

# OPINION

## THESE TIMES

# Inking eyes: The final frontier

Of all the items you wouldn't want in your eye, it seems a needle would be near the top of the list for most people.

Most people. Not all people.

Last week, a Senate committee in Olympia advanced a bill that would prohibit injecting ink, with a needle, into the outer layer of the white part of your eye, called the sclera. The ink spreads through the sclera, turning the white part into any color the customer fancies. Black seems to be a popular choice. So are bright blue and purple.

This is real. It even has a technical name: "scleral tattooing."

The bill originated in the House of Representatives, where it passed 94-4. It moved to the Senate, where it didn't raise a wake in sailing through the Health & Long Term Care Committee. As of Monday, this legislation is on track to become law, creating a civil penalty for anyone who sticks a needle in someone's eye with intent to tattoo.

The law would take effect 90 days after it's signed by the governor, so you best hurry if altering your sclera is on your to-do list.

Scleral tattooing has been around for more than a decade, but you can't find firm numbers on how many people do the work or how many people have had it done. It's an unregulated act of ghoulishness, so data tends to be spotty.

The primary sponsor of the bill is Rep. Steve Tharinger of Sequim. Testifying in front of the Senate committee last week, he said, "Although there hasn't been problems with this in Washington, there were problems in Canada and other countries. This bill gets us in front of any tendency for folks to take the risk to their eyesight by performing this procedure."

Some of those problems in

Canada and other countries include loss of vision. Go figure.

Ever since tattooing and piercing became conventional expressions of edginess in the

1990s, and as ever more people surrendered the tenderest parts of their bodies to the ink and stud, I've wondered where it would all end. The uvula? A spike clean through the head? A tattoo on the pancreas?

How about intentional bruising? You could go into a studio for a session of punches and two days later have some delightfully colored bruises on your body. That would be edgy.

But I never considered the eyeball, and it seems a frontier has been breached here, much as President Kennedy and NASA pushed us beyond Earth's orbit into the frontier of deep space in the 1960s. I can't imagine anything existing beyond space or anything existing in the tattooing world beyond inking the eyeball.

But enacting a law to ban this type of self-expression seems dubious. First, even the bill's sponsor says it's not a problem in Washington, and second, anyone involved in either side of this transaction — the tattooer or the tattooee — is likely wrapped up in other shenanigans that imperil life and limb, and perhaps eyeballs. You can stop them at needles in the eye, but what about when the next edgy fad is shoving flashing LED lights up your nose or injecting cricket larvae into your eardrums?

Life, like sports, seems to go much better if you avoid the unforced errors. Don't fumble the football, don't fall off of the roof, don't overthrow the cutoff man and don't test how long you can hold that lit firecracker.

And don't put anything sharp in your eye except your elbow.

■ Contact Kirk Ericson at [kirk@masoncounty.com](mailto:kirk@masoncounty.com)



By KIRK ERICSON

## JOURNAL EDITORIAL

# Stand up for what you believe

A video showing a man speaking to the Seattle City Council last month sparked some outrage.

Richard Schwartz, addressing the council during a public comment period March 11, politely called out council members for having their "heads down" while he was speaking.

"It's really discouraging to come up here and see all the heads down," he said at the podium.

At one point, he asked whether his two-minute timer could be reset so he could begin again with the attention of council members. He was denied — "No, we're not going to. Just go ahead," Councilwoman Debora Juarez interjected.

Schwartz went on cite a previous meeting where members of the public were limited one minute each to speak, yet Pramila Jayapal, a U.S. representative, was allowed to speak as long as she wanted.

He said the exchange reminded him of George Orwell's "Animal Farm," citing the novel's famous passage — "All animals are equal, but some animals are more equal than others."

Schwartz's comment struck a chord with some Mason County residents. We understand why.

Why should the movers and shakers have more say during a public meeting? Do their opinions count for more? Do they get more than one vote during our elections? Does more wealth equal more valuable input?

Of course not.

So, let's politely make sure our own civic leaders and elected officials know this when we speak during public meetings. We can do this by respectfully addressing our electeds during the public comment period at any of the dozens of public meetings that take place each month in Mason County.

In case you're unfamiliar with protocol, all publicly elected boards or entities in Mason County — including school boards, boards of fire commissioners and hospital district boards — set aside time for you to speak directly to their councils, boards or committees. You might be asked to sign your name on a sheet or contact a particular board in advance, but it's your right to directly address in person the elected men and women who serve you in public office.

