

EAST OREGONIAN
Founded October 16, 1875

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OUR VIEW

Passenger rail should come first

Passengers and freight have always competed for precedence on rail lines. For 40 years, passenger trains have come first. Now that is being challenged. The U.S. Surface Transportation Board will be deciding whether to accept the argument of freight railroads, which argue that Amtrak's tacit priority on rail lines should be changed.

The Wall Street Journal's story last week on this case describes the conflicting worlds. Amtrak ridership is up markedly. With fossil fuels in decline, freight lines are struggling and need an advantage.

The Surface Transportation Board will likely parse this dispute

five different ways. But at the end of the day, its decision will be about America's future. And one way of describing that is that we must nurture and generate new mass transportation solutions. That imperative is driven by growing traffic congestion and the need for energy conservation as it relates to climate change.

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Put simply, rail passengers replace drivers and vehicles on the highway. Freight trains travel more slowly than passenger trains. On-time performance is everything for the Amtrak rail passenger network.

Giving freight trains precedence would be a giant step in the wrong direction.

Culture corner

Raymond Carver is certainly among the giants of Oregon literature.

Though he grew up in Yakima and spent much of his life in the state to our north, he was born in the Oregon mill town of Clatskanie and we claim him as one of our own. Many of his stories and poems are quintessential Cascadia.

Last week Carver would have turned 78 — had he not died of lung cancer at the height of his powers at age 50, after a lifetime of heavy smoking, hard living and bad luck.

Biographies of Carver, who reinvented the short story genre for a modern audience, have always leaned heavily on his dirt-poor childhood, his alcoholic and out-of-work father and his exasperated and possibly unhinged mother. It helped explain who Carver came to be — kind but difficult, genius but dangerous,

prone to alcoholism, depression and bankruptcy.

But last week, on the occasion of Raymond's birthday, his brother James Carver wrote a piece for website Electric Literature that didn't quite flip the narrative,



but further informed it. Certainly family members can be unreliable storytellers when it comes to their own family legacy, and the piece should be read critically.

But James Carver's memories of the Carver clan are insightful and enlightening. It adds another dimension to a man who, James correctly notes, has had his life "sliced, diced, analyzed and dissected" over the past decades. The piece also includes never-before-seen family photos that will intrigue any Carver fan. You can read it here: <http://bit.ly/1VihR32>.

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.



OTHER VIEWS

The ghosts of old sex scandals

We are now being forced to relive the decades-old sex scandals of Bill Clinton, as Donald Trump tries desperately to shield and inoculate himself from well-earned charges of misogyny.

I say, if we must go there, let's go all the way. Let's do this dirty laundry, as Kelly Rowland, former *Destiny's Child* member, once crooned.

First, multiple women have accused Clinton of things ranging from sexual misconduct to rape. Paula Jones famously brought a sexual harassment case against Clinton. The case was dismissed, but on appeal, faced with the prospect of having to testify under oath, Clinton settled the case out of court.

Clinton has maintained that he had inappropriate sexual relationships with only two women: Gennifer Flowers, a model and actress, and Monica Lewinsky, a White House intern.

Clinton was impeached on charges of perjury and obstruction of justice in connection with his affair with Lewinsky.

Let's just say this: Clinton was as wrong as the day is long for his affairs. There is no way around that.

But the problem was that many of the men condemning the beam in Clinton's eye were then shown to have one in their own.

Newt Gingrich, who was so incredibly disliked that he stepped down not only from his speakership in the House of Representatives, but also from Congress altogether, later admitted cheating on his first wife (with whom he discussed divorce terms while she was in the hospital for cancer) and on his second (that cheating occurred while Gingrich led the Clinton impeachment proceedings).

Into the void created by Gingrich's departure stepped speaker-to-be Robert L. Livingston of Louisiana.

