



The Bunkhouse Chronicle

Craig Rullman
Columnist

The Emperor has no books

Multiple news outlets have reported that President Donald Trump does not read books. If these reports can be believed, which is a large-style “if” these days, His Excellency eschews the written word altogether, preferring, one supposes, the background noise of flattering network coverage and the occasional furtive glance at his “so-elegant” self in a gilded mirror.

True or not — and with a nod to the embarrassing lack of articulation demonstrated by Monsieur Trump thus far — I’m going to believe it.

This is very bad news for all of us. I don’t expect the President to be a zealous adherent to Clifton Fadiman’s Lifetime Reading Plan, or to have memorized long passages of Proust, but I would be greatly comforted if I thought that, between issuing executive orders and glad-handing billionaires, he was tucking into Kurt Vonnegut, Cormac McCarthy, or John Keegan — a nice mix of authors that would, perhaps, greatly enrich his thinking.

If I were a scientist I would be hard at work attempting to prove a working hypothesis I’ve developed — that the number of books existing and/or read in a household is inversely proportional to the nitwittery

that emanates from its inhabitants. Which is not to say that devoted readers are incapable of flamboyant stupidity. We just know that isn’t true, but still, my spidey-senses tell me there is something in the theory worth investigating.

In a former profession, I went inside a lot of houses. And all kinds of houses: crack houses, whorehouses, homes for rich people, extravagant mansions for really rich people, cockroach-infested hovels for poor people, and all manner of shacks for really, really poor people. Sometimes we even went into the homes of middle-class folks, but usually only because little Johnny got caught with a bag of weed in his backpack, or because little Sally forgot her upbringing and boosted a pair of ballerina jeggings from Old Navy.

There were almost never any books. No bookshelves, even. There were always video-game consoles, and oftentimes, even in subsidized city housing where the inhabitants were illegally subleasing rooms, there was somehow a Cadillac Escalade in the driveway and a 60-inch flat screen in the living room. But no books. Not even a worn out edition of “The Cat in the Hat.” Nothing.

This was almost universally true, though in the interest of transparency I must mention the sad case of a notorious hoarder, who was actually crushed to death by his books. We discovered him much too late under a six-foot landslide of leatherbound classics and fading National Geographics. He was, tragically, DRT, which is cop-speak for Dead Right There.

But the Emperor of America has no books.

We could, for historical interest, compare Mr. Trump to another outlandishly

vain and populist president, Teddy Roosevelt. The 26th president was a voracious reader, and is purported to have read a book before breakfast, and perhaps as many as three in the evening. No doubt it was, in no small part, his deep and lifelong readings that made him such a formidable leader of peoples. Books can do that. The founder of the Bull Moose Party estimated that he had read tens of thousands of books in his lifetime, and the library at Sagamore Hill was jam-packed with tomes across a broad spectrum of interests.

Somehow, I believe the Office of the President is better served by chief executives who read.

I don’t dislike Donald Trump. I don’t have the time or the energy to spend hating the guy. Mostly, I find him disturbing and amusing, the same way I found Joe Biden disturbing and amusing. Both of them belong to that creepy eccentric class, the world of fabulously wealthy and pandering dolts, and are mostly ridiculous caricatures of American statesmanship. But I sincerely wish that Trump would read books. If he were to call the ranch phone I could recommend some good ones. I’d even send him a box-full, free of charge, with a McGuffey Reader on top.

Books have a way of elevating us “onto the adult plateau” as Mark Moskowitz says in his fabulous documentary “Stone Reader.” In that film, Moskowitz goes

to extraordinary lengths to find the author of his favorite book, “The Stones of Summer,” which revolutionized his thinking about life. A good book can explode our world, as it did for Moskowitz, and actually make us better human beings.

Even my granddad, a hard-bitten, hard-drinking World War II Marine who spent his life chasing cows around the American outback, read books. A lot of them, and toward the end he was reading Agatha Christie because, he said, “It keeps my bean in good shape.”

Roosevelt, naturally, came up with a list of rules for readers. Here is Number 6: “Books are almost as individual as friends. There is no earthly use in laying down general laws about them. Some meet the needs of one person, and some of another; and each person should beware of the book-lover’s besetting sin, of what Mr. Edgar Allan Poe calls ‘the mad pride of intellectuality,’ taking the shape of arrogant pity for the man who does not like the same kind of books.”

The hero of San Juan Hill reminds us not to be arrogant about the kinds of books we read, which is an important thing. But it also assumes, as an obvious matter, that people are reading.

I wonder what Roosevelt would make of a president, or a nation that could elect him, that doesn’t read at all?

Amanda Smith named second team all-league

By Rongi Yost
Correspondent

Senior Amanda Smith was selected second-team all-league and was the lone player on the girls basketball team to earn all-league recognition. Smith finished league with 158 rebounds, 48 blocks, and shot 33 percent from the field.

Coach Alan Von Stein said, “Amanda was always looking for scoring opportunities. She was willing to post up and if not open, re-post in both the high and low positions. She also developed into quite a shot-blocker, especially as the season progressed. She was an amazing leader and rock for the team. She was great with all of her teammates and always played her role on the team in a very mature way.”

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Construction of the roundabout at the intersection of US 20 and Barclay Drive/McKinney Butte Rd. is underway.

In order to complete the Barclay side of the roundabout, Barclay Drive is closed for an approximate 4-5 week period.

The majority of work will occur Monday through Saturday during daytime hours. Traffic on US 20 will remain open, and work will not provide significant delays for traffic except for the detour of Barclay Drive. Travelers trying to access Barclay Drive should follow signed detour routes using Pine Street. Additional information about closures and detours will be posted when applicable.

Oregon Department of Transportation

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