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OUR VIEW

The promise of another new year

As we limp toward the end of 2016, the promise of a new year awaits.

The holiday is always a mix of nostalgia and optimism, as we look back on another year of getting older and look ahead to a fresh new beginning. Hanging a new calendar offers us the pleasing opportunity to start again with a blank slate.

2016 will not go down as the best of slates. It was marred by the most exhausting and debased presidential election in recent memory. It included the denouement of Syria's Civil War — which showed us that inconceivable suffering can and does exist in the 21st century. That war and others in the Middle East contributed to a refugee crisis that spread across much of the world, which has tested governments, international charities and our own hearts. The year was also scarred by an almost continuous parade of dying cultural figures, from David Bowie to Carrie Fisher. Each one seemed to slam the national bumper button harder than the last. And the U.S. government was a mess throughout — the Supreme Court spent a whole session with an even number of judges and Congress could barely be persuaded to pay the nation's bills.

Many of us are excited to see 2016 take its place in the rear view mirror.

But this New Year's Day is different than most recent ones. For some, their optimism is mixed with plenty of anxiety. A new U.S.

president is among the top causes of worldwide heartburn, because he has shown himself to be a man not prone to respecting political or social mores. Perhaps there is a benefit to a new kind of politician, but there are real concerns about the continuity of the world order that have not been present since the Cold War. The first year of a Donald Trump presidency is bound to bring significant change, and change is scary. Lord knows it was for those who had to get used to Barack Obama.

Good things can happen in 2017. Growth and stability, promotions and awards and marriages and births. Yet sadly we know we will see another war somewhere in the world, another genocide and another terrorist attack. There will be blood. There will be layoffs and divorces and deaths.

So much will be out of your hands in the next year, but much will be in them. Nothing is going to change on January 1 unless you do. So let's make this a year of personal responsibility, of personal charity and kindness. Let's do our best. Let's hold our leaders responsible for their actions, and to the same code of decency we teach at home. Let's make a resolution to be better than we were.

2017 will be here soon. And perhaps the most painful and most comforting thought is that in the blink of an eye it will be over, and we'll be right back here talking about the coming of another new year.

Let's make a resolution to be better than we were.

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.

Rent control cure can be worse than disease

The (Bend) Bulletin, Dec. 24

Oregon's housing shortage cuts across economic lines in many ways, but it can be those at the lower end of the economic scale who suffer most when there's not enough housing to go around.

That reality helps explain why state Rep. Tina Kotek, D-Portland and speaker of the state House of Representatives, is pushing to have the Legislature enact a "rent stabilization" — rent control — bill when it meets next year.

Yet if Kotek and others who think rent control will actually improve the state's housing problems did even the most rudimentary homework, they'd discover how destructive the policy could be. It's so bad, in fact, that many economists say it's worse than the disease it seeks to cure.

Among rent control's problems: It tends to drive money out of the rental housing market. If a builder cannot charge what he believes his building is worth, he'll put his money elsewhere. That's true for even expensive buildings that are not subject to rent control laws. There, economists note, potential landlords worry that someday controls will apply to them, too, and so go

elsewhere.

Owners of existing buildings, meanwhile, can find themselves with repairs and maintenance needs they cannot afford to pay for, meaning the quality of rent-controlled housing declines. Rent controls have proven themselves an effective way to lower the quality of the housing to which they're applied.

Rent control also holds landlords responsible for Oregon's affordable housing challenges. That's just not fair. Depending on how rent control is structured, it can also help people who don't

need help.

Meanwhile, Kotek and her cohorts fail to understand or selectively forget that Oregon's housing shortages and high costs also have to do with the availability of buildable land, not just with "greedy" developers and landlords. With plenty of land available, the price of land does not face as much upward pressure. That helps hold down the price of housing.

Rent control does not increase the supply of housing. It's likely to discourage new housing to correct the housing problem.

It's simple, really, so much so that everyone in the Legislature should be able to understand it.

Rent control does not increase the supply of housing.

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.



OTHER VIEWS

Reynolds and Fisher: A mother-daughter fable

Some years ago I had the privilege of a long evening with Carrie Fisher, starting at her house in Beverly Hills and proceeding to a nearby restaurant, and she talked so expansively — about her memories of "Star Wars," about her electric shock treatments, about Diet Coke, about everything — that I didn't come away with just a few impressions of her. I came away with a few hundred.

Still, one stood out: She was obsessed with the subject of mothering. While giving me a tour of the house, she mentioned again and again that her mother, Debbie Reynolds, lived next door. Did I know that they shared a driveway? And that they saw each other daily? This proximity clearly rattled her, but it reassured her, too. It was equal parts intimidation and consolation — in other words, motherhood itself.

At dinner, Fisher volunteered that she was in the middle of a spat with the father of her own daughter about some childrearing issue. I don't recall the details, but I do remember how agitated she became, even handing me her phone and insisting that I read the emails that she and her estranged partner had exchanged. I also remember thinking that if anything could wound this seemingly bulletproof survivor, it was the suggestion that she was an irresponsible, inattentive mom.

