

Two rural dining experiences

ONE: When I first patronized the place, I don't think the The Club was formally called The Club. I think it was just the local name for the establishment. The only signage identifying it as a café/bar was a plywood sign on the roof, lighted by incandescent bulbs that said simply "Eats."

It was a hot July Saturday afternoon when I walked into the building, through a beat-up front door into a white Formica café with four small tables, a dozen straight backed chairs, and six leatherette stools at the counter. The kitchen area was tiny, with a serving window ledge. I could just see the top of a gray head, belonging to the one cook who also acted as waitress, cashier, and busperson.

I was the only patron. It looked dark and cool back in the bar, so that is where I went. An old-school wooden bar hugged one wall. A few round tables skirted a dance floor and jukebox. The bartender wore a ballcap that said "Clyde." I asked Clyde if it was alright to eat in the bar and could I see a menu? He handed me a single sheet of 8 1/2 x 11 paper with a mimeographed price list.

While a beer made peace with my ulcers, I studied the menu. A hamburger with fixings was a dollar, a bowl of chili 50 cents, and a chiliberger \$1.75. I pointed out to Clyde what seemed to me to be a discrepancy in the pricing.

"So?"
"Well, this must be an error. It just

seems like it would be cheaper to order a hamburger and a bowl of chili than to ask for a chiliberger."

"So?"
"Well, what is the difference? If you are charging two bits more for the same ingredients and calling it a chiliberger, is it something special, something more than chili over a hamburger and a couple of sunk buns? I mean, is the chiliberger something I eat with my fingers or with a fork?"

Clyde gave me a "you stupid-pup" look that I saw several times in the next few years, jerked the menu from my fingers and said, "Hell no, son. With a mouth like you've got, I'll walk over home and get you a scoop shovel if you think you're going to need it." I ordered the chiliberger.

TWO: When I was a teenager, at the very beginnings of what turned into a 30-year on-and-off career as an agricultural worker, I put up loose hay out in the Sandhills of Nebraska, where ranch families made darn certain that their help ate three square meals per day. The big meal was at noon, called dinnertime, when the women of the family would bring a big spread out into the fields and feed the workers as though they were going to market us by the hundredweight in the fall. I fondly remember sitting in the shade of a tractor wheel and feasting on fried chicken, potato salad, coleslaw, and homemade bread, washed down with raspberry Koolaid and followed by a piece of gooseberry pie and a short nap.

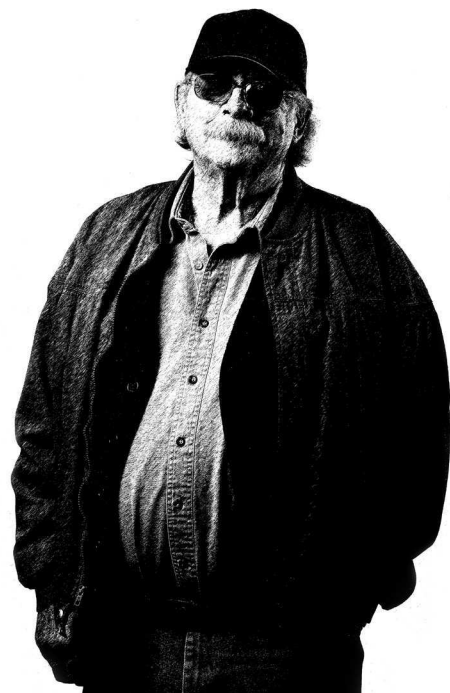
By the time I was in my thirties and had bounced around the planet, I ended up in the high country above the Salmon River in Idaho, where no food was ever offered by the various ranchers I helped, and, eventually, none was expected. We cowpokes and silage pit stompers would sneak home at noon for a baloney sandwich or into town for a chiliberger at The Club.

Except for one time. It was weigh-out day at the ranch, as close as one can get to Cow Owner Christmas, that day when the cattle buyer with the dusty tan Cadillac, big checkbook and five cattle hauler trucks shows up at the ranch to weigh and load grass-fed beef for the trip to the big feedlot in the sky. It was rancher's payday.

About mid-morning, when the crew was encrusted with cow crap and the rancher and cattle buyer were opening their second pint of Old Overholt, the owner yelled into the pens that none of us were supposed to leave at lunchtime because his wife had prepared food for all of us. Crazy Dan and I were both surprised at the sudden appearance of a meal plan in our terms of employment.

