

THESE TIMES

Two Capitols, Jan. 6, 2021

*“It’s coming to America first,
The cradle of the best and
of the worst.”*

“Democracy,” Leonard Cohen

OLYMPIA — In the midafternoon of Jan. 6, a day that will live in infamy — and reverence — across our schizoid nation, I was in the parking lot on the south side of the state Capitol having a post-insurrection chat with a friend.

It was 4 p.m., just a few minutes after the last white militants had been shooed from the area around the Governor’s Mansion and a few minutes before the Washington State Patrol began clearing the west side of the Capitol Campus, saying anyone who remained would be arrested.

My friend and I revisited the events of the previous hour, including witnessing two WSP SUVs accelerate toward us at a furious speed and then take the corner we were on so fast I could see the vehicles’ frames tilt into the turn. The SUVs re-accelerated toward the end of the parking lot, near where the Governor’s Mansion was having guests.

While we talked, I saw a lone woman, maybe in her 30s, crossing the wide avenue that leads to the Legislative Building, her Trump-touting flag furling behind her. The woman’s shoulders were as straight as a soldier’s at parade rest, her chin was raised and her head was on a swivel, perhaps seeking one more chance to share her insights about politics, culture and depravity.

Her eyes caught mine from 20 yards away. She yelled, “Joe Biden is a pedophile!”

This I did not know.

“How do you know that?” I



By **KIRK ERICSON**

yelled back.

“I saw the emails on Hunter Biden’s laptop!”

“Where did you see Hunter Biden’s emails?”

“On the internet!”

“Where on the internet?” I asked.

“You can’t find them anymore. They’ve been deleted!”

A half hour earlier I stood near another woman, who had just retreated (tactically withdrawn?) from the mansion area, while she explained that the cops were harassing people “just for ringing a doorbell. All this” — she made an indignant sweep of her arm toward the sprawling law enforcement presence — “for ringing a doorbell?”

The woman didn’t mention the doorbell was attached to a home that was reached by breaking through a gate and that the finger on the doorbell belonged to a mob, many of whose members were armed. But still, when you’re trying to make a point ...

Those women clearly had some frayed wires short-circuiting upstairs, but it’s understandable. Eating the sludge that this president has force-fed us for 5½ years has made some of the sanest of us unravel a bit.

Those people who failed to

squish our representative democracy on Jan. 6 are unlikely to get another chance soon. Around 3:45 p.m. at our Capitol, the clot around the Governor’s Mansion was breaking up and I had counted at least 80 law enforcement vehicles on the campus. More vehicles were still arriving and WSP personnel were still strapping on riot gear at a time when it appeared the anarchists were leaving the scene.

I figured some insurgents must be in the mansion, but I learned that wasn’t true, so the donning of riot gear and the flow of arriving law enforcement seemed redundant. Then I figured it out, maybe: They were letting the insurrectionists know just what was in store for them if they ever came back with insurrectionist intentions.

Considering the sheer terror and horror that was visited upon their brethren and sisters at the U.S. Capitol, I presume that this state and these law enforcement folks are done indulging these hooligans. I imagine the thinking is the same in Washington, D.C.

At that same moment in Washington, D.C., law enforcement was bum-rushing those women’s comrades-in-delusion off the grounds of the U.S. Capitol. Many of those patriots had gone to the U.S. Capitol after departing — completely coincidentally, of course — a Donald Trump rally just up Pennsylvania Avenue.

Those people who invaded the U.S. Capitol were like the dog that finally caught the car they’d been chasing. The insurrectionists apparently hadn’t received a detailed battle plan from Col. Trump, so they did what such patriots do: They took selfies, injured police, chanted “USA! USA!

USA!” and shot pictures and videos of their fellow travelers, making it much easier to identify them. Thanks for not wearing masks. That was helpful.

It was truly a hard week for democracy in America, but let us at least be glad that this furious vanguard of Trumpism, this tip of this particular spear, is not composed of the brightest gardenias in the garden.

