

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

Code enforcement should be high priority

Living in the country can be heavenly — unless you've got problem neighbors. Then it can be pure hell.

Our Nov. 8 story, "Clatsop County searches for better ways to enforce code violations" reported what it's like to be "pretty much like ... living in a war zone." We focused on one situation on Youngs River Road. The issues described, however, are widespread throughout the rural Pacific Northwest.

At the property we reported on, squatters are behind threats of violence, possible drug odors, loud noise, piles of trash, human waste and burning of large items like a trailer and mattress. The term "squatters" makes it sound like a random invasion. Reality usually is more complicated. Renters invite or allow friends and family to move in, usually in violation of leases. Landowners who neglect basic management functions unintentionally permit smaller issues to fester and grow into neighborhood-wrecking free-for-alls. Violators themselves may be rotten jerks — or simply overwhelmed by poverty, illness or substance abuse. Although there are certain commonalities, in some ways each situation is unique.

The county has at least 20 other problem properties. It is managing about 200 unresolved code violations. Until recently, there wasn't a full-time code compliance specialist. In weigh-



Colin Murphey/The Daily Astorian

A property on Youngs River Road with vehicles and trailers in states of disrepair and piles of refuse.

ing competing priorities, counties and other local governments understandably struggle with how to allocate funds. In the most clear-cut example, in a contest between hiring a sheriff's deputy or a code officer, protecting the public against outright criminals is always likely to win.

It's essential to recognize that code disputes can and do blow up into crimes. Tempers flare when dogs bark all day or chase horses. Arguments about illegally burning smelly garbage can easily turn into assaults.

Looming over all this are protections for private property rights. One person's awful mess may be another's

cherished stockpile of old farm equipment and vehicles kept for parts. As a local official observed, even the most egregious violators deserve due process.

Carried to an extreme, such properties negatively affect the value of neighboring addresses. Lack of appropriate rule enforcement drags everyone down.

Beyond admonishing everyone to be better neighbors, what's the solution?

The current county commission has shown it appreciates the seriousness of the worst code violations. It recently conducted a first-of-its-kind hearing to accelerate seizure of a property that

was swiftly losing value due to violations. This is commendable, but it's important to stay in front of such situations before they become emergencies.

As Chief Deputy Paul Williams of the Clatsop County Sheriff's Office remarked, the land use code should have ways to prevent similar situations and deter people from violating in the first place.

This ought to include larger fees for problem properties and shorter time periods before action is taken. Facing the prospect of liens against their property to pay for cleanup and damages, most owners will step up efforts to avoid allowing problems to get out of control.

From a broader public perspective, we all can help by letting elected and appointed officials know this is a high priority, and by supporting personnel like new code officer Nancy Mendoza, who has started working her way through the county's "terrible 20" list. Area real estate brokers and agents should wield their considerable influence to make the point that the county's future depends in part upon a reputation for protecting property values and quality of life.

As the 21st century moves forward, our region will have to accommodate more and more residents. It's vital that we get along. Intelligent and diligent code enforcement is a key way to ensure this result.

LETTERS

And the rain comes

In Astoria we have had such a beautiful summer. I thought it was great — maybe never stopping. Now all of a sudden I get a shock, and the rain comes.

I believe it rained lightly about three times during the summer, and the rest was sun and a little fog. The days warmed up and the hearty people of the coast wore short-sleeved clothing. I also see this clothing when it's really cold.

The rain is sneaky. It comes and goes, but can stay for days. You get used to it, and live with it. If you have problems with the rain, and the often accompanying cold, there are other beautiful places in Oregon where it's dryer, but can be colder.

I like the rain and approaching winter months. To me the dark, wet days offer a new excitement of living. When I lived in the South we had around six months of heat and varying degrees (many times over 100) along with the humidity. I will take my spot here any day.

When the rain and cold comes, it seems that typical outer garment is the raincoat and hood. I like my coat and umbrella. That's for the heavy weather. For light rain and short distances, I just go.

