

EAST OREGONIAN

Founded October 16, 1875

KATHRYN B. BROWN
Publisher

DANIEL WATTENBURGER
Managing Editor

JENNINE PERKINSON
Advertising Director

TIM TRAINOR
Opinion Page Editor

OUR VIEW

Podcast 101: An introduction

The era of the podcast is upon us. Technically, we've been living in it for years, but the epoch is really flowering right now.

For the uninitiated, podcasts are digital audio files that can be played on a computer or downloaded to a portable device, such as an iPod. (The word is a portmanteau derived from "pod" and "broadcast.")

They started mostly as just radio programs, helpfully recorded and saved so you could listen at a time (and if you have it on a portable player, a *place*) of your choosing. But the evolution over the last five years has quickly created an entire universe of programming created just for the medium. Podcasts now are a fantastic way to find entertainment, news, comedy, storytelling and all kinds of niche programming.

They went mainstream last year with "Serial," produced by NPR all-star "This American Life." The episodic podcast told the story of a 1999 murder and featured multiple interviews with the man convicted of the crime, still serving time in federal prison. It became a sensation, drawing millions of listeners who waited by their computers and smartphones for the latest release as they did for "Fibber McGee and Molly" in the way-back days.

Obviously, mediums of communication are rapidly evolving. We're all aware of how the Internet changed the dynamic for newspapers and news consumption. But it has changed things just as much for the more modern technologies of television and radio.

In January of this year, cable television viewership was down 12.7 percent from the year prior. It has long seemed clear that cable television would be phased out eventually, but that precipitous drop means extinction will come sooner than expected. Television, as we know it now, won't exist in a generation. That thing we arrange our living room around will be a computer, able to access every "I Love Lucy" episode and the live stream of the Trail Blazers game.

A la carte viewing will take over from didactic, corporate channels and TV schedules. iTunes already allows you to purchase the previous night's episode of Mad Men for \$2.99. HBO this month released an application where you can purchase their shows directly — no expensive cable contract needed.

That a la carte style fits podcasts perfectly. They are ready when you need them, so you can listen during your commute or while chopping veggies for dinner. You can find a few titles you like and never have to suffer through reruns.

Yet for all the modern convenience, there is something throwback classic about the tool. Production value is high on the best

ones, but it's a simple concept. Many of them bring back the free-flowing, longform interview style of the early talk show.

We're toying with some podcast ideas ourselves — audio letters to the editor, for instance, because who wouldn't listen to short chats with opinionated residents? So keep eye out for some headway in that arena.

Until then, there are many places to find some great podcasts online. iTunes may be the most user-friendly, but the Stitcher smartphone app is pretty slick, too. Search for a subject you may be interested in and plug in your headphones. Keep listening until you find something that knocks your socks off, because there is a lot out there that will.

A few of the edit board's favorite podcasts:

"The Gist" by Mike Pesca
In this short, roughly 20 minute daily podcast, Pesca is smart, funny and insightful. A longtime NPR reporter, he talks politics, sports and culture with equal parts acidity and humor. Pesca leads regular segments like "Is that bull****?" to put science and pseudoscience to the test. Want something sharp and fast to keep you entertained and informed about national and international issues? This is your podcast.

"A Tiny Sense of Accomplishment" by Sherman Alexie and Jess Walter

A 1-2 hour weekly podcast features the authors, longtime friends who grew up in eastern Washington. They talk literature and culture and break through the mystique of writing and art by reading from works in progress and expressing doubts about their own abilities and accomplishments — both large and tiny. It has a rural, Northwest-centric feel and Alexie is often devastatingly funny when talking about the literati, his rapidly-aging basketball physique and his reverence and razzing of tribal customs and culture.

"The Whistlestop" by John Dickerson

Political writer and historian John Dickerson visits the past with this weekly, bite-size podcast about presidential campaign history.

