

EAST OREGONIAN

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OUR VIEW

Standing up against public records bullies

This was supposed to be an age of transparency. The nexus of education, democracy and technology should be creating an environment in which public information is widely available to everyone.

But the world seems to be getting more opaque. As conspiracy theory websites grow in popularity and are given increasing credence despite an absence of fact, traditional media is increasingly denied access to the hard data that reliable reports are based on. And sensing the upper-hand, government has become more aggressive about shutting down public record releases and whistle blowers.

A perfect example of this obstructionist behavior by a government agency came up in Eastern Oregon last week.

The *Malheur Enterprise*, a weekly newspaper in Vale, published a detailed report about a con man who avoided prison time by feigning insanity. The Oregon Psychiatric Security Review Board discharged Anthony Montwheeler last year, and less than a month later he was accused of kidnapping and killing his ex-wife, fleeing police and crashing into a married couple on their way to work, killing the husband.

The *East Oregonian* obtained permission to reprint the story in its entirety this weekend, and it's the kind of reporting that brings real insight to the way the criminal justice system operates. It's an incredible tale, but one supported by facts and evidence, research and the reputation of those sourced by journalists.

What would have made the report even more complete is documentation detailing Montwheeler's mental evaluations — documents that were used as evidence at hearings of the Security Review Board. When the board refused to release the records to the *Enterprise*, the paper appealed the decision to the Attorney General Ellen Rosenblum, who ruled the documents should be turned over.

Instead of complying, the Security

Review Board has sued the small paper to keep the records secret. To that end, they are spending taxpayer dollars on a \$400-an-hour lawyer to argue the case in court.

These records are critical, and they should be made public. They show what state officials knew — and didn't know — as they ruled that Montwheeler should be released. They will put hard facts in the hands of citizens and hold those in power accountable.

But this is about more than Anthony Montwheeler, the *Malheur Enterprise* and the Security Review Board. This is about beating back the brazen attempts of government agencies to obscure the truth. The balance is tipping in their favor already, and if those officials are allowed to shut out and intimidate by reaching into the deep pockets of taxpayers, we can all expect less access and truth in the future.

In our opinion, the *Enterprise* is exactly the right rural weekly for this fight. Owners Scotta Callister and Les Zaitz have deep backgrounds in rural journalism and aren't intimidated by bureaucracy or obstinance. Zaitz, a former *Oregonian* reporter, told us Monday the paper has received an outpouring of support from people "offended by the legal mismatch."

The paper has set up a legal defense fund through the Oregon Newspaper Foundation. Donations are tax deductible and can be sent to the foundation at 4000 Kruse Way Place, Bldg 2-160, Lake Oswego, OR, 97305. Checks should be made out to the Oregon Newspaper Foundation/EDF.

The *Enterprise* has been told of donations from \$10 to \$1,000 and hopes to receive \$20,000 by the end of the month to enter the fight on more even ground. Any excess funds will be donated to nonprofit journalism organizations.

Zaitz said this case is a chance to underscore the importance of public access into what the government is doing. And he is hopeful it will cultivate an environment in which real reform is possible.

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.

YOUR VIEWS

Pendleton fire bond will benefit city's elderly

I write in support of the Pendleton fire bond, which will be voted on in May.

I work with frail and isolated elderly persons who need the services provided by the EMTs that are part of the fire department. It is essential that these trained professionals are positioned in a site which will allow the best access to the most citizens of Pendleton.

I believe the St. Anthony site is the best available. I know the response time is crucial to lives and seconds count. We must have this service and it must be as up-to-date and professional as possible.

John Brenne
Pendleton

Potential projects reduce tax bite of bond measure

We have a choice in a little over a month to support a bond measure that will give our community one of the most up-to-date school facilities in Oregon, while eliminating most of the overcrowding in our schools.