Some boards limit your time to one or two minutes; others will let you speak as long as you wish.

It's your right to speak

out on issues that are important to you — you are not wasting their time. If you don't feel like your voice was heard, follow up during the next meeting until you're sure they've heard you.

It's not a burden for them. It is their job to listen to their constituents — not just the ones who have fancy titles or donate money to their campaigns.

We know that it can be difficult for the average local resident to find time to attend a Shelton City Council or Board of Mason County Commissioners meeting. The city council meets at 6 p.m. on the first and third Tuesday of each month. The county meetings are even tougher — commissioners meet at 9 a.m. on the first, second and third Tuesdays of each month, and 6 p.m. on the fourth Tuesday of the month.

If you're not able to address an elected board in person, you can always write, email or call them directly. If they don't get back to them, show up and ask for a response in person.

We know it can be tough to get up and speak in front of a crowd, but sometimes democracy isn't easy. Standing up for what you believe is important — in this case, literally.



# SHELTON-MASON COUNTY Journal

USPS 492-800

POSTMASTER: Send address changes to Shelton-Mason County Journal, P.O. Box 430, Shelton, WA 98584.

Published weekly by the Shelton-Mason County Journal at 227 W. Cota St., Shelton, Washington.  
Mailing address: P.O. Box 430, Shelton, WA 98584  
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Periodicals postage paid in Shelton, Washington.

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**SUBSCRIPTION RATES:**  
\$52 per year (\$43 for six months) for Mason County addresses and \$75 per year (\$55 for six months) outside of Mason County.

Owned and published by Shelton-Mason County Journal, Inc.

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# OPINION

## THESE TIMES

### The rooster and the hen

**M**rs. Ericson, the boy and I visited a farm in eastern Thurston County two weekends ago that's owned by a woman and her husband who Mrs. Ericson knows from work. It's a farm where the animals are treated as pets — they mostly don't have to worry about getting slaughtered, except for the occasional ill-tempered rooster, and his death came so quickly that he likely didn't have time to worry at all.

The star attraction at the farm is a handful of Texas longhorn cattle. They are mammoth, mild-mannered creatures whose horns are longer than a Texas football field, if you're partial to Texas-style exaggeration. Texas longhorns with especially long, twisty horns can bring tens of thousands of dollars at auction.

In the same field as the longhorns was a single kunekune pig whose furry face and ears looked like it was crossed with an Ewok. In a hutch near the house was a colony of rabbits, including several bunnies. Ryan, our 14-year-old boy, held a bunny in his cupped hands for several minutes, which seemed to give a reprieve from the uncertainties and anxieties that come with being 14 years old.

In a kennel behind the house were two Pyrenees dogs, which were originally bred in France and Spain to guard livestock. These white-haired dogs are strong and fast, and are devoted to their owners, according to the husband. If you're in the woods with a Pyrenees and you come across a bear, the dog will fight the bear to its death to give its owner time to save himself, the husband said. And if you have two Pyrenees with you, they'll lay into the bear and make it retreat.

That's a good doggy.

Finally, and here's the point of this story, another fenced area was occupied by some nubian pygmy goats and three chickens. The husband told us a story about one of those chickens.

They used to have three hens and a rooster, but the rooster was wearing out its welcome because it would scare the grand-

children when they visited. One day, the husband told us, he was in the goat-chicken pen when the rooster attacked him. The husband backed out of the pen and proceeded to the barn, where he retrieved a blade and dispatched the rooster.



By **KIRK ERICSON**

A few moons later, the husband said the sound of crowing came from the pen, and it wasn't the ghost of the dead rooster. One of the hens was displaying some of the physical characteristics of a rooster, including crowing, developing a tall, bright-red comb and pronounced wattles under its beak, and the strut of someone who acted like she owned the place. Their hen suddenly was passing for a rooster.

We saw it in the pen. If you were asked to pick out the rooster in a police lineup of chickens, you'd finger that one.

The hen was still genetically a female, but changes in its hormone production made it appear male. I learned later this phenomena is called "spontaneous sex reversal."

I had never heard of such a thing, nor had Mrs. Ericson, nor had several people I told the story to. However, the person who answered the phone at the WSU Mason County Extension office in Shelton said she had witnessed a hen turning into a rooster, as had a friend of ours who had a hen that started making cock-a-doodle-doo sounds.