Which reminds of a story ... Several years ago, a Pierce County Superior Court judge told me the story of a defendant who was accused of having a duffle bag full of drugs. In court, the judge asked the arresting officer how he was able to connect the duffle bag to the defendant. The officer said the defendant’s name was on a tag attached to the bag.

“And how did you connect the defendant to that name?”

“Because he had his name tattooed on his forehead.”

“That was convenient,” the judge said.

“Your honor,” the officer said. “We don’t catch the smart ones.”

The invaders’ motivation and fervor remains a mystery to many Americans, likely including many of the Americans who remain under his spell, so I’ll share one of the best descriptions I’ve come across in the past 5½ years to explain Donald J. Trump’s supporters. It comes from my friend John Van Eenwyk, a clinical psychologist, world traveler and an ordained priest in the Episcopal Church.

“What his supporters like are four things: If they are rich, he’s made them fabulously richer. If they are poor, he’s free entertainment. If they are angry, he’s their spokesman. And to the paranoid, he

assures them they aren’t mentally ill.”

Many names are being used to describe the people who stormed the U.S. Capitol and acted like they had just been called onstage at a cosplay festival: Terrorists, patriots, thugs, Trumpists, protesters, extremists, freedom-lovers, white militants, insurgents and insurrectionists. But those people who crashed our totem of representative government were playing the game well inside the sidelines, as many of their kind have been doing for centuries.

It was these people who massacred hundreds of Lakota Sioux at Wounded Knee in 1890, who bombed the federal building in Oklahoma City in 1995, who shot and bayoneted hundreds of Vietnamese in the village of My Lai in 1968, who slaughtered a wagon train of settlers in the Mountain Meadows Massacre of 1857 and who killed a townful of Blacks in Colfax, Louisiana, in 1873.

But it was also these people who secured voting rights for women in 1920, who developed a vaccine for polio in 1955, who rebuilt Europe with the Marshall Plan after World War II, who aided Harriet Tubman in running the Underground Railroad, who risked their skin to integrate restaurants and schools in the South in the 1960s, and who fought for tribal fishing rights in this state in the 1960s and 1970s.

Let’s call those people what they really are: Americans. And until we fully recognize the rot within us, we are not done with days like Jan. 6, 2021.

■ *Email Kirk Ericson at kirk@masoncounty.com*

LETTERS continued from page A-4

‘Family values’

Editor, the Journal,

Today I heard President Donald Trump encourage a mob to attack the U.S. Capitol and vandalize the structure. How far down has the Republican Party fallen? Shame on you and your child-caging parts of “family values.”

Greg Dallum
Shelton

Impeachment required

Editor, the Journal,

I am writing on Jan. 10, so I do not know what will transpire between this writing and publication. What I am seeing is an inexplicable debate. There are people who are actually wondering whether impeachment is justified and are soft-peddling King Donald’s responsibility. What is even more amazing, is that these same people describe themselves as patriots and constitutionalists. They are neither.

It does not take much constitutional analysis to know the branches are co-equal. Although His Majesty has repeatedly treated the executive as superior, it simply cannot be. If any branch has claim to being first among equals, it is the legislative. It is no accident that the Congress is Article I.

The analysis is especially compelling if you look at original intent. How would the Founders have viewed the Congress? They were English lawyers and educated in English history. The lessons of the English civil war and Glorious Revolution were not lost on them. If you look at Anglo American constitutional practice, the English established the principle favoring the legislature over the king. In fact, it was the pre-Constitution practice that Congress was the governing branch. Although the Constitution strengthened the executive, it by no means was meant to create a king. To read the Constitution that way is simply impermissible.

On Jan. 6, King Donald fired up a mob and sent them to Congress. They proceeded to invade the place. Again, let’s look to the history that the Founders would have been well aware of. They would certainly remember that King Charles I entered the Parliament to arrest five of its members on Jan. 4, 1642. That action made the English civil war all but inevitable. To this day, the English monarch dare not enter the House of Commons. His actions breached the fundamental balance created in the Constitution.

