

Can a writer learn to draw?

I picked up the pencil and held it in my right hand. When was the last time I picked up a pencil for me? For something I wanted to do for me and no one else?

I write and write and write ... if fourth grade writing counts. Fourth grade journal prompts, fourth grade Cornell notes, fourth grade sentences. I'm really quite good at fourth grade.

I write names, make check marks, draw stars, underline, circle, add bullets to notes, and keep my pencil behind my ear most of the time — just in case I need to write.

It was a Sunday evening in the late part of fall. The wind was blowing outside and the tree outside the window brushed against the roof of the back porch. It was dark, so the lights were on in the house. Lamps in every corner turned on spilling light across the hardwood floors, and dusty bookshelves of the house we've made a home. I sat at the counter with a blank piece of beautiful white paper in front of me. Blank, white, hopeful paper.

My friend beside me, my husband

watching from across the counter, and my boys wondering what I was doing with a pencil in my hand and no notecards or lined paper in front of me.

I didn't really know what I was doing either, but I was willing to try. I listened about lines and curves and held my hand out in front of me. My left hand ... the one that isn't as strong as the other, the one with hundreds of lines that for once didn't seem dry or cracked, the one that folded around air as I held it out.

Could I draw at all? Could I make my hand look real on a flat piece of plain, white paper? All I could think about was how I knew I could write, but how I knew I couldn't draw. Thoughts swirled around in my mind like the wind outside, and I twisted and turned the pencil as I anxiously started to draw one line and then another.

The size was off, the lines didn't quite match up, and I squirmed a lot. I wondered if my feelings were obvious. I wondered if the insecurity I was feeling was pushing through to the piece of paper. I wondered why I was doing this thing that I wasn't

good at — at all. I wondered and wondered and wondered.

The clock ticked and the pencil moved — pushing and pulling like my emotions often do — wanting to be brave, but holding back. Wishing for things to turn out just right, but realizing that imperfect is really what I need to be striving for. Hoping I could actually do what I was scared to try. I tried to erase the mistakes, and I even started over completely — twice. And finally, I quit.

Hours later, as I walked through the house turning lights off, I saw the paper sitting on the counter. I looked down at the ridiculous (for lack of a better word) attempt of making my hand have dimension and depth, and I stopped, sat down by myself in a room with one lamp on, and flipped the paper over. I couldn't quit. I couldn't give up.

Sometimes, when you stop worrying about who's watching, stop worrying about being perfect, stop trying so hard for all the wrong reasons, you might surprise yourself within a matter of minutes. In fact, it turns out that all you need to give yourself is a pencil, a paper, and a whole lot of grace to see what was there all along.

To live by grace means to acknowledge my whole story — the light and the dark. In



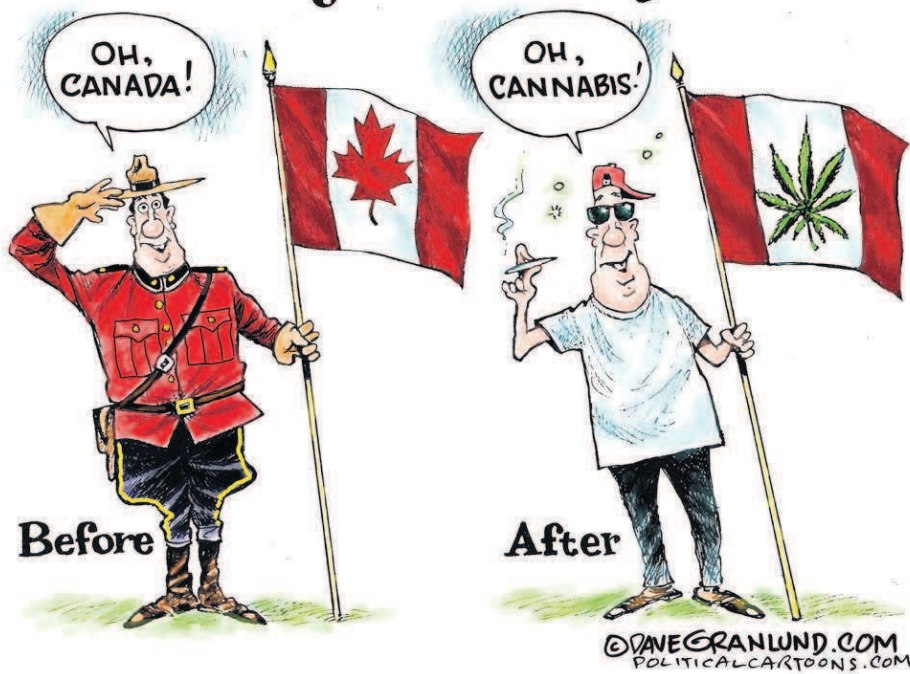
LINDSAY MURDOCK
FROM SUN UP TO SUN DOWN

admitting my shadow side, I learn who I am and what God's grace means.

Lindsay Murdock lives and teaches in Echo.

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Rules for older drivers

To start with, this old dude has had a safe life on the road with zero automobile accidents since 1952.

Looking through an envelope of ancient driving licenses, in hundreds of thousands of miles of driving in every state in America — and Nigeria, Saigon and Bahrain — I never dented a fender. As a result, years ago State Farm Insurance gave me a certificate of guaranteed renewal.

Some relevant facts and good advice: In comparison to younger drivers, older drivers tend to limit their driving during bad weather, at night, and on high-speed roads.

Years ago I picked up a brochure at the local CAPECO office titled "Seniors and Driving: Helping a Love One Stay Safe." Signs that indicate unsafe driving: having close calls or accidents, people honking, difficulty staying in their lane, driving too slowly, confusion about directions to familiar places, getting frequent tickets or warnings.

