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Much hinges on President Trump meeting with N. Korean leader

By DEBRA J. SAUNDERS

They have met on Twitter, but not nose to nose. They dreamed up nicknames for each other, with President Donald Trump dubbing Kim Jong Un "Rocket Man" and the North Korean strongman calling Trump "a mentally deranged U.S. dotard."

Their schoolyard taunts have spawned countless comedy opportunities, even though their relationship could not be more serious for the world around them.

As Sen. James Risch, R-Idaho, recently warned at the Munich Security Conference in Germany, if North Korea deploys its nuclear arsenal, "it's going to be probably one of the worst catastrophic events in the history of our civilization."

Last week, South Korean National Security Advisor Chung Eui-Yong announced that Trump and Kim had agreed to meet. In front of the White House, Chung said that, thanks to Trump's "maximum-pressure policy" and international efforts, Kim declared his commitment to denuclearize and expressed his eagerness to meet the president "as soon as possible."

Trump agreed to a meeting by May. On Twitter, he signaled that he would keep the heat on high until an agreement is reached.

What happens when the two wild cards meet? There are reasons to fear that the U.S. gets rolled again, reasons to assume that nothing will come of the whole exercise, and yet slim hope that Pyongyang decides disarmament is in its national interest.

So much hinges on Trump. The president clearly believes that his "maximum-pressure" approach—a mix of harsh economic sanctions, bellicose threats and personal insults—drove Kim to ask for a meeting.

Asked if Trump's unpredictability factors in this dance, Jonathan Schanzer, senior vice president of the Foundation for the Defense of Democracies, mused, "How would I put this? His unpredictability and his unwavering commitment to maximum pressure has undoubtedly brought us to this place. But that is not the victory. The victory would be denuclearization."

Bruce Klinger, a former U.S. intelligence officer who is now a senior fellow at the conservative Heritage Foundation, saw Trump's decision to meet face-to-face with Kim as "impetuous" and "a bit premature."

Klinger gave voice to the same criticism lobbed at Trump after he announced he would move the U.S. embassy to Jerusalem.

"If the first summit is the highest coin of the realm," Klinger said, "President Trump seems to have spent it without getting anything in return"—not even the release of three Americans detained in North Korea.

Trump's highly personalized style has a way of cutting through the restraints of diplomacy. When Trump met Russian President Vladimir Putin at the G-20 meeting in Germany last July, for example, the two got on so famously that a scheduled 30-minute session exceeded two hours and

ended with a Syrian ceasefire agreement.

But later that night, the downside of Trump's freewheeling style became clear. During a dinner for world leaders, Trump wandered over to where Putin was seated and the two spoke with the help of a Russian interpreter. With no American interpreter, there is no U.S. record of what was said.

Klinger noted that when Trump invited Chinese President Xi Jinping to Mar-a-Lago last year, the White House suggested the president would be tough on Xi. Trump no doubt impressed the Chinese president when he told him over chocolate cake that the U.S. had bombed Syrian forces in retaliation for Bashar al Assad's use of chemical weapons against his own people.

But also, Klinger noted, Trump showed he can be played. Xi gave Trump a "ten-minute lecture" on North Korea and Trump emerged with a different view.

Republicans and Democrats have been aghast at the number of empty positions in the State Department and the fact that Trump has not nominated an ambassador to South Korea. Klinger doesn't see how Trump expects to prepare for a summit in less than two months with a hollowed-out foreign policy shop.

Schanzer is less concerned. He noted that the Obama administration had very sharp operatives working on the Iran nuclear deal, "but they folded in the face of Iranian negotiators."

Schanzer also is heartened by the administration's focus on North Korea, which "has been the No. 1 issue for the National Security Council." When you add staff from the Pentagon and intelligence agencies, he said, "it's not as if we don't have manpower on this issue."

After more than three decades of U.S. presidents trying but failing to tame Pyongyang, Trump at least benefits from the effects of international isolation and trade sanctions that have deprived North Korea of oil imports and other resources.

White House Press Secretary Sarah Sanders told reporters that the North Koreans have "promised to denuclearize, they've promised to stop nuclear and missile testing and they've recognized that we're going to continue in our military exercises."

At the same time, Sanders said, "The United States has made zero concessions."

While past international agreements have failed, Klinger said that doesn't mean that this effort absolutely must fail. The key is to not fall into two familiar traps. "We accepted very vaguely worded agreements in order to reach an agreement," Klinger said, and, "we had insufficient verification."