The success of this offering shows just how niche the podcast world can be, and also how enlightening and enjoyable it can be to sit and listen to a master of their subject. Dickerson is a great raconteur and remarkable researcher, who sheds light on everything from Ronald Reagan's Nashua Moment, to the very first presidential "campaign" of William Henry Harrison in 1840. Before then, campaigning was considered beneath the dignity of the office. How right they were!

It's a great crash course for the lessons and pitfalls awaiting the 2016 campaign.



©Taylor Jones - El Nuevo Día

caglecartoons.com

OTHER VIEWS

My father's secret

ATLANTIC CITY, N.J. — Dad had a twinkle in his eye. "Wait until you see this trick," he told me. "This secret. You're guaranteed to make money. I'll show you when we sit down at a table."

A blackjack table, he meant. Dad loves blackjack, especially with my three siblings and me, and we'll circle a casino floor for an hour just to find a dealer with enough empty seats for three or four or all five of us, so that we can have our own little cabal.

He inducted us into the game decades ago, in Vegas, and we continued to play over the years, because it was another excuse and another way to spend time together: our ritual, our refuge.

Before last weekend, we hadn't played in a long while. But for his 80th birthday, he got to choose the agenda for a weekend out of town. He picked blackjack. And he picked Atlantic City, because it was closer than Vegas and good enough.

It's funny how modest his desires can be, given what a grand life he's lived. He's the American dream incarnate, all pluck and luck and ferociously hard work and sweetly savored payoff.

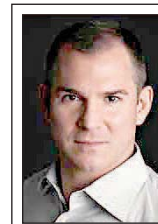
He grew up outside New York City, the oldest child of relatively poor immigrants from southern Italy. English was his second language.

He managed to be elected president of his high school over the blond quarterback from the right side of the tracks, then won a full scholarship to college. But first he had to persuade his parents that four years in New Hampshire at a place called Dartmouth could be as beneficial as an apprenticeship in a trade.

He married a grade-school sweetheart and stayed married to her through business school, a sequence of better jobs and a succession of bigger homes until she died at 61, just months shy of his retirement and of what were supposed to be their golden years. He eventually learned how to work the dishwasher, but never how to go more than a few minutes without pining for her.

It's the phase of his life since my mother that I find most compelling, because it's a tribute to what people are capable of on the inside, not the outside.

They can open up, soften up and step up. When Mom was around, my father's assigned role in the family was as the stern



FRANK BRUNI
Comment

disciplinarian — he played the warden, so that Mom could be our friend — and he was never forced to notice our hurts or attend to them, to provide succor and counsel in matters of the heart.

Then he had to, because he was the only parent left. He held my sister's hand through her divorce. He made sure to tell me and my partner that our place in the family was the same as any other couple's.

And his nine grandchildren, only two of whom my mother lived to meet, came to know him as their most fervent and forgiving cheerleader, ever vigilant, ever indulgent. Their birthdays are the sturdiest part of his memory. He never fails to send a gift.

A generous man from the start, he has somehow grown even more generous still, not just with items of measurable value but with those of immeasurable worth, like his time. His gestures. His emotions.

He has figured out what makes him happiest, and it's doing the little bit that he can to nudge the people he loves toward their own contentment. It's letting us know how much he wants us to get there. It's being obvious about all of that and, in the process, bringing a smile to our lips, a twinkle to our eyes.

Here's what happened, on this milestone birthday of his, when we finally found the right blackjack table and fanned out around him and it was time for his trick:

He asked each of us — his kids, our life mates — to stretch out a hand. And into every palm he pressed two crisp hundred-dollar bills, so that our initial bets would be on him and we would start out ahead of the game.

"See?" he said. "You're already a winner." That was it — his secret for blackjack, which is really his secret for life, and has nothing, obviously, to do with the money, which we're blessed enough not to need too keenly and he's blessed enough not to miss too badly.

It has to do with his eagerness, in this late stage of life, to make sure that we understand our primacy in his thoughts and his jubilation in our presence. It has to do with his expansiveness.

I pray I learn from his secret. I hope to steal it.