I was right at the front of the serving line and was the first to realize that the only entrée on the menu for the day was microwaved beef liver served on a paper plate, with potato chips. I never was a gut eater, and I challenge you to show me a person who ever butchered a steer and eats rare steak. Nuking beef liver does nothing to the organ meat except to heat it up and turn it warm and gray. The ranch wife was using this day to clean out her freezer.

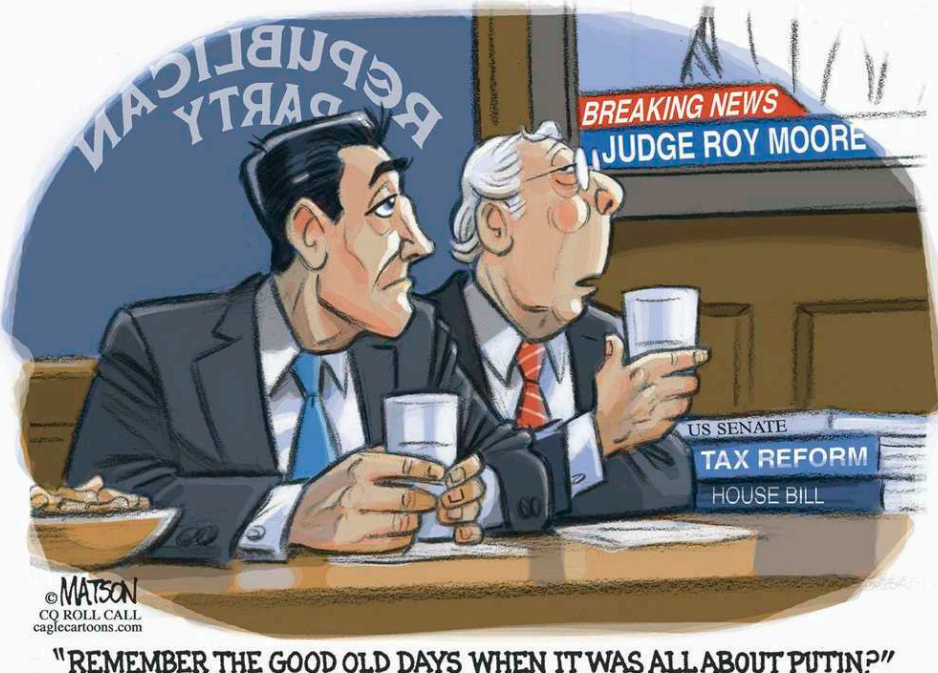
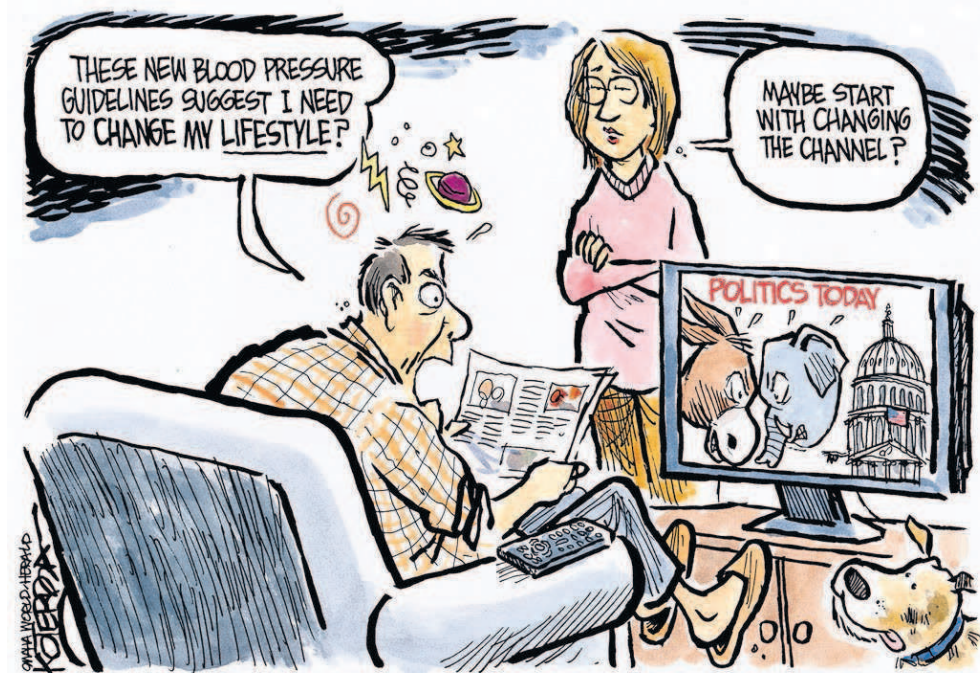
I was lucky. I was able to accept my serving somewhat graciously by holding my breath. Then I excused myself from the kitchen and beat it to the porch where the



