

## Quick takes

### Pendleton considers professional communicator

Where's the money going to come from to hire the person? Why can't the city clerk do it or have one of the council persons or mayor be the public information officer?

— Levi Raber

No don't waste the money. Fix the streets, they are bad. I have never seen them this bad in the 65 years that I have been in Pendleton.

— Millie-Colin White

### EOCI crews outside prison?

The prisoners already do a lot for the community, why not allow this too? They have all committed crimes, but there are also some that are legitimately trying to change their lives.

— Hannah Rogers

It is interesting to see how many like the idea of slave labor. Prisoners should stay in prison until released.

— Christopher Noyes

### Umatilla County overweight

Duh. This town keeps opening cigarette shops and convenience stores like mad. How many fast food joints, cigarette shops and alcohol-related shops does this small town need?

— Anita Crawford

*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.*

# Age-restricted living in the desert

By ELLIOTT SILBERBERG  
*Writers on the Range*

Last summer, my wife and I visited our friends, Randy and Abby, at their desert home outside Tucson. They live in a retirement community with age-restriction covenants. Eighty percent of homeowners have to be over 55 years old and the remaining 20 percent at least 40. Anyone under 19 is out of luck.

I found the rules unsettling, though Randy, 72, and Abby, 65, didn't seem to mind. I realize youth can be annoying, that life is noisier and riskier with youngsters present, and that the elderly may prefer the company of their peers. Still, it seemed extreme that seniors would entirely exclude the occasional child.

One difference was clear that first morning. I stepped outside into a neighborhood that felt ghostly. Many residents travel during summer, but even homes with open garage doors looked clammy with the blinds drawn. In an hour, only a man walking and one slow-going jogger passed by. Conspicuous by their absence, there were no mothers pushing strollers, tweens on skateboards or high schoolers.

The covenants didn't trouble our hosts. Randy had pals at a bicycle club. Abby loved to watch birds. City lights and a generational mix were close in Tucson. I respected their choice, but it wasn't for me.

I took early morning walks in the desert, where more was going on. August monsoons spiffed the Sonora up. Yellow and red flowers jutted, kaleidoscopic-like, from cactus. Quail fluttered about, their chicks in tow. I spotted cactus wren, hummingbirds, woodpeckers and a baby hawk on a branch. Javelina tracks marked a dry wash and a

school of tadpoles squiggled down a rivulet. The not-so-barren desert was my balm for the absence of what I think makes a vital community.

Randy and Abby love living in the desert, too. They were protective of a tarantula we tiptoed around in the driveway. Abby excitedly checked daily for bobcat tracks on top of the patio wall. The desert keeps them company as much as their friends do. It was exhilarating to turn in at night imagining our nocturnal neighbors, the diamondback rattlers, jackrabbits, gray foxes, packrats and great horned owls swooping, slithering and prowling around. I considered how thrilled kids would be to enjoy that sensation, too.

I started mulling over the immensity of time, because the Arizona desert — eons ago a shallow sea — has that effect on me. The vast landscape invites perspective, in every sense. It was consoling. It's easy to see how seniors love living in that meditative dimension. Yet I couldn't help feel that it was selfish to leave younger generations out.

These adults-only communities are multiplying. Water permitting, they are extending from Tucson to Phoenix, a residential corridor that offers a short drive from shopping malls and urgent-care clinics. After business hours, old-timers can find quiet in their air-conditioned cocoons.

Tucson-born author Edward Abbey, who supposedly was interred not far from us in the Cabeza Prieta Desert, came to mind. Abbey called the wilderness "the only thing left worth saving" and despised the mass incursion of humans into the

wild. Perversely, I bet the cantankerous writer would approve of these villages, arguing that places that don't allow human reproduction quicken what may be the best outcome for the rest of life on Earth: the extinction of man.

It's Nature that offers a saner alternative. Consider the giant saguaro we paused under one scorching afternoon. The holes in its

arms were pecked by birds nesting there. Nature had arranged that a plant could serve as a cactus-condo for an entirely different species to raise its young. Meanwhile, back at the housing development with

the strict Homeowners Association rules, humankind was forbidding its own to share living quarters unless you were of a certain age.

The days zipped by. Soon we had to go. Boarding our plane, my wife helped a young mother with her baby. We ended up in the same row. My wife held the baby as the mother settled in. I goofed around with him as he tried to stick my fingers in his mouth. Then the mother put him on her lap and out popped her breast. I took a discreet peek. The baby was in seventh heaven, sucking and falling asleep at the same time.

The mother smiled as the plane gained altitude, and my wife looked serene. I relaxed into my seat. I meant our gracious friends and their neighbors no ill will. Thank goodness, though, life was starting to feel whole again.

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## Adults-only communities are multiplying.

# Dinklage and Dragons: Will Tyrion win the Game of Thrones?

I had many questions for Peter Dinklage.

