

# OPINION

editor@dailyastorian.com



# THE DAILY ASTORIAN

Founded in 1873

KARI BORGEN  
Publisher

JIM VAN NOSTRAND  
Editor

JEREMY FELDMAN  
Circulation Manager

DEBRA BLOOM  
Business Manager

JOHN D. BRUIJN  
Production Manager

CARL EARL  
Systems Manager

## OUR VIEW

# With free speech comes responsibility

The recent controversy about whether conspiracy theorist Alex Jones' absurdities should be removed from media platforms has been shaped by his supporters as both a First Amendment and censorship issue.

It is neither.

It is an integrity issue. The actions of the managers at Facebook, YouTube and Apple in removing his incendiary content are unsurprising. And certainly, they are very easy to justify.

Free speech isn't free — it comes with consequences. The First Amendment guarantees only that the government isn't going to arrest you for what you say, with limited exceptions.

It doesn't shield you from criticism or consequences. It doesn't protect you from being fired for what you say in the workplace. It doesn't mean that anyone has to listen to you. People can boycott you, cancel your television show or ban you from their internet communities.

If you express extreme and reprehensible views, in person or online, you may be ostracized by society.

### Unworthy martyr

Jones is a Texas-based media pundit whose InfoWars website is a hotbed of bizarre theories detached from any semblance of reality. The only downside we can see of booting him from Facebook, YouTube and Apple is creating a martyr in the eyes of the radical fringe.

Some of his musings:

- The 9/11 terrorist attacks and the 1995 Oklahoma City bombing were perpetrated by the U.S. government.
  - The 2012 Sandy Hook shootings, in which 20 children and six adults in Connecticut were slaughtered by a young gunman, were an invention.
  - David Hogg and other eloquent survivors of the Parkland, Florida, school shootings in February are paid actors, hired to advance a gun-control agenda. (This is popularly known as "Second Amendment fan fiction.")
- He has also been censured for pro-



David Swanson/Philadelphia Inquirer

Alex Jones speaks at Settlers Landing during the 2016 Republican National Convention in Cleveland.

moting "Pizzagate," a bizarre story about human trafficking whose publication led to death threats at a Washington, D.C., restaurant, and a false story about an Idaho food processor importing migrant rapists — both fictions for which Jones has had to apologize.

The problem isn't that Jones holds these views, or tries to disseminate them. The issue is that all too often his pronouncements lead others to threaten, vandalize and harass the subjects of his false stories.

Facebook pages which carried Jones' statements have been removed after evidence that he disseminated hate speech against Robert Mueller, the special counsel who is investigating President Donald Trump and his close associates; so, too, has his YouTube channel, and so has Apple, which hosted his podcasts on its iTunes platform. Mueller's probe reportedly examined whether InfoWars had anything to do with Russian interference in the 2016 presidential elections.

In all cases, these private publishing companies have said the outrageous claims fail to meet their standards and may incite illegal actions.

*"Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the government for a redress of grievances."*

— First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution, adopted Dec. 15, 1791

### Familiar controversy

If this controversy over the First Amendment sounds familiar, it is because it has often been addressed on the opinion page of this newspaper.

The Daily Astorian has always had a clear editorial voice, dating back well before the late J.W. "Bud" Forrester set the standard for never sitting on the fence. We keep our opinions to this editorial page, while seeking to publish unbiased news stories on all our other pages.

And because our editorial viewpoints, especially on national politics, consis-

tently lean in one direction, we strive to offer a platform for readers and columnists to offer alternate and often conflicting views.

But with this offer comes a caveat. We genuinely welcome letters and columns that express viewpoints that are contrary to ours. But we won't publish material that is characterized by name-calling, or accuses people of crimes for which they have not been convicted, or seeks to broadcast unverifiable claims and complaints against businesses or individuals.

Because we set and enforce these standards, we have been accused of censorship. No. We simply set standards.

### The most important words

And as for the First Amendment, that's all about the government improperly trying to set parameters for publications.

It doesn't factor into the Jones case.

Back in 1791, the most important words ever set to paper in the English language were crafted by the founders of this nation. James Madison originally wrote, "The people shall not be deprived or abridged of their right to speak, to write, or to publish their sentiments; and the freedom of the press, as one of the great bulwarks of liberty, shall be inviolable."

That wording morphed through a careful editing process into those precious words we hold inviolable. "Congress shall make no law . . . abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press."

With that freedom comes responsibility.

Just as it is not responsible to yell "fire!" in a crowded theater, it is certainly not responsible comment to inflame or incite by posting obvious falsehoods that cause others to act inappropriately or even illegally.

Sophisticated and community-minded publishers know that — and choose what they print accordingly.

## SOUTHERN EXPOSURE

# A timeless author, discovered too late

I like to think "better late than never" when it comes to discovering an author.

Brian Doyle died at 60 in May 2017, only months after he won an Oregon Book Award for his young adult novel "Martin Marten."

Doyle was a former New Yorker, the son of a newspaperman and a teacher who made his mark in this state and dedicated himself largely to its wonders on the coast and elsewhere.

A former editor of the University of Portland's Portland Magazine, Doyle was nominated for the Oregon Book Award nine times and finally won in 2016 for "Martin Marten."

