

LET'S NOT TAKE THIS
For Granted

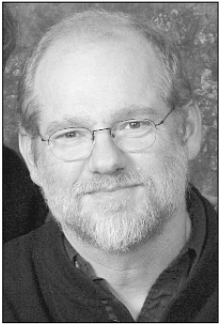
By CRAIG JOSEPH DANNER

Random Stuff

I've decided that today's column is going to be about the random thoughts of a man who spends his days prying the clothes off stiff, cold corpses, and chatting amicably with the criminally insane.

And that's just on the weekends.

But seriously (well, not really seriously), I just don't have anything appropriate to say this week, as opposed to all the other weeks, when I rarely say anything appropriate. Which reminds me of our Congressman. The last time I mentioned him in a column I said something I shouldn't have, so I'm staying away from that subject for a while. My mother always said if I can't say anything nice, I shouldn't say anything at all. That advice, of course, makes for very short or very boring columns.



To be perfectly honest, now that I think about it, it takes some real huevos for a columnist to imagine readers would be interested in his or her random thoughts. So feel free to stop reading anytime. I can promise you, this isn't going to go anywhere.

The Best Policy

Speaking of honesty, I want to confess that I am not always perfect in that regard. For instance, I once wrote about an encounter with a patient that involved the explosive expression of dehydrated secretions from one of her nostrils. (Feel free to stop reading anytime!) In the great tradition of Brian Williams and Bill O'Reilly, and in the interests of humor and entertainment, I actually stole that story from a colleague. I want to take this opportunity to apologize to my readers, and especially to my children, for being such a disappointment. But it really was too good a story to let go to waste. I'd do it again in a heartbeat.

And speaking of heartbeats, I do occasionally spend my days prying the clothes off stiff, cold corpses. It's one of my jobs. Honestly. And you, dear Taxpayer, are the one who helps pay me to do it.

Feel free to stop reading anytime, because, seriously, I don't know how appropriate I'm being. But let's take a look behind the scenes at the work of the Assistant County Medical Examiner. I've held that position for the past 10 years, ever since my late wife, who was the county medical officer at the time, decided she would rather not pry the clothes off cold, stiff corpses, and so passed the job on to me.

(Random thought: how should I refer to my late wife during the time before she was "late?" Logically, I'm guessing that would be "early." And if before my late wife died she was my "early" wife, how do I refer to the woman I am married to now? Do I call Stacey my "current" wife? My "most recent" wife? And what exactly does the word "late" imply? I'm thinking it's a little more serious than just being "tardy." Perhaps I should refer to Stacey as my "on time" wife...)

Cause and Manner

My job as the Assistant County Medical Examiner is to determine the cause and manner of death when someone dies unexpectedly or traumatically, with the "cause" being the thing that actually killed the person, and the "manner" being either homicide, suicide, accidental, or natural. For example, if a jogger is found dead by the side of the road, I would investigate the death by examining the scene of the death, talking to witnesses and family, reading medical records, and by examining the body for evidence of trauma or disease. If the decedent was 24, was in perfect health, had no obvious mortal enemies, and had tire tracks across his back, then the cause of death would be "blunt trauma to the chest and abdomen" and the manner of death would be "accidental." If the decedent was 98, had known heart disease, and the body simply had a few scrapes from falling down, the cause of death would be "complications from coronary artery disease" and the manner would be "natural."

(I don't know why you're still reading. I would have given up a few paragraphs ago.)

So, here's the truth. One cannot fully examine a dead person without removing the clothes. If you are a parent, you understand how difficult it is to try to dress or undress an unwilling four-year-old. Now imagine your four-year-old weighs 248 pounds, is six feet long, and is cold and stiff. If you die unexpectedly in Hood River County, you can be pretty certain that I will be involved in wrestling off your clothes. And it's not exactly easy, so I'd appreciate a little cooperation.

(I want to be serious for a moment, and I mean serious serious. I know I am making light of a rather morbid situation, but I don't want anyone to get the wrong impression. It is sometimes rather difficult to remove clothes from a decedent, and on occasion we have to resort to cutting them off. But if at all possible, we try to remove the clothes intact because they may have sentimental value to the family, and that is something we try to respect. I've worked with our area funeral homes for the past decade, and without exception, 100 percent of the cases I have worked on have been treated with respect and dignity. I trusted my late wife to their care. I have complete faith in their integrity and good intentions for everyone for whom they provide services. It can be a very difficult job and they do it very well and I am proud to work with them.)

(That said, I want to take this opportunity to apologize to Jack for implying that his truck tires seem a little large. That's an inside joke.)

Next column, if I can't think of anything better to say, I'll write about my frequent, amicable conversations with the criminally insane. And of course, you can feel free to stop reading at any time!

Unitarians install new minister on Sunday

The community is invited to attend the installation of Rev. Judy Zimmerman, the first called minister of the Mid-Columbia Unitarian Universalist Fellowship (MCUUF).

The event will take place from 3 to 5 p.m. Saturday, March 7, at the Rockford Grange, 4250 Barrett Dr., Hood River, where MCUUF holds its services on Sundays at 10 a.m. Light refreshments will follow the installation service.

Children are welcome to attend. Spanish translation will be provided.

Zimmerman also works as a psychology professor at Portland

Community College.

