

# EAST OREGONIAN

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## OUR VIEW

# Finding the sense in the senseless

There is no way to make sense of the senseless.

On a Sunday evening in Las Vegas, a 64-year-old man rains death on an outdoor country music festival. Firing hundreds of rounds, he commits a well-planned massacre.

Dozens die. Hundreds more are wounded, some critically. Thousands more — concertgoers, family, friends — will find their lives forever altered.

To say the shooter's act defies comprehension is to state the obvious.

Millions of Americans own guns. Few use them as instruments of mass chaos and carnage.

Millions of Americans are in their 60s. Few commit slaughter.

Millions of Americans struggle with mental illness — murder is not a sane act, even though jurisprudence sometimes judges it as such — yet few resort to homicidal violence.

And so, it is useless to automatically blame firearms or mental illness or whatever else for Stephen Craig Paddock's butchery undertaken from the 32nd floor of the Mandalay Bay Hotel and Casino.

Yet surely, we can all agree that something is dreadfully wrong — deadly wrong — in our culture. Something enables mass violence to proliferate. Something allows humans to take out their societal and personal grievances with deadly precision.

We exist in a culture that increasingly has become "us vs. them," from politics to standard of living to personal vendettas. However, blaming anyone, from the president to the neighbor next door, will achieve nothing. Rather, we as an American people must get it together ... and bring ourselves together as one.

How can we, as you and I and everyone else, overcome the causes that impel some people to the madness of massacre? How do we spot the signs — presumably of social isolation or of beyond-the-norm anger and unresolved rejection — that foretell impending violence?

To say the shooter's act defies comprehension is to state the obvious.

A lesson of the 2015 shootings at Umpqua Community College in Roseburg is that lots of people saw oddities in the days and weeks

beforehand, but no one put them all together. Without becoming the Big Brother of George Orwell's "1984" or the authoritarian society of Ray Bradbury's "Fahrenheit 451," we — family members, friends, teachers, colleagues — must become better at noticing and better at alerting, even when we don't know whether our little piece amounts to anything, or whether there even is a puzzle to be solved by authorities.

As for firearms, they reflect a societal truth. Bad things come from good things carried to extreme. Used properly, a firearm has a legitimate, worthwhile role. Used wrongly, a gun can become an instrument of evil.

In our society, instruments of casual carnage are easily available, from bomb-making instructions on the internet to high-capacity, high-power guns that can be obtained illegally when not legally. More laws will not change that, at least not soon.

Neither will new laws change our society's fascination with, and glorification of, mass violence. Books, movies and video games celebrate violence as the perceived solution to one's problems and a measure of one's machismo.

Even if we cannot make sense of the senseless, how do we stop the senseless?



AP Photo/Marcio Jose Sanchez

Moises Flores raises an American flag outside of the Thomas and Mack Center in the aftermath of a mass shooting at a music festival Monday in Las Vegas.

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

### State of Oregon is sliding into socialism

Gov. Kate Brown and our socialist controlled legislature has turned Oregon into North America's version of Venezuela.

HB 3464 strengthens Oregon's claim to the greatest sanctuary state in the Americas where serial rapists, like Sergio Martinez who has been deported 12 times, was released and later charged with the rape of a 65-year-old woman.

HB 2177, Brown's "motor voter" law, is the first in the nation that allows voting without proving citizenship, ensuring socialist control of Oregon.

