

A summer of reconnection

It felt like home.

Last month, the nursery and greenhouse family came together to golf at the Duffers Classic, our annual tournament to raise funds for the Oregon Nurseries' Political Action Committee (ONPAC).

Although some displayed a rusty golf game, that could not hamper the tremendous feeling of reconnection we all shared. Our long national winter of the pandemic was giving way to the warmth of summer of a gathering.

Duffers has never really been about the golf. There are some stellar players, and they deserve accolades for the skill they bring to the game, but for many, it is about getting away from the trucks and shipping stress — to laugh, yell “FORE” and enjoy the family that is the industry.

I, for one, did not play this year. Instead, I joined Steve Shropshire at the Jordan Ramis PC tent to serve beer, connect with people, and regain a sense of home.

Happy birthday America!

The Declaration of Independence — our nation's statement to the world against the monarchy of England — turns 245 years old this year. It is often seen as our birthday for good reason.

With civics just being reintroduced into the classroom next year in Oregon, it is worth noting that America's revolutionary charter of freedom is a document upon which our nation's founding principles were established.

For leaders in the time, signing the declaration was akin to signing one's own death warrant. We had no structure, and no standing army, but plenty of guts to tell the world's reigning power to “stick it.”

Our history books heap praise on Thomas Jefferson, seen as the author, but Jefferson was not alone (he would have you think so). The brainiac Virginian's first draft was edited by John Adams and Benjamin Franklin. While Ben Franklin was never a president, historians believe that he was the critical voice to push a fledgling country into the light of freedom.

Not everyone is aware, but Independence Day actually should have been July 2. On that day in 1776, the Continental

Congress voted for independence. John Adams, in his writings, even noted that July 2 would be remembered in the annals of American history and would be marked with fireworks and celebrations.

The written Declaration of Independence was dated July 4, but was not actually signed until August 2. Fifty-six delegates eventually signed the document, although all were not present on that day in August. This singular step paved the eventual way for the drafting of our U.S. Constitution, followed by the many ebbs and flows that our three branches of government have guided over numerous economic and cultural changes.

Taking time to appreciate freedom

For eight years working for U.S. Sen. Bob Packwood (R-Oregon) on immigration policy and reunifying families from all over the globe, followed by 15 years at the state and national level as your voice on immigration policy, I have seen first-hand the love and commitment to country of our immigrant community members.

The immigrant journey is one that we all have in common. For many, it has been generations since our bloodline came to this country. For others it is weeks or years. My great grandparents immigrated from Italy and came west to Camas, Washington to be — in essence — strike breakers at the Columbia River Paper Company. They migrated down to “Stump Town” — otherwise known as Portland, Oregon — and became part of the community.

My great grandparents fled authoritarianism for a better life. They did what they needed to do to survive and assimilate into the cauldron of culture that is the United States.

Perhaps it is because immigrants know more about the true value of living here. They often come from nations where their civil liberties and economic freedoms are oppressed. They inherently value our government structure more than many in the press.

Veterans who have fought overseas certainly get a recalibration of this notion of appreciation for what we have here at home. Despite all the changes, isolation and anger that seem to be everywhere right now, take



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a long look at what is happening around the world. We do not have opposition parties being shut down like in Russia, we do not have famine and genocide like the Tigray region of Ethiopia or a warzone such as Israel and Palestine.

Yes, we have cultural changes happening in real-time. Yes, we have leaders making snap decisions on how businesses should be run, even as many have never signed the front of a paycheck in their lives. But you also have the OAN and its leadership — senators and advocates to defend you every day.

America turns another year older

In 1947, Winston Churchill, prime minister of Great Britain, uttered the often-misinterpreted phrase, “Democracy is the worst form of government, except all the others that have been tried.” Churchill was never shy in putting it all out there. It is fitting that our separation from his home country provided one of the best definitions of the American democratic system.

Churchill was right. There have been many forms of government have been tried and will be tried again and again, rediscovered or reengineered. He was pointing out that no one pretends that democracy is perfect or all-wise. Its imperfection is its beauty.

My hope that America will use our 245th birthday to reawaken our love and realize the blessings that our nation bestows upon us. Democracy is hard and we must be cognizant that our system of government is not self-executing. It needs constant work.

Happy birthday, my friends, and let us continue our community gatherings next month at the Farwest Show (August 18–20) in Portland. See you at Farwest! ©