

Quick takes

Japanese restaurants come to Umatilla County

So cool. I've been saying for years that Pendleton needs a sushi restaurant. I do wish they would get some real chopsticks though. The cheap disposal kind doesn't fit the nice atmosphere.

— Lisa Bork

Don't really know if I like sushi but excited to try something new!

— Kelli Stewart

I wondered when people would get tired of hamburgers.

— Scott Hernandez

State looks at new ways to plug budget holes

The people voted no (on Measure 97), so now they want to force the tax on the people anyways?

— Richard Rockwell

Really, why do we vote if they don't understand people don't want it?

Maria Richards

Alkio celebrates her 100th

She was my home economics teacher. She was the one that got me interested in sewing and cooking.

— Debbie Steinnerd

I still remember my eighth grade class, you were always smiling Mrs. Alkio.

— Dianne Kaser McEwen

Tweets from the president-elect

The cast and producers of Hamilton, which I hear is highly overrated, should immediately apologize to Mike Pence for their terrible behavior.

—@realDonaldTrump

I watched parts of Saturday Night Live last night. It is a totally one-sided, biased show — nothing funny at all. Equal time for us?

—@realDonaldTrump

The only bad thing about winning the presidency is that I did not have the time to go through a long but winning trial on Trump U. Too bad!

—@realDonaldTrump

I have always had a good relationship with Chuck Schumer. He is far smarter than Harry Reid and has the ability to get things done. Good news!

—@realDonaldTrump

I canceled today's meeting with the failing @nytimes when the terms and conditions of the meeting were changed at the last moment. Not nice.

—@realDonaldTrump

Happy Thanksgiving to everyone. We will, together, MAKE AMERICA GREAT AGAIN!

—@realDonaldTrump

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.

Ursula K. Le Guin's prophetic vision

Last year The New Yorker zeroed in on the natural hazards of our Oregon coast in Kathryn Schulz's "The earthquake that will devastate the Pacific Northwest."

Maybe it is appropriate that the magazine, in their Oct. 17 issue, now focuses not on a force of nature but a voice for humanity.

"The Fantastic Ursula K. Le Guin" by Lisa Phillips offers an intimate portrayal of the only living author — with Philip Roth — in the Library of America series.

Le Guin first enchanted readers in the 1960s and never stopped. Among the most honored of America's authors, she lives in Portland and Cannon Beach. "We believe she is one of America's finest authors and a bold and honest voice in the entire field of literature," Cannon Beach Book Company's co-owner Maureen Dooley-Sroufe said this week.

At the Cannon Beach Book Company a request for Ursula K. Le Guin's writing results in a "walking tour" of the store.

"We start in science-fiction/fantasy, head over to children's books, on to poetry, then to essays and finally Pacific Northwest Regional books," Dooley-Sroufe said. "Ursula K. Le Guin is the only author whose books we feature in this way — it reflects the great diversity and breadth of her work.

"She is a part-time resident of Cannon Beach, and we delight in knowing that she may be writing, relaxing or strolling to the beach right now," Dooley-Sroufe added.

Watt Childress, co-owner of Jupiter's Rare & Used Books, praised Le Guin in an interview with the *Gazette's* Erick Bengel.

Le Guin's work, Childress said, "rises to the level of epic myth that burrows deeply into our consciousness ... She speaks from a place and a position that commands respect."

Le Guin's books are magical, not necessarily cheerful hocus-pocus, but with cloudy edges teased into being by a prankish wizard.

In "Unlocking the Air," the author warns: "There is no 'after' in 'happily ever after.'"

But "after" is what Le Guin pursues, our ability to re-invent, re-create ourselves: "We can tell the story over, we can tell the story till we get it right."

Imagining the future

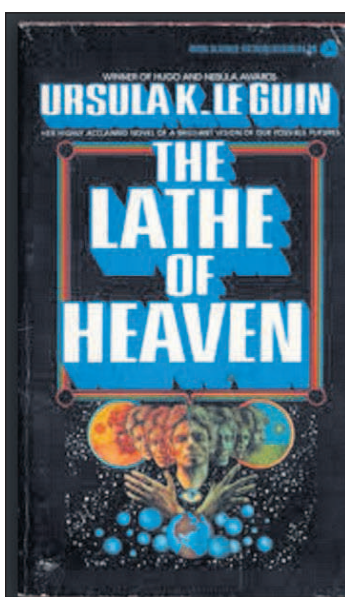
In The New Yorker's profile, Phillips draws a biographical arc describing a young Le Guin as an outsider uncomfortable with the cultural cliques of the 1950s and '60s, "never at home with establishments of any kind."