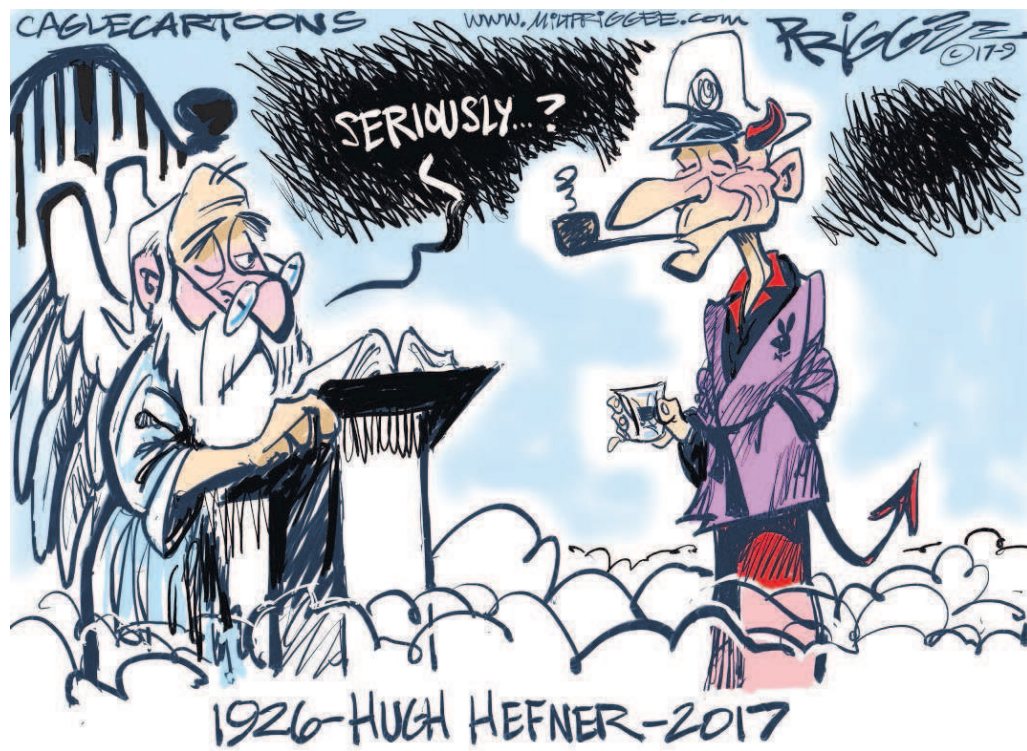
HB 3391 is a new tax on Oregon's

health care, providing sex-select abortions for foreigners at Oregon taxpayer expense. In case Oregonians get upset at their state being molded in Brown's image, SB 719 will require gun confiscation of those deemed not responsible to "possess a deadly weapon."

In May 2015, 15,000 doctors left the Venezuela health care system because of shortages of drugs, equipment and poor pay. The current dictator Nicolas Maduro's response to food shortages: "Let them shoot rabbits." Most Oregonians will not wake up until it is time to shoot rabbits.

Stuart Dick  
Irrigon

## OTHER VIEWS



## Speaking ill of Hugh Hefner

Hugh Hefner, gone to his reward at the age of 91, was a pornographer and chauvinist who got rich on masturbation, consumerism and the exploitation of women, aged into a leering grotesque in a captain's hat, and died a pack rat in a decaying manse where porn blared during his pathetic orgies.

Hef was the grinning pimp of the sexual revolution, with quaaludes for the ladies and Viagra for himself — a father of smut addictions and eating disorders, abortions and divorce and syphilis, a pretentious huckster who published *Udipe* stories no one read while doing flesh procurement for celebrities, a revolutionary whose revolution chiefly benefited men much like himself.

The arc of his life vindicated his moral critics, conservative and feminist: What began with talk of jazz and Picasso and other signifiers of good taste ended in a sleazy decrepitude that would have been pitiable if it wasn't still so exploitative.

Early Hef had a pipe and suit and a highbrow reference for every occasion; he even claimed to have a philosophy, that final refuge of the scoundrel. But late Hef was a lecherous, low-brow Peter Pan, playing at perpetual boyhood — ice cream for breakfast, pajamas all day — while bodyguards shooed male celebrities away from his paid harem and the skull grinned beneath his papery skin.

This late phase was prettier up by reality television's "The Girls Next Door," which kept the orgies offstage and relied on the girlfriends' mix of desperation, boredom and charisma for its strange appeal. The behind-the-scenes accounts were rather grimmer: depression and drugs, "dirty hallway carpets and the curtains that smell like dog piss," the chance to wait while Hef "picked the dog poo off the carpet — and then ask for our allowance."

Needless to say the obituaries for Hefner, even if they acknowledge the seaminess, have been full of encomia for his great deeds: Hef the vanquisher of puritanism, Hef the political progressive, Hef the great businessman and all the rest. There are even conservative appreciations, arguing that for all his faults Hef was an entrepreneur who appreciated the finer things in life and celebrated la difference.