Our friend named the chicken "Pat," in honor of the "Saturday Night Live" character whose name became a shorthand reference to androgyny, which was quite the rage in the 1990s thanks to characters like Michael Jackson, Annie Lennox and Boy George.

The WSU Mason County Extension office put me in contact with its Puyallup office, which gave me the name of Rocio Crespo, a poultry expert who once worked at the Puyallup branch and who is now employed at the North Carolina State College of Veterinary Medicine. Crespo sent me an article written by another

see **TIMES**, page A-5

## JOURNAL EDITORIAL

### Don't be the spark this summer

**F**ire danger may be "low," according to the state Department of Natural Resources.

But county officials aren't taking any chances.

Last week, the Board of Mason County Commissioners approved county-wide burn restrictions on land-clearing and residential debris fires. Recreational fires, including fires in concrete, stone or metals pits — commonly found at campsites — are still permitted, as are charcoal, gas and propane barbecues.

The limits apply to county-regulated lands. As of Tuesday afternoon, DNR-managed lands did not have any burning restrictions. For current information on state burn restrictions, go to [www.dnr.wa.gov](http://www.dnr.wa.gov).

It's early for the county to take such a step. Last year, the county did not place burning restrictions until early July. But fire officials are worried about dry weather — May has been exceptionally dry — so they decided to make the move.

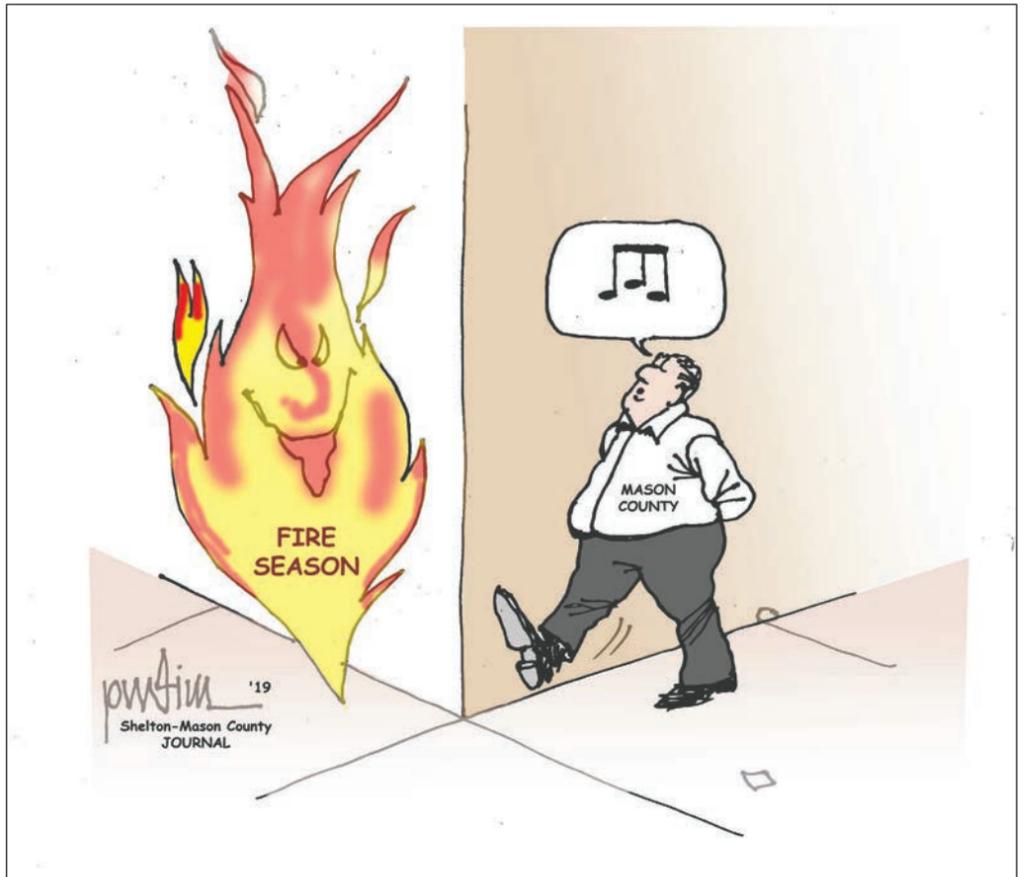
We're glad they're not taking any chances. During the past couple of summers, first responders have been busy. Some careless residents haven't made those jobs easier by tossing fireworks, lit cigarettes or other flammable materials out of car windows and into the foliage. It doesn't take much for Mother Nature to do the rest.