As a young writer Le Guin acutely felt the closed society of both literary and male-dominated



Submitted photo

Filmmaker Arwen Curry, producer and director of "The Worlds of Ursula K. Le Guin," with the author in Cannon Beach.



elites, each to stymie her and then shape her own genre-defining path.

A frustrating period of rejections gave way to a venture into a new genre.

"I just didn't know what to do with my stuff until I stumbled into science fiction and fantasy," Le Guin tells Phillips. "And then, of course, they knew what to do with it."

The author's success was immediate. Science fiction opened Le Guin up to writing not only about aliens, but from "alien" points of view: "composing the political manifesto of an ant, wondering what it would be like if humans had the seasonal sexuality of birds, imagining love in a society in which a marriage involves four people."

The author, through her characters, was questioning and redefining the modern gender experience.

At home in Oregon

Le Guin slings wicked puns, to wit, her short story title "Ether, OR: For the Narrative Americans."

The story, like a significant

part of her work, pays homage to the state where her great-grandfather arrived from California in 1873.

And who could be more of an archetypal Oregonian superhero than George Orr, the man who can stop an earthquake, in "The Lathe of Heaven"?

When on the coast, Le Guin tells The New Yorker, she "does the stupid, ordinary stuff that has to be done that you can't let go." That also includes participation in local literary activities, including the 2013 program "Get Lit at the Beach."

For a glimpse behind the front door, visit Le Guin's blog, where she provides rants, cat photos, poetry, even rules of the game "Fibble," where "the only words allowed are words that (so far as anybody there knows) do not exist."

"Doing fine but not doing very much," Le Guin posted in September.

A late October health update (Le Guin suffers from a congenital heart murmur that landed her in the hospital): "Can't hang from branches yet, but am real good at moving slo o o w l y ..."

A passionate voice

We don't often think of courage as a literary trait — Le Guin reminds us otherwise.

"The measure of a civilization may be the individual's ability to speak the truth," Le Guin proclaimed in the 1976 essay "Language of the Night."

Le Guin encourages us to be masters of our own destiny, like George Orr, whose dreams can alter reality.

Le Guin celebrates the power of imagination and the individual's freedom to express it.

"Don't worry about control! Freedom is what you're working toward!" she writes.

The unconscious mind is "the wellspring of health, imagination, creativity," to be expressed

freely and without restraint.

The author's voice resonated in a passionate speech at the 2014 National Book Awards:

"Right now, I think we need writers who know the difference between production of a market commodity and the practice of an art," Le Guin said. "We'll need writers who can remember freedom — poets, visionaries — realists of a larger reality."

In an age of self-censorship and media-bashing from right and left, Le Guin provides inspiration for the creative voice in all of us.

"We believe she is one of America's finest authors and a bold and honest voice in the entire field of literature," Dooley-Sroufe said. "Her support of authors, readers and the art of creative writing is legendary."

Sometimes politics jump from abstraction to "larger reality" in a jolting manner. Le Guin, like her characters, seems to possess the power to conjure a reality eerily similar to our own.

I wonder if I'm the only one reflecting on this chilling opening to Le Guin's "Dispossessed":

"There was a wall," Le Guin writes. "It did not look important. ... But the idea was real. It was important. For seven generations there had been nothing in the world more important than that wall. Like all walls it was ambiguous, two-faced. What was inside it and what was outside it depended upon which side of it you were on."

In the most highly charged political atmosphere in history, Le Guin offers a steady vision into our world — internal and external — as timely as when she first put pen to page.

R.J. Marx is editor of the *Seaside Signal* and *Cannon Beach Gazette*, sister papers of the *East Oregonian*.

The many problems with grazing

The Department of Interior recently released its Integrated Rangeland Fire Management Strategy whose goal is to reduce range fires in sagebrush ecosystems critical to sage grouse.

The plan correctly identifies that cheatgrass, a highly flammable exotic annual, is a major threat to the bird, as well as the sagebrush ecosystems.

However, the plan failed to acknowledge that livestock grazing is the major factor facilitating the spread of cheatgrass and targeted grazing as a fire prevention solution is a delusion for reasons I'll discuss below.

Even if livestock grazing were effective, there is collateral damage to sagebrush ecosystems that is typically ignored. Worse, livestock grazing has multiple other impacts on sage grouse at all stages of life cycle that are virtually impossible to eliminate.

Cheatgrass, as an annual, whose seeds can remain viable in the soil for years, can burn repeatedly, even every summer, and maintain itself on the site. Native perennial grasses and sagebrush, by contrast, historically burned at long fire rotations, often up to hundreds of years. They cannot survive frequent repeated burns.