Fisher died on Tuesday and then, on Wednesday, so did Reynolds, reportedly while helping to plan her daughter's funeral. Was it grief that did Reynolds in? A story in *The Times* by my colleague Benedict Carey presented that as a definite possibility, and an interview that Fisher's brother, Todd, gave to "Good Morning America" also suggested as much. He said that Reynolds was utterly lost "without having Carrie to look after."

Whatever the truth, it's impossible not to regard the head-turning coincidence as a heartbreaking confirmation of the singular embrace in which Fisher and Reynolds held, and sometimes smothered, each other.

It's also hard not to reflect on the relationship between these two movie-industry legends as a case study — upsized for Hollywood, sensationalized accordingly and on display to the entire world — of the currents between almost every parent and child: the pride and the shame; the protectiveness and the destructiveness; the gratitude and the resentment.

As it happens I spent some time with Reynolds, too, though in 1996, more than a decade before I met Fisher. I was writing a profile of her because, after a long drought of no movies, she was starring in a new one. Its title: "Mother." Its theme: the emotional havoc that a parent can unintentionally wreak on a child.

It was Fisher who pestered Reynolds to pursue the part. She knew that Reynolds yearned for a comeback. And she sensed that Reynolds was right for the role.

What a fascinating tandem of accomplishment they were, and what a glorious mess. On the one hand, Fisher idolized her mother. Look at Lawrence Schiller's amazing photograph, from 1963, of Fisher at the age of 6, watching Reynolds perform onstage. Schiller later reminisced that the little girl "was really mesmerized by her mother, always."

But so were tens of millions of other people, and Reynolds diverted her attention to

these fans. Fisher didn't much care for that. What adoring child would?

"Walking down the street with her was like being in a parade," she said at one point. "I had to share her. She belonged to everybody."

Fisher tried to live up to her, following her into show business and, with the "Star Wars" movies, making an early, indelible mark there. Then she spurned her, refusing to see her for 10 years.

A sort of explanation came in "Postcards from the Edge," a 1987 novel by Fisher that became a 1990 movie noteworthy not only for its blunt description of drug addiction but for the way the irrepressible mother and exasperated daughter at its center resemble Reynolds and her. They're merciless together, but neither can shake the obligation or resist the inspiration of the other. They're a screaming, sobbing love story of the most complicated and honest kind.

Reynolds actually put her hand up to appear as the mother in "Postcards," reasoning that everyone would think that the character was her anyway. But the assignment went to an actress whose currency onscreen far surpassed hers by then. Shirley MacLaine played Reynolds to Meryl Streep's Fisher.

With "Postcards," Fisher switched her focus from acting to writing, and she found particular distinction in trashing the very rites of celebrity that her mother so gleefully relished and dutifully executed, to diminishing returns. Reynolds weathered that long movie drought by performing in a Las Vegas casino bearing her name, and she began her cabaret act there by introducing herself as "Carrie Fisher's mother."

Despite a turbulent domestic life, she honed an image of utter purity. Not Fisher. She presented herself without apology as a cyclone of sin.

But they struck me as more alike than different, both of them exhibitionists to the core. During one of my interviews with Reynolds, I asked about an odd-looking contraction in the corner of her hotel room. "That's my ab cruncher," she said, then commenced a demonstration, and suddenly I was watching a 64-year-old with a bouffant thrust and jiggle on the carpet in front of me.

During my evening with Fisher, which was social rather than professional, I listened to an almost nonstop monologue of wordplay, secrets, provocations: whatever she needed to hold the audience's interest.

They were the very definition of game, this inimitable mother-daughter duo. They recognized and respected that shared D.N.A.

The words with which she paid tribute to her mother in a 2010 interview with *The Times*'s Brooks Barnes had that same double edge. "She should be put on that thing with the four presidents — Mount Rushmore," Fisher said, praising Reynolds's unflagging work ethic and inextinguishable cheer. "Right after Teddy Roosevelt, but have his eyes looking down at her cleavage."

Cleave the cleavage from the comment and it captures how so many of us view our parents. They're larger than life. Monumental. But our desire to acknowledge that is barely stronger than our determination to cut them down to size.

Frank Bruni is a columnist for the *New York Times*.

YOUR VIEWS

Federal government best suited to care for public lands

After reading the letter of John D. George in the Dec. 28, 2016, *East Oregonian*, I am not sure I understand his comments. I do believe the Forest Service does try to bring people together.

My concern is that the people planning to turn over public land to the states may not realize they could bankrupt their state governments. Oregon is already in debt with PERS. Having to assume the expense, management, employment and insurance of the public land the federal government presently manages would put a burden on the states' taxpayers. Where else would they get the funds? The federal government spends billions to manage the public lands.

It also concerns me that we do not seem to realize the resources available to our fathers and grandfathers are no longer as abundant as they were in their time. Forests are being depleted, mining is less profitable, and other resources such as water show signs of overuse.

Unless the federal government steps in to save these resources mankind will continue to overuse them. Look about you in the world. We are the only nation with abundant natural resource wealth. We need to preserve these resources and if it takes the federal government to do it, they must, whether we like it or not. It's that simple.

I know I do not have the full information, but I do know there is something wrong with the nation's public land policies.

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