

O P I N I O N



The Nugget salutes all the hard-working people in and around Sisters who labor to meet the needs of our community and keep our economy moving.

**The Nugget Newspaper will be open
9 a.m.-5 p.m. on Monday, September 7.**

— All standard deadlines remain. —

Letters to the Editor...

The Nugget welcomes contributions from its readers, which must include the writer's name, address and phone number. Letters to the Editor is an open forum for the community and contains unsolicited opinions not necessarily shared by the Editor. The Nugget reserves the right to edit, omit, respond or ask for a response to letters submitted to the Editor. Letters should be no longer than 300 words. Unpublished items are not acknowledged or returned. The deadline for all letters is 10 a.m. Monday.

A heartfelt thank you and goodbye to Jim and Sue Anderson. Folks and critters of Sisters Country are going to miss you, something fierce.
Judy Bull



To the Editor:
I read the column that Jim Anderson is moving. Tears began to stream as I have so enjoyed reading Jim's articles about our beautiful wildlife, his wonderful family, and

our precious world. I want to thank Jim for his life's work and all he has brought to us. The education, beautiful prose, and wonderful insight. I will miss your sage wisdom and wish you the very best. You have made my world a better place and I thank you from the bottom of my heart!

May good health, peace and beauty be yours.
Rebecca French

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Sisters Weather Forecast

Courtesy of the National Weather Service, Pendleton, Oregon

Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday	Monday
Sunny 94/57	Sunny 96/60	Sunny 98/60	Sunny 95/58	Sunny 94/57	Sunny 91/57

Dueling with demons

Jim Cornelius
Editor in Chief

Alcohol and pills, its a cryin' shame

You think they might have been happy with the glory and the fame

But fame doesn't take away the pain, it just pays the bills

And you wind up on alcohol and pills

— Fred Eaglesmith

Amid the litany of tra-
vails, disasters and mishaps
that have made up the first
half of the year 2020, the
word came late last month
that Justin Townes Earle died
of an apparent drug overdose
in Nashville. He was 38.

Earle was a phenomenally
talented songwriter and guitar
player who performed at the
Sisters Folk Festival in
2018. He took the stylings
of old country bluesmen like
Lightnin' Hopkins and Manse
Lipscomb, mastered them,
and bent them to a contempo-
rary songwriting vision that
cut right down to the bone.

The son of legendary
Americana artist Steve Earle
and the namesake of the way-
ward troubadour Townes Van
Zandt (best known for pen-
ning "Pancho and Lefty"),
JT seemed doomed to inherit
both the streak-of-lighting tal-
ent and the self-destructive-
ness embedded in his heri-
tage. He struggled with addic-
tion from his early teens, and
it got him in the end.

The connection between
great creativity and reckless
self-destructiveness is too
commonplace and too self-
evident to dismiss. Justin
Townes Earle's death caused
me to reflect on the fact that
most of the artists who move
me most profoundly wrestled
with demons of self-destruc-
tion. Some walked away
from the battles battered but
unbowed. Some died.

From Caravaggio to Hank
Williams to my beloved Texas
singer-songwriters, there's a
rogues' gallery of the mad,
bad and dangerous to know.
It's all too easy to romanti-
cize the doomed artist, and I
certainly was guilty of doing
so in my younger days. With
age and a modicum of wis-
dom comes the realization
that the blast radius around
such self-destructive figures
is wide and desolate, and
there's nothing to admire in
it. And you have to question
whether the self-destruction
is really an integral aspect of
creativity or a byproduct of
something else.

Audrey van Houweling
of She Soars Psychiatry in
Sisters notes that, "People
who have a lot of creativ-
ity have a lot of emotional
energy behind it. That can be

trauma-related."

That was certainly the
case for Justin Townes Earle,
who never resolved his sense
of childhood abandonment by
his wayward musician father.

Sometimes the noise is
deafening, and alcohol and
drugs mute it.

"Sometimes it's a way
of numbing that emotional
energy that's there," Audrey
says.

Those who look on, both
repelled and enthralled by the
spectacle of an artist coming
unwound, are bound up in the
drama.

"We like there to be a big
story behind somebody's cre-
ativity," Audrey says.

"That can be part of that
romanticizing effect."

Artists themselves roman-
ticize and rationalize their
own actions, and some fear
that they will lose their edge
if they give up the booze and
drugs and the self-destruc-
tion. For some, their identity
is so tangled up with a self-
destructive lifestyle, they're
not sure who they would be if
they gave it up — even if part
of them desperately wants to.

Ironically, Justin's father
Steve Earle is living proof
that a highly creative artist
can successfully decouple
creativity from self-destruc-
tion. He came out an epic spir-
al in 1995 and has been clean
for 25 years — and is a better,
more prolific artist for it.

Demons of self-destruc-
tion can hound all kinds of
creative people — not just
those who are up on a stage.
The driven entrepreneur, the
social visionary — all are
perhaps more susceptible to
danger than average folks,
although substance abuse and
self-destruction can afflict
average folks, too.

Getting down to the root of
trauma and anxiety is impor-
tant to overcoming addiction
and self-destructive behaviors
and impulses. That's hard and
scary work — and it's not
work that can be done alone.

"Collective sup-
port is really important,"
van Houweling says. "Not
trying to do it solo."

The coronavirus pandemic
is a slow-rolling crisis for art-
ists and musicians, who are
seeing their livelihoods and
their very purpose in life shut
down, with little prospect of
recovery. It's a dangerous
time for those who might
have a bent toward self-
destruction. They're not all
up on a stage. Some of them
are in our lives. Might be a
good idea to reach out and
check in and let them know
you get it and are there for
them.

Because those demons are
strong and they are patient
and they are always there.

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Postmaster: Send address changes to
The Nugget Newspaper,
P.O. Box 698, Sisters, OR 97759.
Third Class Postage Paid at Sisters, Oregon.

Editor in Chief: Jim Cornelius
Production Manager: Leith Easterling
Creative Director: Jess Draper
Community Marketing Partner: Vicki Curlett
Classifieds & Circulation: Lisa May
Owner: J. Louis Mullen

The Nugget is mailed to residents within the Sisters School District; subscriptions are available outside delivery area.
Third-class postage: one year, \$55; six months (or less), \$30. First-class postage: one year, \$95; six months, \$65.

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