The people who supported the insurrection love to tell us how they are the true constitutionalists and patriots. Yet they repudiated the concept of governance by the people, substituting their own self-justified beliefs as if they were the sole arbiters of the people. They

would rule from the point of a gun, not by governance. They are the fools who supported Shay’s Rebellion and the Whiskey Rebellion. And President George Washington had no problem putting the latter down. They accept constitutional governance when it yields the policies they like and support a King if those policies do not suit them.

King Donald has violated the most basic fundamental principle of the Constitution and literally assaulted one of the branches. That is simply sedition. There is only one remedy. Impeachment, conviction, removal and barring him from office. We have reached a point where one can either support King Donald or the Constitution. One may not do both.

Andrew Makar
Hoodsport

Death of free speech

Editor, the Journal,

Free speech as a right of all Americans has come under attack by Twitter and Facebook by banning opposing views and opinions they do not agree with. President Donald Trump voters and true conservatives should rise up (not violently) and cancel their accounts by choice, before they are canceled with no choice.

CNN has called for OAN, FOX and Newsmax to be removed from Direct TC, Comcast, Century Link and other cable providers. This is the promotion of the

stifling of free speech. CNN is a liberal-slanted network calling for the censorship of all conservative viewpoints. I say this is proof of CNN calling for the disregard of the Constitution, free speech, and freedom of the press. This is true sedition of the government. By its own views of intolerance, they should be the ones removed.

Notice I do not call for a ban on MSNBC, CBS, NBC, ABC or other liberal networks as they have a right to their opinion, but do not seek to abolish ours.

Patrick Sanzo
Shelton

What about the Clintons?

Editor, the Journal,

I had to respond to the “Waiting for January 2021” writer.

The writer forgets probably the worst political criminal of all time, the Clintons.

Hilary as secretary of State funneled \$4 to \$500 million into the Clinton Foundation and Clinton International during her short stay, as only a real thief can do. She accepted bribes. A disgusting pair of low-lives. Prison for Hilary and Bill.

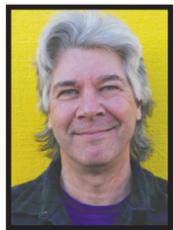
George Skarich
Shelton

OPINION

THESE TIMES

Some moments outside the bubble

“Art is so wonderfully irrational, exuberantly pointless, but necessary all the same. Pointless and yet necessary, that’s hard for a puritan to understand.” — Gunter Grass, German novelist, 1927-2015



By **KIRK ERICSON**

I’ve been friends with Ron Skowronek pretty much since the day he pulled me out of the sand nearly 25 years ago, but I had never noticed the ethnicity of his last name.

“Is Skowronek a Polish name?” I asked him last week.

It was early afternoon and the two of us were off to pick blueberries at a field in southern Thurston County. I was at the wheel and Ron was in the back seat, with the windows down and our masks on. It was my first time since March in a car with someone who didn’t occupy my containment dome. In the vocabulary of this pandemic, I was outside the bubble.

“My family’s from the Kashbia, Kashubia, whatever you call that place between Germany and Poland,” Ron said. “You know, that place Gunter Grass writes about.”

“I don’t know that place,” I replied.

Before the blueberry field, we stopped at his house to fetch a backpack, a picture frame and matting, and a hat, all for my son’s upcoming birthday. Ron’s house is where I buy gifts because his house is crammed with the art he makes and items he’s foraged from garage sales, roadsides, dumpsters and Goodwill. The walkways in his house are piled high on both sides, sometimes providing just enough room for him to pass without turning his shoulders.

Some might consider Ron a hoarder, but that word

doesn’t fully explain him.

The words “gray squirrel” describe him better. They’re both wiry and fidgety creatures who have scattered stashes on the land they roam.

