



In the PINES
By T. Lee Brown

Shooting fish in a barrel is not an Olympic sport

Some friends of mine are pissed off at the government, especially our state. One friend — let’s call her Lucy — complains that the State of Oregon is “incompetent.”

It’s a reasonable accusation. I spent a couple hours on the State of Oregon’s webpage for pandemic unemployment assistance. Haven’t seen a dime yet.

But I also spent hours on a simple matter with a local, private company. I wasn’t asking them to make millions of dollars appear, figure out which of the over 362,000 citizens who applied deserves a share of it, then deliver each their portion using various feats of computer-aided logistics. Nope: that’s the enormous request I’ve made of the State of Oregon.

From the private entity, I simply needed to log onto my accounts. One of their third-party providers of digital something-or-other got hacked, and then they upgraded a thingamajig, and then none of my accounts worked, on phone or computer. All this happened to coincide with COVID hitting the fan; walking into their office to sort things out wasn’t an option.

Digital upgrades are a big deal; I get that. In fact, I worked so hard on an upgrade for an online company back in the Internet Stone Age (a.k.a. the early 1990s) that I managed to permanently injure my hands and arms. So, I was willing to cut a local business some slack as they waded through the mire of their technology.

Even though the service they provide is essential to me and my family, and we — like most of you, dear readers — were having a pretty weird, rough time already.

The nice people at the company sent apologetic emails. A customer service representative eventually took my call and alleged to solve my problem.

Three days later I once again couldn’t log in. It was 8:30 on a weekday morning. Tried to call customer support. They weren’t open yet.

Huh. Even the State of Oregon’s unemployment office answers calls that time of day.

Speaking of governments everyone loves to bitch and moan about: check out what the federal gubmint has been up to. They’ve managed to put operators on the horn over the weekends, so the Small Business Administration can administer emergency pandemic loans seven days a week.

A loved one got through fast on a Sunday call to SBA. Now his loan is sittin’ pretty in his company’s bank account and his employees are getting paid.

But here I was at 8:30 on a business day, unable to get through to my essential services provider...which also happens to be my friend Lucy’s employer.

I’m not mad at Lucy’s employer. (Nor am I mad at Lucy, a very smart and awesome person who sews beautiful COVID masks for the community whilst I tap uselessly away at my computer, spewing words into the ether.) I’m also not mad at the State of Oregon.

Whenever you get a bunch of people, procedures, and computers together, there will be failures. There will be stupidity. There will be aggravation, grumpiness, and lots of waiting. That’s just reality.

Would I like to see a better, shinier reality? Sure, I’m always up for Utopia. In the meantime, I’m going to give both my sweet local company and my beloved State a break. I’m gonna say: People are doing their best.

Hell, I’ll even go out on a limb and thank the federal government for not imploding — at least not completely,

not yet.

Government’s an easy target. It’s big! It takes money from us! Its largest budget item is devoted to killing other people, including civilians, often in gruesome and torturous ways!

It’s got a plethora of easy-to-loathe public faces! In DC: snarky Tweet-bots, grumpy old people, clichéd Millennial Instagram Influencers, narcissistic buffoons.

Over the pass in Salem: career paper-pushers who can’t see past the confines of the Willamette Valley, PERS mismanagers, lunatics who believe their fellow Americans are actively trying to wrangle a Communist Chinese takeover. Manning the bridge, a rather nerdy and unspectacular bureaucrat.

Fish in a barrel, my friends. Fish...in...a...barrel. There’s a reason shooting such fish is not an Olympic sport. It ain’t sporting.

In a more sportsmanlike spirit, I propose a different narrative. What if the State of Oregon has done a pretty good job in the pandemic? Washington exploded with COVID-19 cases. California was next. Here we are, sandwiched between them, with respectably low death rates and plenty of hospital beds.

Should someone in Oregon have a heart attack from getting worked up about government overreach, the ER can zap ‘em back to life.

Kate Brown and her cushy-government-job underlings can’t magically find all the money and distribute it to 362,000 people with a snap of their greasy, sausage-like, Democrat-electing fingers? So it frickin’ goes! Waiting is frustrating, but no more so than dealing with the average non-governmental entity.

Is there a solution to the ills we face as a nation, a state, and a society? I dunno. I do know we’re not gonna find it in a barrel full of spent lead and rotting fish. Here’s hoping we move on to something tougher, more productive, and less stinky.

HOMESCHOOL: Relax and go lightly; have fun for best learning

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media, and turn off the TV. Limit news to the evening news or newspaper to keep stress down. Focus on “adult” skills, doing chores together.

- Focus on feelings, family and fun first. Then, encourage reading quietly or aloud and daily writing. Model reading. Teach math, vocabulary and science through baking, measuring, board games and writing stories.

- Lighten up and take care of yourselves and your family.

- Teach through play and fun, encouraging academics in light un-academic ways.

- Relax. Be sure your kids feel safe, seen, heard, and loved. Do a little schoolwork, then leave it. Play a game, go outside, bake a treat, snuggle

up together and read a book. Talk to your kids to get a sense of how they’re managing and feeling. Who and what do they miss? Remind them this won’t last forever, we’re all in it together, and we’ll all get through it.

- Facilitate learning about your child’s interests. Look things up together. Find YouTube videos that demonstrate. Encourage freedom for learning what your child wants to learn. Explore their interests.

- Don’t limit knowledge to a prescribed curriculum.

- Spark an interest, like cooking. You’ll be using math, English, science, and possibly culture, religion and geography.

- The best learning happens when you are having fun. (afineparent.com)

- The same website carried information about How to Plant Your Own Food in a Kid-Friendly Garden. Check it out. Think about all your kids will learn by getting their hands dirty.

Food establishments encouraged to use masks

Central Oregon Public Health Department are strongly encouraging all local food establishments to use cloth face coverings. Local health authorities note that, while masks are not required, there is strong evidence that face coverings can prevent the spread of COVID-19 from workers who do not show illness symptoms, yet still can spread the virus.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommends wearing cloth face coverings in public settings where other social distancing measures are difficult to maintain, such as restaurant kitchens, drive-through windows and food trucks.

According to the Oregon Health Authority and the Oregon Department of

Agriculture, there is no evidence that food or food packaging is associated with the transmission of COVID-19. Food products do not need to be withdrawn or recalled from the market if someone on the farm or in the processing plant tests positive.

The virus is thought to spread mainly from person to person, such as between people who are in close contact with one another, or through respiratory droplets produced when an infected person coughs or sneezes. To further reduce the risk of contracting the virus, Oregon Health Authority recommends people wash their hands often, including before and after preparing meals, before eating and after coming home after being out.

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— Paid for by Laurie Kimmel —