

## Son disturbed at his school

**Dear Annie:** My husband and I bought a house in a safe neighborhood 12 years ago primarily because it has a great school district. We have two children, a boy and a girl, and I am writing about our oldest child, "Alan," who is 12. Alan is very sensitive and wants for everyone to get along. He can't stand it when people fight.

Alan used to love going to school, but lately he has been trying to stay home as much as possible, saying, "I feel sick." Yesterday, when he was home being "sick," we had a long talk and he opened up to me. He said there are four boys in his class who don't like three other students because the others are immigrants from South America who are still learning English. Alan likes both groups of boys but feels like he is being pressured to take sides against the Spanish-speaking students.

Alan has a best friend, "David," who is also quiet and sensitive, and Alan said David does not want to take sides either. He said that he wouldn't be surprised if fights started breaking out, and he and David just want to run for cover. He said both sides get together at school and when school is not in session, and they say awful things to each other.

My husband and I don't really know where to turn. I have read stories about parents who approached their school districts with similar complaints, only to be labeled politically on one side or another. We don't care about politics. We just want for our son to be eager to go to school and learn, the way he used to feel. Do you have any suggestions for how we can handle this? — *Concerned Mother*

**Dear Concerned Mother:** You and husband might want to get together with David's

parents, and, if you are all on the same page, have a meeting with their teacher. It is remarkable, and wonderful, that Alan opened up to you. It shows that you are a great mom. I'm sure the teacher is aware of the potential problem. It might make sense for the school, or Alan's class, to have a group discussion and allow all students to express their opinions — and hear their classmates', too.

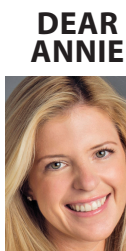
What is happening in your school district is not unusual, and the more we can communicate openly and accept many different viewpoints and perspectives, the more we will all get along, just as your wise son wishes.

**Dear Annie:** I am responding to your column about competitive, catty women. So sad to spend your 70s with "friends" that are so challenging in yoga class. Not sure yoga is all about that.

Now going on to my 80s, I'm having a great time with friends that love to laugh, enjoy what we can and cannot do, find joy in groups that not-so serious about life's difficulties. My suggestion is to find different friends that can laugh and enjoy the good in getting older and wiser! — *Staying Away from Negative People*

**Dear Staying Away from Negative People:** Your vibe attracts your tribe.

**Dear Annie:** The column from the person whose in-law, a gentleman who worked really hard all his life only to pass on only a few months after his retirement, was really moving. It truly underscores the fact that we need to work to live, not the other way around. It also struck me that you termed the letter "incredibly beautiful." It was, and I like that you subtly brought to light that "beautiful" is not always pretty.



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## Scotland: Our similarities help us celebrate our common humanity

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their own specific words for fishing gear, boat designs, their Nordic religions featuring sea and weather gods and numerous superstitions that reach far back into the mists of history.

In more recent times, the sailor towns of Scotland, such as Scrabster, developed a wild and masculine culture for maritime workers and members of the fishing fleet. These men faced the temptations of drinking, whoring and gambling, just like in Astoria. The Scottish mariners feared dreaded British Naval "press gangs" that could kidnap them to a forced life at sea—much like the young men of Astoria who were "shanghaied" and pressed into maritime service.

Today's Scottish coast continues to share many cultural parallels with the Oregon and Washington coasts. Their fisheries are also in decline, and their fishing fleet is graying—and shrinking. They are rightfully proud of their coastal heritage, and keep it alive through museums, boat fairs, folk festivals and college programs such as the one at UHI.

In some ways, their path differs from ours. Struggles to keep the salmon harvest profitable have resulted in "farm fishing," raising fish in tanks or ponds, something that would not find much acceptance around here. Men on Scotland's north coast have also found work in off-shore drilling, something most Oregonians would probably rather not risk, for fear of polluting the waters.

Two differences between cultures made me smile. When I told them about our beloved FisherPoets Gathering, they were incredulous. Fishermen writing poetry? They could not wrap their heads around it. Not one person I encountered could imagine a Scottish fisherman writing—much less reciting—a poem. The other difference—one that makes me proud to be an Astorian—is how many women have entered our local maritime workforce. From fishermen to crabbers to bar pilots to officers to cooks to ship agents—the women of Astoria have become a respected part of the maritime scene. This also caused the folks in Scotland to scratch their heads. Not a single person I met knew of a woman who fished, sailed or navigated. They could not fathom it.

The Pacific Northwest and the Scottish Highlands are cultural cousins on different seas. Recognizing our similarities helps us to celebrate our com-



Scottish fishermen.

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Scottish fishing fleet.

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mon humanity. By recognizing the differences between ourselves and other small communities that live on a coast, we are able to celebrate what makes us unique—for good or for bad—and also what makes

Astoria such a special and beloved place to live.

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