanese-Americans demonstrated loyalty to their country by volunteering for the armed forces from their internment camps.

Army personnel warned they would fight in Italy, the scene of some of the war's fiercest combat, but the volunteers were undeterred. The all Japanese-American 442nd Regimental Combat Team became the most decorated unit in American history for their size and length of service. Twenty-one Medal of Honor winners came from their ranks.

The attack on Pearl Harbor was the beginning of the end of a long run of Japanese conquest. Japan began to modernize in the mid-19th century and looked to Great Britain as an example of a successful island nation. Impressed by the British empire, Japanese leaders decided the key to greatness lay in expansion, to control raw materials and command respect.

Japan's rise began when it pegged Russia as a rival for influence in the Far East and launched what became the Russo-Japanese war. The Japanese handily won that conflict, shocking the world as the first

nonwhite nation to best a great power. After that victory in 1905, Japan acquired China's Shandong Peninsula and the Mariana, Marshall and Carolina islands in the World War I settlement.

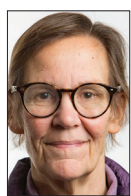
In 1931, Japan colonized Manchuria, then invaded and terrorized east-central China in 1937. By 1941, Japan controlled much of the Pacific, as its allies Nazi Germany and Fascist Italy dominated Europe. When Japanese leaders decided to try to cripple their principal Pacific rival, the U.S., they were dizzy with success. But the bombs dropped on Pearl Harbor sealed Imperial Japan's doom. Once the U.S. joined the fight, Japan's bitter, brutal defense of its Pacific conquests ultimately subjected its civilians to the apocalyptic horror of the atom bomb.

From his Pendleton office, East Oregonian editor E.B. Aldrich saw a silver lining in the storm clouds over Oahu. Aldrich editorialized that the U.S. should take an active role in defending the World War I peace settlement. No one else had the means to do so in 1919.

When the country opted for isolation instead, Aldrich repeatedly warned of a second world war. After Pearl Harbor, Aldrich predicted victory for the democratic nations and expressed the hope that this time, the U.S. would help craft and defend a lasting peace. This it achieved in the creation of the Marshall Plan, NATO and the World Bank.

After the Japanese attack, Americans would urge each other: Remember Pearl Harbor! Even 80 years on, Pearl Harbor is emphatically not forgotten.

*Brigit Farley is a Washington State University professor, student of history, adventurer and Irish heritage girl living in Pendleton.*



Brigit Farley

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### Remembering the why of Pearl Harbor

We have in my mind, come to a serious crossroads. Disinformation is not new, but as a virus spreading far faster than it did in 1941. We remember Pearl Harbor, those of us who were forever affected by its introduction into a global war, waged physically in Europe and the islands, but waged in the hardships and heartbreak in the U.S.

We now wage a new war of massive disinformation on every phone, laptop, and desktop giving voice to the most destructive battle we have ever seen. For those of us who remember telegrams, or waiting for a phone line, perhaps ringing someone continuously because there was no "answering machine," this new technology will either destroy us or make us more aware of its benefits and its potential for abolition of the human connection. You pick.

Pearl Harbor was a miscalculation of communications that had life-altering results, for my family, a grandfather I never knew, gone in an instant. A single paragraph only touches on the massive calamity that led to the shock of that day:

"Japan had planned to declare war shortly before its planes bombed the U.S. fleet at

Pearl Harbor on Dec. 7, but a series of errors by typists and translators prevented the Japanese embassy from giving Washington the declaration of war in time."

Will we, as a people continue, to malign the very knowledgeable, educated and experienced professionals in our ability to be scandalously vile because the written word through the internet does not expose us? Will we miscommunicate information that could potentially destroy someone or something?

Remembering Pearl Harbor as a memorial to those who gave their all to stop extreme nationalistic ideologies, like total totalitarianism, authoritarianism and fascism is admirable, but to focus on how we got there and understand the price that was paid will be the only way to save what we hold dear, knowing that the speed of this "misinformation and miscommunication" is far more potent than 1941 and will inevitably catch us completely unaware and unprepared.

Kate Dimon Pendleton

### Offering appreciation during difficult time

I carried the wreath to the door of Pioneer Chapel Funeral Home. This wreath,

gleaming with a glittery copper bow and holiday ornaments, had been decorated and now gifted from my PEO Chapter members to Valori Martin, the business owner. PEO chapters provide woman-to-woman educational outreach and holiday community needs gifting, and this was an opportunity to show a Pendleton businesswoman we appreciate her.

Valori's husband and co-business partner had recently passed away, and we wanted her to know how we value her and her business. As I spoke with Valori she expressed how touched she has been with the outpouring of love and support during this grieving time. She and Ron have played such a caring role to many. And carry on Valori is, by continuing as the owner of her business, and assisting Eastern Oregon communities with specialized funeral planning.

Valori understands her business and is proud to provide services with a respectful personal touch.

Yes, she feels blessed to have the outpouring of kindness from many. And, yes, we citizens of Pendleton and surrounding areas are blessed to have the services of Pioneer Chapel and its owner, Valori Martin.

Barbara Hodgen Palmer Pendleton



CORRECTIONS

It is the policy of the Hermiston Herald to correct errors as soon as they are discovered. Incorrect information will be corrected on Page 2A. Errors committed on the Opinion page will be corrected on that page. Corrections also are noted in the online versions of our stories.

Please contact the editor at editor@hermistonherald.com or call 541-278-2673 with issues about this policy or to report errors.

SUBMIT A LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Letters Policy: Letters to the Editor is a forum for the Hermiston Herald readers to express themselves on local, state, national or world issues. Brevity is good, but longer letters should be kept to 250 words.

No personal attacks; challenge the opinion, not the person. The Hermiston Herald reserves the right to edit letters for

length and for content.

Letters must be original and signed by the writer or writers. Anonymous letters will not be printed. Writers should include a telephone number so they can be reached for questions. Only the letter writer's name and city of residence will be published.

OBITUARY POLICY

The Hermiston Herald publishes paid obituaries; death notices and information about services are published at no charge. Obituaries can include small photos and, for veterans, a flag symbol at no charge.

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