One of the items that has not been discussed is the increased tax base that is coming to our property tax district. Currently, there is over \$1 billion of new projects slated for West Umatilla County. This potential increased assessed value will actually lower our taxes when it comes on line within the next ten years. This growth in assessed valuation, with the current low interest rates, makes this the perfect time to increase our schools' capacity. The cost of the improvements will never be lower than now.

The community is growing and we need to be prepared to educate the children of our area. So please understand that we may have a short-term tax increase, but the future continues to look bright for our

community and its property tax situation because of these projects.

We urge you to support the bond measure.

Dennis and Catherine Barnett
Hermiston

School bond will keep Hermiston growing

I urge the voters in the Hermiston School District to join us in voting for the upcoming school bond election.

We live in a vibrant, dynamic, growing community that brings significant population growth, including many youngsters of school age. This alone necessitates the need for more classroom space. In addition, schools built in the 20th century are not equipped for the needs of the 21st century. Briefly let me enumerate a few items to consider:

1. Schools for today need to be energy efficient. Our old buildings that have classrooms with exterior doors do not meet today's standards. 2. In the same manner, schools must be more enclosed to allow for the security needed in these times. 3. The schools being replaced were built before anyone knew of a thing called the internet and few of us understood what the computer age was all about.

Students of the 21st century are required to be very technologically savvy and our schools need to be equipped to provide this knowledge. The jobs will be for those who design, control, and use technology. Automation and robotics will do much of the work that was previously done manually.

Vote for 21st century schools for students who will live and work in this century.

John and Janet Spomer
Hermiston

STAR TRIBUNE
SAC



OTHER VIEWS

Manhood in the Age of Trump

One of the dippiest, catchiest commercials of my youth was for Campbell's soup. I remember it precisely; I can still sing the snippet of song at its center.

"How do you handle a hungry man?" crooned an offscreen voice. A very deep voice, I should add. It then answered, thunderously, "The Manhandlers!"

That was the name for a line of especially hearty Campbell's concoctions, and the images that accompanied the lyrics, depending on which iteration of the commercial you saw, might be hockey players slamming into one another or basketball players jockeying for position under the net. The message was that a man worked up a sweat and then ate up a storm — in this case, a beef-and-noodle hurricane, or at least a split-pea squall. He was a force of nature with untamable appetites.

That was the 1970s, and what strikes me isn't how much has changed but how little.

Oh, sure, we're having a soulful discussion, at least in the media, about the elasticity of gender. Just over two

weeks ago, the cover of Time magazine read, "Beyond He or She," and in smaller type: "How a new generation is redefining the meaning of gender."

But the following week, Time's cover teased an interview with our president, Donald Trump, whose take on gender is decidedly old-fashioned and fixed. He casts

himself — surprise! — as a force of nature with untamable appetites. And that persona won him tens of millions of votes, lofting him to the White House, so it can't have contradicted Americans' notions of manhood all that much.

A real man lusts. A real man rages. A real man doesn't chip in with domestic duties. That's not just Trump's view — he once boasted that he'd never change a diaper — but also, apparently, the message that many young men in America today still get, according to an intriguing study released a few days ago.

Promundo, a nonprofit organization that promotes gender equity, surveyed roughly 1,300 American men between 18 and 30. Seventy-five percent said that they're supposed to act strong even when scared or nervous; 63 percent said that they're exhorted to seize sex whenever available; 46 percent said that they're waved away from household chores.

Promundo also surveyed British and Mexican men, and neither group described a gender construct as musky, musty and unyielding as the one that Americans detailed. The research suggested that plenty of American men live in what some sociologists call the Man Box, constricted by a concept of manhood that includes aggression, hypersexuality, supreme authority and utter self-sufficiency.

I can't say that I'm surprised, not when I look at the biggest male movie stars and see such an emphasis on brawn over brain. Dwayne Johnson — aka the Rock — can open a movie; Daniel Day-Lewis cannot. Tom Cruise's box-office status owes more to physical pyrotechnics in the "Mission Impossible" franchise than to courtroom fireworks in "A Few Good Men," just as Hugh Jackman's currency comes from his bladed fingers in "The Wolverine" and now "Logan," not from his dulcet voice in "Les Misérables." Will Smith's verbal dexterity in "Six Degrees of Separation" may have won him critical regard, but his coolness in "Bad Boys" and "Men in Black" made him box-office gold.