We hope this is a good reminder for residents to brush up on fire safety, especially since the Fourth of July weekend will be here before we

know it. According to the National Fire Protection Association, fireworks start an average of 18,500 fire each year, including 1,300 structure fires.

Most residents know the danger fireworks pose to the human body — each year, Mason General Hospital treats adults and children with injuries stemming from the Fourth of July. It's one thing to injure yourself, it's another thing to risk the lives of our firefighters, EMTs and other first responders who have to put out a smoldering bush.

For the sake of the people who work to keep us safe, let's take the Board of County Commissioners' advice — don't burn yard waste or debris this summer. It can wait until rainy weather returns.



### Correction

A story in the May 23 issue incorrectly stated how many Shelton City Council races will be on the Aug. 6 primary ballot. Only the race for Position 2 will be on the primary ballot because it features four candidates: Donald Coots, Dean Jewett, Steven Peters and incumbent Kathy McDowell. The *Journal* regrets the error.

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**LETTERS TO THE EDITOR**

**Nice job, Boy Scouts**

Editor, the *Journal*

Our very own Boy Scout Troop 9110, and all those associated with it, deserve a humble bow of respect and gratitude from all of us. During this past Memorial Day weekend, if you needed a good dose of patriotism, all you had to do was drive through Shelton Memorial Park. If you'd wanted to give your respects to those who wore a uniform for the United States of America, a walk through Shelton Memorial Park allowed you to honor many. If you wanted to feel proud to be an American, a visit to Shelton Memorial Park most likely brought tears to your eyes.

I don't know how many flags this Boy Scout Troop placed throughout the park, but I personally appreciate each and every one — and say thank you for such a generous act. You reminded us of who we are and where we live and invited us to say a special prayer for those you remembered. And they do it every year!

Suzy Petty  
Shelton

**Here's how to help our elders**

Editor, the *Journal*

Every May, the Administration for Community Living leads our nation's observance of Older Americans Month. The 2019 theme, Connect, Create, Contribute, encourages older adults and their communities to:

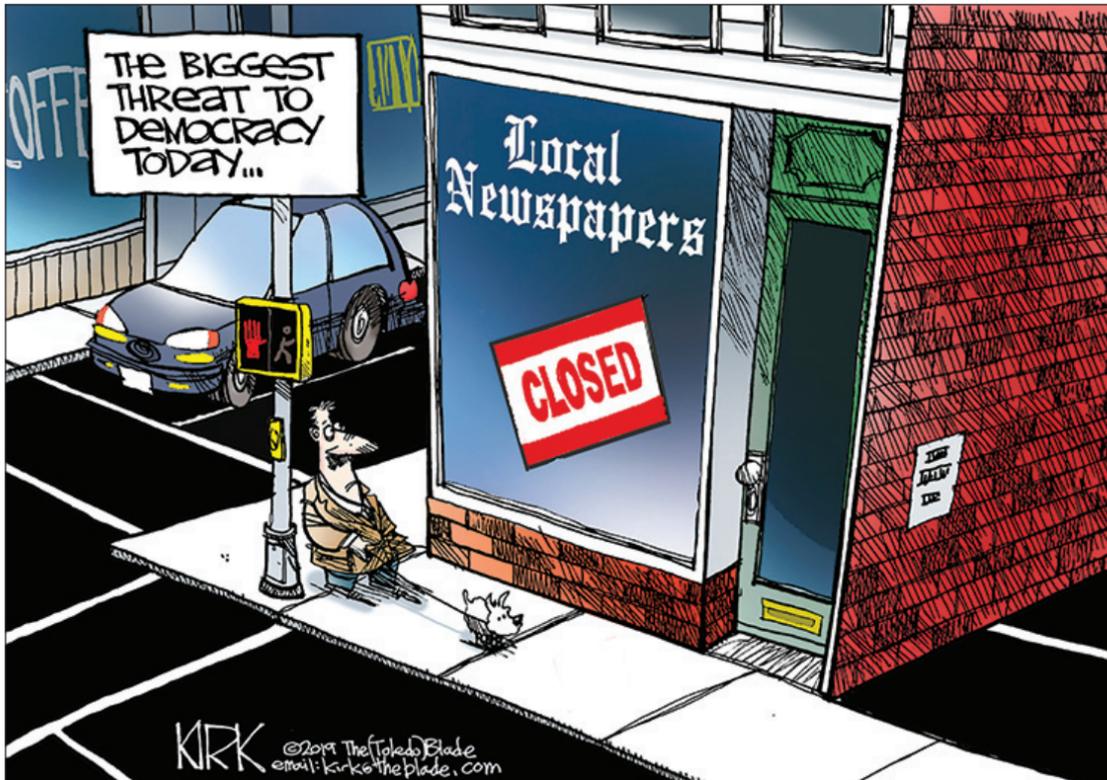
- Connect with friends, family, and services that support participation.

