

# The invention of pork roast

I hit the caffeine wall in late afternoon last Thursday, that time in every addict's day when the morning's intake erodes from one's nerve endings and all remaining brain cells are swamped by secretions from the glands of laziness.

"Oh, go ahead. Flop on the couch and sleep," whispered my imp of the perverse, but there were novels to write and floors to clean and peach cobbler to cobble so, in the spirit of modern problem solving, I elected to consume more drugs. I poured the slush from four abandoned mugs into my ducky cup, popped the concoction into the microwave, selected a minute's worth of radiation, and opened a women's clothing catalog.

When the time's-up bell dinged, I retrieved my afternoon fix from the bowels of the machinery and tested its temperature with my right index finger. It was hot. While standing there with my finger in my mouth, staring at a contraption that had produced lava in less time that it took to study the fit of an underwire bra, I was transported back through the decades to Miss Craig's demonstration of how folks discovered cooked food.

Miss Craig was my third, fourth and fifth grade teacher. I don't know why we called

her Miss Craig. She was married to a hog farmer. She was built close to the ground, dressed in black and wore stockings rolled down into dark brown donuts at mid-calf. She had actually seen New York City during the Depression as lead soprano in a women's choir. A person wanted to be about ten paces away when Miss Craig launched into "In the layund of the freeeeeeeeeee, and the home of the brave" I don't remember ever knowing her first name.

She was a brave person who, in the course of digging farm kids out of the cultural dirt, taught evolutionary theory in the fundamentalist hickwaters of western Nebraska. She was normally a proper and reserved person, but when she addressed the subject of how blind luck and natural selection had driven us humanoids from way back there to clear up here, she became a silent film actress, the Faye Wray of the Sandhills. I was privileged to witness three performances of her "Cave Woman Discovers Pork Roast" act.

According to Miss Craig's theory of the evolution of cuisine, a cave-dwelling woman from the Cro-Magnon region of present-day France was out walking her pet pig on a mountainside one day about 20,000 years ago. (Miss Craig climbs a pretend Alp in

front of the blackboard, pausing now and then to stroke the friendly but invisible hog at her side.) The cave woman and her pet get caught in a sudden, ferocious storm. (Miss Craig cowers behind her desk, beckoning to her faithful porker to join her.) Devastating lightning, wind, and rain ensue. (Miss Craig is on top of her desk, making broad zig-zag sweeps with her arms, little fluttery rain motions with her fingers, her hair buffeted by gale force winds from the forced-air heater.) The pig gets struck by lightning. (Miss Craig also plays a cameo here and is thrashing and twitching on the floor.) A general conflagration results from the storm. (Miss Craig is behind the map stand, shielding her face from the heat.) The fire passes. (Miss Craig peeks out from behind the maps.) Cave woman discovers that Porky is inanimate. (A tragic wringing of hands accompanied by silent sobbing.) A ray of hope shines in the forest. (Miss Craig approaches the invisible pig and tries to nudge it to life with an index finger.) A recently roasted pig is hot. (Miss Craig puts her finger in her mouth to cool it off.) Mmmmm ... you know, pet pig tastes pretty good after being hit by lightning and burned in a forest fire. (Miss Craig looks at the sky, looks all around at the remains of the stone-age barbeque, then repeatedly pokes the pig and puts her finger in her mouth.) Pork roast has been invented.

In the final act of this drama, Miss Craig, as brand-new Cro-Magnon carnivore, looks at the sky and tests the wind while leading another pig up the same classroom