We’ve learned from a team of researchers in Canada that gray squirrels often forget where they’ve buried their nuts, which means they have to bury a lot of nuts to see them through the hard times. It also might explain why gray squirrels have that twitchy, vibrating presence — they’re trying to remember where they left those damn nuts. Ron often has that look.

“You’ve never read Gunter Grass?” Ron asked.

“I haven’t,” I said.

“Gunter Grass writes about that place in Poland all the time,” he said.

I met Ron while stuck up to my waist in the beach during a low tide in Budd Inlet. I got sucked in while wandering too close to shore. I had a cup of coffee in hand, the sun was out and I wasn’t going anywhere without aid, so I eased into the fix I was in and waited for someone to pass by and give me a yank. Many people passed by before Ron approached and stuck out his hand, in greeting and in aid.

“I don’t think most people know who Gunter Grass is,” I replied, giving him a glance in my rear-view mirror.

“Really? But Gunter Grass won a Nobel Prize for literature.”

“People are more likely to know who Kim Kardashian is.”

“Who?”

I didn’t explain. How do you explain something like Kim Kardashian?

Ron works as handyman to pay the bills, and he works as an artist to pay his

see *TIMES*, page A-5

JOURNAL EDITORIAL

What makes a community?

Despite anecdotal evidence that implies Shelton is a bedroom community for state employees and students, Shelton’s downtown still has a vibrant and still thriving business community.

We mourn the loss of locally owned traditions like Roosters, which it appears will soon be replaced by a Wendy’s and a Starbucks (see related story) because there is no more important link to the vitality of a town than its business proprietors.

The *Journal* has often fallen prey to the ease and effective delivery of products from behemoths like Amazon, despite the full realization that the end game for its founder, Jeff Bezos, is elimination of every other business on Earth.

This begs the questions, “when all the businesses are gone, where will I work and how will I pay for my purchases?”

For this newspaper, Amazon’s success could parallel our own demise. Most of the *Journal’s* income is derived from the advertisements with which we frame our pages every week.

It’s been a great and trusted business model for more than a century as long as we maintain your trust.

Your great-grandparents believed that what they read in these pages was reliable and credible information and thus they can trust that our advertisers will be reliable and trustworthy.

We do our best to ensure the continuation of your trust but several times a year we watch a long-time advertiser close its doors, all too often because it cannot compete with the likes Amazon.

The Titans of Tech last week spoke before congressional committees in a shot across the bow which we hope will eventually beget the breakup of modern monopolies like Facebook, Amazon and Google.

Although competition law dates back to the Roman Empire, it’s been more than a century since Americans watched a president (Teddy Roosevelt) swing a big stick at the Captains of Industry.

And although Standard Oil and the beef industry giants like Swift still exist in some form, their size gave them the ability to take advantage of the consumer. And while Americans love capitalism, we don’t much like to be raped by unbridled capitalists.

So please, before taking the road well-traveled with your next purchase, ask yourself, “can I buy it locally?”

If you don’t know the answer, make a few telephone or email inquiries to see if you can help sustain our local economy.

Or better yet, grab a mask and walk into a few local stores where you’ll most likely meet an owner or two.

These are the people who have invested their money, and their most precious and irreplaceable resource, their time, into building our thriving community.

When you desire to make a purchase, they are here for you and more importantly, they have local expertise to advise you on the product or service which will best suit your needs.

And if you have a problem with a purchase, avoid voicemail Hell, just go downtown and talk to an owner.

They (and we) are here to help.



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 Telephone: 360-426-4412 Website: www.masoncounty.com Periodicals postage paid in Shelton, Washington.

The *Shelton-Mason County Journal* is a member of the Washington Newspaper Publishers Association.