J.D. SMITH
FROM THE HEADWATERS OF DRY CREEK

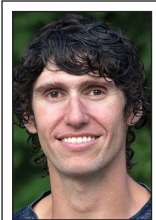
cowdogs were waiting. A young hard-working Dingo dog was kind enough to eat my free lunch. By the time the last of the cowboys joined me on the porch, though, the cowdogs were plumb full of microwaved beef liver. I'm pretty sure that my horse slipped on a chunk of liver that afternoon, chucked into the barnyard slop rather than left rudely on the plate.

J.D. Smith is an accomplished writer and jack-of-all-trades. He lives in Athena.



We are all on unstable ground

In 2015, Kathryn Schulz, a writer at The New Yorker, published "The Really Big One," a meticulous evocation of the oceanic earthquake that will someday drown the Pacific Northwest beneath a tsunami. I lived in Seattle then, and the quake was all anyone talked about: at coffee shops, in elevators, on buses.



BEN GOLDFARB
Comment

Many articles, even books, had been written about the coming 9.0, but Schulz's Pulitzer-winning story was the first to grab the slumbering Northwest by the shoulders and shake it awake. Until, that is, the news cycle shifted, people got on with their lives, and earthquakes receded again in society's consciousness.

Earthquakes are our most confounding natural disaster.

Earthquakes, writes another Kathryn — Kathryn Miles — in her new book, "Quakeland," are our most confounding natural disaster. We can watch hurricanes spinning in the Atlantic weeks before they land; we detect the rumbling of volcanoes months pre-eruption. Earthquakes, though, often provide no warning at all. Our grasp of what triggers them is tenuous; we are flying blind when it comes to predicting them. Hence the complacency: Why stress the incomprehensible? "How could we know so little about our planet and the risks it poses to all of us?" Miles asks.

"Quakeland" is a sprawling, painstaking attempt to answer that question. The author travels the country, from quake-overdue New York City to Yellowstone National Park, whose slumbering caldera, if we're lucky, will hold off on annihilating us for a few more millennia. She is primarily concerned with how various sectors — schools, hospitals, oil tank farms — are preparing, or failing to prepare, for Big Ones in their own backyards. No

facility goes untoured: Miles descends into an Idaho silver mine, wanders the bowels of the Hoover Dam, and visits the Berkeley seismology lab where researchers are designing quake warning systems for your phone.

You can't write a book about quakes, of course, without dwelling on California. The San Andreas Fault plays a starring role in "Quakeland." Miles wanders West Hollywood with an engineer who exposes alarming construction vulnerabilities. (Wood, counter-intuitively, is

more resilient than stone or concrete, which "tends to explode.")

But it's the obscure hot spots — the intraplate faults, far from the junctions of colliding tectonic masses — that

seem scariest, precisely because we're so ill prepared for their rupture.

Salt Lake City overlays the Wasatch Fault Zone, where a 7.0 would be catastrophic: The region could expect 2,000 deaths, 9,000 injuries and 200,000 rendered homeless. Miles is ruthlessly pragmatic about the attendant logistical nightmares: "How would (building) inspectors get into a city whose highways and runways had crumbled? ... How would the city get its dead and injured out?"

We're not just unready for disaster — we're exacerbating the risk. Miles is especially concerned about induced seismicity, earthquakes caused by human industry, particularly the injection of fracking wastewater into the ground. The phenomenon's epicenter is Oklahoma, which went from one of the least seismically active states to the most after a drilling boom. Agencies, beholden to industry, denied the connection until the evidence became irrefutable; other states still

skirt the problem. The debate uncannily resembles the conflict over climate change: Fossil fuel interests exploit uncertainty about the magnitude of the problem to justify inaction — never mind the overwhelming scientific consensus about the threat's reality.

