

The importance of sharing stories

The salesman must have left our house a happy man: Mom had purchased not only his encyclopedias but also the Book of Knowledge, a set of eight science books and a shelf of Children's Classics: "Heidi," "Treasure Island," "Robinson Crusoe," "Kidnapped," "The Adventures of Tom Sawyer," "Tales from Shakespeare," "The Arabian Knights," "Robin Hood."

Our father was devastated. How would they make the payments? Mom was unrepentant. She spent her days growing and canning our food, baking our bread and making our clothes, but she knew her children needed more than food and shelter.

It took her nightly reading from the Children's Classics to bring Dad around. We watched the back of his head — yes, he was listening. Finally he turned his chair toward us. Who could resist Robin Hood?

It's a need as old as human community, this gathering to share stories. That's why on the third Thursday of every month Pendleton Center for the Arts hosts the First Draft Writers' Series, where writers from all over the Northwest come read to us.

Some, like Molly Gloss and Craig Lesley, are familiar names to readers in Eastern Oregon. Some, like Ursula K. Le Guin, are internationally known. Some we know as

neighbors: Judith Quampts, Shaindel Beers, Peg Willis, Ki Russell, Pamela Reese, Karen Zacharias, Bobbie Conner, Jennifer Karson Engum, Thomas Morning Owl.

Writers drive from the Willamette Valley, from Missoula, Moscow, Spokane, Seattle. Flora and Monument. Ashland.

Warm Springs. Fossil. Port Angeles. Every month brings a different perspective.

We love it. So do the writers. One evening poet Alice Derry leaned over the podium to tell us, "I can feel you listening!" And Craig Lesley wrote afterward, "Truly, it was one of the best adventures of my writing career, right up there with winning the PNBA awards and being interviewed by Studs Terkel."

The magic comes from hearing writers reading their own words in their own voices. Last month, as poet Scot Siegel read about his childhood fear when his Jewish father's print shop was torched — and then his poem in the imagined voice of real life 1920s teacher Grace Brandt telling her shivering Lakeview students to "Write a poem, of summer. Something /with lavender, or watermelons" — we were there, inside those stories.

Afterward, those who have signed up for the open mic read from their own writing. We get to hear voices from our

own community, people we now know better. What was it like to be waiting for the bus that would carry you to Mississippi for Freedom Summer just after those three civil rights workers had been murdered? To rediscover the moss-edged dock where you learned to swim? To visit your brother for the last time?

Just after the big December storm, the one that dumped so much snow on Pendleton that the city all but shut down, two writers from Wallowa County were scheduled to read. Should we cancel? But they were on their way. Cabbage Hill is closed, but hey, Tollgate's open, Rich Wandschneider said. One woman drove up from John Day, and eight local residents came out. We sat in a circle to hear Cameron Scott's river poems and Rich's essays about Standing Rock, and to share our own stories.

Then came January and all that ice. This time the Gorge was closed. We sent out emails letting everyone know Joe Wilkins couldn't be here, but 34 folks wanted to come anyway. Pamela Reese brought a busload of students from Echo. Lynn Robertson, who had taken a workshop from Wilkins last summer, read from his poems about growing up on the Big Dry in eastern Montana. Nine people shared their work at the open mic.

My mother died at 93, a year before First Draft came into being. But that night I could feel her in the room.