MCUUF traces its history to the Rev. W.G. Eliot, Jr., who founded the First Society of Unitarians in Hood River in 1903. The original church building, at 9th and State streets, is now a private home.

Rev. W.G. Eliot, Jr. is the son of Rev. Thomas Lamb Eliot, a Unitarian minister, for whom the Eliot Glacier on Mt. Hood and Eliot Dr. in Hood River are named.

The First Society of Unitarians disbanded in 1918. The society was reborn as the Mid-Columbia Unitarian Universalist Fellowship in 1986.



Rev. Judy Zimmerman



Submitted photo

HOSPICE YOUTH make cards: Jordan Ziegner, Candace Wilson, Jennifer Furrow, Claire Davies, Anna Ticknor, Blair Holman, Deylan Gudiel, Lauren Trumbull, Claire Davies and (not pictured) Samantha Thompson.

Youth bring customized cheer to Hospice patients

Valentine's Day received a personal touch from the Hood River Youth of Heart of Hospice (YoHOHs), who decorated custom cards for each Heart of Hospice patient.

The suggestion to personalize the cards was made by Jill Goatcher, the original founder of Youth of Heart of Hospice. Goatcher said to find out what about each patient's likes and incorporate them into their cards.

Flowers, fish, and facts about Alaska were a few of the customized cards for Heart of Hospice patients.

"It was wonderful finding out more about the patients and they were pretty excited to receive visits from the

YoHOHs," said volunteer coordinator Jayne Medeiros. YoHOH Deylan Gudiel dressed up in a heart costume and the YoHOHs sang love songs while giving out Valentines cards. The Heart of Hospice patients, families, staff and visitors really enjoyed the festivities.

The very last visit of the day was visiting with Charles and Jean Mason, and they made the YoHOHs feel so very welcome. Participating were Michelle Hobbs, Blair Holman, Deylan Gudiel, Olivia Mitchell, Megan Dayley, Jennifer Furrow, YoHOH co-leaders, Jean and Charles (Red) Mason, Savanna Hawk, and Jordan Ziegner.

Donations sought for Pine Grove FD auction

Pine Grove Fire Department hosts the 51st annual auction on Saturday, March 7, beginning at 9 a.m. Breakfast and lunch will be available for purchase all day.

Live auctions take place inside the fire hall and, for larger items, in the yard.

The station is four miles south of Hood River on Highway 35. This is a major fundraiser for the department; funds are used to purchase fire apparatus, medical and fire related equipment and supplies.

Firefighter Joe Long said donations are now being accepted and the fire house will be open Saturdays from

9 a.m. until 2 p.m., and Tuesdays from 7 p.m. to 9 p.m.

For more information and if you need to arrange pick-ups, call Long at 541-806-1173.

Pine Grove Fire Department, along with Odell Fire Department, make up the Wy'east Fire District.



Jared Brekke and Kristen Armacost

Armacost, Brekke engaged

Kristen Armacost and Jared James Brekke, both of Boise, have announced their engagement. They will be married Oct. 10, 2015.

The bride-to-be is the daughter of Denny and Tammy Armacost of Hood River. She is a graduate of Hood River Valley High

School in 2010 and Paul Mitchell Cosmetology of Boise. She is a manger and bartender at Legends Pub and Grill in Boise.

The future groom is the son of Jerry and Lori Brekke of White Salmon. He graduated from Borah High School in Boise and is a manager at Big 5.

Red Cross sets local Blood Mobile dates

The American Red Cross encourages eligible blood donors to become everyday heroes by giving blood in celebration of Red Cross Month this March.

Since 1943, every president has designated March as Red Cross Month – a time to recognize those who support the Red Cross. Local communities depend on the Red Cross, which relies on donations of time, money and blood to fulfill its humanitarian mission.

Blood Mobile visits will be in Hood River on March 25, 12:30 to 6:30 p.m., at the Oregon National Guard Armory Hood River, 12th and Belmont streets, and in Parkdale on

March 31, 1 to 6 p.m., Mt. Hood Town Hall Parkdale, 6575 Highway 35.

By donating blood, eligible donors can help save the lives of patients in need. Those who are unable to give blood can support blood donations by organizing a blood drive, volunteering to assist with Red Cross activities, or creating a SleevesUp virtual blood drive online at redcross-blood.org/SleevesUp and asking others to make a lifesaving donation.

To make an appointment to give blood, download the Red Cross Blood Donor App, visit redcrossblood.org or call 1-800-RED CROSS (1-800-733-2767).

May Street annual Lasagna Dinner, Art Auction March 12

May Street Elementary School will hold its annual Teddy Webber Scholarship Dinner and Student Art Auction on Thursday, March 12. This event, which began in 1997, is held to raise money for the school's artist in residence program and the Teddy Webber scholarship fund.

All are welcome to join in this community celebration featuring a lasagna dinner prepared by the talented chefs at Celilo and Double Mountain Brewery, with ingredients donated by our many local restaurants and stores — Riverside at the Hood River Inn, Pizzicato, Solstice, Egg River Café, Andrew's Pizzeria, Pietros, Hood River Taqueria, Papa Murphy's, Rosauers and Safeway.

Dinner is served from 4:30 to 6:30 p.m. Tickets are \$8 for adults, and \$4 for students and seniors.

The evening's family fun includes a silent and live auction, student art show and sale, plus a bouncy house and face painting for the kids.

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