Occasionally, Miles' reporting is so thorough it's exhausting: I have no doubt that a Southeastern quake would cause headaches for FedEx's Memphis headquarters, but I'm not sure I needed a chapter to belabor the point. In leaving no seismic stone unturned, though, "Quakeland" discovers alarming Achilles' heels in our infrastructure and emergency systems. That at least 30 faults underpin Nevada's Yucca Mountain does not make me feel more comfortable about someday storing nuclear waste there.

Fortunately, there are success stories as well as potential apocalypses. Though most Northwesters may have again forgotten that they live in a future flood zone, disaster managers have not. Near the end of "Quakeland," Miles visits a school in Westport, Washington, that constructed a \$2 million rooftop tsunami shelter. No grim detail had been overlooked: "Surrounding the platform is a six-foot-high parapet ... mostly to protect the kids from witnessing the devastation."

Quake preparedness is partly a matter of personal responsibility: Stock an emergency kit with food, water and warm clothes today. Mostly, though, it's a public policy problem. We must invest in modernizing bridges and developing early warning systems; retrofit our schools and hospitals; advocate for regulations to reduce induced seismicity. Gearing up for inevitable earthquakes won't be easy, and it won't be cheap — but we can't bear the cost of doing nothing.

Ben Goldfarb is a contributor to Writers on the Range, the opinion service of High Country News (hcn.org). He is a writer in Connecticut.

How and why to talk about privilege

For many of us, the approaching holidays will be charged with unease. We will step out of our echo chambers and find ourselves sitting down with family and friends we rarely talk to in person and who may have radically different views.

What if we could rethink how we start those conversations? What if there was a way to transcend party lines and listen to one another's real life experiences?

There's an app for that. Well, not an app, exactly.

Actually it's a short online quiz, designed to reveal an individual's "American Dream score." I took it myself and it's an interesting way to look at the factors that helped you move up or you worked to overcome. Try taking it yourself (my score was 51), and read others' stories online. The test offers an empathetic way to navigate a conversation with people who may not recognize how the cards have been stacked in their favor — and why that matters.

And that's a fine framework through which to consider some of the harsh realities unmasked across the country, and here in Oregon, since the divisive presidential election.

Rather than avoiding talking politics this year, shouldn't we ask ourselves: "What is at stake if we don't begin talking?"

Since November 2016, more hate crimes per capita have been reported in Oregon than in any other state. That's worth talking about.

Some of these incidents might seem isolated: racist graffiti, intimidating fliers, racial slurs. But small acts are the stones that pave our society's path forward. More than 20 of the hate crimes reported this year involve students. On-campus harassment and intimidation in Portland, Silverton, Bend, Coos Bay and other cities sent a message that reverberated well



DOUG STAMM
Comment

There's an app for checking privilege.

beyond the school grounds. In 2017, Oregon is still steeped in the racism and disparity that defined its past: white supremacists and hate groups, the displacement of indigenous people, Japanese-American internment, and entrenched institutional discrimination against African Americans.

Increasingly, this ugly legacy is showing up in our cities as well as rural communities, where demographics are shifting rapidly. Census data show the percentage of people of color in rural counties across Oregon is growing at a faster rate than the state overall. Across the board, the picture of what it means to be an Oregonian is changing,

and that change reveals cultural and structural barriers we have yet to overcome. How all of us, as Oregonians, handle this moment will define our state's future. As a white, heterosexual, college-educated, urban American male, I'm aware of my position on the comfortable side of disparity. I know I have a responsibility to use my privilege to speak up and fight for positive change.

However you approach your own conversations, remember what's at stake. Have the courage to talk about what's happening across our state and why it needs to change. Move past discomfort by reminding yourself that the Oregon our children deserve is a place in which equality is real — not an ideal.

That is not a matter of opinion or politics. It's a matter of conscience. Your voice matters.

Doug Stamm is the chief executive officer of Meyer Memorial Trust, where he oversaw a shift toward grantmaking focused on equity, diversity and inclusion. Born and raised in Oregon, he plans to step away from Meyer in 2018, after 15 years as CEO. A search for his successor is underway.