

## Quick takes

### Looks back on 2014,

2014 was great. I lost 55 pounds and graduated from EOU!

— Nicole McLouth

The best things that happened to me this year are, having a beautiful and healthy baby boy and getting engaged.

— Amanda Henshaw

A moose walked by our house in Helix (in 2014)! That was definitely interesting.

— Patricia Lovejoy

My son was born in May. Healthy and happy and all around perfect! Best year of my life!

— Malissa Wurtz

Getting my drivers license at age 27! Finally.

— Stephanie Williams

### Whooping cough

Parents please get vaccinated! And for God's sake, please vaccinate your children too!

— Alex C. Thompson

I just had my DPT booster, well worth it to ensure little ones do not get this illness.

— Virginia Gehringer-Justice

And it takes a couple weeks for your body to build up immunity once you receive it, so those who are expecting, tell family members to be vaccinated with the Tdap vaccine (if 7 years of age and up) well before baby us due (7 year olds are usually already vaccinated, just FYI)

— Riann Rachelle Roggiro

One of the great lessons of the Twitter age is that much can be summed up in just a few words. Here are some of this week's takes. Tweet yours @Tim\_Trainor or email editor@eastoregonian.com, and keep them to 140 characters.

# Salmon ground is holy ground

By MARTIN WELLS  
Writers on the Range

As bishop of the Eastern Washington-Idaho Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church, my territory is home to the Columbia River, one of the great rivers of our continent.

Whenever I have time and the Spirit allows, I travel throughout this region learning about its history and cultures, and studying its blessings and gifts. In Christian terms, this is called "theology of place," in which our understanding of the Divine comes through the beauty of the natural world. One site where I feel most deeply connected to God is the Hanford Reach National Monument.

Through a sometimes-open gate off Washington's remote Highway 24, a gravel road leads to an overlook where visitors can see the only undammed portion of the Columbia River left in the United States. This is the ancestral home of the Wanapum Tribe, whose name means "river people." This is salmon ground, holy ground, and it is threatened by radioactive waste seeping toward the river.

The Columbia River is indeed holy ground and not a machine, though it has long been treated like one. In 1964, the governments of the United States and Canada ratified the Columbia River Treaty, which mandated the building of large storage dams on the river for flood control and power generation. For these purposes, the treaty has been mostly effective. For Native Tribes and Northwest salmon, though, it has been a disaster.

None of the 15 Columbia Basin tribes were party to the 1964 treaty. They were treated as if they did not exist as sovereign nations, and as if they had no stake in the living river and the salmon that fed their people. Throughout the dam-building era,

First Nations in Canada and Native tribes in the United States were moved from their homes, lost their livelihoods and food source and saw their sacred ancestral sites flooded. This injustice mars the majesty of the river and the lives of her people.

Salmon and steelhead have fared no better. Dozens of the Columbia River's famed runs are now extinct, and 13 remain listed as threatened or endangered. The Columbia is no longer a living, robust river for most of its 1,200-mile journey. It has become a shackled ghost of its former self.

Last fall marked the first time, with 10 years' notice, that the U.S. and Canadian governments could renegotiate the Columbia River Treaty. There is reason to hope that a new treaty can revive the river, respect the tribes, and leave a living legacy for all who love and share the abundance of the Columbia.

Together with many other faith leaders, I uphold the Columbia River Pastoral Letter written by the 12 Roman Catholic bishops of the international watershed; it is an ethical framework for decision-making as the treaty is renegotiated. The values we invoke embrace conservation of the watershed as a common good, including flood control and power production, protecting species and wildlife, respecting the dignity and traditions of indigenous people, and promoting justice for all beings who share the river.

I was also pleased to sign the Declaration on Ethics and Modernizing the Columbia River Treaty, which was sent to President

Barack Obama and Canadian Prime Minister Stephen Harper in late September. The declaration put forward key principles for a renegotiated treaty, including:

- Healthy ecosystem function must be a central purpose of an updated treaty. Without a healthy riparian ecosystem, there is no future for the salmon and steelhead that depend on the living waters of the Columbia. The treaty's governance must also include a steward, a designated protector of these unique waters.
- The tribes and First Nations must be parties to the new treaty. Native

## Dozens of the Columbia River's famed runs are now extinct, and 13 remain listed as threatened or endangered.

leaders are strong advocates both for salmon and for their communities, which have already lost so much. We must remember that the future of the Columbia River is a moral issue, and that indigenous rights must be revived and preserved for a just future.

- Climate change must be acknowledged and dealt with as a factor that will challenge and change the river. For both salmon as well as our communities to survive, the renegotiated treaty must help stem climate change as well as support adaptation to the changes that will surely be manifest in this watershed in the coming decades.

