

Montana has Freemen, but Oregon has Tonya

OUR OPINION: The Big Sky state may have learned something from the wacky Northwest

What's up with the state of Montana?

First off, the state has all those gun-hugging Freemen holed up on some snow-dusted ranch with half the nation's FBI babysitting them.

It's probably due to all that crystal-clean Rocky Mountain air that blows all over the place. See what happens to a handful of wheat farmers, cattle ranchers and NRA cowboys when they grow up breathing air permeated with actual oxygen?

"Whoooooe! Don't cha love that there crisp mountain air Clyde? Clyde, I been watchin' that darn mailman an I do believe he's one 'o them there jack-booted FBI-CIA-ATF agents from Warshington — I say we plug that bastard full 'o lead and send him to that big federal buildin' in the sky!"

If we could just send the whole shootin' bunch of them to California to breathe some Los Angeles air for a few weeks, they'd probably turn out just fine — that is, if they survive the drive-by shootings.

And at this stage, it looks like Theodore Kaczynski could turn out to be the alleged Unabomber. One thing is certain. With that stylin' haircut, he'll never have to worry about making the cover of GQ magazine — he's got a doo to make a Deadhead die for.

Kaczynski was charged last Thursday in Helena, Mont., with one count of possessing bomb components.

But Montana wasn't the

first to have such a prominent, though disastrous, spotlight in the national media.

Oregon was. Yep. We've been there, done that — long before the Unabomber or Freemen.

Remember Bigfoot? Although we're sure the fuzzy one never sent any mail bombs to anyone, he's still from the Northwest. The mysterious muppet has been scaring people for decades.

U.S. Senator Bob Packwood? The naughty man who couldn't keep his lips off the liquor or his hands to himself?

From Oregon.

And how about the Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh and his free-love and heavy-beads commune in Eastern Oregon during the mid '80s? Talk about a media event. A couple of the Bhagwan's followers were convicted last year for their part in a plot to kill then Oregon State Attorney, Charles Turner.

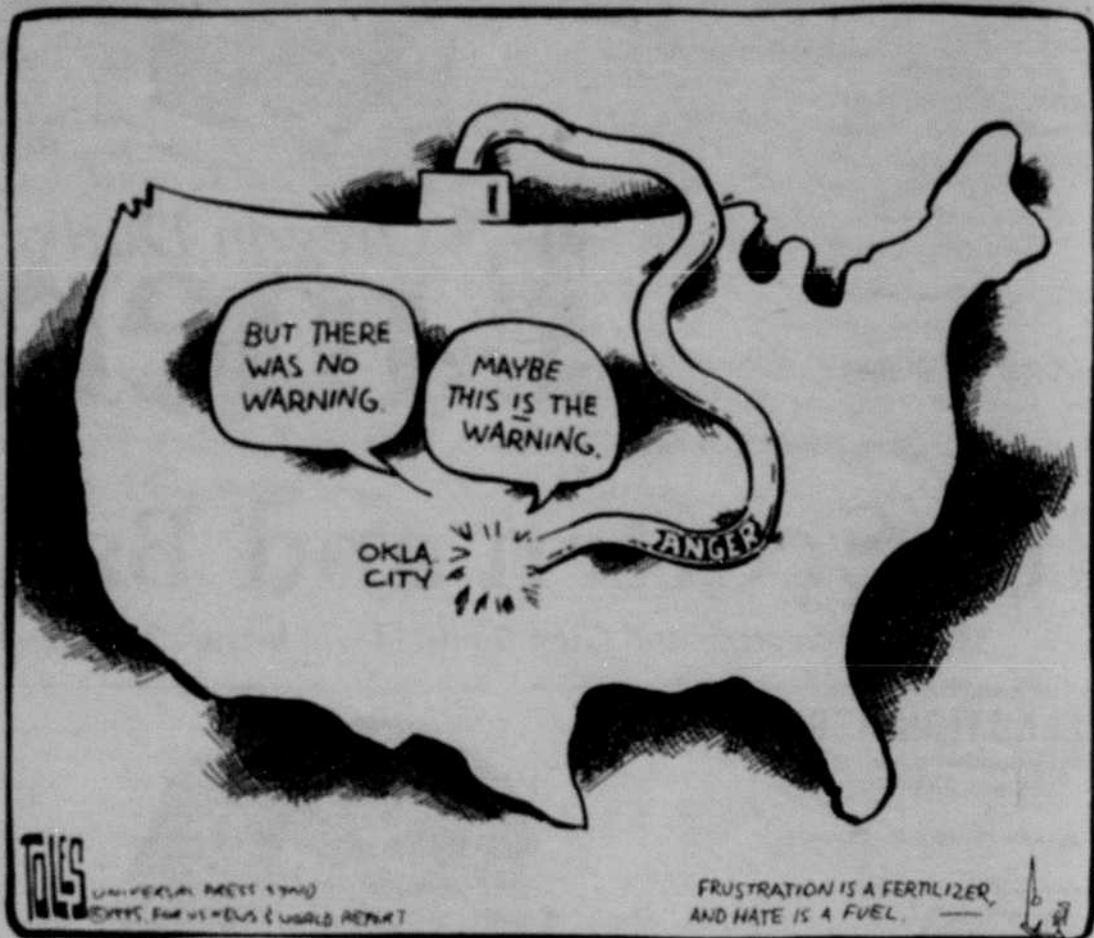
Apparently, the two missed the Bhagwan's seminar on leaving federal attorneys the hell alone.

