

School, church and tavern

One of the key components of our federal government is the principle of checks and balances provided by our Constitution’s separation of power into the executive, legislative and judicial branches of government. In theory (and generally in practice) it prevents one branch from gaining inordinate influence over the others and usually maintains a fairly healthy state of cooperation and compromise for the good of all — or at least most of us.

Small towns such as Helix, my place of approximate residence (my ZIP code is technically Adams), provide a provincial example of checks and balances in the form of three institutions that I regard as vital to a community’s balance of power: the School, the Church and the Tavern.

Each of these plays an important role in a community’s well-being and, personally, I would be suspicious of a place where any one of these institutions exhibited unilateral control. In the near quarter-century since I moved to Helix, I have spent time in all three of the aforementioned places, though I have no definitive nor accurate means by which I could quantify exactly how much time has been spent in each or in what order of priority.

Though I unfortunately do not possess anything more than a cursory and incomplete knowledge of Helix history, I have been fortunate enough to know many folks, both friends and family, who possessed great knowledge concerning Helix schools, churches, and taverns and from that have gleaned enough to offer a brief synopsis.

Schools
Like most other pioneer towns of the American West, the citizens of Helix saw the need for public education nearly from the start of the town, or at least by the time the railroad arrived and gave some semblance of permanence around 1889. The grade school from this era still stands though it has been transformed into a residential duplex. The second more modern brick grade school

was built about 1914. Still a handsome structure, it now serves as city hall, museum and public library and is the focus of a local group called HAPN (Helix Advancement Partnership Network), which hopes to continue to improve and enhance the facility for present and future denizens of Helix. The high school in Helix was built in 1923 and named for a long-time resident of the town, Dr. Griswold. Born in 1850, Griswold came to Helix in the 1880s and was an important stalwart of the community until his death in 1922. He is buried in the cemetery on the hill south of town and his legacy endures to the present.

Before unification of districts occurred in the 1940s, the Helix area had many one-room schools spread throughout the present, rather large district. These included,

but were not limited to: Holdman, Stanton, Mullencup, McRae, Dorran, Juniper, Moll, Koepke, Myrick and the Finn School. The Stanton and Dorran schools were moved in the 1940s and became farm dwellings.

My family lived in the Dorran school until 2009 when we moved to a different farm. The Finn School was moved and is now the shop building on the Enbysk Farm.

Church
At the turn of the last century, Helix proper had two churches, one Baptist and one Christian. The Christian Church no longer exists except in photographs, but the Baptist Church founded in 1893 still stands and now serves the spiritual needs of the area as a non-denominational flock tended to by a former farmer from Sauvie Island named Mark Woolbright.

The greater Helix area has had other churches as well. For many years, Holdman had a church and a parsonage that accompanied a store, post office, school and teacherage, and hotel among several homes. My grandmother was rewarded for perfect attendance at Sunday School sometime in the 1920s. In 1892, a German evangelical Lutheran Church was built south of Myrick

Editor’s note: In an effort to get more local voices and more good writing into your newspaper, the *East Oregonian* is introducing a group of columnists that will rotate appearances in each Saturday edition.

The cast of characters come from different backgrounds and different perspectives, but each live, work and write in Eastern Oregon.

Matt Wood kicks off the series today. He will be followed in coming weeks by J.D. Smith, Bette Husted and Lindsay Murdock.

Have feedback on the columns? Email opinion page editor Tim Trainor at ttrainor@eastoregonian.com.



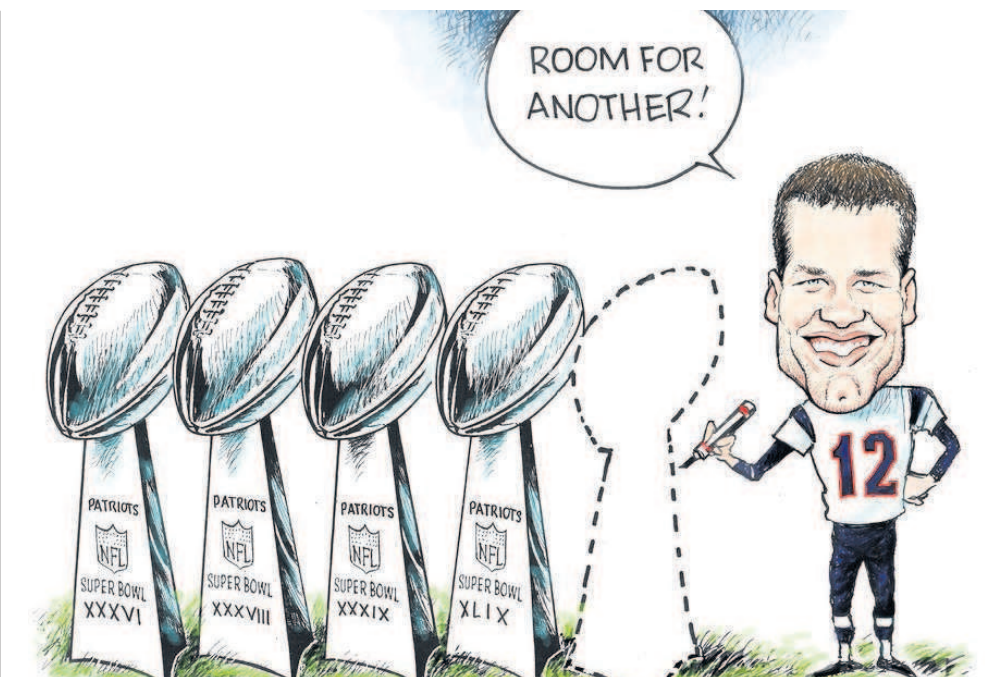
MATT WOOD FROM THE TRACTOR

20th Century, the city of Helix collected \$500 or more annually to license each tavern in town, a princely sum in 1905.

