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GUEST COLUMN

Our coastal community mourns

Reflections about sad reality of young lives lost on local waters

By SYDNEY STEVENS
For the Chinook Observer

Kevin Soule: father, husband, son, friend. In a small community we build relationships effortlessly. Kevin was my student at Ocean Park School more than 30 years ago. Tall for his age as a third grader. Quiet. Curious. The kid every teacher wants a classroom full of.

I don't think any of us who knew Kevin in those years was surprised that he grew up to be a fisherman, an oysterman, a man whose interests and livelihood centered on the bay. There have been Soules living around our bay for generations. Boats and saltwater were part of his DNA.

From our house in Oysterville, we all too often hear the search and rescue helicopters at work over the bay. Just 10 days ago rescue volunteer Doug Knutzen left our house concert and flew out to rescue a man whose canoe had capsized. But we were unaware of the search for Kevin on Saturday. Ironically, we were sitting in the midst of many of his colleagues at the Science Conference in Long Beach, listening to the problems and proposed



Kevin and Heather Soule recently went clamming with daughters Nora, 10, and Aila, 6.

solutions involving our bay, our ocean, our river. We didn't know that on that very day, the search began for Kevin and his boat, the Kelli J.

It stands to reason, in a small community like ours — all but surrounded by water — that our young people will

gravitate to jobs that take them out on the water. And it probably stands to reason that some won't come home from their day's (or night's) work. Fishing is hazardous. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics: *Fishers and related fishing workers deal with a set of work-*

ing conditions unique among all other occupations. This occupation is characterized by strenuous work, long hours, seasonal employment, and some of the most hazardous conditions in the workforce.

And though there is a tacit understanding of those facts here in our community, it does not make it easier. Since I moved here in 1978, I've known six young fishermen who have died at sea. One was the father of two girls who were my students. Three others were brothers of my students. Another, the son of friends. And now, Kevin. Once again, I have no words.

I woke up thinking of Mary Garvey's song after the *Lady Cecilia* went down in March 2012 with a loss of four lives, including Luke Jensen, age 22. It began:

I wished I lived in Phoenix or some hot and dusty town

Where the ocean did not roar at night and no one had to drown

Where fish were raised in fish tanks as fish were meant to be

And no one had to risk their lives by going out to sea

In my heart there is a song for Kevin. And for his parents Bonnie and Ernie, and Heather and his daughters. It's the same song we all have when tragedy strikes our community. I hope Mary can write it for us.

OUR VIEW

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Farmers' share of food dollar shrinks

The U.S. Department of Agriculture reported recently that the farmer's share of consumer food dollars is at its lowest point since 1993.

According to data collected in 2016, the most recent available, farmers received just 14.8 cents of every dollar spent by consumers for food.

That's a 4.5 percent decline from 2015 and nearly a 14 percent drop from 2014. It's also the all-time lowest share since the USDA Economic Research Service began the Food Dollar series 25 years ago.

"It kind of tells me the farmer's share of what the consumer is eating is getting smaller," John Newton, director of market intelligence for the American Farm Bureau Federation, said.

Adjusted for inflation, the real farm share is 12.2 cents compared with the baseline share of 17.5 cents in 1993, he said.

The experts at USDA's Economic Research Service say there are two reasons for the drop. First, commodity prices have dropped from the highs of five years ago. Second, Americans are eating out more and restaurants claim the greatest share of the food dollar — 36.3 percent.

Farmers have long received a relatively small part of the dollar Americans spend on food. Unless food is purchased directly from the farmer, the people who process, package, transport and market food add more than 80 percent to the cost.