I wanted to know how he feels about being the first dwarf heartthrob. I was curious why his 4-year-old daughter is named Zelig. I wondered what it was like to elope to Vegas.

But first, I had to ask about the dragons.

The "Game of Thrones" star is such a big animal lover that he's a vegetarian who eats tofu masquerading as meat in the carnivorous, libidinous show.

So now that the global hit — Season 6 starts in two weeks — has brought his character, the wil and louche "halfman" and "perverse little imp" Tyrion Lannister, into the sun-baked realm of Daenerys Targaryen, was it fun to act with the dragons? Or were they temperamental divas who chewed — or incinerated — the scenery?

"They're not real," he says, looking at me solemnly with his big, droopy blue eyes.

Whaaaaa? I am shocked, given the CIA-level secrecy around the HBO show — which has sometimes confiscated extras' cellphones and this year declined to provide the press with episodes in advance — that Dinklage would let such a huge spoiler slip out. (On a less top-secret note, HBO plans to make a comedy pilot inspired by my book "Are Men Necessary?")

"The dragons are just a projection," Dinklage says in his melodious baritone. "Ah, working with something that is not there. Sometimes I work with some actors who aren't fully there. The guys in the visual effects department show you pre-visualizations, pre-vis. It used to be just storyboards, but now they're really well done on computers, and you see the whole scene with you and the animated dragons before you do it, so you get that in your head. It's neat. It's cool. I like it."

This season of "Game of Thrones" will be the first to venture beyond George R.R. Martin's books, like the medieval globe with unexplored territories labeled, "Here be dragons."

Season 5 ended with Tyrion offering to be Dick Cheney to Emilia Clarke's Daenerys and to help her conquer and rule the Seven Kingdoms.

"You can't compare her to Eleanor Roosevelt, I suppose," Dinklage says. "She's so much cooler."

I ask him about his comment to Entertainment Weekly that, given the propensity for very sudden deaths on the show, the pair could "go out in a blaze of glory — boom, boom, Bonnie and Clyde." Would he prefer that to the Iron Throne?

"I think they should dismantle the Iron Throne," he replies saucily. "Smelt it down and give it to the poor. It's very uncomfortable. They would have let the queen of England sit down on it, but she didn't. But, you know, she's an elderly lady, and having sat on it myself, I could understand why. It's made of swords. Sometimes your bum gets stuck for a second."



MAUREEN DOWD  
Comment

Does he ever think about the show in terms of modern politics?

"You think Trump will start using trial by combat?" he asks slyly.

I point out that Tyrion and Trump both felt compelled to dispel doubts about their manhood.

"Yeah, that was a classy debate, huh?" the actor laughs. "Wow. Life and TV are becoming like the big crossover episode."

(Dan Weiss, one of the "Game of Thrones" creators and writers, says Trump reminds him of Hodor, a gigantic dimwit who answers every question with one word: his name.)

I'm sitting with Dinklage, who's sporting a vest over a black hoodie, black jeans, Blundstones and a mop of uncombed hair, in the Blue Room atop the chic Wythe Hotel in Williamsburg, Brooklyn. He has Patti Smith's latest memoir with him. His idols are the cool people who don't strive to be cool — Smith, Lou Reed, Tobias Wolff and Sam Shepard.

The 46-year-old remarks that he lived five blocks away back in the '90s, after Bennington College, when he was trying to make it as an actor and supporting himself with a daytime office job.

Dink, as his friends call him, was a frontman and cornet player for a band called Whizzy and he even boasts a scar from a wild night at CBGB's. Band members wrapped themselves up in Bubble Wrap, handed out candy and played a song called "Dwarven Funk Rap," where Dinklage ran around the stage yelling "I'm no dwarf!"

"I was pretty angry back then," he says.

He comments on all the hipsters with beards, even though he has one, and all the tall buildings.

"It looks like Miami," he says, staring out the panoramic window. "Even though I've never been to Miami. That's not the life I live." (Well, he has explored the Night's Watch Wall and Meereen, and that's more impressive.)

"It was very toxic out here then," he says. "The conspiracy theory was that they had all these spice factories to cover up the smell of the toxic chemicals. Everything smelled of nutmeg. It was rough going."

The 4-foot-5 Dinklage has said his condition, short limbs caused by a genetic mutation, made for a "tricky" adolescence, growing up in Brookside, New Jersey, the son of an insurance salesman and music teacher, and going to a Catholic prep school full of jocks.

When I called his close friend Lena Headey, who plays his conniving, incestuous sister, Cersei, in "Game of Thrones," she said that his adolescence "must have been hideous." But Dinklage downplays it now.

"It's called hormones," he says. "That's why in certain cultures, they send teenagers out into the woods for periods of time."

He married the theater director Erica Schmidt in 2005 in Vegas. "I was going there for a charity event," he recalls. "And then while



Peter Dinklage attends the season six premiere of "Game Of Thrones" at TCL Chinese Theatre on Sunday in Los Angeles.

we were there, we just decided to do it. It was a bit lonely. We got a VHS videocassette of the wedding that no one will ever see, that we've buried in a box deep beneath the earth's core."