(Creators Syndicate)

the opinion of others



A lot happened in short session

The short session of 2018 is finally over, and I wanted to let you know some of what went on behind the scenes, what bills passed and what bills I tried to stop. I will readily admit, without the strong leadership of Senate President Peter Courtney, a lot more damaging legislation would have passed. Though he and I do not always see "eye to eye," I will say this: one day we will all miss him for his love of the "institution" that is the Legislature. So, let's start with what I feel very good about accomplishing this session:



from the capitol
By BILL POST

First, I passed both of my bills. House Bill 4068 passed out of the House and Senate on an 88-0 vote (2 excused). I am very proud of this bill as it was exactly what the short session was supposed to be about: amending previously passed legislation and budget fixes. This bill fixed an issue with grass seed farmers that was mistakenly made in 2011.

House Bill 4078, though it did not pass as a bill itself, was "stuffed" into House Bill 4028 and so in essence, I "passed" the bill by working to get it into another bill as an amendment. It will also help rural agricultural entities prosper in their business.

Secondly, I helped pass several really

good bi-partisan bills this year and I want to share some of them with you:

HB 4035—Requires Higher Education Coordinating Commission to provide grants to qualified members of Oregon National Guard to attend community colleges or public universities.

HB 4055—This goes after those who are involved in a "hit and run" and don't come back to the scene when they know or believe their vehicle has been in a collision.

HB 4098—Directs department to provide annual training to county veterans' service officers and veterans' organizations regarding apprenticeship programs and federal and state education benefits.

SB 1506—Directs Department of Transportation to issue Oregon Wounded Warrior parking permits to qualified applicants.

SB 1562—Provides that person commits crime of strangulation if person knowingly impedes normal breathing or circulation of another person by applying pressure to chest of other person.

I also voted 'Yes' on several bills that help with affordable housing and help bring down the cost of pharmacy products. I was also instrumental in

helping to stop a bill that I originally had sponsored. Originally, SB 1540 was intended to help provide clarification and protection for the Salem-Keizer School District. Then Sen. Sara Gelsler amended it so that it would have effectively lowered the age of sexual consent to 12. I worked hard behind the scenes and we were able to convince enough of the House Democrats that it would have been "political suicide" for them to vote 'Yes' for 12-year-old sex, that they actually did something very unusual: they pulled the bill from the House floor and amended it in Rules to take that part out. Now we will need to go back during the interim and work with the school district and others to find a solution that protects our kids and teachers.

Tucked into one of the budget bills we passed, was funding for the Marion and Yamhill County food banks, and emergency winter shelter (warming centers) for our neighbors who are struggling.

So, overall, it was a less damaging session than it could have been, though I personally believe there were way too many complicated bills that should not have been considered for the short session. Thankfully most of them did not pass.

(Bill Post represents House District 25. He can be reached at 503-986-1425 or via email at rep_billpost@oregonlegislature.gov.)

Will student protests change things?

Ever since the school shooting at Columbine High School on April 20, 1999, this writer has wondered what's involved in the mental makeup of that ever-growing number who commit murderous acts. That incident, and the many others that followed it, left me 'lost at sea' because nothing even remotely like it happened at the high school in Oregon I attended.

Not able to make sense out of these malevolent acts, I have searched to discover explanations that assist me to understand reasons for murder in high numbers of other citizens by assault weapons usually seen nearly exclusively overseas in guerilla warfare and subjugation activity. Dave Cullen, who's written extensively on the horror of Columbine, has afforded some credible clues to what's going on with people who commit these crimes.

Cullen first reminds us of conclusions reached after Columbine. One was that the "Trench Coat Mafia outcasts" who had found their school experience miserable, were taking revenge against bullies.

However, a team of FBI experts, psychiatrists and psychologists came to a different conclusion. They came together a few months after Columbine, concluding from discovery that Eric Harris and Dylan Klebold dreamed much bigger than an impulsive act on students and teachers to vent their rage. In fact, that pair of killers were reported to have laughed at previous school shooters and planned a massive scale bombing where, fortunately, the propane bombs they set in the cafeteria didn't explode. A way of interpreting what they intended: Their vision was to create a nightmare so devastating and apocalyptic that the entire world would take notice of the power they wielded.