As deeply as his characters correlate their lives with his fiction debut, "Mink River," Doyle espoused himself with the Oregon Coast, especially the North Coast, promoting and sharing his work at Get Lit at the Beach, the city's signature literary gathering.

Doyle was an advocate for young people, providing workshops for students in Cannon Beach, Seaside and Astoria.

Watt Childress of Jupiter's Books called Doyle a "masterful, lyrical writer, with a heart the size of Mount Hood."

In a 2014 reading, Doyle "relayed stories like prayers," Childress said.

At the same event, Cannon Beach's internationally renowned novelist Terry Brooks called Doyle "one of the best writers he's ever read."

This week, Childress compared Doyle to the singer/songwriter Van Morrison. "Somehow I think of them in tandem. When you mention the lyricism. There's just so much feeling packed in there. Damn! The good folks just don't live long enough."

### 'Just sit down and play'

I chose "Mink River" out of all Doyle's books, essays and poetry after randomly pulling it off the library shelf.

I was so enthralled I bought a used copy for myself, coincidentally signed by the author "To David." (David, wherever you are, shame on you for parting with this autographed edition!)

"Mink River" takes you on an inner trail, a serpent's tail that pulls at the connections in your mind, paints a multilayered canvas and provides raw material for a fellow writer's toolkit, which is never full enough.

Otessa Moshfegh, a young writer profiled in The New Yorker in July, wrote: "Writing to me, is more musical than I think it is literary a lot of the time — the way that a voice can sound and the way that it leads the reader in a sort of virtual reality, a journey through its own consciousness."

Doyle could have easily said the same. "Don't think when you write," Doyle said at Get Lit. "Your head is probably your worst enemy. Just sit down and play. And listen to what needs to be said."

Writing, he said, is "taking an idea out for a walk."

In "Mink River," Doyle doesn't walk, he runs. The setting is the fictional Oregon Coast town of Neawanaka, a hybrid name like Ursula K. Le Guin's fictional "Seaview," another tribute to our shores.

"I have visited the coast very often," Doyle said in a 2011 interview with the Gazette's Erin Bernard. "Central and north, and wanted very much to sing and celebrate the hard brave sweet wet wild life there; one of the most delicious comments I have had was from a reader on the coast who said this book is true to life here; that to me was a great honor. I so wanted it to be true fiction, you know?"



Brian Doyle

For this reader, what strikes me most is the book's mournful prose.

Deep, drenching sadness that immerses us in not only the rich outdoor lives of coastal Oregonians in the fictional city of Neawanaka, but leads us into an epidermal layer of pain, sadness and loss.

What more can we ask from a writer than to say he has changed the way we look at the world around us?

Doyle reaches more to William Butler Yeats and Dylan Thomas than American authors like John Updike or John Cheever, exquisite interior monologists both. Perhaps it is the Irish brogue that permeates the characters of the O'Donnell clan, an unforgettable lineage descended from the unforgettable Red Hugh, "a master curser who starts cursing before he even gets out of bed."

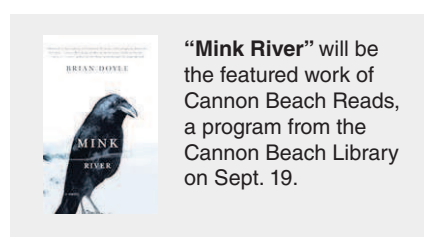
Red Hugh can still get a "good burst" going, Doyle writes, "although he can't sustain an hour's worth of snarling invective like he could in the old days."

Doyle's fabulous crew, Moses, a full-blown, walking, talking, flying character, possesses the gift of speech, which he puts to good use in aiding and abetting the life and well-being of the residents of Neawanaka. Moses makes "Jonathan Livingston Seagull" look like a pipsqueak.

Even the bears and creatures of the forest are given full throat. Witness the bear and her two cubs, as they "trundle in rugged parade order, fascinated by bees and berries."

### Doyle's legacy

Doyle is as playful as the ouzels he portrays — festive singing water birds — among the crawdads and water striders. His narration blurs the line between human and animal consciousness to the point where nature itself is communicat-



"Mink River" will be the featured work of Cannon Beach Reads, a program from the Cannon Beach Library on Sept. 19.

ing, reminding us of the chirping, mewing and mooring around us — the language of animals.

The sentences are long, lingering, reciting lists but never listing, with a cascade of revelations ending with a punch line to the gut.

Childress guided me to another work by Doyle, "Spirited Men: Story, Soul and Substance." The 2004 collection is notable for its profile of Van Morrison (which will send you scrambling to YouTube for live clips of the great and soulful rocker); contemplations of the alto saxophonist Paul Desmond; and an exploration of the clerical themes of 20th-century novelist Graham Greene.

Doyle, like Greene, was a master of many genres, a literary omnivore, capable of dissecting a wolverine; appreciating and one-upping a quick wit or appraising a pinot noir. Such writers are all too rare in any decade.

Reading his tales of death, loneliness, love and natural magic, I am grateful for the legacy of work he left behind.

"People ask for him," Childress said. "But not enough. Maybe his name has not risen to the point where people are requesting him as much as he deserves. He's the kind of person that's going to be here and stick around, and people are going to come back again and again to read and enjoy."

R.J. Marx is The Daily Astorian's South County reporter and editor of the Seaside Signal and Cannon Beach Gazette.