

PARENTS TALK BACK

# Parenting through the pain

**Editor's note:** Aisha Sultan is away this week. This column originally appeared on Sept. 4, 2010.

A girlfriend gave birth last week to a healthy, 9-pound baby boy. In the process of getting an epidural to numb the pain of labor, she ended up with such excruciating spinal headaches that she was unable to rise from her bed to care for her newborn.

The chances of this happening — namely, leakage of spinal fluid from the dura, resulting in severe headaches — are only about 1 in 200. But when you are the one suffering, statistics are irrelevant.

She said she cried, she prayed, she bargained with God to relieve the blinding headaches. She had moments when she wondered if she would survive if the pain continued.

Certainly, pain is unavoidable in our lives. It comes in a rainbow of forms: emotional, like the anguish accompanying grief or the ache of loss and sadness; and physical, which can be latent and chronic, or acute and debilitating.

The worst pain can render us helpless and force us into submission. My pain is in my gut, and it comes in crashing waves. Fortunately, the pain does not appear very often; for the most part, I control it with diet and medication. But when it does hit, it can be paralyzing: keeping me up at night, making my hands shake. I focus on breathing until each tidal wave passes. It can be terrifying to have a part of your own body turn against you — twisting and burning with such force.

Like my friend and me, millions of parents struggle to deal with serious pain while trying to care for their children. The immediate thought that crosses a mother's mind at the first signs of an illness? "I don't have time for this." How can you keep up with a toddler, preschooler or tween when you can't get out of bed?

There is competing advice on how parents should navigate these waters, but the most crucial thing a parent in pain can do is to reach out for help. Let someone else take over the parenting reins when necessary. For the times when pain is immobilizing, there's little choice.

Needing help does not make us bad parents. Being able to accept an outstretched hand helps us recognize the value of our relationships. Our loved ones can provide not only moral and logistical support, but also new perspectives and nudges toward treatment. In the case of the new mother with the throbbing headaches, a friend came to her house and persuaded her to go to an emergency room. A medical procedure helped eliminate her pain within a few days.

Some parents in pain wear a disguise. They manage to go through the necessary motions, without losing their temper, and the child may be clueless as to the lengths taken to create the artificial peace. A part of us whispers that we should keep our lonely sacrifice a secret.

Some pain management sites say that while our instinct is to shelter our children from our pain, we should instead talk about it as honestly as possible. Use simple language, and speak calmly and quietly. Reassure children that it isn't their fault. Relate it to something in their own experience, such as falling off a bike. Tell them you will get better, even if you're not sure when or how.

If there is one thing mothers know, it is our capacity for strength. But through pain, we learn our capacity for humility. And when the pain subsides, it leaves us with a renewed appreciation for health.

Our children will inevitably experience their own hurts. Watching us deal with ours shows them how to handle their own.

I vividly remember my mother's moments of pain. When she was bedridden with asthma, laboring for each breath, I felt an ache in my own lungs. She did not have to say anything for me to recognize her struggle. I could not offer much, except to lie next to her periodically, bring her medicines and ask her if she wanted soup.

It was enough. Humans — including parents — need their pain to be recognized, ideally by someone who cares about the suffering.

Aisha Sultan is a St. Louis-based journalist who studies parenting in the digital age while trying to keep up with her tech-savvy children. Find her on Twitter: @AishaS.



AISHA SULTAN  
Parents talk back

# Ambitious doctor stirs up Pendleton politics

Dr. James A. Best was a well-known and respected doctor in Umatilla County the early 1900s, first in Weston and later in Pendleton. Dr. Best became a household name in 1913 when he launched his political career, beginning with the controversial gravity-fed water project to bring drinking water from Thornhollow Springs to the city.

As the water project was heading for the finish line, Dr. Best joined in the race for a seat on the commission. Best stirred up the current board when he charged the project's bank account was short more than \$33,000 and implied one or more of the commissioners was at fault. The race was fraught with mudslinging, and Best was accused of graft when a contractor working on the project said the candidate was supplying his own horse teams for hauling gravel and demanding to be paid more than the other haulers.

When Best was elected to the commission by a large margin, the other four members of the board submitted their resignations and requested a thorough audit of the books. Contrary to Best's allegations, the audit turned up a small (\$1.14) excess in the project account. The recalcitrant commissioners were lured back to their seats on the board by the fear that anti-gravity men would be appointed to the commission and tie up the project before it could be completed.