On March 16, Pamela Royes will read from "Temperance Creek," a memoir about

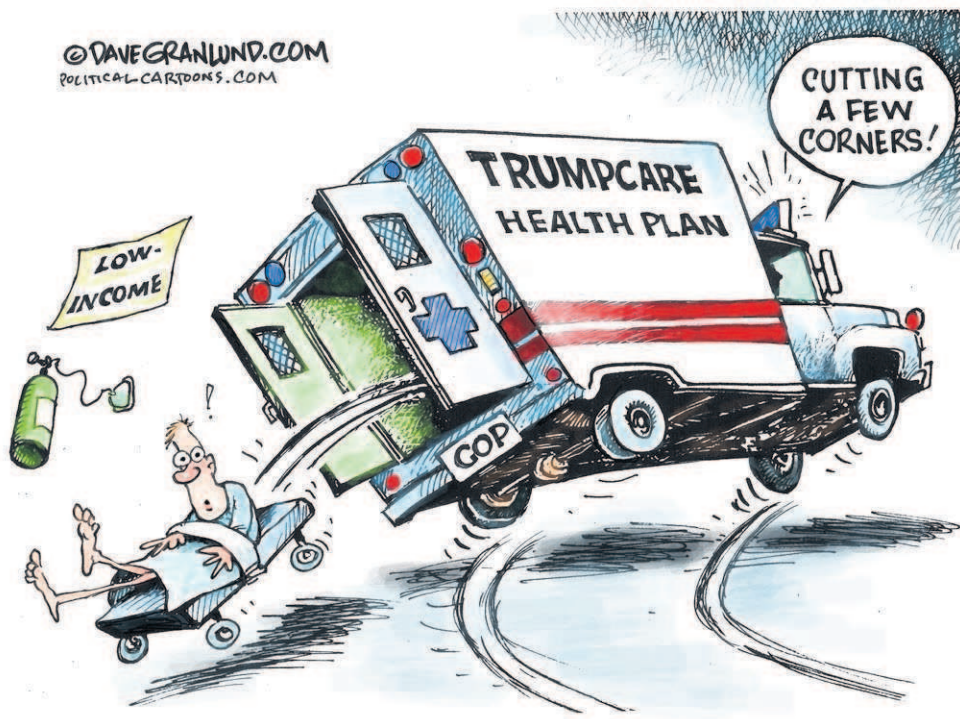
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BETTE HUSTED FROM HERE TO ANYWHERE

her mid-1970s transition from hippie middle-America college student to Hell's Canyon sheepherder. "Why don't you come with me?" the Vietnam veteran she had known for less than a day had asked her. Sounds like a story to me.

Bette Husted is a writer and a student of T'ai Chi and the natural world. She lives in Pendleton.



Quick takes

Weed odor case goes to trial

Who has enough time to call the police because they can smell weed?
— Sydney Bleau Oldenburg

You all do realize that workplaces now ask people not to wear fragrances because of people's allergies. An offensive odor is offensive. I know I'm allergic to marijuana and hemp but I'm more allergic to molds.
— Virginia Gehringer-Justice

A waste of the Justice Department's time. It sounds like more of a personal issue to me.
— Diana Thompson

Oregon Republicans carry high hopes for state races

That's funny right there. We conservatives are lucky we haven't been lynched for being here, much less gain power.
— Joe Ream

Man sentenced in mistaken killing of Boardman man

Why not deport him now and let Mexico pay for the fool?
— Sandy Howland

As someone who had a family member killed by someone that served their time in jail and was then was deported, I looked into it. Had they been deported they would have done no time and would have just found a way back to the States and not paid a day for his crime.
— Heather Ann Howard Pearce

Another rural self-serve gas bill debated in legislature

It would be great for nighttime hours. Occasionally I must be on the road at those times and not being able to fuel up when needed is problematic.
— Montie Banks

I think this is a good thing as long as they keep it limited to only after operating hours. I prefer to pump my own fuel, but these are good jobs for high school kids, people who have had trouble in life, etc. It's a good thing that Oregon keeps these jobs open.
— Tanner Remillard

This is just one of many stupid laws Oregon has on the books. Hope it's a start to overturning many more.
— Jeff Casey

Tweet your quick takes to @Tim_Trainor or email editor@eastoregonian.com, and keep them short.

Winter in Eastern Oregon has been a disaster

By TED FERRIOLI AND BILL HANSELL
Oregon State Senators

Out of sight, out of mind. For us that phrase describes our failure to focus on the devastation our farming and ranching families in Eastern Oregon are currently experiencing. Excessive snow, ice, and extreme winter temperatures have culminated in a literal disaster. And we urge our state's major newspapers and broadcast media to give this catastrophe the coverage it deserves.

Damages and costs are still being assessed, but full recovery could take up to three years, and cost over \$100 million. Regardless of which side of the Cascades you call home, it's critical we are all aware of and actively support our fellow Oregonians through the near insurmountable difficulties they're facing from the terrible effects of this past winter. Because we are one Oregon.

The onion industry, which contributes about \$143 million annually to the state economy, was hardest hit. Current estimates place total commodity loss at 150 million pounds, or the equivalent of four 10-pound bags for every man, woman, and child in Oregon. To date, at least 50 onion storage

and packing facilities have collapsed from snow and ice accumulation, leaving insufficient infrastructure for the 2017 harvest.

Insurance coverage is projected to only cover 0-70 percent of replacement costs. Many Oregon growers are considering relocating and rebuilding in Idaho, taking a good share of those \$143 million revenues with them.

Livestock suffered from the severe weather. At least 1,000 mother cows are lost and assumed dead. Calf births are down 30 percent so far this year. Livestock weight gains are down 40-50 percent versus typical years.