Rules of the road

1. For older drivers, smaller cars are safer. Forgo your old four-door behemoth.
2. Now that you're on Medicare, remember that you can't swivel your head like you could when you were younger — your neck ain't the same now.
3. Also make sure that you can see at least 10 feet in front of your car and also can see when backing up with your rear view mirror. Buy seat cushions!
4. Yield, yield, yield the right-of-way to other drivers and remember to look for pedestrians at intersections.
5. Pull carefully into intersections, looking everywhere for traffic. Study the safest way to town — plan your route.
6. Remember the speed limits. About a year ago I started driving to and fro on I-84 at a steady 55 MPH. It works well and I feel safer.
7. Hold at two drinks per evening.
8. Signal and look when changing lanes.
9. Keep distractions down, like internet conversations with a passenger. And keep the volume down on your car's radio.
10. Be extra wary at busy left turns. Find a safe way to navigate them, such as driving to another crossing.
11. Be careful at dusk and when



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the sunset is in your eyes. Wear sunglasses.

12. Buy a louder turn signal switch at a parts store. Your son-in-law can install it.

13. Get into the habit of following every glance in the rear-view mirror with a glance at the instrument panel. Look for trouble. Which is what I ask the guys at my lube shop to do.

14. Watch out for trucks. Stay far back, don't argue with steel.

15. Remember the 4-Second Rule:

- Keep 4 seconds following distance.
- Look 4 seconds before changing lanes.

• Wait 4 seconds before pulling out from a stop sign.

• Check 4 times to either side before pulling into traffic.

16. Avoid the rush hour whenever possible.

17. In Pendleton country, if/when a deer jumps in front, don't turn off the road. A busted grill is better than St. Anthony Hospital. In "Road-Kill Romance," Pendleton poet Dick Kaiser wrote: "But deer are less stable at either end. So hit them either for or aft. It will spin them full around."

18. Buckle up your seat belt when starting the car, not at the first turn or stop. Accidents tend to happen close to home. Remember, state laws allow police to stop and ticket a motorist if the driver and passengers are not buckled up.

19. Always turn on your headlights during the day so other drivers will see you coming.

20. Watch out for children, who sometimes dash across the street. And really, really slow down in school speed zones — eyes are upon you.

21. Don't depend on mirrors. Look right, left, and right again.

22. Scan the road ahead for unusual action. Drive in a bubble of awareness.

23. Look behind and around when leaving any parking spot. Don't back into someone or something like a shopping cart. Why don't shoppers put them back in their racks where they belong?

My final helpful hint: Park in an open area in parking lots. A walk to Walmart's front door is both safer and healthy.

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Tariffs on China could burn rural Oregon

On Monday, President Trump ordered new tariffs on an additional \$200 billion in Chinese imports, in response for China's retaliation against previously announced tariffs. Our economic landscape is now vulnerable to a potentially catastrophic trade war between the United States and Oregon's largest export market. Sadly, when the smoke clears from this impending international inferno, it will likely be Oregon's working families who get burned.

Trade wars, like wild fires, are easy to prepare for but hard to contain. Indeed, they are risky adventures that are incompatible with the principles of free enterprise and the free market. Yet fate finds our nation poised to repeat past mistakes by fanning the flames of just such a trade war, this time with China—a move that jeopardizes Oregon's export economy, with potentially devastating and disproportionate impacts on families and communities in rural Oregon.

Far from correcting inequities in trade relationships, trade wars tend to be fueled by domestic political calculations and quickly spread beyond their fire lines to elsewhere in the economy. We know this because we've been here before. The Great Depression was kindled in part by escalating measures aimed at protecting American workers, which exploded out of control. True, today's global economy bears little semblance to the trade landscape of the 1930s. But the fundamentals of the marketplace remain the unchanged—and that offers a preview of what's to come if the Trump administration continues down the path of brinkmanship toward economic devastation.

China is by far the number one international destination for goods produced in Oregon. In fact, Oregon exported \$3.8 billion in goods to China last year, according to the U.S.-China Business Council. And according to the Peterson Institute for International Economics, approximately half a billion dollars in Oregon exports are likely to be affected if the president's trade war with China isn't extinguished.

Granted, the size of a trade relationship shouldn't be decisive of



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whether to pursue remedies to other countries' harmful trade policies. And yes, China has a long history of intellectual property theft which directly harms many of Oregon's high-tech employers. But a trade war is not the answer.

Our nation's founders wisely empowered Congress to check the president's authority to meddle in the marketplace. If the president fails to heed history's warning

and continues to fan the flames of reciprocating tariffs and trade barriers, Congress has a duty to step in and reaffirm our nation's fidelity to the free market. This must include abiding by first principles, upholding longstanding commitments, and adhering to the rule of law.

Oregon Congressman Greg Walden has expressed concerns about unintended consequences arising from President Trump's recent moves and countermeasures on trade. As chairman of the House Committee on Energy and Commerce, Congressman Walden is in a powerful position to wield influence over his colleagues in Congress on trade matters. For the sake of Oregon's export-dependent industries, let's hope Congressman Walden is prepared to follow his words of warning with action.

Time is short, so the days and weeks ahead will be crucial to containing this blaze before it gets out of hand. There is ample kindling and more than enough fuel to wreak havoc on our nation's economy. But the better angels of our nature might still prevail if leaders in Congress are prepared to do the right thing.

President Trump prides himself on his ability to negotiate, and previous interactions suggest that the president shares a good rapport with his Chinese counterpart, Xi Jinping. It's time for President Trump to use those skills in service to a better economy and leave the trade wars in the ash bin of history.

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