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Courtesy of www.longline.co.uk

In the United Kingdom and elsewhere, oysters are sometimes grown off the bottom, suspended from long lines like these that float in the water attached to plastic buoys. This is one possible solution to a sudden crisis for the Willapa Bay oyster industry following this weekend's sudden collapse of a regulatory effort to license a new pesticide to kill burrowing shrimp.

Willapa oyster trade faces turning point

Without shrimp poison, new cultivation methods are vital

A fundamental premise of mainstream Pacific Northwest aquaculture as it has been practiced for more than a century is teetering on the edge of disaster.

Last weekend's sudden collapse of a long-made plan to use the pesticide imidacloprid to kill burrowing shrimp could be one of the landmark events in the industrial history of the bay.

As usually cultivated here by large growers, oysters are scattered on privately owned tidelands for the majority of their life cycle. Burrowing shrimp are a serious problem for this type of oyster cultivation. They churn tidelands into a soft, almost quicksand-like texture, into which oysters sink and smother.

An older type of shrimp poison applied to oyster beds since the 1960s was gradually eliminated in recent years following a court settlement. The industry response was to look for a replacement spray. Now, imidacloprid has been banned by the European Union. It is widely blamed for killing bees.

Increasing numbers of consumers worry about chemical residue in foods and many citizens fret about the impacts of sprays on nontargeted species. These concerns are a perfect storm of very bad publicity for an industry that prides itself on environmental stewardship.

The shrimp problem isn't going away. The surface of oyster lands is

deteriorating. The industry's first impulse will be to hope a public-education campaign might ease concerns about pesticides. Less plausibly, considering the time pressures involved, perhaps some "organic" anti-shrimp treatment might be developed.

But it looks likely that a fundamental shift must happen in the ways oysters are grown, getting them off the "shrimpy" bottom and into different forms of cultivation that don't rely on such firm, shrimp-free mud. For many reasons, this will be far more easily said than done.

If the environmentally aware public wants the culinary and conservation benefits of oysters, it's time to step up and help with a generational shift in Pacific Northwest oystering. This has to be framed in ways that allow every size of operation to identify future solutions that work.

Without its scrappy, hard-working and diverse army of oyster growers, Willapa would be very poorly positioned to survive the onslaught of development swirling in the immediate future of Western Washington and Oregon. Without them, the bay may be saved from pesticides but lost to everything else. They need smart partners with viable answers, not just people taking potshots.

More candor, please

Just how public are Oregon's public records?

Public Records and open meetings are two of the foundational elements of democracy. Oregonians like to believe that we have an open system of government. That is not entirely true.

The crash-and-burn ending of the John Kitzhaber administration opened our eyes to what our governor wasn't telling us. Within his own office there was a subsidiary operation run by his companion, Cylvia Hayes, who was styled as first lady to heighten her political currency.

Kitzhaber's successor Gov. Kate Brown immediately grasped the need for Oregon state government to come clean. In her inaugural address, the principal topic was ethics reform.

This week the state Senate passed Senate Bill 9, one element of Gov. Brown's package. Assuming enactment by the House, this law will set in motion an audit of all state agencies' response to public records requests.

Promoting her legislation, Brown told a Senate committee: "Oregon's public records law is like a Victorian house that has been remodeled one room at a time by multiple owners over the course of several decades.

There are currently over 400 exemptions in Oregon law, spread throughout our 838 chapters of Oregon Revised Statutes."

We in the media understand exactly what Gov. Brown was saying. We deal with those myriad exemptions to the public records law.

The other two elements of the governor's ethics package are about the state Ethics Commission. They would do three things: shorten the amount of time the commission has to take action, increase penalties for using public office for personal gain and change how commission members are appointed.

To some lawmakers, this ethics package might seem like niggling, bothersome concerns — not the sort of votes for which PACs will reward them. But they represent the essence of democracy. Ethics also has a lot to do with how efficiently the massive business of state government operates. We in the private sector know candor is the smartest way to deal with our customers. A measure of candor is what state government's customers — the voters and taxpayers — have a right to expect.