Frank Bruni has been Op-Ed columnist for The New York Times since June 2011.

He has figured out what makes him happiest, and it's doing the little bit he can to nudge the people he loves toward their own contentment.

YOUR VIEWS

Other western-themed options for Brownfield Park

A recent viewpoints column "Western theme at Brownfield Park" by Fritz Hill caused me to think once again of a common sight from the 1950s and 1960s on Pendleton's Main Street.

It was a pleasure to see Chief Clarence Burke and a salesman named Chlouie "Tilikum" Chloupek standing beneath the awning at Olyer-Howard Pontiac passing the time of day. I was too young to join in the conversation but I was old enough to appreciate the friendship and western theme represented by the two of them. Today that spot is Brownfield Park, a place to pause for a moment and perhaps to think of other impressions such as Reverend Dr. Earle Cochran manning the 20 mule team around the corner at the Pendleton Hotel, keeping the energy of the mules focused and providing truly astounding entertainment for all.

Folks, this is not entirely about tourism. An additional idea might be the use of historical photos designed to be weatherproof, which would record the significance of that place and its treasured memories.

Barbara Howard
Milton-Freewater

Pendleton considers options, has infrastructure problems

The Pendleton City Council has been "mulling" over issues recently. Here is a headline, "Pendleton council will keep mulling walkway ordinances". This headline also ties in with the city council mulling over the marijuana issue as well. The two issues are connected because the congregation of students on the Bedford Bridge is related to the sale of marijuana. There is now frenetic activity trying to come up with a plan for the sale of marijuana.

Here is another headline, "City mulls

funding options for crumbling infrastructure." City Manager, Robb Corbett, has declared that the city will hold "listening" sessions about the status of city streets as well as the construction of a new fire house. The city will soon decide whether to put the bond proposal on the Nov. 3 ballot.

Let's not forget Corbett not turning in the document to put the bond issue on the ballot last time. He placed the blame on his staff. He also blamed his staff for being off by \$300,000 for the Convention Center expansion project yet he recently got a raise in his salary to \$120,572.

It is clear why Pendleton has infrastructure problems. Look at the city's track record of spending starting with the unused Barnhart Rd., the purchase of 40 acres for the industrial park with no infrastructure, borrowing money to give to the 3 Peaks drone testing business that has yet to generate a profit, and having a \$2 million airport debt with no strategy to pay it off.

Lastly, the city council also mullied over the issue of decorating statues. The Jackson Sundown statue was made to look like a fool in honor of St. Patrick's Day. Fortunately, Chuck Sams wrote about the significance of Sundown to the Nez Perce nation and that he deserved respect for his achievements.

Today, the statue issue reared its head again regarding Brownfield Park. I would like to submit a few questions. How has the "Western theme" improved economic development in Pendleton for the last 10 years? Has it brought in jobs with a living wage? Why is Hermiston's economy bustling and our economy is stagnant?

The writer stated that "Let 'er Buck" should be changed to "Let 'er Reek." My suggestion is that his witty remark be applied to the placement of the plaqueless statue of a bordello madam on our Main St. because it's an embarrassment to the community.

Jerry Cronin
Pendleton

Unsigned editorials are the opinion of the East Oregonian editorial board of Publisher Kathryn Brown, Managing Editor Daniel Wattenburger, and Opinion Page Editor Tim Trainor. Other columns, letters and cartoons on this page express the opinions of the authors and not necessarily that of the East Oregonian.



LETTERS POLICY

The East Oregonian welcomes original letters of 400 words or less on public issues and public policies for publication in the newspaper and on our website. The newspaper reserves the right to withhold letters that address concerns about individual services and products or letters that infringe on the rights of private citizens. Submitted letters must be signed by the author and include the city of residence and a daytime phone number. The phone number will not be published. Unsigned letters will not be published. Send letters to Managing Editor Daniel Wattenburger, 211 S.E. Byers Ave. Pendleton, OR 97801 or email editor@eastoregonian.com.