What a lot of garbage. Sure, Hefner supported some good causes and published some good writers. But his good deeds and aesthetic aspirations were ultimately incidental to his legacy — a gloss over his flesh-peddling, smeared like Vaseline on a pornographer's lens. The things that were distinctively Hefnerian, that made him influential and important, were all rotten, and to the extent they were part of stories that



Ross DOUTHAT  
Comment

people tend to celebrate, they showed the rot in larger things as well.

His success as a businessman showed the rotten side of capitalism — the side that exploits appetites for money, that dissolves family and religion while promising that consumption will fill the void they leave behind.

The social liberalism he championed was the rotten and self-interested sort, a liberalism of male and upper-class privilege, in which the strong and beautiful and rich take their pleasure at the expense of the vulnerable and poor and not-yet-born.

The online future his career anticipated was the rotten side of the internet — the realms of onanism and custom-tailored erotica, where the male vanity and entitlement he indulged has curdled into resentment and misogyny.

And his appreciation of male-female difference was rotten, too — the leering predatory sort of appreciation, the Cosby-Clinton-Trump sort, the sort that nicknames quaaludes "high openers" and expects the girls to laugh, the sort that prefers breast implants to female intellect and rents the charms of youth to escape the realities of age.

No doubt what Hefner offered America somebody else would have offered in his place, and the changes he helped hasten would have come rushing in without him.

But in every way that mattered he made those changes worse, our culture coarser and crueler and more sterile than liberalism or feminism or freedom of speech required. And in every way that mattered his life story proved that we were wrong to listen to him, because at the end of the long slide lay only a degraded, priapic senility, or the desperate gaiety of Prince Prospero's court with the Red Death at the door.

Now that death has taken him, we should examine our own sins. Liberals should ask why their crusade for freedom and equality found itself with such a captain, and what his legacy says about their cause. Conservatives should ask how their crusade for faith and family and community ended up so Hefnerian itself — with a conservative news network that seems to have been run on Playboy Mansion principles and a conservative party that just elected a playboy as our president.

You can find these questions being asked, but they are counterpoints and minor themes. That this should be the case, that only prudish Christians and spoilsport feminists are willing to say that the man was obviously wicked and destructive, is itself a reminder that the rot Hugh Hefner spread goes very, very deep.

Ross Douthat joined *The New York Times* as an *Op-Ed* columnist in 2009.

## OTHER VIEWS

## Let Obamacare repeal rest in peace

San Francisco Chronicle

The law President Trump and Republican lawmakers deride as Obamacare could at this point be rechristened McCaincare, Collinscare or even Kimmelcare.

Graham-Cassidy, the latest attempted repeal of the Affordable Care Act, officially expired Tuesday without so much as a vote, thanks in large part to the likes of Sens. John McCain of Arizona and Susan Collins of Maine, who reprised their roles as the moderate conscience of their caucus, and late-night host Jimmy Kimmel, who was moved by his son's congenital heart defect to, as he put it, take a break from "talking about the Kardashians."

Nine months into the GOP's total control of the federal government, the obsessive campaign to dismantle the ACA has succeeded mainly in expanding the ranks of its unlikely defenders in the face of grim alternatives. It's a measure of the depth and illogic of this obsession that Republicans have yet to give it up completely.

Majority Leader Mitch McConnell, who oversaw a grueling series of failed votes to

undo the ACA in July, urged his colleagues to move on to tax reform but vaguely claimed that they were "not giving up" on health care. One of the champions of the latest bill, Sen. Lindsey Graham of South Carolina, promised to return to it after "taking our show on the road" to build support. Some lawmakers were even pushing to tackle health care and taxes — a pair of "unbelievably complex" subjects, as the president once noted — simultaneously. And Trump maintained that "there will be a repeal and replace."

Rushed into consideration with just days left for approval by a simple majority before a procedural deadline, Graham-Cassidy would have replaced ACA subsidies and Medicaid funding with grants to the states, likely returning tens of millions of Americans to the ranks of the uninsured. As McCain and others noted, it skipped the hearings and analysis typically applied to major legislation as well as any attempt at bipartisan support.

It also cut short an effort to craft legislation that would actually address some of the ACA's flaws. That remains the obvious way forward for senators who can bear to abandon their assault on Obama's signature reform.

## LETTERS POLICY

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