SUBSCRIPTION RATES: \$62 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.*

Publisher/Editor: Tom Mullen

Advertising: John Lester, General Manager Theresa Murray, Ad Representative

Newsroom: Justin Johnson, Sports/Outdoors Editor Gordon Weeks, Reporter Isabella Breda, Reporter Kirk Ericson, Columnist/ Proofreader Kirk Boxleitner, Reporter

Front office: Dave Pierik, Office Administrator Karen Hranac, Customer Service

Delivery: Jon Garza David Olson Niel Challstrom

Composing room: William Adams, Advertising Design and Technical Support

Design: Lloyd Mullen, Creative Director

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

To submit a letter to the editor, email justin@masoncounty.com.

Opinion

THESE TIMES

Exactly whose town is it?

*“Don’t take your guns to town son
Leave your guns
at home Bill
Don’t take your
guns to town.”*

— Johnny Cash, “Don’t Take Your Guns to Town”



By **KIRK ERICSON**

Sunday in downtown Shelton felt like the canker sores who dwell on social media and in the comment sections of news sites suddenly sprouted legs, arms — and side arms — and then sprung from their computer screens, in a furious squall, to claim that Shelton was created in their own image.

What follows is but a glimpse of that claim, heard at the corner of West Pine and North Fourth streets, near the county courthouse, about 15 minutes after Black Lives Matter (BLM) marchers left their assembly point at Post Office Park. Many of the people protesting the protest — identifiable by the sight of their guns and bared teeth — had been barking at the heels of BLM marchers ever since their march started about 2 p.m.

It was quickly clear which side had the message and which side came to interrupt the message. It was like having your little brother tag along to the movie with you and your girlfriend, and then have him spit popcorn kernels in your girlfriend’s hair. Except in this case, your little brother has a semi-automatic rifle.

The two sides in Shelton’s Sunday drama came fully face-to-face at Pine and Fourth. To appreciate the venom directed at the BLM side, picture the following words emerging from puffed-out chests, thrust-out jaws and throat-popping vocal cords, and with the volume turned to 11. And excuse my (bleeping) language:

“Get the (bleep) out of my town!”
“Go (bleeping) home!”
“Are you from Shelton?”
“It’s my (bleeping) town!”
“Go home!”
“You’re not welcome here!”
“If you don’t (bleeping) live here, go home!”

This hometown matter was clearly a thorn with some of these counterprotesters: Because the 100 or so people marching in the BLM rally were not from Shelton, their thinking seemingly went, the BLM people had no right to expose Shelton to their message — without being threatened to within an inch of violence.

The problem was — oops — most of the BLM marchers were already home. I talked to perhaps 15 people Sunday,

on both sides of the fragile white line, and virtually all said they were from Shelton.

The belief among some folks that BLM marchers were not from Shelton seemed intensely personal to them, as though they couldn’t understand that such treachery existed in their midst. Instead of accepting the truth that many people in Shelton might have vastly differing views on how humans

and government should behave, they instead chose to treat the BLM folks as foreigners, as strangers.

But why should it even matter if BLM protesters were out-of-towners? Why should it matter where they’re from? Aren’t they from Washington? Aren’t they U.S. residents? Aren’t they ultimately from the same place in eastern Africa (or, if you choose, the Garden of Eden, which is only a little up and to the right from the Great Rift Valley?)

It might come down to this: Accusing your opponent of being a foreigner is the easiest way to justify your opposition to what they do, say and think. It’s easier for some people to highlight someone’s otherness than it is to compete in the arena of thought.

I did, however, find one invader. Earl Burt comes from the outer borough of Bremerton — you might remember Earl from earlier this year when he ran against state Rep. Drew MacEwan in the primary election.

I talked to Earl before the BLM march started. We crossed paths on Railroad Avenue while wandering among the Back the Blue backers — some of whom did not later join the counterprotesters’ ranks. Earl showed up with colored chalk hours earlier to inscribe some messages — Marxist, if you squint hard and tilt your head enough — on downtown sidewalks.