Dr. Best's detractors continued to try to dig up reasons why he should not be allowed to sit on the commission, citing his lack of U.S. citizenship, among other things, but the charges never seemed to stick. Best eventually gave up his seat on the water commission when he entered the race for mayor in 1915.

This campaign also was beset by strife; supporters of Best's main opponent, John Montgomery, dredged up accusations that Best was in cahoots with local bootleggers and purveyors of bawdy houses — accusations that Dr. Best did not deny. The *East Oregonian* weighed in against Dr. Best, running editorials and political cartoons depicting organized crime interests using every tactic (including corrupt polling practices) to secure their



EO file photo

candidate's victory. Special police contingents hovered at every polling station to prevent non-eligible voters from swaying the outcome. More than 500 people registered to vote the day of the election. In the end, after the heaviest voting ever seen in Pendleton to that point, Dr. Best was declared the winner, beating Montgomery by 232 votes, 1,197 to 965.

A near riot followed the close of the polls. One of Best's other opponents for the mayoralty, Dudley Evans, left the polling station in the Bowman Hotel to walk to city hall for the official results and was followed by a mostly quiet crowd, though some of Best's supporters began tossing about jeers and threats. After the crowd returned to the hotel, Dr. E.J. Sommerville stirred up the crowd and a short scuffle erupted in the lobby of the building, compelling officers to pull their guns to scatter the crowd. Dr. Sommerville joined up with another Best supporter, E.W. McComas, near the St. George Hotel and there ran afoul of Chief of Police Alex Manning and Officer Omar Stephens. Words led to blows and in the short melee Officer Stephens was knocked down. Chief Manning clubbed McComas over the head and took both McComas and Sommerville to the police station. The crowd reformed and attempted to force its way into city hall, but Chief Manning again drew his gun and club and, with a few well-placed blows, beat back the rioters. Several prominent citizens were able

to defuse the situation, but the crowd did not disperse until well after midnight.

Dr. Best next threw his hat into the ring for the Republican nomination for state representative in February of 1916, another potential step up for the aspiring politician. He polled a distant third of three candidates in the race.

Best's time as mayor was also quite contentious. On March 23, 1916, Best attended a boxing match at the Oregon Theater, a ten-round bout between Romeo Hagan and Ray McCarroll that lasted only into the second round. McCarroll was knocked to the canvas and Mayor Best stood up to announce the match would be the last to be staged in Pendleton during his tenure, as prize fights were against the law. In the furor that resulted from his announcement Best "hurled a profane epithet and obscene injunction" at one of his tormentors that resulted in the mayor being brought up on charges. A protracted legal battle ensued, ending a year later when the mayor suddenly changed his plea to guilty, paying a fine of \$15. He admitted he had broken the obscenity laws but claimed he was fighting the official charge of vagrancy; his own search of state statutes revealed it was the only law on the books he could be charged with on the complaint.

Mayor Best also ruffled feathers in the police department. One of his first official moves in January of 1916 was to appoint himself the head of the police commission, which until



Dr. Best

then had never been done. He immediately got on the wrong side of Chief of Police Thomas B. Gurdane, who claimed the mayor was undermining his authority and hampering his abilities to do his job. A protracted struggle between Mayor Best, a contingent of city councilors led by Claude Penland and Chief Gurdane built up over several months, ending in March of 1917 with Gurdane's abrupt resignation and a barrage of letters in the *East Oregonian* revealing a sampling of the mayor's alleged transgressions (including allowing illegal businesses to operate during Round-Up and splitting the profits). The city council meeting of March 9, 1917, blew up into charges and counter-charges and almost erupted into a brawl. But again, the expected firecrackers between the mayor and his detractors fizzled out when the planned "clipping of the lion's claws" during the March 21 council meeting didn't happen — the rebel councilors appeared to be afraid to speak up, much to the disappointment of a large crowd. Dr. Best served as Pendleton's mayor until October of 1917, when he joined the war effort as a captain in the medical corps.

Best returned to Pendleton, after serving almost two years in the military, to continue his duties as a doctor. Dr. Best was eventually elected to the Oregon legislature, serving one term as state representative in 1933 and three terms in the Senate, where his priorities included assistance for the elderly and agriculture. He retired in December 1944 due to ill health and died Aug. 18, 1946.

Renee Struthers is the Community Records Editor for the *East Oregonian*. See the complete collection of *Out of the Vault* columns at [eovault.blogspot.com](http://eovault.blogspot.com)

OUT OF THE VAULT



RENEE STRUTHERS  
Out of the vault

ODDS & ENDS

## Pastafarian gets to wear strainer in license photo

BOSTON (AP) — A Massachusetts agency is letting a woman who belongs to the Church of the Flying Spaghetti Monster wear a colander on her head in her driver's license photo after she cited her religious beliefs.

