

OPINION



the Astorian

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WRITER'S NOTEBOOK

How do we come back from loss?

Learning to handle a loss is as important as how to appreciate a victory. Even the best hitters strike out many more times than they hit safely in baseball.

Humiliation and losses have the potential of defining the rest of our lives. Do they leave a scar that festers? Or do we respond with creativity?



STEVE FORRESTER

David Brooks has written about “what a large role humiliation has played in American history.” In *The New York Times* in October, he describes the physiological trauma that comes from it. “The brutal feature of humiliation is that it gets inside you,” he

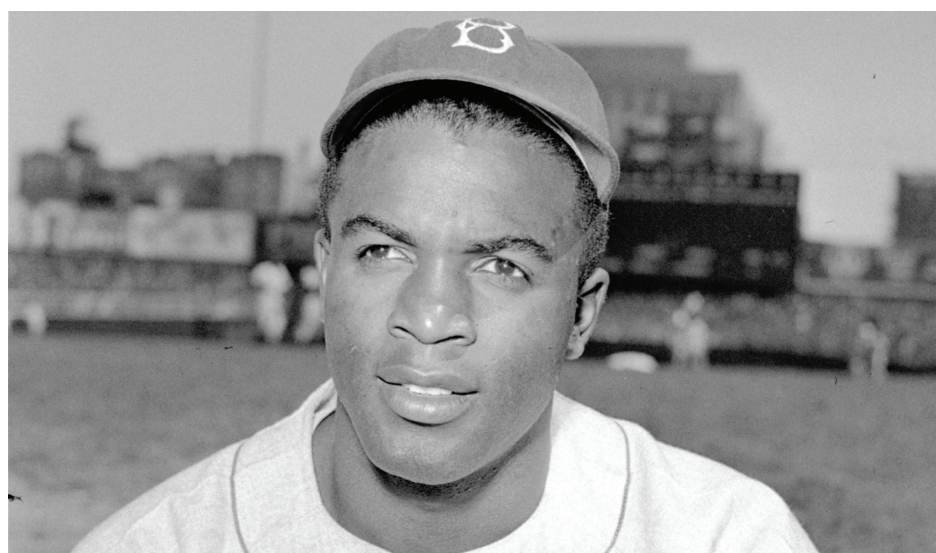
wrote.

If you are familiar with Jackie Robinson’s story, you know he endured constant abuse as a groundbreaking Black player in Major League Baseball in the late 1940s and 1950s. It was essential to his mentor, Branch Rickey, that Robinson not take that bait — that he not respond to the haters. You also know that Robinson died young, at the age of 53. In the tellings of Robinson’s story that I have heard, there is a presumption that his years of being the object of racial hatred in ballparks took a physical toll.

Resilience is the word, which these days is applied to the capacity to come back from childhoods of impediments. Psychologists and educators are especially interested in men and women who move beyond poverty and abuse to lives of accomplishment.

Brooks describes it this way: “They responded to humiliation with creative action. Disdained at home, they turned their faces to the future.”

As I have unearthed the life of Oregon’s Richard Neuberger, discrimination and humiliation are unspoken ele-



A portrait of Jackie Robinson of the Brooklyn Dodgers in 1948.

ments of the late U.S. senator. I have found them in contemporaneous newspaper reports about the young man. It also appears in his letters and in interviews I did with his contemporaries.

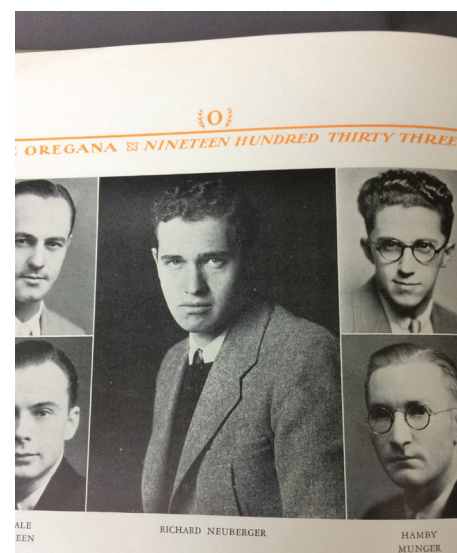
At the University of Oregon, Neuberger disturbed the peace while editor of the *Oregon Daily Emerald*. He addressed the predicament of needy students at a time when the Great Depression had cut dormitory occupancy by half. He developed a financial plan, as well as an eating plan, for students in need.