The rain will come, and there will be cold and dark days. This will be the challenge and the fun of living here. It can be a good life to enjoy.

NORM HOOGE
Astoria

Giving thanks

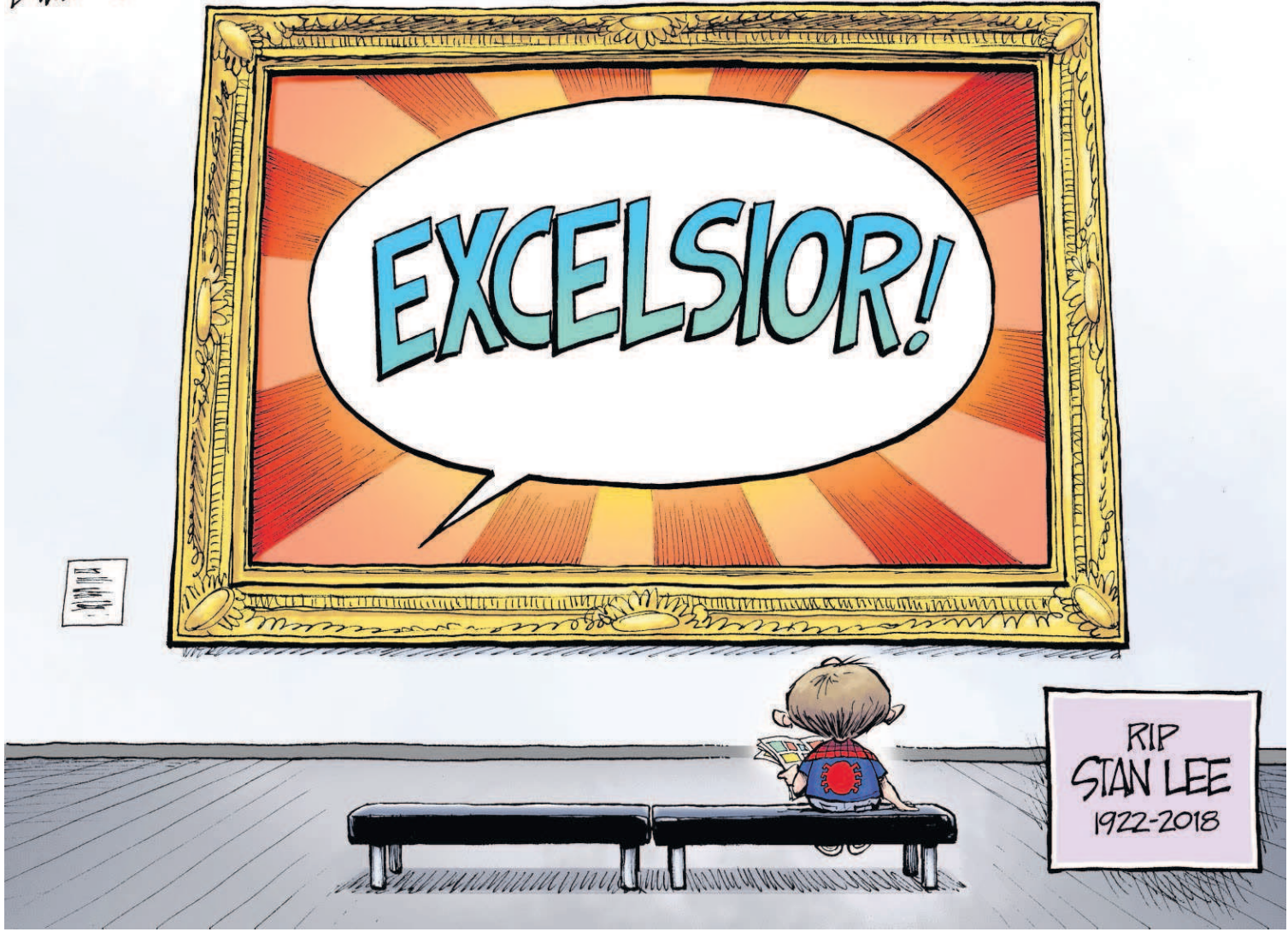
This Thanksgiving, I thank the physical therapy staff at the Columbia Memorial Hospital Pavilion. Without them, I would not be swimming, walking without a limp, nor doing household chores. Any hospital has its drawbacks, especially on the coast, but CMH's shining star is their Physical Therapy Clinic's administrators and therapists.