In October 1922, Harry Rose of Helix was shot and killed at his establishment by L.D. Clark, town marshal, after an argument and subsequent fisticuffs between Rose and Clark’s son, 19 year-old Sim. The Olympic Bar was located approximately where the Helix Telephone Company is currently. I have the safe from that bar. The current tavern began life as a dry goods store in 1920 and was owned by F.E. Blinn.

Lines are sometimes blurred at our town’s three most important institutions. I and many others have occasionally preached from a bar stool. I have also prayed at school, either during an invocation at a graduation or in search of a correct answer during an exam. And it goes without saying that education frequently takes place somewhere other than a classroom.

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Matt Wood is his son’s hired man and his daughter’s biggest fan. He lives on a farm near Helix, where he collects antiques and friends.



Quick takes Oregon considers raising smoking age to 21

More government overreach. Always trying to protect you from yourself.
— Helen Willis

You can’t deny the dangers of smoking, or that the human body is much more developed and less susceptible to addiction at 21 as opposed to 18.

— Aaron Charles Shields Colbray

If you are 18 but cannot make your own decisions to smoke and drink, but can be sent to war at 18 to die for the same government, then they really need to re-evaluate their laws and regulations of adulthood.
— Holly Appleton

Not saying it might not be a good idea, but most people I know who smoke started at 14-16 years old. So will it really do anything?
Jim An Sharon Evans

Disc golf heads to Hermiston

I know a few people into disc-golf. It’s not very expensive to get into at all and children enjoy it.

— Christopher Spencer

So glad they’re going for a tournament regulation course.

— Val McAllister

Audit: ODOT culture lacks transparency, vision

I wonder how many road repairs or lanes that \$1 million (audit) could have funded?
— Debra O’Rourke

Oregon needs to revamp ODOT from the top down and have an oversight committee.
— Levi Raber

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 and keep them to 140 characters.

ODFW, fire, winter doing a number on wildlife

By LOREN STOUT

This winter has many similarities to the winters of 1983 and 1992. If history proves itself again, there will be a dramatic die-off of our game animals.

There is one stark difference that accompanies this year and not the previous two disaster years. In 1983 and 1992 the animals were counted after the spring die-off, and the tag numbers were allocated according to the amount of animals that survived the winter. According to the radio, ODFW is going to fly after spring green-up and reassess the number of tags they planned for in the 2017 synopsis. That is how it is suppose to be, but maybe things are not as cut and dried as ODFW is claiming they are.

When the charter for the game commission was originally enacted, its official duty was the management of the game animals of Oregon. A commission was formed and their duty would be to oversee the ODFW to make sure they were performing their duties within the parameters of their charter. Everything worked fine until somehow the duties of managing the game was turned over to the commission. The people that were on the ground, and knew what was going on, became irrelevant.

The commission turned into a group of governor-appointed lobbyists and their attention turned to pleasing the environmental groups and their clients instead of managing the wildlife and fish. That direction carried over into the working ranks of ODFW without very good results. It got so bad we actually obtained documents that ODFW personnel were collaborating with an environmental group to stop grazing and logging on federal ground. It became apparent the mantra switched from fish and game management

to “Let’s destroy peoples livelihoods to deflect from our own ineptness.”

When ODFW decided to ignore what their purpose in state government was, it obviously put them in situations that did not benefit fish, wildlife or the real citizens of Oregon.

A great example of this occurred when some citizens of Grant County were meeting with ODFW to try and figure out how to best recover the once-great mule deer herds of the county. This unit was designated a deer recovery area, which entitled ODFW to receive project money to address this task.

We did not know it, but behind our backs ODFW cut a deal with an environmental group, that if they would vote for ODFW’S budget, they would allow unlimited big game bow tags. In essence, the citizens were trying to build back the game numbers but behind their backs ODFW sold out to the special interests and eliminated any gains that may have been made. It made it impossible to recover the numbers with unlimited tags.

When the hunters started realizing that they were buying licenses and tags without the game to support what ODFW was telling them, the battle cry for the state once again switched back to the miners, loggers and cattlemen. These working class people are the reason behind declining fish and big game numbers.

They once again told the public that unequivocally is not the management of ODFW or their association with the special interests that has led us into this situation. I personally believe the hunters and fisherman are getting sick of hearing this

excuse. They can see what is going on.

Take the Murderers Creek unit for instance. The last three years, 180,000 acres of critical habitat has burnt along with the inferno that killed every animal that was caught in its wake.

Instead of cutting tag numbers back and actually letting the environment heal and the animals recover, ODFW stuck with unlimited bow tags and relentless hunting seasons. The results are very telling if the opinion of the hunters means anything.

That brings us to today. The deer are dying, the elk are struggling and the coyotes are fatter than usual. We have the reassurance that ODFW is going to manage the tags according to survival numbers.

There is only one small problem in that: No true hunter believes them. They will cut numbers, all right, but they will all be from

the pool of rifle tags available. The number that is cut will be made up with bow tags. Remember, they cut a deal to allow unlimited bow tags in a lot of units. ODFW is going to get their budget money and keep their clients happy one way or another.

In the meantime the rifle hunters are getting the shaft and have been for years.

There is only one way to stop this abuse of the duties of ODFW. The hunters and fishermen themselves are going to have to demand more of their state government.

I just hope this has not spun so far out of control there is no turning back. It is sick that our hunting and fishing heritage has been compromised by self-enrichment of the few.

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Loren Stout lives in John Day.

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.