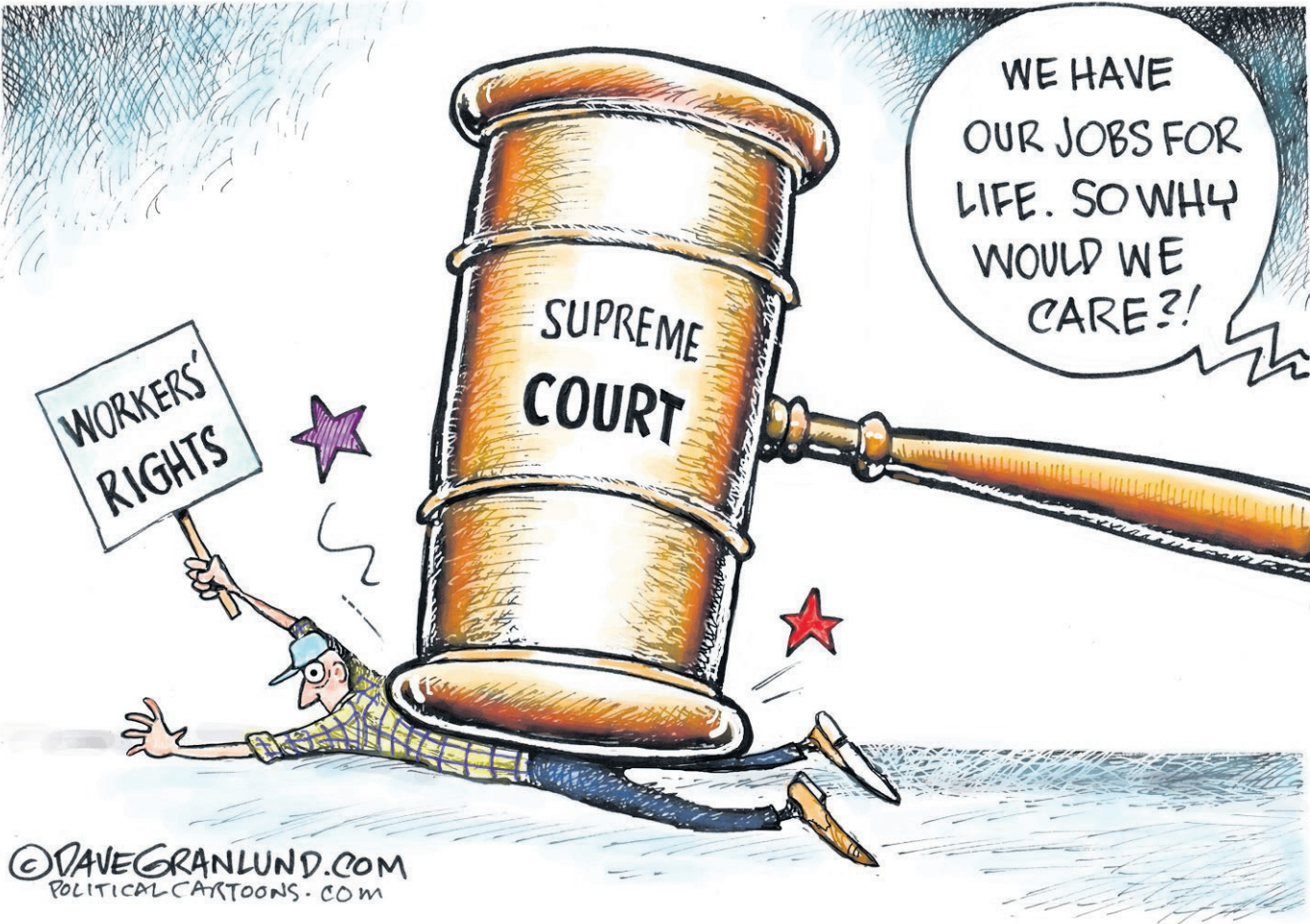
Farmers are really the only ones in the process who are price takers, not price makers. To one extent or another, everyone else in the supply chain can add pennies, nickels or dimes to their price to cover their increasing costs.

The proof? As commodity prices continue to fall from their highs of 2013, the price of food has increased.

According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, the cost of food between 2013 and 2016 increased by 1.5 percent.

And, they can raise prices with impunity. As food prices rise we hear no cries from the public blaming processors, whoever they are. It's always the "rich farmer," not the "rich grocer."

There's not much that can be done about this, other than farmers and ranchers redoubling their efforts to educate consumers about the economics of agriculture.



Students need real teaching, gun control

There might be a connection between school shooting by disenfranchised students and the last 15-plus years of testing ad nauseam in the high school curriculum.

Originally we had "learning is fun" as our model, and it brought all sorts of excellent accomplishments, and great strides in technology. This was replaced by testing ad nauseam, aka the No Child Left Behind Act. The title of this act is definitely misleading. Testing ad nauseam has artificially created tremendous, unnecessary stress in high school students. It has had a profoundly negative impact.

The No Child Left Behind Act was paired with the Universal National Service Act. Both of these acts originated with the Cheney/Bush administration and its Republican Congress. It appeared to me that the testing ad nauseam was designed to force students to drop out of high school and join the military. This would probably affect male students most heavily.

Give our youth "learning is fun," real teaching, and sensible gun control.

MONICA TAYLOR
Astoria

Show and teach children to speak up

A team of players was tired, discouraged and frustrated. They got in a chat room and went at it. I guess it got very ugly. Yes, my child was one. I do not expect my child to be perfect. Nor do I expect anyone else's. There will be punishment; no question about that, but there will also be some training and life lessons.

I think a school shooting is often someone not knowing how to deal with life's foibles. Yes, bullying can be a factor; yes, abuse can; yes, mental illness. A lack of respect for life and guns could even be involved. But this child, as well as a child who commits suicide, has reached the end of the rope. They think they are the only one who suffers this way. They don't know what to do, and they want to lash out. Pretty serious way of doing it, but the root is the same.

Show and teach our children where, when and how to speak up; when to follow the leader or not; where, when and how to get help. Teach them how to persevere if help seems elusive. There must be someone, somewhere they can turn to. Try to be that person. If you aren't, help them find someone.

Don't assume someone knows something they haven't learned, even if it seems common sense to you.

DOREEN WALGREN
Seaside

Please restore former views in Cannon Beach

A note to the Cannon Beach City Council: Please grant us your permission to restore our former views. We don't see what the city gains by insisting that we no longer have the view we used to have.

From our deck we used to see Haystack Rock, beach and surf. Now all we see is sky, a wall of dune, and a small grass area between our condo and the dune.

What makes the top 10 feet of dune so sacred it must stay? What would the city lose? We're not asking it to cover the cost of shaving the top.

Two of my three grandkids are too small to climb the dune. The extra height I carry them cannot be cut too quickly for me to be able carry them again.

Please treat us like good neighbors, which we believe we are. Not like some nuisance nemesis punished from a distance.

I explained the situation to my grandson, who is 6. He said he didn't think the problem should be that hard to remedy.

DAVID DORNBUSCH
Cannon Beach