

The INDEPENDENT

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Opinion

A lot to be thankful for

Bad weather, power outages, negative three-hundred eighty-four thousand, one-hundred seventy-four dollars in Vernonia's Community Development Fund. Along with a five-year sewer fee increase to pay for just the planning of the first phase of the sewer project, and no mention yet of how we will pay for construction of phase two or even phase one. Not to mention the burgeoning Federal deficit, dysfunctional political parties, or the tragedy of war. With all of the negative things life brings, let's hope we never lack the ability to be thankful.

Thankful for the hard working linemen who have been working what appears to be an impossible number of hours in some of the most miserable conditions. Thankful for the public works employees who, in spite of the extra work caused by the recent storms, still manage to remove the wet slippery leaves from the path around the mill pond and the wooden foot bridge across Rock Creek. Thankful to be able to watch people greet each other with smiles and waves as they pass on the street. Thankful that we get to live in a community where people truly care about, as well as for, each other, as evidenced by the volunteers on the fire department, Vernonia Cares, the Lions, the PTA, Vernonia Pride, Scouting groups, PEO, and Boosters, as well as all the volunteers on the many committees and commissions, including council members who take a lot of heat while serving their communities. These are just a few who put their time and money into various projects and needs for the community.

And when personal tragedy strikes, you can be sure to find many with sincere words and kind hearts. It is not just in Vernonia where you will find such types plentiful. You will also find them in abundance in Mist, Jewell, Birkenfeld, Buxton, Manning, Banks, Roy, and Verboort. We are thankful to be a part of such communities as we have in rural Northwest Oregon. We all have a lot to be thankful for.

NOTICE

The INDEPENDENT publishes on the first and third Thursday of each month. Because there are five Thursdays in November, the next issue will not be published until December 7, 2006.

The deadline for articles and ads for the December 7 issue will be Friday, December 1, 2006.



Out of My Mind...

By Noni Andersen

The Wonderful World of Politics

I rarely feel sorry for political operatives who lose, then have to make nice by saying all the right things. However, I felt a bit of pity for Ken Mehlman, head of the Republican National Committee, as he was being interviewed on NBC Wednesday morning, after the voters' crushing repudiation of President George W. Bush's policies.

In his response to questions about the coming changes in Congress, Mehlman emphasized the president's desire to work with Democrats. For some reason, he didn't mention that the president had just spent 10 days campaigning in all of the shaky red states by telling voters that a vote for the Democrats was a vote for terrorism and a win for Al Qaida. Yep, that really sounded as though the Prez wanted to work with the Dems.

Mehlman has either a conveniently short memory, or he was suffering from major sleep deprivation.

During a press conference regarding Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld's "resignation", a reporter asked the president about his prior statement that Rumsfeld would stay on for the next two years. "I just said that to get you off the subject," Bush responded, because "I didn't want to make a major policy decision during a campaign." That must be the truth because, surely, the Prez wouldn't lie.

In spite of widespread voter discontent about the war in Iraq, in many ways it is not the primary

factor that interferes with the needs of American citizens. However indefensible and tragic Iraq may be, our unsustainable fiscal deficit is a far greater problem.

Bush and the Republican "leadership" have been spending as though they got a pre-approved credit card in the mail. Just max it out, then use another credit card to pay it off. That way, it doesn't cost anything! Right?

It isn't only "emergency" defense spending that is deliberately placed off budget; it is grossly increased agricultural subsidies for "family farms" like Archer Daniels Midland (ADM), as well as write offs and subsidies for other very profitable industries, big oil and Pharma come to mind.

The \$9 billion in Iraq reconstruction funds that can't be accounted for is only the tip of a very large iceberg. Will any of the contractors be required to pay back the taxpayers? Not likely. That little problem was erased by eliminating the position of Inspector General for Iraq spending.

Closer to home, results on Columbia County voting were delayed because of problems with the vote counting equipment. Someone in the Elections Office said the information would be available on the county's website and, remarkably, it happened. Through no fault of the elections office, the county's site is poorly designed and, often, haphazardly updated.

Perhaps our county commissioners could start earning their substantial salaries by actually overseeing departments' operations? Oops, that would require work. Sorry I mentioned it.