These initiatives were resented by fraternity representatives in student government. One mean-spirited initiative took the shape of a resolution: “Be it resolved we the individual students in the University of Oregon, wish to contribute to a scholarship fund to aid Richard L. Neuberger to enroll in some distant Eastern college or university at his earliest convenience.” Tin cans were nailed up around the UO campus, beckoning contributions to “send Dickie” to another school.

Neuberger responded graciously, saying that these contributions should be given to students who needed the financial support. But the virulent undertone of this campus behavior was not lost on Maurice Sellin, who wrote in *The Jewish Scribe* that Neuberger had been “vilified, attacked, castigated and anathematized by bell, book and candle. If I may be permitted to coin a word, he was also antisemitized.”

The ultimate humiliation came when law school dean Wayne Morse flunked Neuberger in Morse’s criminal law course. Morse then called Neuberger’s parents to suggest that they were wasting their money on law school. Neuberger’s roommate, Steve Kahn, told me that Neuberger was “despondent.” Neuberger left the UO and never earned a degree.

Flunking out of college is dispiriting. Neuberger responded with creativity, by selling his first article to *The New York Times*. He followed that with nine more *Times* articles in the following year, as well as two to *The Nation* magazine. His



A portrait of Richard Neuberger when he was a student at the University of Oregon.

phenomenal career as a magazine and newspaper journalist was well off the ground.

In examining a historical figure, we tend to look for accomplishment — as though success was an obvious outcome in their life. But every professional writer has his or her set of rejection letters. And the most successful often bear scars.

One of Neuberger’s most profound responses to setback was his 1959 *Harpers* article: “When I Learned I Had Cancer.” This revelation appeared in an era when cancer was typically a dark secret, spoken about in hushed tones. In his confession, Neuberger did what first lady Betty Ford would do decades later by revealing her brush with breast cancer.

Aldous Huxley provided us with a useful perspective on how we might handle the darker sides of life: “Experience is not what happens to a man; it is what a man does with what happens to him.”

Steve Forrester, the former editor and publisher of The Astorian, is the president and CEO of EO Media Group.

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LETTERS WELCOME

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GUEST COLUMN

Face masks and kids

A face mask is a simple thing, yet it’s one of the best tools we have to help protect one another from COVID-19.

That’s why public health experts say almost everyone should wear a mask until they’re fully vaccinated — including children as young as 2 years old. Many areas have mask mandates in addition to recommendations. And children may need to wear a mask at least part of the time while they’re at school.

Tips for masking up

Wearing a face mask can be challenging for children. You can help them adjust with these suggestions:

- **Make it fun.** Put a face mask on a stuffed animal. Give your child’s mask a cool decoration. Point out that many superheroes wear masks.
- **Practice together.** Help your child get used to wearing the mask before you go out.
- **Show your child pictures of other kids wearing masks.** This will help your child avoid feeling different or singled out.
- **Talk about the importance of masks.** Using age-appropriate words, talk

with your child about face masks and why your family wears them: to avoid spreading germs. Talk with them about how germs can spread when people breathe, talk, cough or sneeze. Wearing a mask keeps the virus from reaching others and it can stop germs from reaching you! Additionally, contaminated hands are a way for the virus to spread and masks stop people from touching their mouths and faces, adding another level of protection.

Right mask, right fit

You can buy a face covering for your child. Or if you sew, you can find DIY mask patterns online. A pleated cloth mask with elastic ear loops usually works best for kids.

Just make sure the mask you buy or make will fit your child’s smaller face and can be securely worn over your child’s nose and mouth. Adult face masks are too large for kids.

Also, children often need to be reminded to:

- Wash their hands before and after wearing the mask.
- Avoid touching the mask while wearing it.



WHITNEY LATHAM



Lydia Ely/The Astorian

Masks can help deter the spread of the coronavirus.

- Remove the mask by taking it off from behind rather than from the front.

When to talk to your child’s doctor

Some children have a developmental or intellectual disability or a health condition that may make it harder to wear a mask.

Ask your child’s doctor for advice.

Call your CMH clinic or visit columbianemorial.org to request an appointment or learn more information.

Dr. Whitney Latham is the in-house pediatrician at CMH-OHSU Health Pediatric Clinic – Seaside.