

OTHER VIEWS

Michael Reagan



Who got America in this mess?

Lots of perplexed Americans are asking the question, “How did we get here?”

They ask how is it that a rich, powerful and generally happy country that was chugging along so smoothly in the 21st century has almost overnight become an economic, social and ideological train wreck.

It’s a fair question – and the answer has little to do with the pandemic and the collateral damage we’ve done to ourselves with lockdowns and the war on COVID.

Today, the country is divided into dozens of red-blue factions who argue bitterly about everything from federal spending and abortion to oil pipelines, gun control, vaccines and “corrective” gender surgery for 12-year-olds.

The major liberal media have become shameless lapdogs of the Democrats in power in Washington, D.C.

Comedians are being canceled for being incorrectly funny. Future U.S. Supreme Court justices can’t – or won’t – define the word “woman.”

Our great and special country has never been perfect, obviously. For starters, ask Native Americans, Blacks, women and gays.

But 2022 America has gone mad – in every sense of the word. And the person we can pin much of the blame on is

Barack Obama.

In 2008 the sainted liberal from Chicago cruised into the White House on the ideal of hope and change, his powerful oratory and the promise of a better, colorblind and more equal future for all Americans.

But once in office, as his big dreams evaporated, he lit the fires and fanned the flames of much of the political insanity and negative feelings about America we are suffering with today.

For example, Obama was the first president in my lifetime who openly criticized specific people in the population.

“You didn’t build that” he told business people who’ve started successful companies.

“The police acted stupidly” I think he said when criticizing the Boston cops who arrested professor Henry Louis Gates for “breaking in” to his own house.

The whole “hate the police” theme – which morphed during the Trump years into the “Defund Police” campaign – was essentially sparked by Obama’s attitude about police and his ignoring of the gang violence wracking cities like his hometown.

Meanwhile, Obama’s wife Michelle was the first first lady to say publicly she was not proud of America.

And when Barack went off to tour Europe, he made it a point to publicly apologize for America’s past failings.

But it’s now clear that the worst thing Obama inflicted on the country in the long run was Joe Biden.

Instead of his many possible but now forgotten VP picks, Obama chose a long-time, washed-up, gaffe-prone, “moderate” hack Democrat and failed presidential wannabe from the who-cares-state of Delaware.

Sen. “Amtrak” was carrying around a career’s worth of bad bipartisan baggage.

Friend of KKK alums like Sen. Robert Byrd, foe of busing for school integration, plagiarizer, hawkish on wars in Iraq and other Middle East places, hard guy on urban crime, mis-handler of the Clarence Thomas confirmation hearings – Biden held a bunch of positions that simultaneously offended or embarrassed his friends and enemies.

Biden was the booby prize of VP candidates in 2008 – and we can thank Obama for making it possible for Old Joe to eventually become the booby prize of American presidents in 2020.

President Biden – who some argue is really the front man for Barack Obama’s third term – is a mouthpiece for harmful leftwing energy and environmental policies that the “Old Joe” of old would never push.

Sadly, we’re stuck with Biden for two more years, if he can last that long.

But there’s hope for America to become great again — again.

In the fall Republicans will retake Congress. Obama’s socialist ideas and negative attitude about America will die the political deaths they’ve always deserved.

And we’ll never hear of them again – until 2024, when Democrats put Michelle Obama of Martha’s Vineyard at the top of their ticket.

Yikes.

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Michael Reagan, the son of President Ronald Reagan, is an author, speaker and president of the Reagan Legacy Foundation. Send comments to reagan@caglecartoons.com and follow @reaganworld on Twitter.

OTHER VIEWS

Jack Parry



Hi, I’m Jack Parry, and I was the reporting intern at the Wallowa County Chieftain in Enterprise this summer.

Over the past two months, I have been taking notes, awkwardly introducing myself in public, reading, writing and talking to people from Elgin to Joseph.

Even though it feels like the summer has flashed before my eyes, I’ve learned some pretty valuable lessons during this experience that I hope will guide me through the rest of my life.

When I first arrived in Enterprise as an eager writer, I quickly realized that my interview experience was extremely limited. In my brief time as a sports reporter in my sophomore year of college, I had only done interviews that were mandated at the end of games or set up through other people.

So, I set out to try and improve my long conversations with sources, and man-on-the-street interviews. While I haven’t become a master at walking up to strangers just yet, sitting down and chatting with sources has become something I dearly enjoy.

