

PERSPECTIVES

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Bryan Dixon Emerald

Pick up a reading Hobbit



A STEREOTYPE REBELS

REBECCA NEWELL

With the conclusion of finals two weeks ago and 10 homework and class-free days stretching ahead, I decided to indulge myself during spring break. I wasn't flying off to get obnoxiously inebriated in Cancun, or to backpack through parts of Europe, or even hitting the slopes in Tahoe (which the rest of my family happened to be doing without me). A new job had me anchored to Eugene during the prized week of freedom college students look forward to, but I was eagerly looking forward to catching up with an old friend ... a good book.

When I was a child, books kept me company on the bus ride to school, intrigued me during boring

lectures in school (hidden safely in a text book), were my dining companions as I ate breakfast, and suffocated under the covers with me as I read with a flashlight, one ear listening for the approaching footsteps of the parent patrol.

Determined to catch up on old times with my old friend, I enthusiastically set out for Knight Library, armed with a wish list of the books that would claim my free time during the break. A Dean Koontz novel, something by Toni Morrison, and yes, even Nora Roberts. But most of all, I was looking forward to re-reading J.R.R. Tolkien, creator of "The Hobbit" and "Lord of the Rings."

After seeing a trailer for the cinematic release of the trilogy (which I desperately hope beats the disappointment of the return of the "Star Wars" movies), I decided I had to re-read the novels. It's been a decade since I pored over the pages of Tolkien's masterpieces, which hold a special place for me, as my dad read them as a young man and named his first boat after

Gandalf, the wise wizard from The Hobbit. My family's first dog was named Brandy after the Brandywine River, one of the landmarks in Bilbo's adventures.

Back at Knight Library, I located the Tolkien area and browsed the shelves, scanning them for the desired titles. And failed miserably. The two copies of "The Hobbit" were checked out and the two shelves containing Tolkien's works included his biography and dozens upon dozens of collections of his notes or scholarly opinions about his writing.

But I didn't want to read why he chose to name the hobbit "Bilbo" instead of "Bozo" or what an Oxford professor thought of Gollum. I wanted to form my own opinions about the story and the characters. And I didn't want to spend beaucoup bucks at Borders for the set, so I took my first trip to the Eugene Public Library.

After I failed miserably at finding my way around the library (sadly enough, I'm practically a college graduate), I enlisted the

guidance of the children's section librarian (at the counter marked "HELP!"). She pointed me in the right direction, toward dozens of Tolkien books — actual works of fiction, not notes — distributed in both the young adult and children's section.

I was so excited to actually find the books after the fruitless search on campus, I wasn't even fazed by the fact I was hauling an armful of "children's books" — I think Tolkien can be enjoyed by all ages. As I exited the library, I clutched my new library card almost as fervently as I had my ID on my 21st birthday. After all, both were opening new possibilities for me, though the library card was probably a bit more productive.

As I headed off to the nearest coffee shop to indulge in my new books, I reflected over the irony of the situation. The University wasn't able to provide me with the tools needed to fulfill my literary desire, and our library, which boasts thousands upon thousands of volumes of books, wasn't able to

offer some classics to its patrons.

Memorizing the timeline of the French-Indian War or the scholarly opinion on Shakespeare's "Taming of the Shrew," while beneficial to our overall general knowledge and education, probably fails to ignite our creative spirit or our imagination. So don't expect to get all of your literary needs fulfilled by the assigned reading from your classes, or even from a list of the greatest American novels.

Instead, head down to the local library and thumb through the dog-eared, well-loved pages of some of your old favorites, or select a random book to dive into. Not only is the check-out time a month, but you won't have to sell your textbooks to be able to pay hefty late fees that (ahem) some academic libraries charge. Nourish your literary needs with some reading you choose.

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Runge v. public opinion: a conspiracy theory?

GUEST COMMENTARY

George Beres

Title IX legislation almost a generation ago gave long overdue athletics opportunities to women as players. But after seeing the cavalier way the current Oregon women's basketball coach, Jody Runge, has been treated by University administrators, maybe similar legislation is needed to assure a fair shake for women coaches.

By any yardstick of wins and losses, coach Runge has been a roaring success. The victory over Oregon State in the game that closed the regular season marked her 100th Pacific-10 Conference triumph, a feat achieved by only two other coaches in the league. Her teams have earned eight straight NCAA-tourney appearances and have won almost 70 percent of their games (160-72).

There is another side to the question that has left Runge's position in jeopardy. Eight of her players (unnamed) met with Athletic Director Bill Moos to complain about Runge's coaching style. Maybe their charges justify Runge being fired. I have not heard them and am in no position to judge.

What I do know suggests a male coach in a similar situation would get different treatment while the "jury is out." A director would postpone other commitments, such as the fund-raising trip that had Moos in Palm Springs, Calif., the entire week after the meeting with players.

Equally disturbing is the stance taken by The Register-Guard sports columnist Ron Bellamy, which has stirred enough community reaction that executive editor Jim Godbold devoted a Sunday column to it. It is reassuring to know Godbold gives complete independence to columnists, such as Bellamy, whose writing on Runge stirred anger among many readers. But I wonder if Bellamy's deserved independence on the staff is matched by independence

from the big player on his beat — Oregon varsity athletics.

I ask because the day after the paper reported the player meeting with Moos, Bellamy's column announced: "It's over. She's gone." For me, it had a familiar ring. The week before Runge's predecessor, Elwin Heiny, was fired by then athletic director/football coach Rich Brooks, Bellamy's column said it was time for Heiny to be replaced.

Discomforting as it sometimes might be, a columnist has that privilege. But I wondered about the coincidence. My guess is the writer might have been asked by both directors to grease the skids for controversial actions they were planning.

Sound like paranoia? Maybe. But my experience when I became Oregon sports information director 25 years ago feeds suspicions. At the time, The Register-Guard still was an afternoon paper. The sports editor/columnist, Blaine Newnham, made an understandable pitch: Would I arrange to release all significant

announcements for p.m. deadlines? I may have been new, but I knew that would not be welcomed by George Pasero, sports editor of The Oregonian, nor by the Oregon Daily Emerald, both morning papers. I also knew it was unfair. I told him my policy was to alternate major announcements between morning and evening deadlines.

That didn't disturb Newnham. He continued to get early alerts on stories from an assistant athletic director, Lew Cryer, who ignored my release schedules.

No big deal, I guess, except for George Pasero and the Emerald. But maybe that's why I can't help but suspect that the published report, "She's gone," is another collaboration between the writer and someone at the University.

George Beres is a former Oregon sports information director, former editor of the University of Oregon faculty newsletter and former manager of the University Speakers Bureau. Retired, he now writes on the history of college sports. He can be reached at gberes@oregon.uoregon.edu.