When Dinklage first told his grandmother that he was going to play Tyrion Lannister, she thought he said "interior banister." (His other grandmother was "sort of a Follies girl" who acted in silent film shorts.) "Game of Thrones" has since made him internationally recognizable.

And unlike others on the show, Dinklage can't simply change his hair and clothes and blend in. So he's a target for every crazy "Game of Thrones" superfan (like me) in addition to those who stare, taunt or touch him for luck — a superstition about dwarves.

The very private and low-key actor doesn't have a personal publicist, and he's not on social media. The Internet falsely spread the word that his daughter's name is Zelig. "I love that Woody Allen movie," he says, "but why would you name your child after that character?"

When he's out in New York walking with his hound dog and his daughter — whose name he prefers to keep out of the press — he's bombarded with people snapping his picture, sometimes surreptitiously, which irritates him, and sometimes nonchalantly, which surprises him.

"The other day this teenage girl walked right up to me and put her arm around me and took a selfie and said 'Thanks' and just kept walking," he says. "It was almost forgivable because she

saw nothing wrong with it. But if you're sneaking pictures, you know you're not doing something great. Oftentimes, they don't want to meet you; they just want proof that they met you. I was watching that Steve Jobs movie on a plane the other day and I was like, 'You started a monster, man.'"

A team of mathematicians recently did a network analysis of 107 characters in Martin's sprawling epic and declared Tyrion the true protagonist.

"Tyrion is the character that everyone loves," says Nikolaj Coster-Waldau, who plays his brother, Jaime Lannister. "I think he's clearly fighting the just cause. Even when he kills his father, you instantly understand."

David Benioff, the other creator and writer, thinks Tyrion has the most modern voice and relatable perspective. "We all love Jon Snow, but most of us aren't heroes," Benioff said. "Tyrion is a bit cynical and capable of breaking out of that cynicism."

He added that there is now "a lot of Peter in Tyrion," and said they have drawn on his teasing friendships with Headey and Conleth Hill, the Irish actor who plays the eunuch, Lord Varys.

When I noted that Tyrion and Varys have a Humphrey Bogart-Claude Rains thing going, Benioff replied, "That is not accidental."

I asked him if Tyrion, the favorite character of Martin, President Barack Obama, me and most fans, was unkillable.

"No one is immortal," he replied.

Dinklage laughs at that and says of Benioff and Weiss: "Oh, I try

to keep them in my good graces, those two. Believe me, I keep them filled with liquor and joy."

I mention that the Internet overflows with comments about how sexy he is, to which Dinklage drolly replies, "Hey, where were they when I was in high school? Too late, ladies."

He became the first dwarf to play a romantic lead in a movie when he starred in the 2003 indie hit "The Station Agent." Even with Coster-Waldau and Kit Harington (Jon Snow) as competition, Dinklage's debonair reputation continues to grow.

"I don't think he's adjusting very well to being a sex symbol," Coster-Waldau said. "He doesn't like any fuss about him."

Emilia Clarke testified: "His charm is absolutely irresistible. My mom came to the set once. She's very English. I have never seen that woman blush until I turned around and she was talking to Peter. His wit is quicker than Tyrion's."

Sophie Turner, who plays Sansa Stark, seconded that: "I'm lucky to be married to Peter Dinklage onscreen. I wish I was married to Peter Dinklage. He oozes natural sex appeal. Just watching him, I learned how to act with my eyes."

Dinklage is a prankster who likes to goose up the mood by shouting out ridiculous things or making cracks right before they call "Action."

He admits he was surprised by the "huge uproar about Sansa's character being raped" by her next husband, the loathsome Ramsay Bolton.

"You just love these characters and you don't want to see anything bad happen to them," he says. "But the same people are OK with all these prostitutes on the show being killed and raped."

Asked about the anger the series has provoked among some for its treatment of women, Dinklage replies: "I love strong reactions to things in what we do for a living. If it doesn't boil the blood, especially in this genre, then we're not doing our jobs."

Dinklage has long said he did not want to be a role model or spokesman for dwarves. (Dwarf is the term he uses, or dwarfy, as an adjective.) He made an exception when he talked about Martin Henderson, a British dwarf who was tossed in a bar, when he accepted his Golden Globe in 2012.

Though he refused leprechaun parts early in his career, he now hopes to make a movie about a leprechaun called "O' Lucky Day." "It's a very different take on it," he says.

As we leave, I reflexively repeat my standard goodbye line for women and men who are very charming in interviews.

"Thanks," I say. "You're a doll." He shoots me a look and I freeze.

But then he smiles. "I know," he says, as he saunters off with his backpack.

Maureen Dowd, winner of the 1999 Pulitzer Prize for distinguished commentary, became a columnist on *The New York Times Op-Ed page* in 1995.