But whether I was sitting down for an hour with the Enterprise police chief or just saying a quick hello on the street, I always wanted to make sure the people of Wallowa County understood I was going to provide them with the most truthful and useful information possible.

And the locals couldn’t have been nicer. To everyone I interacted with throughout my time, I just want to say

thank you. Thank you for giving me the opportunity to ask challenging questions, have real conversations and for showing me respect.

Another lesson I’ve learned on the job has been the ability to improve my own discretion. Working at a newspaper that has an editor who’s not in the office and just one other reporter, being independent has been crucial while on the clock.

Going out and finding the information for stories can be a complicated process, filled with many different plans depending on the information you get. In the beginning, I had problems listening to my instincts, which led to some stories not turning out the way I pictured them.

It can be scary to trust yourself when you are writing stories about pertinent information being read by local people when you grew up and live right next to a whole different ocean. On the job I went to my first rodeo, Fourth of July Parade and air show. So my gut feeling was sometimes confused.

However, as I’ve started to go with my notions more frequently, I’ve noticed an improvement in my data collection as pieces to the puzzle become a lot easier to see.

This leads me to my next skill I’ve honed over the last few months, the ability to be creative within the boundaries of the paper.

Coming from a sports beat reporting background, I’ve often experimented with the style of my journalism, using the creative writing side of my brain to illustrate plays or important moments.

After arriving at the Chieftain, I immediately struggled to adapt to writing local news articles.

While I may have had some frustrating realizations to start, I quickly began to find more and more ways in which I could be innovative without sounding repetitive.

Sometimes, it seems like the general

public can turn away from hard news articles for being boring. But no matter the topic, my goal has been to provide the most interesting story possible with varying sentence structure, eloquent verbiage and a logical presentation of information.

This summer I would’ve been lost without my coworkers, so I want to thank my editor, Jeff Budlong, for his leadership after taking over just before I joined the paper. I also want to thank Bill Bradshaw and Cheryl Jenkins for keeping me company in the Enterprise office, and imparting some great wisdom.

Living in La Grande this summer, I drove to the Enterprise office twice a week on Oregon Route 82, which was around 2½ hours roundtrip.

Some people would look at that commute and think that it would be miserable to do, even twice a week, but for me it was actually the opposite.

Riding on the route each time, I gasped at the expanding fields of hay near Imbler, Elgin and Minam, before bending around mountains and being spit out into the Wallowa Valley alongside the beautiful Wallowa River. I looked around the quaint towns of Wallowa and Lostine before arriving in Enterprise, with the sometimes snow-peaked backdrop of the Wallowas behind me as I walked into the office, something suburban New Jersey just doesn’t have.

This journey to and from work showed me that Wallowa County is a stunning oasis with a tight-knit community of passionate and hardworking people. This realization inspired me to do my very best to provide truthful, insightful and sometimes heartwarming stories to a deserving readership.

Thank you, Wallowa County.

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Jack Parry is 20 years old and going into his junior year at the University of Maryland as a multimedia journalism major.

Collaboration is lousy management of public lands

OTHER VIEWS

Rick Meis



I was intrigued by the column Mark Webb wrote recently about collaboration. He makes common mistakes in his less-than-accurate description of what a collaborative should be if they are going to be done inclusively and effectively.

If Mr. Webb believes what he stated in his opinion piece, he would understand that when it comes to public lands management, a collaborative would be unnecessary.

In practice, collaboration has become a process of playing two sides off against each other in order to create enough guilt in one or more parties that compromise is reached. The primary problem is that it is not based on sound science or best available data, thus eliminating the concept of best management practices and the long term needs of the resource to maintain the natural values of the landscape into the future.

The use of collaboration has become a cop-out on the part of public land managers to not have to do the work required of them in order to achieve good management decisions. Agency budgets have

been slashed repeatedly making it difficult to do a good job, thus making collaboration a fallback tool.

Collaboration has become a process that gives validity to those whose activities are either illegal, incompatible or damaging to public resources. Those types of activities, using sound management principles, should be restricted. The goal of the normal data- and science-driven decision-making process of land management agencies is to filter out input that lacks substance and thus should not be incorporated into management decisions.