Because the Columbia River is a gift given to us by our Creator and a blessing, I hope this understanding frames the renegotiation of the Columbia River Treaty.

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The Rev. Martin Wells is a contributor to *Writers on the Range*, a column service of *High Country News*. He is bishop of the Eastern Washington-Idaho Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, and is based in Spokane, Washington.

## For journalists, 2014 was the best and worst of times

The year just concluded was not good to journalism. Consider:

**At least 60 members of our profession were killed in the line of duty.** Seventeen died covering the fighting in Syria. Five in Iraq and five the Ukraine. Four in Gaza. Three each in Somalia, Afghanistan, Pakistan and Paraguay. Many were targeted for murder. Most died in combat, while covering war or civil unrest. Two suffered a horrible public death, beheaded by Islamic radicals.

**Other journalists were jailed or exiled.** A dozen reporters and photographers were arrested and jailed while covering the riots in Ferguson. Three journalists have been locked up in Egypt for a year on trumped-up terrorism charges. Seven are jailed in Turkey. Forty-two have been exiled, one-third from Syria.

**Law enforcement targeted us.** *New York Times* reporter James Risen was threatened with jail time for refusing to testify about sources he used for stories on Iraq's nuclear weapons program. Fox News reporter James Rosen was named a "co-conspirator" in another national security leak case. Meanwhile, the FBI was forced to admit it had planted a fake story in the *Seattle Times* as part of a sting operation.

**And we did it to ourselves.** Rolling Stone magazine published a gripping story about a violent gang rape at the University of Virginia. The story reaffirmed an accepted narrative about a culture of rape at colleges and fraternities. However, the *Washington Post* found several problems with the alleged claims and Rolling Stone later admitted it did not perform basic fact-checking. Not to be outdone, *New York Magazine* gave us a 17-year-old who amassed \$72 million by playing the stock market. The entire story is untrue.

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Against that backdrop, however, there were excellent examples in 2014 of what journalists do best: uncover that which is hidden from the public and promote change. Some national, state and local examples:

**The deadly VA.** It's difficult to truly shock Americans anymore. Yet, there was an audible shudder when CNN reported that at least 40 veterans died while waiting for care at Veterans Health Administration facilities in Arizona. The CNN investigation revealed widespread delays in treatment throughout the VA system and identified administrators who covered it up. The revelations triggered a series of investigations — some criminal — and prodded Congress and the president into action.

**Oregon's first lady.** *Willamette Week* blew the lid off the governor's fiancé, revealing how Sylvia Hayes used her notoriety and government access for personal gain. As other newspapers and our Capital Bureau joined the investigation, we learned about her hidden marriage, an alleged marijuana-growing operation and how the governor's office bent the rules to accommodate her. More revelations are coming in 2015.

**A killer's life.** Lukah Chang brutally killed a Pendleton teenager and attacked another woman. He later said he just wanted to know what it felt like. While the *East Oregonian* reported extensively on the case



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and the victims, reporter Phil Wright wanted to know more about the killer and what led to one of the more frightening killings in our region's history. Wright persuaded Lukah's sister to speak. Their conversations over three weeks provided a raw look at his troubled life.

**A tale of two cities.** The *EO* published a week-long series of articles on Hermiston and Pendleton. While only 30 miles apart, the series explored the dynamics between the two rival cities and examined their demographics, city governments, cultures, economics and histories.

**Costly remarks.** Our weekly newspaper in Grant County reported on employment discrimination lawsuits filed against the county. The cases stemmed from derogatory remarks about a job applicant's sexual orientation. The *Blue Mountain Eagle* commented editorially as well, criticizing the county for treating human resources like an afterthought in a time when such litigation is a growing cost for local governments.

**Challenging times.** Our other weekly newspaper in Eastern Oregon, the *Wallowa County Chieftain*, examined the decline of one community institution and the loss of another. A fire at the local Elks lodge left that service organization with a costly recovery at a time of dwindling membership. And when the state closed its employment office in Enterprise to save money, it left the entire county with only Internet and e-mail access to this important operation.

**Bridging the divide.** Our weekly ag newspaper, *The Capital Press*, published "Rural Oregon, meet Portland." Reporter Eric Mortenson explained why what Portlanders think matters to farmers and ranchers across the state. The article also dispelled misconceptions Portlanders have about Oregon agriculture.

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Producing stories like these is expensive and time-consuming. It requires owners who firmly believe newspapers should be operated as civic institutions devoted to the community. And it takes editors, reporters and photographers with natural curiosity, talent and fearlessness.