The notoriety doesn't stop there.

Tonya Harding, that sniveling embarrassment in the 1994 Olympics, is from Portland.

The state has been quieter the past few months and years. That's exactly why the bozo in Hood River recently filled a shed he owned near Mosier with all kinds of explosives, and then let the thing blow sky high. This immediately brought all the media and the other half of the nation's FBI back to Oregon.

After all, we've got to show those Montana boys how it's done.



Jessica's flight: Parents crash young life

Do you hear the rain? Do you hear the rain? Watching a thunderstorm rapidly approaching, an anxious Jessica Dubroff talked to her mother on a cellular phone moments before she embarked on her final flight. After stalling shortly after takeoff, the 7-year-old's Cessna nose-dived into a street, immediately killing Jessica, her father and the flight engineer.

Seven years old, I dreamt about flying when I was that age. The freedom of soaring like a bird, having my own wings, the usual kid stuff. Of course those were merely fantasies, and back then the only takeoffs I had were from swing sets and jungle gyms.

But the story of Jessica's attempt to be the youngest pilot to aviate across the country is nothing like a childhood dream.

It's an incomprehensible nightmare of parental folly.

In the world I live in, 7-year-olds don't set aviation distance records. They ride bikes, they play hide-and-go-seek, they pick their noses. The only planes they fly zoom through their imaginations at whimsical speeds.

And then I see a picture of Jessica in the cockpit, taken as she prepared for her eight-day, 6,900-mile trek, and I feel nauseous. I literally become ill at the sight of the brown bomber jacket that Jessica's parents wrapped around her. I guess she was supposed to be another Charles Lindbergh or something. Jessica's father, Lloyd Dubroff, was a master at promoting photos like this one.

In the picture, Jessica sits in a specially made booster seat; she is fastened to a specially made seat belt, and she steps on a set of extended rudder pedals because the plane wasn't intended for people her size.

With an oversized headset perched atop the "Women Fly" cap she wears, Jessica turns to the camera and gives a thumbs-up. But Jessica does not smile like the 55-pound Amelia Earhart she is supposed to be. Her lips are dull, and she appears motionless. Her eyes are half-closed and glazed over with an expression that says, "Why am I here?"

Following the crash, the most pathetic comment came from Jessica's mother, Lisa Blair Hathaway. The unapologetic mother said that her daughter died "in a state of joy" and that Jessica's "life was in her hands."

Contrary to this pitiful eulogy, reports indicate that Jessica's life was always in the hands of her media-hungry parents. The entire record-breaking venture was conceived by Jessica's father. Before the fateful voyage began, Dubroff had spent \$1,300 for 200 special baseball caps to give to friends and reporters. He brought a pro-

fessional television camera on board the plane so he and Jessica could appear on ABC News. Dubroff was in such a rush to get to Massachusetts and appear on NBC's "Today Show" that he rushed into a bad-weather takeoff that should have been delayed or canceled all together.

OPINION



Keith Cunningham

Since the crash, loud protests have been made regarding young pilots who fly. Perhaps even more noise should be made about destructive adults who live vicariously through their children.

We could start a national campaign and use Jessica's mom and dad as the poster couple. A father who makes

his daughter play the tragic role in his own perverted dream. A New-Age mother who celebrates a 7-year-old's "freedom of choice." The campaign could read: "If You're Going to Fail This Miserably At Being A Parent, Get Sterilized — Please, For Their Sake!"

Jessica's parents gave their daughter no toys; they opted for power toys, so that Jessica could "learn by doing." She was home-schooled and restricted from television. When Jessica's mom was asked if she might have pushed too hard, she remained entirely unrepentant, saying that her daughter "had a full, wonderful, wonderful, exquisite life."

Seven years old.

Why can't this mother at least concede that perhaps she did something wrong, that perhaps she was too hard or too controlling, that perhaps she pushed and pushed until Jessica had no life of her own?

Yet Jessica's story is about more than Lloyd Dubroff and Lisa Blair Hathaway's pitiful parenting. It's about a society that squeezes its children to a pulp. It's about dance classes and piano lessons and play practices. It's about adults who don't know the first thing about raising children.

Parents should be there to steady the bike as the growing legs turn the pedals, to smile and to cheer as the tiny body determinedly pushes forward. If the child falls and scrapes, if the bat swings and misses, if the piano notes are off-key time and time again, the cheering must never stop.

Parents must freely dispense this unconditional love, without strings of fame attached.

Only then will our children acquire their own wings and truly achieve flight.

Keith Cunningham, a senior majoring in English, is a columnist for the Emerald. E-mail: keithc@oregon.uoregon.edu

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Newsroom: (541) 348-5511; Display Advertising: (541) 348-3712

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