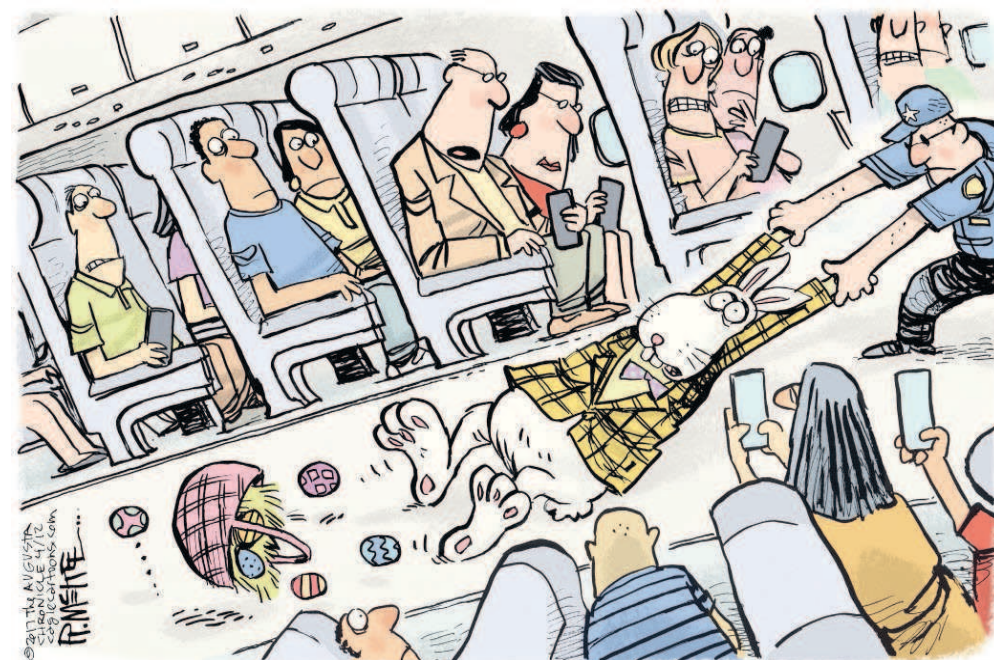
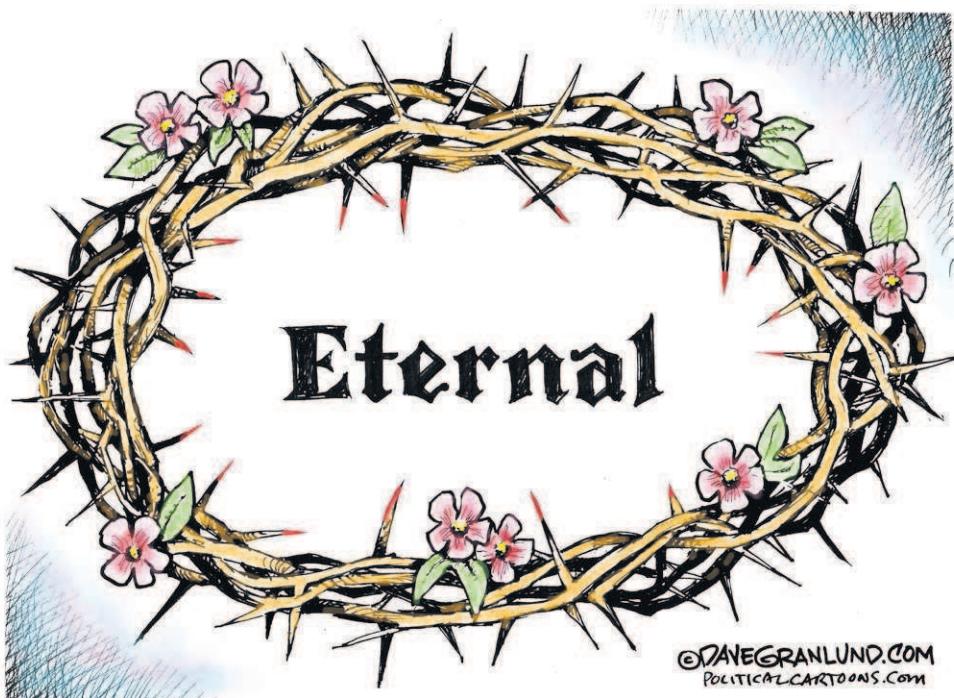


**J.D. SMITH**  
FROM THE HEADWATERS  
OF DRY CREEK

mountainside. She smiles, whistles and carries a stubby little finger-length stick about the same length as the spoon I now use to test the temperature of microwaved tea.

J.D. Smith lives in Athena and is a grant writer for the Pendleton Center for the Arts.

I was transported back to Miss Craig's demonstration of how folks discovered cooked food.



## Quick takes

### Wallowa Co. man allegedly poached dozens of elk

Needs to spend 12-years minimum in prison.

— Judith Henderson

Seriously, I would've been happy to dress and transport. And eat.

— Shawn Boethin

### Pendleton Penney's to stay open another month

What a pity, the Pendleton store is where I found out I was "husky" nearly 50 years ago!

— Robert J. Humphreys

I really hope they change their minds on closing JCP in Pendleton. It's always busy and we just don't have a store to fill the void that'll come from closing it.

— Warrine Terpening

### Data centers, 160 jobs headed to Umatilla County

Bring on the outside workers or hire locals? This influx can really change a community, Prineville is a good example. More urbanites, environmentalists, liberal leaning, crime will increase.

— Sherrie Henry- McClain

Good that new things are coming to Umatilla County.

— Woody Rennison

As you grow please remember to add constructive things for teens to be involved in and keep it affordable. There needs to be more than sex, drugs and alcohol for their weekend fun.

— Ginny Heard

### Larry Lindsay celebrates 50 years at Port of Morrow

Thank God for Larry Lindsay! And thank God for the Port of Morrow! Very impressive..

— George Hicks

A true gentleman, and a great ambassador for the agriculture community.

— Mike Yutzie

One of the finest men I know!

— Arne Swanson

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 or email editor@eastoregonian.com, and keep them to 140 characters.

## A good walk spoiled on the golf course

As a teenager caddying at a restricted country club, I resented the bigotry but accepted the tips. I learned to play golf myself and eventually got fairly good at it, but now I hate the game. Let me tell you why.

The ecological and aesthetic harm caused by most of the world's 34,000 golf courses — 45 percent of them here in the United States — is widely acknowledged today. Natural habitats have been disfigured and destroyed to create highly organized, artificially watered and unarguably fake nature. Some people find golf courses calming and beautiful, but that beauty comes at a price.