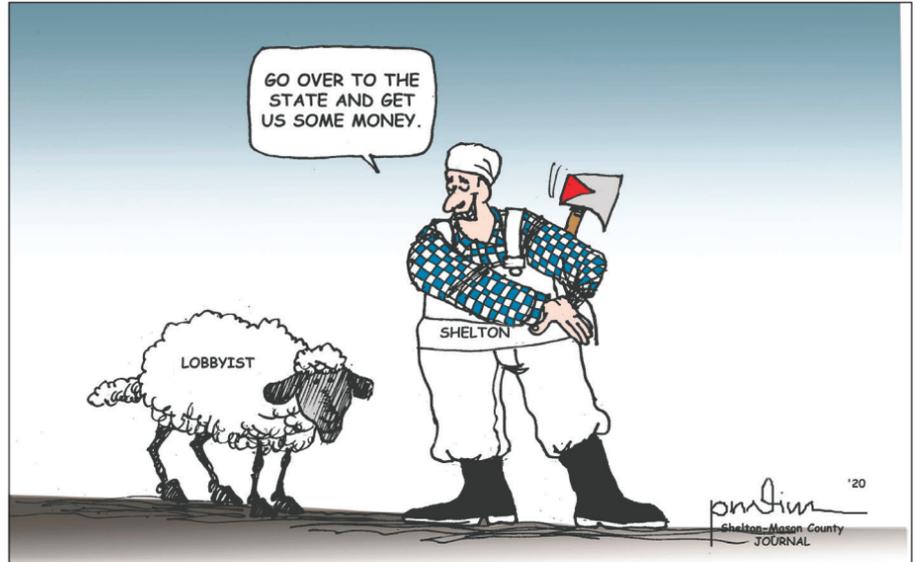
“I did it this morning,” he said with a grin. “I was the guy in the hat without a gun.”

Some of what Earl scrawled on sidewalks includes “Imagine a pandemic of love,” “Vote early, but only vote once” and “Black Lives Always Matter.”

Go back to Bremerton!

This theme of home and who belongs cropped up with the first person I interviewed Sunday. Shelton resident Leonard Chavez was resting easy in a chair in the shade of a tree along Railroad Avenue, accompanied by a Mossberg Model 500 shotgun and a .38-caliber revolver, while trucks with flags puffing up the current U.S. president drove up and down Shelton’s main drag. Many a horn was being honked.

see **TIMES**, page A-7



LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Consider the shortstop

Editor, the *Journal*,

Compromise in any endeavor is difficult. A compromise solution is usually not pleasing to all involved. A comprise process requires a lot of work of give and take to hone an acceptable outcome. Sometimes opposite ideologies are so entrenched that these ideologies will not allow for any common themes to even be discussed.

Selfishness, power struggles, arrogance, contempt and hatred are usually the pitfalls to a compromise. Over the years I have seen these behavioral traits play out with our members of the United States Congress. I am really disgusted with Congress for this type of behavior.

I personally like a politician who is a moderate and is willing to move left or right to support a bill or policy that is good for the people and the nation. And then comes back to the moderate position.

With that thought, I have invented my own political party. It is called the “Shortstop Party.” So, using the metaphor of a shortstop baseball player, you can see him standing between second and third base.

He is not too far left or right. He ranges left or right as the play dictates. After the play, he moves back to his position. He does not stand around doing nothing. He is always in the game to support his team. After the game, he does an interview with the press and meets and signs autographs with his fans.

You, too, can join the Shortstop Party. There are no fees or applications. There is no loyalty oath. All you need is the computer between your ears to figure out and find a politician that is truly willing to

work, to hustle and to compromise. And when you find that gold nugget politician, tell your friends and then, most importantly, vote for that person. And then keep an eye on that person’s “stats” to see how they are performing.

Try to watch a baseball game this season and keep your eye on the shortstop.

Earl W. Burt
Bremerton

Truth Matters

Editor, the *Journal*,

I disagree with Mr. Burke’s Aug. 27 letter attacking car dealers and Commissioner Randy Neatherlin. Restoring trust in government is an ongoing never-ending full-time job requiring experience that matters.

