

The INDEPENDENT

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Opinion

Remember their sacrifice

Memorial Day will be observed throughout the country on Monday, May 28. Those observances will vary in style, with people finding their own way to honor our heroes.

There will be many thoughtful and sincere considerations of the day's original intent – to remember and honor those who answered the call to arms for our country, and gave their lives in that service. Paying tribute to those who gave all they had to preserve our rights, freedoms, and way of life is important. The local remembrance will be at Vernonia Memorial Cemetery, at 11:00 a.m.

There will be flags on the graves of our veterans, and in many towns there will be concerts, parades and speeches. If you attend a Memorial Day parade, clap loudly for all of those heroes, they deserve it. Also, please remove your hat and stand in respect when the color guard passes by; it is painful at any time to see this simple recognition of our national symbol ignored by so many, but especially so on Memorial Day.

Hopefully, Memorial Day also reminds us that war should be a last resort, to be used only when all other options have been exhausted. The impacts of war extend far beyond the battlefield, affecting people individually and nations collectively, long after the weapons have been silenced.

Sometimes it is a necessary evil, but too often it's not. We should be wary of anyone who talks in a cavalier manner of going to war, as though it will be cheap and easy and painless. It is never any of those things.

War drains reason out of what passes for civilization, but the stories matter. They let us know what courage is, and what war is. We need to listen, to pay attention when we are told those stories, because most of us will never know what our soldiers experience. It is simply too easy to think that war is somebody else's responsibility. War is not glorious, it is not entertainment, it is not a video game.

Even as we honor the dead, we must maintain hope that humanity will some day reach a point where we can work out our differences without having to kill each other in the process. We must recognize the humanity we have in common with our enemies because that humanity is what war destroys.

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Out of My Mind . . .

by Noni Andersen



My kitchen table is usually cluttered with paper – newspapers, magazines, brochures, advertisements, grocery lists, to-do lists, letters, cards – you get the idea. The one element that ties together these disparate pieces of paper is that each results from someone's mind,

whether as a passing thought or as an earnest attempt to explain something like the futures market or how a hedge fund works.

While starting this column, I found that my mind was about as cluttered as my kitchen table. I couldn't decide on one topic. Then I realized that there is one *emotion* weaving its way through many topics, and I can clear up my cerebral clutter by getting some of it out of my mind.

That one emotion is ANGER.

I hear and read a lot of anger, some from people who seem to be chronically angry at life, some from those who have specific complaints, but direct their anger toward the wrong place. City government is a favorite target for both types of anger. One chronic complainer blames the city for FEMA regulations, because the city "doesn't have to do what FEMA says". Explaining that failure to do so could leave city residents without flood insurance didn't matter, of course, because that person is chronically angry.

A specific, understandable complaint from many people is about our ever-increasing utility

fees, but the current council is a misplaced target for that anger. This situation is the result of years of a head-in-the-sand approach to fiscal responsibility. Former councils knew that utility loans had to be repaid, but they didn't want to make people unhappy, so utility rates were raised only enough to pay the interest. Now we're paying for that neglect – and we're angry.

Education is what makes me angry, more specifically, our national neglect of education. At a time when innovation is more and more valuable, we are making it more and more difficult for our children to get even an adequate education.

Higher education is needed to develop the skilled workforce for evolving technologies, but we are making it too expensive for increasing numbers of people. Additionally, we are letting the foundation of higher education crumble by ignoring the needs of K-12 schools.

We know that:

- more classroom time is needed for children to learn, so we are cutting days out of that time;
- crowded classes hamper learning, so we're cutting teachers;
- advanced math and science are needed more than ever, so we're limiting those choices;
- history and government are needed to understand how we got here, so we're reducing those requirements;
- social sciences are needed for a basic understanding of our culture, so we're cutting most of those classes;
- art, music and drama stimulate both creativity and intellectual development, so we're cutting

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