

The take away from the Oregon standoff

Bill McKee/Moscow-Pullman Daily News

Last week the 41-day standoff at the Malheur National Wildlife Refuge concluded with the surrender of the final four occupiers.

It ended in about as strange a manner as possible. An audience of some 30,000 listeners heard the last holdout, 27-year-old David Fry, on a YouTube livestream vow to "stand his ground," threaten multiple times to shoot himself, wish he had marijuana, complain of UFOs, drone strikes and government conspiracies to mutate people and then, in the end, give himself up with a "hallelujah."

Hallelujah indeed, for his surrender brought to a close not just the occupation in Oregon, but provided for many a long-sought conclusion to the 2014 standoff in Nevada. The lack of prosecution for that defiance of federal officers, many argued, led to this most recent event.

In all, more than two dozen were arrested, including both the leader of the militia group that took over the refuge in Oregon, Ammon Bundy, and his father, Cliven Bundy, who led the Nevada standoff two years ago. Cliven Bundy, 69, was taken into custody as he stepped off a plane in Portland, Ore., last Wednesday on charges of conspiracy to commit an offense against the U.S, assault on a federal law enforcement officer, carrying a firearm in relation to a crime of violence, obstruction of justice and interference with commerce by extortion. He faces decades in prison and several hundred thousand dollars in fines.

Thankfully, of all the armed "patriots" who professed plans for violence if authorities closed in, only one was killed. LaVoy Finicum, despite claims to the contrary, can clearly be seen dropping a hand toward his chest, where he had a loaded 9 mm pistol, before he was shot by an Oregon State Police officer.

Many supporters of these "constitutionalists," who say the federal government's continuous overstepping of its powers drove them to take action, will paint Finicum as a martyr, a sacrifice to galvanize others to action. The rest of us will be reminded of the way this all ended - with the disjointed, delusional rambling of one who would likely have benefitted from both therapy and medication - and see it as a reminder that guns have no place in a protest in our civil society.