

Letters

Teacher says thanks for 15 great years

To the Editor:

In 1988, [Vernonia] high school principal Randy Aultman, took a chance on a 28 year old "greenhorn" and hired a social studies teacher/basketball coach. Fifteen years later I still can't properly express my gratitude for the opportunity given to me. But I'd like to give it a try.

The reason for this letter is that I have taken a position in the Beaverton School District at Mountain View Middle School, teaching eighth grade social studies. Closer to home, closer to my family. This will be a terrific opportunity for me in a number of ways. However, that means I will be giving up the "home" that I've built here. So, in saying goodbye, I would like to try to convey my gratitude for the experience I've had with the community of Vernonia.

Over the years, I've been fortunate enough to develop many special relationships in the community. I would like to single out a few people here as examples of the wonderful treatment I have received from this community. Certainly it started with Randy Aultman. In the first years here, I had to learn fast or get swallowed up. But I got valuable support from Randy and the cast of teachers on hand at that point. What

started out as a big challenge became a labor of love as I came to appreciate what each student has to offer if you get to know them.

Teaching is what I do, it is part of how I define myself, but basketball is a passion of mine. It was my way of building onto my experience in the community. While learning the craft of coaching at Vernonia, I received a lot of help. Among those who stand out is Chris Cota. While he and his family were welcoming the Finlays to Vernonia, Chris took the time to watch how I operated and proceeded to enhance our program by picking up on and doing the things that I didn't. In this way, his assistance made my coaching look much better. I have been around a lot of good coaches throughout the years and Chris is the kind of guy that I'd like to have coaching my kids.

Among the many people that surrounded me in the building, Jill Griffin is an example of the number of educators that truly reflect a caring attitude for our youth. Anyone that spends time with her knows that her commitment is unquestionable. Likewise, Roxanna Sherman-Heath exemplifies the quality of help that our classified staff brings to the classroom. She always makes extra time to work with both the students and the teachers to provide opportunities to meet our students'

individual needs.

If you look at the positive changes that we've gone through over the last five years, certainly the leadership of Mike Durbin has been critical for the high school. Our administration has also been surrounded by cheerful, competent and efficient personnel like Jan Bernardi, Barb Carr and Cindy Baker (to name only a very few of our many terrific staff). Leon Torgerson represents the immense and often thankless efforts from our maintenance crew.

On a daily basis, I have been surrounded by teachers that, in their own way, have brought the best they have to the classroom every day to share and help educate our children. "Old timers" like Gordon Crowston and Ward Nelson have been great sources of information while the "young bloods" like Laura Waddell and Tony Pupo are among the many whose enthusiasm will be the base for VHS's future in education. James Brookins has been a colleague across the hall from me for years. We have shared ideas, stories, laughs and a few Altoids! At lunch, though the crowd has changed a bit over the years, Randy Shockey and Jeff Cheney and I get together and embellish our war stories. These guys are quality professionals in their craft. Jeff has done a good job of taking over the basketball program and

making it his own and Randy is always finding ways to help kids "get math" (no easy task). Thanks too, goes to the Staff at WGS for sending us kids that are ready for high school.

Finally, I could list many many more people than have been mentioned so far. Hopefully, the few that I have mentioned shine as examples of what is good about education in Vernonia. However I need to finish with two more debts of gratitude. First to the parents of all the young men and women I have had the opportunity to work with: Thank you for your support and for entrusting me the care of your children's education. Last, to all the students that I have worked with over the last 15 years, that allowed me a chance to get to know them better: Thanks, Dudes! I am better for it.

Give me a call if you're in the Tanasbourne Area. I'm in the phone book.

Scott Finlay
Portland

How can we get back the good in Jamboree?

To the Editor:

The Vernonia Friendship Jamboree has reached a fork in the road and our annual little get together is going through some growing pains experienced by many events of a similar nature.

Granted, there have been problems in the past due to individuals blowing off steam in ways that are disturbing and sometimes downright dangerous to others. When that many people are together, there are bound to be problems that need to a creative resolution.

I don't think anyone wants a return to the brawling and scuffling of the past, but the overzealous policing of this last Jamboree seems a step too far in the other direction. What is needed is to find some middle ground or we will lose the Jamboree altogether.

Some local business owners said their revenue was down. I spoke with several vendors that told me of their lack of business and [that they] might not return in the future. Several lost merchandise to pilferage. With the economy in bad shape, it is difficult to make up for losses like that.

I agree that a police presence is necessary to deter

problems and I fully support them with their all too difficult task of keeping the peace, however, I have heard several reliable reports of confrontational behavior by the State Police. The peace can be kept by presence or intimidation. The State Police seemingly chose the latter whereas the interactions I had with our local police were pleasant and respectful. A little respect by everyone involved goes a long way toward keeping the peace.

In the end, we must decide what kind of a Jamboree we want to have. Do we want a friendly gathering to see old friends and have a good time, or to be surrounded by an overzealous and intimidating presence that knows nothing of our rich history and culture? Somehow we need to find a way that everyone can responsibly enjoy themselves and deal creatively with those that go overboard, without turning the city into an armed camp.

The only way we can put the friendship back in the Jamboree is to get involved personally and help make it happen. We need to address the issues that came up this year and start planning for the next. We need people with productive suggestions who are willing to assist in the implementation of those suggestions.

We have been given an opportunity to create a new future for the Jamboree. What will we do with it?

Burt Tschache
Music Chairman
Vernonia Friendship
Jamboree Committee

County listens to voters, State doesn't

To the Editor:

On July 22nd at Vernonia City Hall, our Columbia County Commissioners listened to local County residents voice their concerns regarding the Goal 4 proposal mandated by the State of Oregon. Despite the few voiced objections over the State requirements, it was my observation that the Commissioners are trying to implement the process in such a way as to be the least intrusive of County Property owners. Nevertheless, when I requested that the Commissioners simply tell the State, "No!", I was provided the following: The last time the Co-

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Between the Bookends

By Ann Krutsinger, Library Assistant
Banks Public Library



When I look for a good vacation read, I always think mysteries. I'm not a big fan of mysteries generally, but somehow, hot summer weather and travel whet my appetite for a suspenseful but not too scary read. Lately I've been

hooked on the mysteries of Walter Mosley. His main character, Easy Rawlins, is a complex fellow. Learning about the man is almost as fascinating as the scrapes he gets into and the murders he seeks to solve. The novels are set in post WWII Watts, California. Easy is a black man and a vet whose life was changed by serving in the military. Coming back to Watts, Easy is amazed that nothing has changed in his community. The police are all white and persecuting the black community (particularly him), the dance halls are still full of dangerously sensual women who drink too much and violent men who gamble away their paychecks.

Easy came home from the war craving the

American dream: He wanted to own his own home, have a wife and kids. In the series, he achieves these things, but not without a price. It isn't easy to keep a woman when you're always sneaking out of the house to do his sideline — sleuthing. Coming home battered and bleeding without any explanation is hard on a relationship. Each book has an interesting insight into Easy's life and the characters around him. So, if you want to read a great series, try starting with *Devil in a Blue Dress*, *White Butterfly* and *A Red Death*. The newer edition is *Six Easy Pieces*.

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