More to being a recreation director than knowing the rules of the game

We looked for passion, concern, eagerness

When Mary Blake, interim executive director of the Sunset Empire Park and Recreation District, asked me to be on the community panel that would interview candidates for the permanent director, I eagerly agreed.

As a reporter, I have covered the hiring of many top executives in myriad companies and organizations. But, as someone who's more curious about what goes on behind the curtain than onstage, I've always been interested in how and why the hires were made.

I wouldn't imagine it was difficult to attract the 40-plus applicants for the recreation district director's job. Who wouldn't want to live on the North Coast, near the ocean, mountains and forests and be challenged every day to provide recreation opportunities for South County residents?

I've done my own share of hiring for newspapers, talking to eager applicants, reading between the lines on resumes, asking probing questions, trying to find the right "fit" for both the applicant and the job.

But this was the first time I had been asked to participate in hiring for a public agency. As a holder of a year-round pass and a fairly frequent user of the district's facilities, and as a former editor and reporter who regularly attended district board meetings, I was probably as qualified as anyone to be on the community panel.

And so were the other four panel members, who regularly used the

IMPRESSIONS

By
NANCY
MCCARTHY



district pool or participated in the district's foundation. We were eager to meet the three finalists.

As expected, each had their own strengths. Darren Gooch, the district's information technology and marketing manager who has worked in a variety of district positions, is as familiar with district operations as anyone could be. He's also active and well-liked in the community. Another applicant had many years' experience running recreation districts elsewhere.

The third applicant, Skyler Archibald, had both the experience of running a university recreation center and growing up in Seaside.

On interview day, the applicants toured the facility on Broadway. Then, they spent time answering questions posed by the technical committee,

composed of folks who know something about how a pool, gym and community center are supposed to run. Eventually, each applicant made his way to our panel.

We had a list of seven questions, all written out for us. We asked about the applicant's background, the district's role in helping the underserved in the community, what it should take to maintain a good staff and keep the district's \$2.5 million budget on an even keel.

We listened closely to their answers, but we looked more at what was behind those answers. Because, since Feb. 14, 1969, when voters

first approved the district, it has been close to their hearts, and not just because Election Day happened to be Valentine's Day.

In the limited time we had and within the interview boundaries imposed on us, we attempted to discover the true applicant. We searched for his passion to help residents lead a healthy lifestyle; his concern for those who cannot afford to pay for a meal or a daily swim, let alone a yearly pass; his eagerness to become involved in the community for the community's sake and not just because it will further the recreation district's mission.

In both Archibald and Gooch we found those qualities.

The technical and community panels forwarded their names to the district board, and by the board's 3-2 decision, it is obvious that the board members had a tough choice.

Archibald will be the district's next executive director, and he will be a fine leader, with all the qualities necessary to lead the district into the future and a compassion for the community that compelled him to offer his family the experiences he enjoyed while growing up here.

But the board's decision put the district's patrons in the best possible position.

With Archibald coming on board and Gooch already there, as well as other trained staff members, the district's leadership is in good shape.

Now, it's up to the community to work with the district to fulfill the promise that was made by those voters 38 years ago. We take our health seriously here on the North Coast, and what better way to offer the possibility of healthier lives for all than through an existing facility that provides a variety of opportunities to be active? Let the district's leaders know how you would like them to reach out to the community.

Then, let's all go out and play!

Nancy McCarthy retired recently as editor of the Seaside Signal and Cannon Beach Gazette and as the South County reporter for The Daily Astorian. She is enjoying retirement and lives in Cannon Beach.

We take our health seriously here on the North Coast.

A career path from 'Hamlet' to Hillary

By FRANK BRUNI

New York Times News Service

If Hillary Clinton goes the distance, she may have Shakespeare to thank.

Shakespeare and beer.

Both forged one of her campaign's chief architects, Joel Benenson. Both are among his compasses.