Public land management decisions should be made using well-established legal and regulatory processes. So-called public interest groups on all sides use it as a way to raise money and their profile. The politically motivated use it to reach another successful failure by achieving the lowest common denominator.

Our public lands are integral to maintaining viable natural ecosystems. The most guilty players in collaborations are the so-called environmental groups who have chosen to defy everything they claim to stand for in order to curry political favor, new donations or something equally as shallow. It is unconscionable. These groups should not be selling the future of our natural heritage down the river.

High-impact activities, whether industrial or recreational, have intensified to the point where they’re no longer compat-

ible with long-range goals of agencies to meet their obligations of conserving the resource. A collaboration justifies misuse of the landscape. Best management practices, using science and best available data, should not allow high-impact users the unlimited access they desire which squanders public land values.

Collaboration can only work if everyone agrees that it is about what is best for the long-term values of the resource. There are infinite examples of those entering into collaborative processes for all the wrong reasons, thus collaborations give bad results.

A retired educator and political science professor wrote that if the future is to be determined by citizen collaborations, then a parallel track should be implemented based on science that would evaluate natural characteristics of the landscape. This track should consider the long-term future of the natural resources and recommend management actions to protect and maintain these values so future generations will experience a natural landscape as we did because of the efforts of those who have gone before.

Wait! Isn’t that what current laws and regulations already require of land managers? Isn’t that what groups involved in collaborations say they believe in?

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Rick Meis, of Halfway, is a retired business owner who has been actively involved in wild land and wildlife issues in the Northern Rockies since the 1970s.

5 reasons women should consider annuities for retirement

LAYIN’ IT ON THE LINE

Steve Kerby



If you’re a woman in or near retirement, let me ask you this: “How do you plan to take what you’ve so diligently saved and turn it into a lifetime stream of dependable, predictable, tax-advantaged income?”

If you’re like many of us, you probably don’t have a ready answer to this question. That’s because you’ve been busy doing “all the right things.” You’ve been working, saving, maximizing your 401(k), paying off debts, being a caregiver, running a household, etc. It’s likely you haven’t really had time to think about what to do when the time comes to stop working and live on what you’ve accumulated.

I want to suggest: Take some time to consider annuities carefully. After spending time studying this often overlooked, but powerful financial vehicle, I’ve come to believe that nearly every woman planning on retiring could benefit from the features found in annuity products.

Here are a few reasons you should consider an annuity when it comes time to

empty your “accumulation” bucket.

- An annuity creates guaranteed income for life. When you deposit a lump sum into an annuity, you enter into a contract with an insurance company in which the company guarantees you income for the rest of your life. This will eliminate a chief concern of many women entering the retirement phase of their lives, namely, running out of money too soon.
- Flexibility and customization. Annuities have come a long way in the past few years, offering a full spectrum of longterm care and inflation protection features. No longer are you constrained to a “one size fits all” annuity. These new kinds of annuities now provide for a new level of customization, safety and functionality.
- Annuities provide predictability. Many people, especially those in their pre-retirement and retirement life stages, want to know exactly how much income they will have available when they retire. If predictability is one of your top priorities, then an annuity can provide that.
- Zero maintenance. When you agree to the terms of the annuity contract, you’ll be assured of a steady income for life even if you live for another 50 years after retiring. An annuity is one of the few available financial products you can actually “set and forget.” There is nothing to keep tweaking or moving around;

no more crossing your fingers every time the market hiccups.

- Tax benefits by using an annuity for a portion of your nest egg allow that portion to grow tax-deferred, just like the money in traditional retirement accounts. That means if you don’t take out all the money for a while, you could see a significant tax reduction in retirement.

There are many other reasons that an annuity, while it may not be for everyone, is still worthy of your attention as you enter retirement. Partnering with an annuity specialist will allow you to examine these safe money alternatives more thoroughly to see if they will work in your particular situation.

If you’d like to know more about how women can use annuities to create safer, saner, more prosperous post-work lives, email or call me, and I will be happy to send you educational information to help you make the right decisions about your retirement blueprint.

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As an avid outdoorsman, Joseph and the Wallowa area have been a big part of Steve Kerby’s life since 1964. Steve is a Syndicated Columnists member, a national organization committed to a fully transparent approach to money management. With over 50 years in the financial services industry, Steve specializes and focuses on each individual client’s goals. Visit stevekerby.retirevillage.com or call 503-936-3535 for more.