Since 1982, the United States Golf Association has funded efforts to conserve water through improving irrigation technologies, planting grasses that require less irrigation, and using recycled water from sewage treatment facilities.

Despite these commendable efforts, precious water is still being squandered in places like California's Coachella Valley, which includes Palm Springs and Palm Desert, where, despite a severe drought, golf courses continue to use about 37 million gallons of water a day. In drought-stricken Arizona, Phoenix-area courses routinely use more than 80 million gallons per day. The pesticides, fertilizers,



MICHAEL BAUGHMAN  
Comment

fungicides and herbicides spread by the irrigation water all harm complex ecological systems on land and at sea.

So critics like me are happy that the game's popularity is waning.

According to the National Golf Foundation, a high of 30.6 million golfers in 2003 had been reduced to 24.7 million by 2014. The number of golfers between ages 18 and 34 has declined by 30 percent over the past 20 years.

Millennials are apt to find the game far too slow — five hours or more to finish 18 holes — for their 21st century tastes. They are also typically more open-minded than their elders, and therefore tend to be turned off by the racism, sexism and snobbery that have long been associated with the country club scene. The ultimate result is that more than 800 courses across America have closed in a decade. Some of these courses have become housing developments, others parks, and a few landowners have taken advantage of tax breaks by donating their properties to nature trusts.

One of the reasons for this change had been explained succinctly in Forbes Magazine: People simply can't afford to play golf anymore. I find that easy to

believe. In 1958, a friend named Bob and I, both of us college students, reserved a tee time and paid \$8 apiece to play 18 holes at the famed Pebble Beach course on the Monterey Peninsula.

We talked about natural beauty during our round and agreed that the land, sea and sky we saw that day would have been far more beautiful without the intrusion of the golf course we played on. For a similar tee time today, however, Bob and

### The number of young golfers has declined in the past 20 years.

I would be required to stay a minimum of two nights at the Pebble Beach Lodge or an affiliated property, and the 18 holes would cost us a minimum of \$1,835 apiece, carts and caddies not included.

Mark Twain may or may not have said (the quotation's origins remain murky): "Golf is a good walk spoiled." But even that isn't true anymore, because very few golfers still walk. Most climb in and out of motorized carts whose costs aren't included in Pebble Beach's exorbitant greens fees. The only virtue the game ever had — moderate exercise — is gone forever.

Michael Baughman is a contributor to Writers on the Range, the opinion service of High Country News. He is a writer in Oregon.

## Finding the creator in creative writing

By DORYS GROVER

April is National Poetry month, and when I read colleges across the United States are seeing a boom in demand for courses in creative writing I thought how many people expect to make a living with a bachelor's degree in creative writing.

I taught creative writing at my university and it was a disaster. I was assigned the course because I had received several awards for publishing poetry and short stories. Not a very good reason for the assignment. There were 20 students, mostly 18 to 20 years of age. Several thought they were writing the great American novel. I sent them to read John Dos Passos. Some sought self-expression in poetry. I sent them to Walt Whitman.

Have you read any of the poetry published today in leading magazines or college creative writing journals? Many want to write their memoirs, and at age 18 how many have had life experience long enough to attempt a memoir? In a three-credit course of study a professor expects some kind of results from

instruction. Certain elements are required: plot, character, action, time, site and theme. Creative writing is self-expression. The diversity of personalities taking such a course is challenging. The major drawback I found in the students was their lack of reading, especially in the classics. I found more creative writing when teaching a folklore class.

Writing is a way of life, of being aware of others, of nature, of death. The quiet voice of a poem can change one's world. Keats tells us poets are the legislators of the world. Poets open and explore the world. They bring insight and understanding of ourselves, others, of nature, animals, of dreams.

They are significant pathways of a life and are a search for truth. A poet's personal values come forth in self-expression in their response to life. Poets are well-read and profit from what they have read. They have lived lives of meaning and have learned how to express them.

Poets can express the beauty of dunes of sand heaped by wind and wave, the sound of a bird's song, the whisper of aspens in the stillness of a forest, the rush of water

down a mountain stream, the cry of a coyote, or the danger in the black eyes of a rattlesnake.

Mostly, the poet reaches inside the heart to find peace. The life of a poem, as T. S. Eliot wrote, is its past, present and future. It is the poet's wilderness. In a poem titled "Glimpses," William Stafford writes, "Walking along, any time, I find clues to tomorrow —" Larry McMurtry in "Literary Life: A Second Memoir" writes "The best part of a writer's life is actually doing it, making up characters, filling the blank page, creating scenes that readers in distant places might connect to."

The first book I published, I was relieved. I was tired, as I had read and reread page proofs. I was glad it was done. It was not a best seller. A writer's life is lonely. So why write? Something inside won't let you rest if you are really a writer. There must be something in this generation of college students that drives them to self-expression, abysmal as it often is. Maybe it's the pathway to sanity.

Dorys C. Grover, of Pendleton, is a member of the Academy of American Poets.