Randy’s re-election campaign signs “Restore the Trust” and “Experience Matters” are honest and accurate.

Do not trust false negative billboards attacking Randy’s years of dedicated public service. Randy is open and accessible to all. If the truth matters to you, call him at 360-490-7389.

I trust Randy simply because he cares about Mason County. He is a time-tested dedicated public servant always working to keep your trust in county government. Proven leadership, common sense, promises kept and his record of accomplishments shows that experience matters.

Be honest to yourself and keep trusting Randy to work for you.

Bob Harris
Belfair

see **LETTERS**, page A-5

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
Telephone: 360-426-4412
Website: www.masoncounty.com
Periodicals postage paid in Shelton, Washington.

The *Shelton-Mason County Journal* is a member of the Washington Newspaper Publishers Association.

SUBSCRIPTION RATES:
\$62 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.*

Publisher/Editor: Tom Mullen

Advertising:
John Lester, General Manager
Theresa Murray, Ad Representative

Newsroom:
Justin Johnson, Sports/Outdoors Editor
Gordon Weeks, Reporter
Isabella Breda, Reporter
Kirk Ericson, Columnist/ Proofreader
Kirk Boxleitner, Reporter

Front office:
Dave Pierik, Office Administrator
Karen Hranac, Customer Service

Delivery:
Jon Garza
David Olson
Niel Challstrom

Composing room:
William Adams, Advertising Design and Technical Support

Design:
Lloyd Mullen, Creative Director

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

To submit a letter to the editor, email justin@masoncounty.com.

LETTERS, continued from page A-6

Where Trump's loyalties lie

Editor, the *Journal*,

Can anybody now doubt that this president wants to destroy democracy in this country, that he wants to emulate his idol, Vladimir Putin, and become president for life?

His latest actions to destroy the Post Office and suppress voting are only the latest manifestations of this.

Times: 'This feels surreal'

continued from page A-4

"We're here to keep the peace," Leonard said when I asked him why he was here, which is not an easy question to ask of a stranger armed with a shotgun and revolver, but he didn't take offense. "We want to make sure our officers are loved and they are backed. Those others can take their stuff back to Seattle and Portland."

Standing near Leonard was Caleb McGill of Shelton. He was accompanied by an AR-15 rifle and a .45-caliber handgun.

"I'm here to back the blue, armed just to make sure," Caleb said. "BLM and antifa are the ones that are creating the damage. We're not the ones damaging things."

Meanwhile, in a quiet city park a block to the north, BLM marchers gathered and milled about. The mood was apprehensive, illustrated best by the words of a woman who piped up while Shelton's police chief and the county's chief criminal deputy paid a quick visit to ensure their safety.

"They have guns!" the woman said, which seemed very much to the point.

Here's a story from Oregon: The 22-year-old son of a friend of mine is running for the Oregon House of Representatives, and he's active in the BLM movement. The candidate, Nolan Bylenga, and others organized a march Aug. 29 in Pendleton, which finished without major conflict, but it was tense. Afterward, Pendleton's police chief had some barbed words for the support-the-police counterprotesters who badgered the BLM protesters throughout the Pendleton march.

"I get the whole Second Amendment piece of this, but why carry the firearm?" Pendleton Police Chief Stuart Roberts told the *East Oregonian* newspaper.

The counterprotesters claimed to be in support of police, Roberts told the newspaper, but the actions and intentions of some in attendance were merely antagonistic.

"When I challenged them verbally they wanted to debate with me (about their rights and said they were here to support the police," Roberts said of the counterprotesters who trailed the march. "My position is you're not supporting me by creating more work for me or making my job more difficult."

Back to Shelton: While the BLM marchers gathered in the park, counterprotesters made occasional forays through their midst, including two men who strutted through waving little U.S. flags like they were Fourth of July sparklers. I spotted a young man standing near the curb with a much larger U.S. flag, which I assumed was intended to be a much larger provocation.

It wasn't. The flag-carrier, Kristoffer Pennington of Shelton, was on the side of patriots.