But, as *The Chicago Tribune* reported at the time:

"On the eve of the House debate to impeach President Clinton for lying about sex with Monica Lewinsky, House Speaker-elect Bob Livingston told his Republican colleagues Thursday night that he had strayed from his marriage and had adulterous affairs. Only a few hours after Livingston decided to proceed with the impeachment debate despite U.S. forces being engaged in hostilities in Iraq, he admitted in a GOP caucus that he had 'on occasion' committed infidelity and in 'doing so nearly cost me my marriage and family.'"

And Livingston wasn't the only Republican moving to impeach Clinton for lying about a sexual affair who would be forced out of the shadows for his own sexual scandals.

Dennis Hastert, who became speaker in 1999, pleaded guilty last year to illegally structuring bank withdrawals in order to pay what prosecutors contend was hush money to a man Hastert had sexually abused as a child.



CHARLES BLOW
Comment

Indeed, as *The Times* reported in April, federal prosecutors asserted that Hastert "molested at least four boys, as young as 14, when he worked as a high school wrestling coach decades ago," before the Clinton impeachment hearings.

Henry Hyde, chairman of the House Judiciary Committee, who *The Times* reported had raised "the specter of the Watergate era" when discussing Clinton, admitted to a journalist during the proceedings that he'd had a five-year affair with a married woman decades earlier.

Dan Burton, House Government Reform and Oversight Committee chairman, who *The Washington Post* described as "one of President Clinton's most persistent and combative critics," was forced to admit that he had a secret love child.

And, just last week, *The Times* reported: "Kenneth W. Starr, the former independent counsel who delivered a report that served as the basis for President Bill Clinton's impeachment in 1998, was removed as president of Baylor University on Thursday after an investigation found the university mishandled accusations of sexual assault against football players."

The sweep of karma and the level of hypocrisy is just staggering.

No wonder nearly two-thirds of Americans opposed Clinton's impeachment, and he emerged from the impeachment with record-high approval ratings.

Now, Trump wants to dip into this muck again, even though he has had his own extramarital affair.

Indeed, nine days after Clinton admitted his affair with Lewinsky, Trump seemed to support him and find kinship, saying, "Paula Jones is a loser, but the fact is that she may be responsible for bringing down a president indirectly."

Trump also mused on the prospect of his own run for public office, saying, "Can you imagine how controversial that'd be? You think about him with the women. How about me with the women? Can you imagine ..."

I can, actually. Last week, when Trump lawyer Michael Cohen was confronted on CNN with Trump's defenses of Clinton during the sex scandals, Cohen responded that at the time Trump was simply trying to "protect a friend." And yet, this is the same camp lambasting Hillary Clinton as an "enabler" for trying to protect a husband?

It's all incredibly distasteful, yes, but it also doesn't jibe. And, aside from the unshakable feeling that there is something tragically off about using a husband's philandering as a weapon against a betrayed wife, I also doubt the public will have much stomach for these stories, just as it didn't in the 1990s.

Dirty laundry, done.

Charles M. Blow is The New York Times's visual Op-Ed columnist.

YOUR VIEWS

Questions on Pendleton's budget

I realize after attending the current budget meetings for upcoming fiscal year that a lot of work goes into the process. There were however, a couple of concerns.

The Umatilla County Sheriff's Office, for example, has been requesting additional patrol officers, more boots on the ground, plus new vehicles, and is finally making that happen. The Pendleton Police Department, after finally getting its patrol officer numbers up to acceptable levels, is now reversing course and again, after last year's decrease, is again requesting another decrease in patrol officers and an increase in administrative personnel,

another lieutenant. With the looming disaster in unfunded PERS liabilities impacting our budget, the timing for an increase in personnel spending seems counterproductive.

Then there is the city transportation program. With Kayak, CAPECO, Clearview and the taxi company all providing service, I think it's time to eliminate direct services by the city and let the professionals handle the job, as the consultants pointed to the inefficiency and high cost of the city operation.

Central Services Charge, significant in every department, exceeds our street maintenance. Exactly what is this? I hope these are addressed before the budget is approved.

Rick Rohde
Pendleton

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.



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