But the beat goes on in the U.S. where we've had mass shootings on an apocalyptic scale, one after an-

other. Obviously, then, there is a great hue and cry here to put together and implement stronger and more effective mental health efforts. It's certain we'd do better at stopping these awful acts of violence if we set our nation to doing so and prioritized that objective at the top of a national list of urgent particulars. Troubling in the extreme is the American population seems to possess an ever greater percentage of the citizens not able to accept and deal with life matters at a personal responsibility level while our national leaders do not lead responsibly.

The U.S. is different from other post-industrial nations in noticeable ways. For one example, our Constitution, although written more than 200 years ago, immediately after the Colonists fought a war with the most powerful nation on earth, had self-protection fixed firmly in their minds in order to defend themselves. We need to adjust laws for modern times with special attention to interventions that keep guns—by universal background checks and the closing of loopholes—away from the infirm, the psychotic, the psychopathic and those raging, for what results in infamy (not the kind of fame they seek) through dastardly deeds.

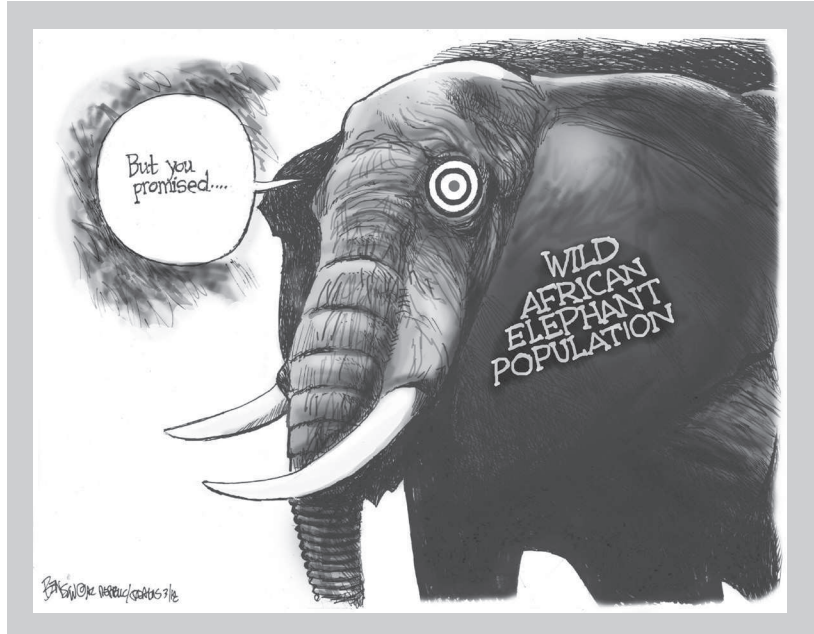
We could try the Australian approach to gun controls. After all, the government in Canberra went about collecting guns by buying them from owners and destroying them, the result being a marked decline in shootings there. We could try that approach but it would likely get in the way of anything effective because of the Second Amendment. It would also go against the dictates of the National Rifle Association. The NRA has a vested interest in keeping dues intact as well as do the gun manufacturers, gun sales outlets, gun shows and private hands sales whose profits would fall from bans and strict controls.

Fits and starts have gotten underway in a few places throughout the nation, resulting from the high school massacre in Parkland, Florida. The youth from that school have launched a protest that's reverberating throughout the country. Every effort remains unsettled at this time as, while the enthusiasm is stratospheric now, the foot-dragging and finding reasons to say "No!" again, and outnumber the "Yes!" votes. Then there are the predictable law suits that follow every reform effort. One solution to the gun issue that would not receive approval from this retired educator: placing guns in the hands of teachers, and, thereby, forcing gun controls in the U.S. on them.

The original scare-inducing argument among those who want no restrictions is the perennial "slippery slope" argument, the one that says, if even one gun is taken away, the government will come for all the others. It's material for an SNL skit depicting how absurd some of us can be. Case in point: having lived a long life in the U.S.A., and having known hundreds of gun owners, I've never known of a gun confiscation unless it was associated by hard evidence with having been used to commit a crime.

And so it goes in the United States of America. No person is safe anywhere in this nation because guns are everywhere and those who have them, unfit or not, have the freedom to use them at will. All of this adds up to mean no citizen here is immune from harm and thereby can be hit by a bullet while in bed, attending school, a music festival, shopping at a mall, viewing a movie or going to church. There are many ways we could bring controls to this mania but it won't happen until a whole lot more of us get fed up enough to act when we declare, "We won't take it anymore!" and end the careers of those politicians who don't serve a majority of Americans. Until that time, the gun beat goes on, madly, insanely and endlessly.

(Gene H. McIntyre lives in Keizer.)



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