"The flag is a sign of freedom, even if it has been co-opted by misguided patriots," Kristoffer said. "Being a patriot is loving your country and also wanting to fix it."

A man decked out in video gear was recording the gathering — he would

Robert Clark
Shelton

No sign of Inslee

Editor, the *Journal*,

No signs. Don't see any Jay Inslee signs? No worry, he doesn't need signs to advertise for re-election, he has Seattle in his back pocket.

John Ervin
Shelton

end up shooting 2½ hours of the day's events (go to YouTube and type in "infopig Shelton.") The man, who wouldn't give his name, said he was in Portland the previous night, which marked the 100th straight night of protests in that city.

"A little more gas than usual," he said, as if giving a weather report.

Sandra Partridge, a Shelton resident, also was among the early marchers gathered at the park.

"It's scary," Sandra said. "You should be able to support your causes peacefully, but this feels surreal ... I grew up supporting civil rights."

While the crowd grew and as a speaker gave instructions to the BLM marchers, a heckler on the sidewalk erupted with some loud grunts, but the speaker pressed on. I walked up to the heckler and asked him why he was making those noises.

"I'm in opposition to the Communist Manifesto," the man responded.

Moving on ...

I stuck with the march for an hour as it coursed through downtown, witnessing the repeated, and unsuccessful, efforts of counterprotesters to goad BLM marchers into a physical response. I wandered back and forth between the line of officers separating the two sides.

I passed a mask-less Shelton police officer standing next to his car. He smiled and said, "We're getting our steps in today, aren't we?"

I took that carefree comment as a sign the protest was winding down. While returning along Railroad Avenue to the *Journal*, a man with baby in arms wanted to talk, so we ducked into an alley where it was quieter.

Sam Kline of Shelton said he was walking out of Safeway with his baby when he "heard shouting and saw a lot of armed people who I thought at first were police, but I realized they weren't. They were carrying weapons around. I've been around guns, but I've never seen such a thing. I don't understand why."

Kline said he spent 25 years in the service, including time in Iraq and Afghanistan. He moved to Shelton a few years ago.

"I talked to them," Sam said. "They don't have good reasons for carrying weapons. You have to leave it to the police to deal with it because it changes the whole nature of protest in this country when you introduce guns into it. It's becoming more about who can intimidate whom."

"I came to Shelton to get away from all this," he said. "We've managed to keep this armed thing out of our electoral politics for much of our history."

We were walking along a relatively quiet stretch of Railroad Avenue when Sam put down his 14-month-old son, allowing him to toddle along the sidewalk, while Sam talked and hopped around quickly to keep the child out of danger.

A question hangs in the air: What kind of country is Sam's child toddling toward?

■ Contact Kirk Ericson at kirk@masoncounty.com

FLEXSTEEL HOME

FALL SEMI-ANNUAL SALE

SEPTEMBER 3RD-15TH

We Deliver in Mason County Every Thursday!

ARNOLD'S

HOME FURNISHINGS

3520 KITSAP WAY, BREMERTON
360-377-5582 • 1-800-533-5311
www.arnoldshomefurnishings.com

Mon-Fri: 9:30am - 6pm
Sat: 9:30am - 5:30pm • Sun: Closed

We Are Observing Phase 2 Covid-19 Guidelines

BR-GC10484909-10

Gas & Pellet Stove Annual Maintenance Service Special

SCHEDULE NOW AND SAVE \$30

Gas Stoves, Inserts & Fireplaces
Pellet Stoves & Inserts
SERVICE * SALES INSTALLATIONS

Buy Local • Serving Mason County

Olympic Stove and Spa

24202 N. US Hwy. 101 | Hoodspport | 360-877-5200 • 360-427-3780

33495

In their matching candy-stripe shirts, the Beach Boys were America's biggest band of the early '60s, transmitting utopian bulletins of summer without end to a cold and overcast nation.

— Steve Erickson