And I mention that not for what it portends about her message. No, I'm fascinated by what the jagged arc of Benenson's life and career says about higher education, the liberal arts, indulging your passions, allowing for digressions and not sweating the immediate relevance and payoff of each and every step you take.

Benenson, 62, majored in theater at Queens College, part of the City University of New York. He thought he'd be an actor, but for most of his 20s co-owned a beer distributorship in the Crown Heights section of Brooklyn.

And now? He's one of the country's leading pollsters and political strategists. He played a key role in Barack Obama's 2008 and 2012 presidential races and is doing likewise in Clinton's 2016 one.

But if his present and past seem disconnected to you, they don't to him. After I wrote a column earlier this year extolling the study of literature and its grand masters, he emailed me: "I can personally attest to the value of Shakespeare in my current profession."

Parsing *Hamlet* and *Macbeth* gave him an "understanding of the rhythm and nuance of language," he explained, that's as useful as any fluency in statistics or political science per se.

And the legacy of the beer business?

He said that almost "every single person" around him — his customers, his employees and his associates — was "living paycheck to paycheck."

"Those conversations never left me," he explained over a recent

lunch, adding that his "value as a pollster" is his ability to write questions in the language of these men and women and to hear the answers accurately. "I know their voices."

Benenson shared his story and thoughts in part because he's concerned, as I am, that too many anxious parents and their addled children believe in, and insist on, an exacting, unforgiving script for success and (supposedly) happiness. Go to this venerable college. Pursue that sensible course of study. Tailor your exertions to the looming job market.

They put too much faith in plotting, too little in serendipity. And it can leach joy and imagination from their pursuits.

'Stop making the focus of your kids' education a job'

— Joel Benenson

But the biographies of many accomplished, contented people aren't formulaic. They're accidents of a sort, except for this: By taking approaches that weren't too regimented, these people were able to color outside the lines and surprise themselves. And their learning transcended their formal studies.

Benenson grew up in Queens, the youngest of three kids. His father died when he was 18 months old and his mother, who worked as a bookkeeper and office manager, never remarried. He chose Queens College because it was free and he could live at home.

He was attracted to acting by more than the bright lights. "To do it well, you have to get at what's going on beneath the words and the emotional content of it," he said, adding that such attention to the details of speech and gesture is crucial "for anybody who's communicating."

So are a firm grasp of language and context, which drama and literature hone.

In that sense, he said, he prepared for a political world of slogans, focus groups and opinion surveys by doing plays by Harold Pinter and Terrence McNally and



Frank
Bruni

reading novels by Nathaniel Hawthorne and Herman Melville.

All those glorious words really did pave the path to sound bites.

That term has become derogatory, he said, divulging that he once pushed back at Obama's skepticism of such tidy, pithy locutions by saying to him: "Mr. President, 'Let he who is without

sin cast the first stone' is a sound bite. 'A house divided against itself cannot stand' is a sound bite. We remember them because they reflect high principle and clarity of thought and universal truths. That's the power of them."

Like Plouffe, Benenson didn't finish college right away. He left to get a jump-start on acting, which didn't really pay the bills. That's where the beer business came in.

He didn't get his last credits and his degree until his late 20s, and in his early 30s he took another sharp turn. He became a journalist.

It wasn't until his early 40s that he fully awoke to his enthusiasm for the kind of work that he does now and pivoted to it.

The lesson for young people?

"Don't think about what you want to do for the rest of your life," he said. "Think about what you want to do next." Maybe, he said, you "have a big goal out there and pursue it, but along the way, that line from A to B is not a continuum. The key will be identifying what you are passionate about in each of those steps along the way."

He said parents were too focused on mapping a straight-line journey from cradle to lucrative career.

"Stop making the focus of your kids' education a job," he said. "College is about learning how to think critically, learning how to write and communicate your ideas."

He keeps three copies of the collected works of Shakespeare — the plays and sonnets both — including the one from his college days. He marked it up extensively.

It's important to scribble, he said. To wander, too. Otherwise, he said, "I think you don't discover yourself."