



## Looking Outward

Dan Glode  
Columnist

### Civility enhances free speech

*Those who make conversation impossible make escalation inevitable.*

-Stefan Molynevy

A lot has gone on in Sisters Country lately, and I cannot rest until I weigh in with an opinion. I read with interest a news article concerning the city council's adoption of a resolution adopting the 9 precepts of the Sisters Country Civility Project. One councilor was worried the adoption might impinge on free speech. And later on, Craig Rullman, in *The Bunkhouse Chronicle* (which I always read), thought people should suck it up — as democracy can be a rude business sometimes.

I believe I understand their concerns and appreciate their thoughts. But, as in many areas of life, I think the key word is balance.

Many years ago I lived in a small town in the Coast Range. I found myself on the city council there as an appointee after a council member told the others where to get off. We passed a resolution to improve our water system, and it did not sit well with many in town. In fact, recall petitions were filed against the entire city council and the mayor. The council meetings dissolved into shouting matches between the council members and the audience.

Fistfights were commonplace, and at one point a sheriff's deputy had to park outside. It was democracy

run amok. Meetings turned in to liquor infused brawls. If the civility project existed then I doubt it would have got much traction.

Mercifully, Sisters has evolved way past this.

Let me get my bias out up front. I think the real unsung heroes of this town (and towns like it) are those people who serve on city councils, school boards, planning commissions, park advisory boards, fire district boards and every volunteer position at all levels of government. These are community-spirited people who basically want to do the right thing and give back. When most of us are in front of a TV watching a ball game

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with a drink in our hand and our feet up they are pouring over notes, budgets, reports and preparing for the next meeting. No, I don't agree with all their decisions but I believe they make them in good faith. And yes, Mr. Rullman, they need thick skins to put up with a lot — but there are limits.

You were a cop and had to deal with a great deal of abuse on your job. I could never have done your job. I was a district attorney and a lawyer and was used to people saying some pretty nasty things about me. We both have thick skins.

Many, if not most, people are not like us in that way. I spent a fair amount of time in court and I expect you did as well. I bet we both disagreed with a judge's ruling from time to time, but did we ever tell the judge on no uncertain terms how we felt about his/her rulings? No, of course not. We always got to give our opinions but the

manner of our speech was controlled.

They say the courts seek the truth. That is never inhibited by regulating the manner of speech.

Now let me be clear: a city council is not a courtroom. The rules are different and the purpose is different but there are some similarities and differences in degree. For example, you cannot regulate the content of what is said, but it is OK to in some ways regulate the manner in which it is said to allow for maximum participation.

Not one of our rights guaranteed under the Constitution is absolute, and this holds for free speech as well. While it is never OK to censor content, the time, place and manner of speech can be regulated. At a city council meeting, for example, suppose there was no time set aside for public input and anyone at any time could blurt out anything and disrupt the meeting to the point business could not be conducted. Sounds like an anarchist's dream.

Having rules of conduct regarding civility will allow those who would not otherwise contribute speak their piece. There are many more of those, Mr. Rullman, than guys like us. I suspect there are many who read about city council meetings and do not participate because the rancor can be intimidating. You put some common-sense boundaries on how meetings are conducted and in what manner and I guarantee you free speech will be enhanced and more input given to the council.

I doubt anyone on the city council thinks it's going to be a “sunshine joyride” as you put it, Mr. Rullman. None are that naive. On the other hand civility in public discourse always has a place. You are right, they are public servants, albeit unpaid ones, but this gives no one the license to in any way intimidate or verbally abuse them. No one should leave the golden rule outside the council chambers.

## Students played varied roles in balloon project

By Ceili Cornelius  
Correspondent

The students of Rima Givot's Chemistry 2 class all participated in various roles in last weeks launch of a weather balloon (*see story, page 3*).

The 600-gram balloon carried student experiments and allowed them to collect data.

Some students were retrievers and would collect the balloon after its landing, while others stayed at the school as the control center monitoring the balloon.

The launch took place at Sisters Eagle Airport, where all the students learned all aspects of launching a balloon — such as how much helium and the ratio of the weight of the payload to the amount of helium needed for a successful launch, combining skills in both math and science.

Students were split into groups, and each group all had some sort of experiment to send up into space in the payload — as ants, bean sprouts and fruit. They did this to see what would happen to each thing after it was exposed to atmospheric pressure.

Chemistry students have been working independently on their experiments for two weeks.

“It was cool to see the culmination of all our hard work” said junior Zidane Galant-LaPorte.

“It is a really cool experiment being done all over world and it's a privilege to be a part of it here.”

Sisters volunteer Ron Thorkildson, who has a degree in atmospheric sciences, helped out with the weather group.

The weather group tested forecast, wind and speed and the trajectory the balloon might take up in the atmosphere, based on surface conditions.

“They were a great group to work with, they all worked very hard on such a technical experiment,” said Thorkildson.

Students successfully retrieved the balloon Wednesday afternoon near Maupin.

To conclude their inquiry, students will be looking at their experiments in the payload and identifying what they are like after exposure to the atmosphere.

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