One of the factors that protects native grasses from cheatgrass invasion are soil crusts. These crusts cover the soil surface in the spaces between the native bunchgrasses. They make it difficult for cheatgrass seeds to become established. However, when the soil crust is broken and disturbed by livestock (or other activities like ATVs) across the landscape, it provides an

empty niche for cheatgrass to become established.

In addition to facilitating the seeding and establishment of cheatgrass, livestock preferentially graze native grasses before they consume cheatgrass. Thus, the native grasses are suffering losses. This increases the gaps between plants, opening more of the soil surface to colonization by cheatgrass.

To quote from one paper by Reisner et al. 2013: "If the goal is to conserve and restore resistance of these (sagebrush ecosystem) systems ... Passive restoration by reducing cumulative cattle grazing may be one of the most effective means of achieving these three goals." There are several scientific studies that purport to show that targeted grazing can reduce fire intensity and preclude rangeland fires. There are many inconsistencies in these reports.

The biggest problem with these studies is that they don't work on a landscape scale, nor under extreme fire weather conditions, which are the only times when you have large range fires.

To be effective targeted grazing requires highly concentrated animals in small areas, which ensures that native grasses and sagebrush will be trampled and the soil crusts destroyed, thus aiding even more cheatgrass establishment. Nearly all the studies that purport to show that livestock can reduce fuels are done under very controlled conditions in small acreage with electric fencing and/or tightly herded concentrated animals. However, not only is this expensive to implement, translating such a model of concentrated grazing across the vast grazing allotments that are typical of

public and private lands in the arid West is impossible.

Grazing sufficiently severe enough to reduce fuels will compact soils, increase drying of soils, reduce carbon storage, reduce forage for other native herbivores like elk, and reduce hiding/security cover for many ground nesting animals. This includes the sage grouse.

The second problem with target grazing proponents is a failure to understand or acknowledge the conditions that create large rangeland fires. All large fires are driven by extreme fire weather/climate conditions. You need extended drought, high temperatures, low humidity and most importantly high winds. If you do not have these ingredients with an ignition source, you simply don't get a large uncontrollable fire. However, anecdotal evidence from large range fires, as well as many studies, have documented that under extreme weather conditions, you cannot stop range fire. High winds blow embers miles ahead of any flame front. Even presuming targeted grazing had sufficiently reduced fuels to affect fire behavior, it simply cannot preclude large wind-driven fires, which are the only blazes that pose a threat to the sagebrush ecosystem.

Indeed, one scientific paper by Bruegger et al (2015) and widely cited by livestock advocates in support of targeted grazing admitted its final conclusions: "Although it is a promising tool for altering fire behavior, targeted grazing will be most effective in grass communities under moderate weather conditions."

Targeted grazing, as its name implies, can only affect a small area, and typically enhances the spread of cheatgrass.

George Wuerthner is an ecologist who has published 38 books, including one dealing with livestock grazing impacts.

How to get most value out of Oregon forest

The Bend Bulletin

The Elliott State Forest, located in the Oregon Coast Range northeast of Coos Bay, is for sale. State officials have received a single bid for the 82,000-acre forest, which they decided to sell in 2014. It's a decision that has environmental groups up in arms.

Yet the state Land Board's decision may be the only way to put the land to the use for which it was intended. In turn, that's a reflection on the state of forestry in Oregon these days, and it's not a pretty picture.

The forest has its roots in the 3.5 million acres the federal government granted Oregon when it became a state. That land, much of which was scattered in parcels, was expected to produce income for the state's schools, and the state constitution requires that it be managed to do so. In 1930 the state and federal governments completed the land swap that gave the Elliott the form and location it has today.

The Land Board is charged with managing the land for the benefit of K-12 education. It was a relatively easy task for years, when the forest generated millions of dollars of income from the sale of timber. Sales peaked in the mid-1980s, however, and with the federal listing of the northern spotted owl as threatened in 1990, the picture changed.

Combine that listing with lawsuits over many of the state's plans for the forest, and the decision to sell the Elliott almost seems like a foregone conclusion. Suits have challenged the state's conservation plan and its decisions to sell timber — also a threat to the marbled murrelet, another bird listed as threatened — over the years.

Today the Elliott is a money loser. It does actually turn a profit some years, but generally not more than \$1 million. Other years it costs the state more than is collected.

No doubt that's why the Land Board got one bid, for exactly the appraisal price of the property. No one but Lone Rock Timber Management, working with the Cow Creek Band of Umpqua Indians, thought it was worth even that much.

If environmental groups are unhappy with the decision to sell, they have only themselves to blame. Having brought logging and the revenue it generates to its knees, they've left the state with no other option.