Lowell resident Lindsay Miller said Friday that she "absolutely loves the history and the story" of Pastafarians, whose website says has existed in secrecy for hundreds of years and entered the mainstream in 2005.

Miller says wearing the spaghetti strainer allows her to express her beliefs, like other religions are allowed to do.

A spokesman for the Massachusetts Registry of Motor Vehicles says policy does not permit head coverings or hats on license photos, but exceptions are made for religious reasons.

Lawyer Patty DeJuneas calls Pastafarianism a "secular religion that uses parody to make its point."

## Spirituality bookstore named Isis gets vandalized

ENGLEWOOD, Colo. (AP) — A Denver-area store called Isis Books & Gifts wants the world to know its name comes from the Egyptian goddess of healing and motherhood and it isn't run by terrorists.

Co-owner Jeff Harrison said Wednesday that the suburban Denver shop has been vandalized five times in the past year or so, probably by people who mistake the name for ISIS, one of the acronyms for the Islamic State terrorist group.

The latest vandalism came last weekend when a store sign was smashed after the terrorist attacks in Paris that killed 129 people.

The store sells books and gifts related to spirituality, religion and healing.

"Isis is the name of an Egyptian goddess, 3,500 years old at least, the goddess of women and healing and childbirth — basically the antithesis of everything the terrorists are about," he said.

Harrison suspects the vandals are "some ignorant people believing that somehow the terrorists have a store, a gift store, in the middle of Denver, Colorado."

The store has been around since 1980



Darrick Fauvel via AP

In this Nov. 12 photo provided by Darrick Fauvel, Lindsay Miller of Lowell, Mass., wears a spaghetti strainer to reflect her religious beliefs while holding her temporary driver license that also bears a photo of her wearing the colander.

under the Isis name. He and his wife, Karen, have owned it since 1997.

Harrison said he's heard from other businesses with "Isis" in their names, asking if they planned to change. He tells them no.

"For now, we are definitely sticking with the name," he said.

The store has not suffered from the name confusion.

"Business has been fine. Actually on the uptick," Harrison said.

## Officials crack case of smuggled beer disguised as Pepsi

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates (AP) — Customs officials in Saudi Arabia say they've cracked a case — and then some — of smugglers trying to bring illicit cans of beer through the kingdom by disguising them as Pepsi.

In a statement, customs officials say they intercepted 48,000 cans of beer moving through the al-Batha border crossing with the United Arab Emirates.

In video posted Wednesday on Twitter, the customs officials show an officer using a box cutter to open a wrapped 24-pack of the fake Pepsi only to find the green-and-white

Heineken cans beneath it.

Drinking or possessing alcohol is a criminal offense in the ultra-conservative Sunni kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

## Man arrested in soap/cocaine mix-up sues in Pennsylvania

ALLENTOWN, Pa. (AP) — A New York man who spent 29 days in jail after Pennsylvania state police mistook homemade soap for cocaine has filed a lawsuit.

The *(Allentown) Morning Call* reports Alexander Bernstein says he had to pay thousands of dollars in court costs and missed Thanksgiving with his toddler before the charges were dropped. He's seeking damages exceeding \$150,000. State troopers and the field test manufacturer are named in the suit filed last week.

Bernstein was a passenger in a Mercedes-Benz police pulled over for speeding near Allentown in November 2013.

Troopers smelled marijuana, searched the car and found packages the driver said was homemade soap, but tested as cocaine. Lab tests later showed it was soap.

The driver was charged with marijuana possession and speeding.

State police declined to comment.

## Lawsuit: Amusement park lets chimp smoke cigarettes

NEW ORLEANS (AP) — An animal rights group is suing to get a chimpanzee named Candy out of an amusement park where, it says, she smokes cigarettes and is given soft drinks instead of water.

The federal lawsuit says Candy is in an inadequate cage at the Baton Rouge park, and should be moved to a sanctuary.

The Animal Legal Defense Fund sued Tuesday in Baton Rouge on behalf of two women who have campaigned to get Candy moved from the Dixie Landin' park. The lawsuit says the women have seen visitors throw lit cigarettes into Candy's cage for the chimp to smoke.

Attorney Carter Dillard says the lawsuit is the first filed under a new federal rule that requires captive chimps to get the same protection as wild chimps.

Park owner Sam Haynes' attorney, Joanne Treadway, said Wednesday she has not had time to read the lawsuit.