There is also significant expense to infrastructure. Damage to roads and buildings are considerable. County and city budget reserves were depleted to fund snow removal. Flooding remains a very real concern.

Those affected are hard-working farming and ranching families whose businesses are vital to Oregon agriculture and the state economy. The recent area visit by Governor Brown, Senator Ferrioli and Representative Bentz, and initial efforts to bring emergency aid to these communities, should be applauded, but more is needed to restore and

maintain a vibrant agricultural community that contributes so much to Oregon's economic health.

Oregonians are urged to support House Bill 2012, the Eastern Oregon Border Economic Development Act, designating Ontario, Vale, Nyssa, and the immediate surrounding area as the Eastern Oregon Border Economic Development Region. HB 2012 would use \$10 million in borrowed economic development funds from the Oregon lottery; the money would be repaid over time. HB 2012 would create a new seven-member board run by locals to promote workforce and economic growth in the area, with the ability to award economy-boosting grants and loans.

Please stand with us to support Eastern Oregon families and businesses that have suffered so much in recent months. Let's give this disaster the attention it deserves to ensure a vibrant future for farming and ranching families and businesses that comprise the heart of this historic and unique part of Oregon. Because we are one Oregon.

Ted Ferrioli, of John Day, represents Senate District 30. Bill Hansell, of Athena, represents Senate District 20.

A radical new way to prevent illness: Take your meds

By JOEL WHITE and SLOANE SALZBURG
Council for Health Coverage

Philip Mandel, a 60-year-old Beaverton man, is a stereotypical Oregon fitness guru. He bikes hundreds of miles a week, hits the gym regularly, and sticks to a low-fat, largely vegetarian diet.

And like hundreds of thousands of his fellow Oregonians, he has had trouble adhering to his doctor's orders. He recently stopped taking his cholesterol medication for two weeks after experiencing some odd side effects. When his physician found out, he ordered Philip back on the drug to help prevent life-threatening conditions like heart attack and stroke.

Too many Oregonians are still hiking along Philip's former path of medication non-adherence. It leads to increased hospitalizations and deaths — and staggering healthcare bills. Fortunately, Oregon health officials can prevent much of this devastation with a few simple reforms that help patients take their medicines as intended.

Oregon, despite its outdoorsy, athletic image, isn't the healthiest of states. More than 61 percent of residents — about 2.5 million people — suffer from at least one chronic medical condition. For example, high blood pressure — a major risk factor for strokes and heart disease — afflicts one

in four Oregonians.

Many of these conditions are easily controlled with medication. High blood pressure treatments, for instance, can cut incidents of stroke by 35 to 40 percent and halve the odds of heart failure.

Yet Oregonians take their pills about as reliably as they drink mass-produced beer. Two-thirds of Beaver State residents fail to follow their doctors' prescription plans. More than one in five prescriptions goes unfilled.

Stunningly, patients with chronic illnesses — the ones who most need these medicines — are the most likely to skip doses or forgo medications altogether.

Patients who fail to take their medications suffer far higher rates of hospitalizations, surgeries, and hospital stays. Poor adherence to prescribed drug regimens accounts for at least 125,000 untimely deaths in the United States each year.

Non-adherence is also an economic disaster. Oregon spends \$4 billion every single year on medication-related problems. Nationwide, adherence costs \$105 billion annually.

More than 50 major health-care organizations recently investigated why patients seemingly ignore their doctors' orders. Surprisingly, only 5 percent of patients with chronic conditions weren't taking medicines because they couldn't afford them.

A stunning 92 percent of patients say

that simply receiving clear information about the drugs would help them take their medications. Patients also say they'd be more likely to adhere to treatment plans if they received reminders or if they had better discussions with their doctors.

Fortunately, there are several easy steps the Oregon Health Authority and private insurance companies can take to provide residents with better tools to help them take their medicines.

First, they could leverage technology more effectively to identify when prescriptions aren't filled at the pharmacy.

Second, they could implement a Comprehensive Medication Management system.

Lastly, officials could start tracking patients' adherence statistics, in order to better identify at-risk populations and gauge the effectiveness of future healthcare interventions.

Far too many deaths, surgeries, and hospitalizations result from patients' failure to take medicines as directed. Giving doctors and pharmacists a few simple tools to educate patients would drastically improve outcomes and save money for Oregon.

Joel White is President of the Council for Affordable Health Coverage, a national nonpartisan coalition of patients, providers, payers and employers.