- Create by engaging in activities that promote learning, health, and personal enrichment.

- Contribute time, talent, and life experience to benefit others.

Communities that encourage the contributions of older adults are stronger! By engaging and supporting all community members, we recognize that older adults play a key role in the vitality of our neighborhoods, networks, and lives.

While raising families and



building careers, older Americans also gave back to their communities in a variety of ways. In their lifetimes, times have changed, and they continue to volunteer and serve their neighborhoods in their own ways. Whether they mentored a child, volunteered at a soup kitchen or served their country, each one deserves recognition for their commitment.

For more information or free help with your loved one, contact the Mason County Area Agency on Aging at 360-427-2226 or stop by 628 W. Alder, Shelton, WA 98584.

Lynn Ford  
Lewis, Mason, Thurston  
Area Agency on Aging  
Advisory Board  
Washington State Council  
on Aging  
Chehalis

**Thank you, veterans, and the press**

Editor, the *Journal*

On May 27 we remembered our veterans who fought and died to protect our freedom. May 3 was World Press Freedom Day. I think they're related. The 1st Amendment tells me the most important liberty in our republic is freedom of speech and the press. It speaks truth to power, ferrets out corruption in government and corporate America. I recall *The Washington Post* exposing

the Watergate scandal that revealed President Richard Nixon's corruption. The press also doggedly uncovered that President Bill Clinton lied about his affair with Monica Lewinsky which eventually led to his impeachment. I think about all the other corruption and cover-ups that have been exposed because our country is committed to freedom of the press. When President Donald Trump attacks the press, engages in name-calling of journalists (and his detractors), when he promulgates "fake news" and calls the press an "enemy of the people" and his most extreme supporters chant, "lock 'em up," I think about the following quote: "It is the press, above all, which wages a positively fanatical and slanderous struggle, tearing down everything which can be regarded as a support of national independence, cultural elevation, and the economic independence of the nation."

It's a quote by none other than Adolf Hitler. Three of my uncles fought against this madman, and my brainwashed German relatives, in WWII in order to protect the freedom we experience today. I've seen one uncle's photos showing how he helped ensure a small German town mayor was shown piles of naked dead Jewish victims inside a concentration camp — all because that mayor claimed the holocaust was "fake news." Let's be grateful to our service people and not forget our history, otherwise we'll be doomed to re-live it.

We can all send respectful, yet opinionated, letters to the editor because it's protected by the freedom of the press that many of our military men and women died for. Jeannine and I say thank you veterans and *Shelton-Mason County Journal!*

Dave Daggett  
Shelton

**Democrats' race will be entertaining**

Editor, the *Journal*

With Bill (be still, my heart) DeBlasio entering the race last week, the number of candidates vying for the Democrat presidential nomination has now reached 23. Several wags have pointed out that this is now greater than the number of horses that ran in the Kentucky derby. One wonders; will there be similar finishes?

The long knives are already out on this one. Communist Conrad Black has called the race, "A New York City marathon for the unfit," and to *National Review* writer Jim Geraghty, it is simply, the "clown car primary." Despite this, I thought it would be fun to peck at and rate the current leaders.

1. Joe Biden. I profiled "Creepy Joe" at some length in the May 2 *Journal*. Many think he is a moderate, no, he isn't, and is the best choice for beating Trump, but

he is getting long in the tooth (crowns?) and if elected, would be 78 when sworn in. I doubt the party youngsters will abide a geezer in the oval office. He's a quintessential politician, but voters should beware. "Plugs" and his son have considerable baggage. It's a likely bet he will drop out due to pressure.