Our company — its 11 newspapers, 20 websites and 200 employees — enters the new year determined to provide our readers with more journalism, not less. While other papers are decreasing their news coverage and staffing, we will provide more — using our printed newspapers, web sites and other forms of communication.

We've also joined forces with another family-owned newspaper company, Pamplin Media, to create a three-person Capital Bureau to keep you informed about the Legislature and state government agencies.

EO Media Group can only be as successful as the communities we serve. So, here's wishing all of you a safe, happy and prosperous new year.

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*John Perry is COO of EO Media Group, parent company of the East Oregonian. While he is responsible for company-wide business operations, Perry spent half of his 40-year career as a reporter and editor. He still considers himself a journalist at heart.*

## Twin peaks planet

In 2014, soaring inequality in advanced nations finally received the attention it deserved, as Thomas Piketty's "Capital in the Twenty-First Century" became a surprise (and deserving) best-seller. The usual suspects are still in well-paid denial, but, to everyone else, it is now obvious that income and wealth are more concentrated at the very top than they have been since the Gilded Age — and the trend shows no sign of letting up.

But that's a story about developments within nations, and, therefore, incomplete. You really want to supplement Piketty-style analysis with a global view, and when you do, I'd argue, you get a better sense of the good, the bad and the potentially very ugly of the world we live in.

So let me suggest that you look at a remarkable chart of income gains around the world produced by Branko Milanovic of the City University of New York Graduate Center (which I will be joining this summer). What Milanovic shows is that income growth since the fall of the Berlin Wall has been a "twin peaks" story. Incomes have, of course, soared at the top, as the world's elite becomes ever richer. But there have also been huge gains for what we might call the global middle — largely consisting of the rising middle classes of China and India.

And let's be clear: Income growth in emerging nations has produced huge gains in human welfare, lifting hundreds of millions of people out of desperate poverty and giving them a chance for a better life.

Now for the bad news: Between these twin peaks — the ever-richer global elite and the rising Chinese middle class — lies what we might call the valley of despond: Incomes have grown slowly, if at all, for people around the 20th percentile of the world income distribution. Who are these people? Basically, the advanced-country working classes. And although Milanovic's data only go up through 2008, we can be sure that this group has done even worse since then, racked by the effects of high unemployment, stagnating wages, and austerity policies.

Furthermore, the travails of workers in rich countries are, in important ways, the flip side of the gains above and below them. Competition from emerging-economy exports has surely been a factor depressing wages in wealthier nations, although probably not the dominant force. More important, soaring incomes at the top were achieved, in large part, by squeezing those below: by cutting wages, slashing benefits, crushing unions, and diverting a rising share of national resources to financial wheeling and dealing.



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Comment

Perhaps more important still, the wealthy exert a vastly disproportionate effect on policy. And elite priorities — obsessive concern with budget deficits, with the supposed need to slash social programs — have done a lot to deepen the valley of despond.

So who speaks for those left behind in this twin-peaked world? You might have expected conventional parties of the left to take a populist stance on behalf of

their domestic working classes. But mostly what you get instead — from leaders ranging from François Hollande of France to Ed Milliband of Britain to, yes, Barack Obama — is awkward mumbling. (Obama has, in fact, done a lot to help working Americans, but he's remarkably bad at making his own case.)

The problem with these conventional leaders, I'd argue, is that they're afraid to challenge elite priorities, in particular the obsession with budget deficits, for fear of being considered irresponsible. And that leaves the field open for unconventional leaders — some of them seriously scary — who are willing to address the anger and despair of ordinary citizens.

The Greek leftists who may well come to power there later this month are arguably the least scary of the bunch, although their demands for debt relief and an end to austerity may provoke a tense standoff with Brussels. Elsewhere, however, we see the rise of nationalist, anti-immigrant parties like France's National Front and the U.K. Independence Party in Britain — and there are even worse people waiting in the wings.

All of this suggests some uncomfortable historical analogies. Remember, this is the second time we've had a global financial crisis followed by a prolonged worldwide slump. Then, as now, any effective response to the crisis was blocked by elite demands for balanced budgets and stable currencies. And the eventual result was to deliver power into the hands of people who were, shall we say, not very nice.

I'm not suggesting that we're on the verge of fully replaying the 1930s. But I would argue that political and opinion leaders need to face up to the reality that our current global setup isn't working for everyone. It's great for the elite and has done a lot of good for emerging nations, but that valley of despond is very real. And bad things will happen if we don't do something about it.

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*Paul Krugman joined The New York Times in 1999 as a columnist on the Op-Ed Page and continues as professor of Economics and International Affairs at Princeton University.*