We're seeing some young female stars expand into action roles — in the "Hunger Games" series, in the last two "Star Wars" offshoots — but I don't detect a commensurate trend of young male stars seeking, and benefiting from, softer parts. True, Ryan Gosling danced (awkwardly) in "La La Land" and Bradley Cooper embodied vulnerability in "Silver Linings Playbook." But Cooper soon pivoted into "American Sniper," for which he thickened his body and slowed his speech.

Maybe I read the tea leaves too closely and pessimistically, but then I'm a gay man whose

teen years were in the late 1970s and early 1980s, when homosexuality alone was considered antithetical to true manhood and someone like me was left in a limbo, wondering what claims on masculinity he really had.

I was a competitive swimmer, and while I hated it, I didn't dare quit, as it felt like a retort to, and inoculation against, anyone questioning my maleness. Just before college I completed an Outward Bound course in the Oregon mountains, and my

outsize pride was about how classically manly the adventure had been: no showers, no toilets, harsh weather, bland food.

That was decades ago, but just last week, when I emailed one straight male friend and one gay male friend with a succinct, unexplained question — "When do you feel the most manly?" — their answers reflected a similar perspective.

The straight friend flashed on his experience playing football in high school and college and wrote that he had felt the most manly when leaving the locker room with his "hands and

wrists taped up, win or lose, smelling and aching."

The gay friend mentioned that he'd been hiking a lot recently, in an area where strong winds were tearing at trees.

"Limbs keep coming down," he wrote. "I feel manly when I have to move them off the trail, knowing some are too big for other hikers to budge."

When does Trump feel the most manly? That's

pretty obvious: when he's salivating over women and styling himself some conquistador of the flesh, as he did repeatedly with Howard Stern and on one infamous occasion with Billy Bush. When he's belittling and emasculating rivals ("Liddle Marco," "low-energy Jeb"), as he did throughout his campaign. When he's vowing vengeance against the House Freedom Caucus, as he did last week. When he's surrounding himself with generals. When he's pledging huge increases in military spending while moving to starve wonky research and the arts.

There are ways in which his life, and his political career in particular, are a burlesque of manhood, "so craven and desperately needy that it has an air of danger and pathos," said Michael Kimmel, a Stony Brook University sociologist and the author of "Angry White Men," a 2013 book that will soon be reissued with a new preface that takes Trump into account.

I think Trump protests too much, distracting us from other traits. He abhors handshakes: all those icky germs! He gilds and swirls his hair. Those white crescent moons under his eyes suggest time spent wearing goggles during artificial tanning sessions. The Marlboro Man got his sun on the range, not in the salon.

But Kimmel said that such signals have begun to diversify somewhat. He noted that Axe, which makes men's grooming products, used to be famous for ads that equated using Axe with getting laid, but it unveiled a new one last year that showed one man in a wheelchair, another with cats, another at a chalkboard, another in drag. "Find your magic" was the tagline, and that magic didn't boil down to sweat, swagger or a sheaf of condoms.

Axe, as it happens, sponsored the Promundo study, which concluded that men who registered narrow, clichéd instructions about manhood were more likely to act out in self-destructive ways, such as substance abuse, and in outwardly destructive ones, such as online bullying.

Online bullying? That brings to mind a certain tweeter in chief, and so does the argument that when you feel compelled to project an unforgiving kind of masculine strength, you end up in a twisted, tortured place. You can call it the Man Box. Or, these days, the Oval Office.

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Frank Bruni, an Op-Ed columnist for The New York Times since 2011, joined the newspaper in 1995. Over his years, he has worn a wide variety of hats, including chief restaurant critic and Rome bureau chief.

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.