2. Bernie Sanders. "Crazy Bernie," a media moniker, calls himself an independent, but caucuses with the Democrats. He is an avowed socialist who honeymooned in, and later returned from, the Soviet Union. Sen. Lindsay Graham, however, said, "he never came back." Now that he's a millionaire with three houses, his socialist patina had dulled quite a bit. Capitalism has been very good to Bernie. He and his swarm of maleducated young supporters will soldier on and could prove strong finishers. I'm just not so sure Americans are ready to eat out of a dumpster.

3. Elizabeth Warren. Today, she polls a respectable third in the race. Known as the Democrat's resident wonk, I call her "Princess Many-Plans."

She has made many policy proposals including free college tuition, universal child care, and a host of other liberal give-a-ways. She famously said, "You didn't build that," to small business owners, men and women entrepreneurs, telling them that big government was as, or more, important than their own efforts. Her breathtakingly inept, "I'm gonna get me a beer" ad in January was widely panned. From this to her phony claim for minority status to Harvard University, she has proven herself to be a complete fraud. Alas, despite her energy and earnestness, she will always be "Pocahontas." A long shot.

Personally, I hope none of these candidates gets anywhere near the White House. Democrats wielding power anywhere is a scary thought, but handicapping these "clown car" occupants is, I confess, sort of fun. Late next month, the DNC will arbitrarily split the top 20 candidates, with 10 debating on June 26 and 10 on the 27th. Here is where the fangs will be bared and the claws will come out. This should be great TV!

Robert Graham  
Union

**Times: Ovary malfunction causes gender-fluid chickens**

*continued from page A-4*

poultry scientist, Jacqueline Jacob at the University of Kentucky, and that led me to "The Urban Chicken Podcast," a broadcast out of Boise, Idaho, that had an interview with Jacob.

According to Jacob, here's what's going on with these gender-fluid chickens: Hens have one functioning ovary, the left one — the right ovary fails to develop fully and is essentially dormant, although it does produce slight amounts of testosterone. If

the left ovary stops functioning, and therefore isn't producing its normal level of estrogen, the testosterone being produced by the undeveloped right ovary starts having its way.

And you get a hen with a strut.

One more interesting chicken fact: According to what Jacob said on the podcast, hens can crow but "They just don't feel like crowing because the estrogen suppresses their desire to crow."

OK. One final interesting chicken fact: Jacob said a kid

in Florida once won top hen in a 4-H competition and then won top rooster in the same competition the next year.

And guess what? It was the same chicken.

■ Contact Kirk Ericson at [kirk@masoncounty.com](mailto:kirk@masoncounty.com)

# OPINION

## THESE TIMES

### Marijuana at the senior center

Glenn Harper, a Mason County Senior Activities Association board member, brought a little jar of pot to the senior center in Shelton last week. It was a couple of nuggets that go by the strain name of Golden Pineapple.

Glenn removed the jar's lid at the beginning of his presentation, handed the jar to an audience member in the front row and told her to pass it around so the 15 or so people gathered in the meeting room could have a sniff. While Glenn, who recently completed a 20-hour, state-sanctioned course on the medicinal qualities of marijuana, spent the next hour or so talking and answering questions about the history and medicinal effects of marijuana, that little jar of Golden Pineapple made its way slowly around the room.

I didn't hear any the sniffers say, "Oh! So that's what marijuana smells like" or "That smells really strong." Because this is the year 2019 in the state of Washington, most people, including many in their 80s, already know what marijuana smells like – and what kind of effect it has on them.

When the jar made it back to the front of the room at the end of his presentation, Glenn chuckled, noting that the jar had the same amount of marijuana as when it started its trek around the room. No one in the audience had pinched any.

Besides the matter of being honest, why should they? There's plenty at the store down the road.

Times have changed. In remarks published in 1953, U.S. Commissioner of Narcotics Harry Anslinger wrote "... marihuana has no therapeutic value, and its use is therefore always an abuse and a vice ... In the earliest stages of intoxication the will power is destroyed and inhibitions and restraints are released; the moral barricades are broken down and often debauchery and sexuality results. Where mental instability is inherent, the behavior is generally violent. An egotist will enjoy delusions of grandeur, the timid individual will suffer anxiety, and the aggressive one often will resort to acts of violence and crime. Dormant tendencies are released and while the subject may know what is happening, he has become pow-

erless to prevent it. Constant use produces incapacity for work and a disorientation of purpose. The drug has a corroding effect on the body and on the mind, weakening the entire physical system and often leading to insanity after prolonged use."

After Glenn finished his talk, I took his place up front and asked audience members – none of whom struck me as particularly insane or violent – about their own experiences with marijuana. There were plenty of takers, and nearly all were willing to allow their name to be used in print.