I've served our nation honorably in both the Navy and the Marine Corps during the Vietnam conflict and Desert Storm, spied on the Soviets, and benefited from travel all over the northern hemisphere. Time off was as good as the rest was bad.

The worst was a radiation experiment the Navy conducted on us on board the submarine Skipjack. But there were accidents at sea, in the air and in port, as well. All you loggers, fishermen, farmers, those who work in industry and transportation know, we're all vulnerable and some injuries may not leave one whole, ever. So we make the best of the hand we're dealt.

Well thanks to CMH Pavilion staff, I've had access to the Veterans Affairs Veteran's Choice program, and physical therapy that now allows me to walk, drive my car, get in and out of a car seat or theater seat, watch a movie, swim, shoot, exercise on some machines, grocery shop, and best of all — sleep straight through the night.

THE COLUMBUS DISPATCH
CARTOONS.COM



So my thanks goes out to the CMH Pavilion staff: Physical therapists Nathan Nagy, Joshua Rogers, Katherine Kahl, Virginia Shaw; Julia Bangs (patient access); PT administrators Melissa Paterson, Haley Jump and Claudine Rivera for most excellent service, above and beyond their job descriptions.

DANE JACONETTI
Hammond

Don't twist theory to discredit evolution

Regarding the recent letter "Examine the truth about evolutionary theory" (The Daily Astorian, Nov. 13): Evolution arose from the same scientific tradition that brought us nuclear theory, gravitational theory, electricity, etc.

Yet no one had problems with these advancements. Why? Because they were ideologically benign and evolution appeared to be a threat to deeply held beliefs. The writer implies that evolution is a theory in crisis because details remain unsolved. Rather, unsolved questions are affirmation of a healthy scientific debate.

Evolution has been studied for over 150 years, and represents arguably one of humanity's major intellectual achievements. In medicine, evolutionary theory forms the basis for

understanding and treating bacterial infections, HIV, Huntington Disease and other ailments. In agriculture, genetic diversity, disease resistance plants, and pest control are grounded in evolutionary theory.

One more thing — the writer mentions punctuated equilibrium, a theory put forth by Stephen Jay Gould, a Harvard paleontologist and firm evolutionist. I, too, am a paleontologist, and knew Stephen Jay Gould. Knowing Stephen, I'm sure he would sit up in his grave if he knew that his elegant theory of punctuated equilibrium was being twisted to discredit evolution.

ED JOYCE
Astoria

In the US, nobody is above the law

Congratulations to Clatsop County voters. Once again we led the way in Oregon voter turnout. We are part of a movement of millions defending democracy.

Therefore, we are especially concerned that President Donald Trump has acted unconstitutionally by appointing an acting attorney general. The U.S. Constitution requires that the president nominate to the Senate for confirmation those who would fill offices that report directly to the president.

We are also deeply concerned that his appointee, Matthew Whitaker, has previously and publicly criticized the Robert Mueller investigation, and suggested ways to undermine it. The investigation must be protected. In the U.S., nobody is above the law.

We urge readers to contact their members of Congress and tell them to protect our Constitution. More information is at indivisible-northcoastoregon.org

DAVID DELK
CHERYL JOHNSON
SUE ZERANGUE
LAURIE CAPLAN
CAROLYN EADY
CAROL NEWMAN
CINDY CARSON
MICHELLE BISEK

Indivisible North Coast Oregon Astoria

Know your rights with smart meters

Hey property owners: Know your rights. Power companies are installing "smart meters," and you have the right to opt out. Get informed. Learn the pros and cons of smart meters. Make the decision before it is made for you.

AMY GUNN
Seaside