

The INDEPENDENT

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Opinion

Potential changes at city airport need deep study

Charges and counter-charges abound as the City of Vernonia looks at future uses of the city-owned airport. Such charges are fairly common when people see a potential for substantial change, either positive or negative.

Vernonia's airport was built during the Great Depression by men employed in the federal job creating program of the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC). At that time, the primary purpose was to put men to work so they could support their families. Now there is consideration of other sorts of jobs, created by different uses of the airport property.

In this mix, however, there is a major concern that city councilors should never ignore: The airport - small as it is and inadequate as it is - remains a valuable asset for this community. Any decisions regarding the airport must be seriously and thoroughly considered. A few of those considerations are enumerated in some Letters on page 3; they are worth looking at.

Plaudits to VHS Softball and Equestrian teams

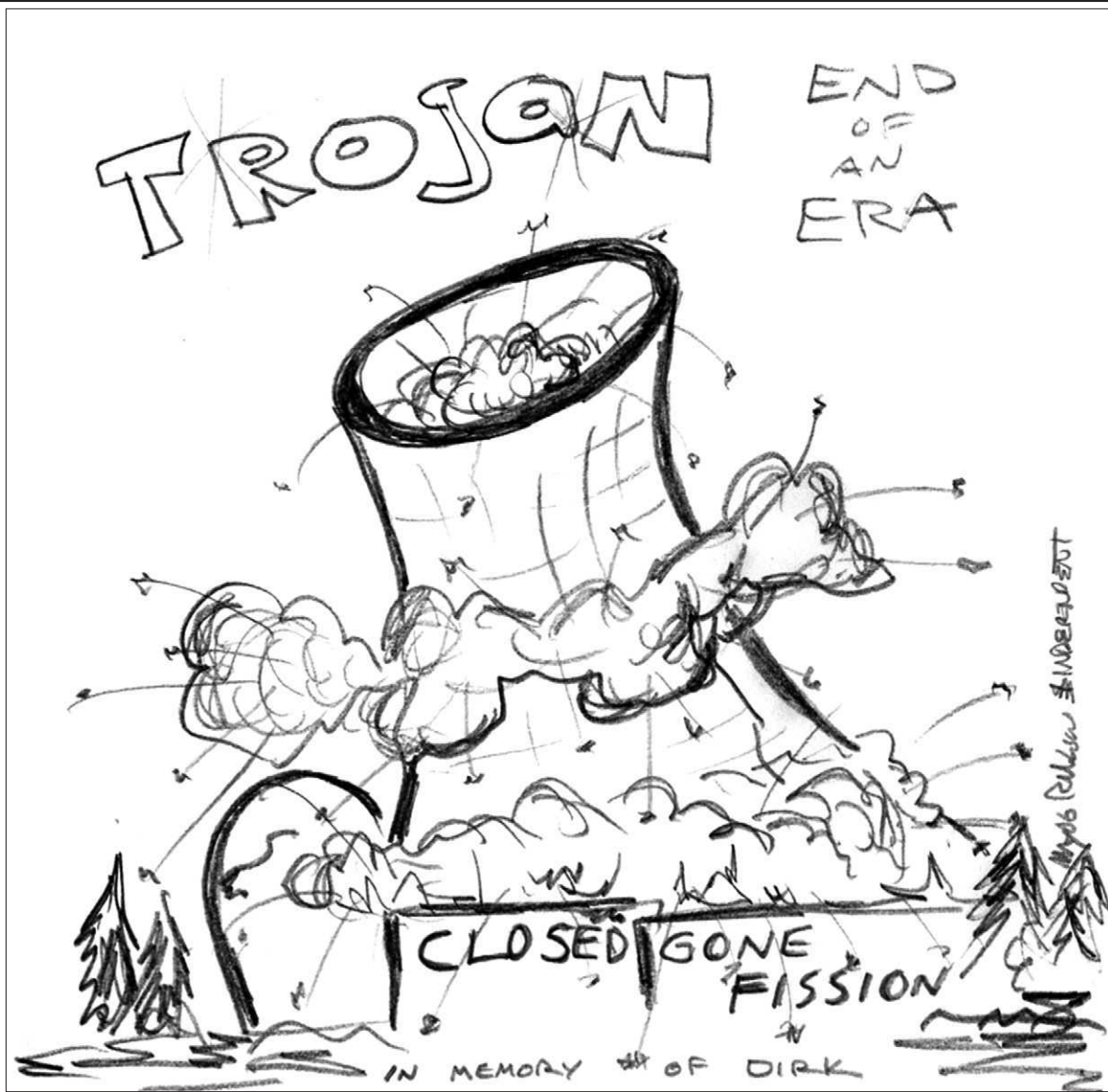
Members of the Vernonia High School Softball and Equestrian teams may be disappointed at not grabbing all the top spots in statewide competition – but they shouldn't be.

Their accomplishments have been outstanding and the community is very proud of their hard work and good sportsmanship.

Okay, so people do vote

Though few Oregonians and, indeed, few Americans bother to vote on unimportant things like funding for law enforcement or who will represent us in Congress, it is now obvious that they will vote Chicago-style – early and often – when it is really necessary.

Proof of this is the 63-million votes for the winner of American Idol. Obviously, the person who wins a television show title is far more important to Americans than the person whose finger is on the nuclear bomb. Interesting. Depressing, but interesting.



By Dale Webb, member Izaak Walton League, Nehalem Valley Chapter



Is River Fest going to survive? That may be the question a lot of people are asking, at least those who care. It is interesting to note that the old river race held by the Jaycees years ago was a big deal. There were lots of boats, some racing and some just having a good time. Some, of course, were having too much of a good time and that was one of the main factors that ended the event. So, is the lack of booze the reason people are not participating? I would think not, a good time can surely be had on the river with out pouring alcohol into one's body. This year I noticed one local family having a good time on the river; the Joel Glass family had rented a canoe from G.I. Joe's and was having a hoot. I watched them as I sped past in my kayak, they were struggling a little with turns and getting the canoe to go where they wanted, but they were laughing the whole time. When they finished at Big Eddy Park, they all had big smiles on their faces and Joel mentioned that a canoe would probably be in the family's future. So why, if being on the river is so much fun, do not more people participate? Having all the equipment is a big hurdle, the event really needs a sponsor who will provide rentals. For an industry that relies on the spread of water sports for its livelihood, they sure have not sup-

ported River Fest. Advertising needs to be more wide spread and the date of the event is problematic, with another big water event going on the same day on the Clackamas River. The May date is also a problem because of low stream flows, this year the river was barely floatable, drift boats will not participate when the river is this low and rafts make little headway. With work this could be a great event, but without any help, River Fest will be a thing of the past.

I was supposed to help people go down the river this year during River Fest, but with very few people entering the river, I decided that I might as well set a benchmark. I had brought my sea kayak down to the event, just in case I wanted to race. A longer boat is quicker and I knew my old creek boat would be a tank in the low, slow waters of the Nehalem. I decided to use my light Swift paddle and when I took off I just about flipped myself, a person becomes very ingrained with the paddle that he uses, and I usually use my white-water paddle with big blades and a feathered blade. It took me a while to get the feel of the Swift paddle again, but I finally got the kayak streaking along. My final time was 1:54 minutes. I was thinking I had knocked off a pretty good time, until I saw a couple of older gentlemen come screaming down the river in a canoe. Their time was 1:45 minutes. That was a very good time indeed!

Here's a warning for the ladies out there who are the wives to hunters. You will need to be a little more patient the next few weeks. Your hus-