Jill Neil, 83, talked about trying marijuana and remembers that her experience included spending an inordinate amount of time staring at the inside of her fridge.

Betty Grindle, 82, said her daughter gave her a portion of marijuana and she remembers being so zonked she had to crawl to get around the house.

"It wasn't fun, but I learned: Start slow," Betty said. "I've had good experiences and bad experiences."

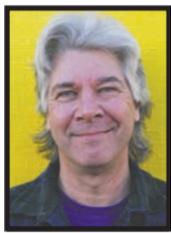
Stories of euphoria, such as being able to pick up the various sounds of rainfall, were mixed with stories of paranoia, and I was reminded of a quote by a medical marijuana activist in the early part of this decade.

"We don't want to treat this like plutonium, but at the same time, society is not ready for us to treat this like oregano," said John Novak, who ran a website called 420leaks.

Marijuana is not the scourge it was once portrayed as nor is it the antidote for every disease known to humans. We have a 10,000-year history with marijuana – the era of marijuana prohibition and incarceration is just a blip on the human timeline – and now is the time to learn what we can about this plant. Why does it seem to help with wasting diseases? Why does it help with symptoms of palsy? Can it help wean people off opiates?

Glenn has scheduled another session at the center on the medicinal qualities of marijuana, including suggested doses and treatments for specific conditions. Join him at 1:30 p.m. July 17.

■ Contact Kirk Ericson at [kirk@masoncounty.com](mailto:kirk@masoncounty.com)



By KIRK ERICSON

## JOURNAL EDITORIAL

### Small donations make big difference

Cancer does not discriminate – it can strike anybody, any time.

It is relentless. It strains families and bank accounts. It cuts lives short.

On Saturday, teams of men, women and children fought back. Dozens of individuals marched around Kneeland Park in downtown Shelton to raise money for cancer research. The American Cancer Society's annual Shelton Relay for Life fundraiser raised at least \$29,000, said event organizer Vickie Gonzales.

It can be daunting to think about just how many people are affected by cancer each day.

Chances are you or somebody you know has had the disease.

The idea of eradicating cancer sounds impossible. But just like any other goal you set out to reach, every step counts – in the case of Relay for Life, each step literally counts. Every dollar counts.

Funds from this event, and others like it across

the country, will pay for chemotherapy, cancer research and more.

We think our local organizers do a fantastic job putting on this event, despite occasionally rainy weather or spotty attendance. Our locals don't have to spend their nights and weekends reaching out to businesses for sponsorships, booking musical acts and providing materials for the always-powerful luminaria portion of Relay for Life.

It's easy to look at the \$29,000 organizers raised and say it won't make a difference. Cancer is so widespread. It's everywhere.

But just think – if every small town in the United States raised \$29,000 each year, we'd have millions of dollars to spend on stopping the terrible disease. Shelton does its part. North Mason's Relay for Life has also contributed thousand of dollars in the past as well.

Using a baseball analogy, not every player

in the lineup has to hit home runs. Sometimes, singles and doubles can be just as effective to get a win. Twenty-nine thousand dollars can make a huge difference in the life of somebody facing a breast cancer diagnosis. It can pay for medical bills, but it can also inspire hope.

You don't need to spend all night walking around a track or emptying your wallet to help – chances are you know somebody who's going through cancer treatment right now. You can offer them a ride to the hospital, or come over and feed their pets while they're gone. You can get their mail or bring them dinner.

Relay for Life isn't just about raising money – it's about bringing attention to the cancer survivors in our neighborhoods who bravely and quietly face their diagnoses each day. They deserve whatever time or energy we can give them. After all, their time might be limited.



#### Journal Letter Policy

The *Journal* encourages original letters to the editor of local interest. Diverse and varied opinions are welcomed. We will not publish letters that are deemed libelous or scurrilous in nature. All letters must be signed and include the writer's name, address and daytime phone number, which will be used for verification purposes only. All letters are subject to editing for length, grammar and clarity. To submit a letter, email [adam@masoncounty.com](mailto:adam@masoncounty.com), drop it off at 227 W. Cota St., or mail it to P.O. Box 430, Shelton, WA 98584.

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All regular editorial, advertising and legal deadlines are 5 p.m. the Monday prior to publication.

To submit a letter to the editor, email [adam@masoncounty.com](mailto:adam@masoncounty.com).