

Gillette: Community shows its appreciation for his years of officiating

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Gillette's brain.

Gillette, 68, began refereeing baseball at age 18 after being talked into it by his brother, Pat. He said he instantly loved it and started officiating basketball and football, too. As a man in stripes, he happily whistled fouls on the hardwood and illegal blocks on the gridiron. He called balls and strikes from behind the plate.

Gillette knew most of the rules since he played baseball and football at Mac-Hi and football at Whitman College. In 1972, he attended school to become a professional umpire. Over the years, he worked five state championship football games, two state baseball finals and at least eight state basketball championships.

These days, Gillette serves as commissioner of the Blue Mountain Basketball Officials Association. He's the guy who schedules the other officials and evaluates their performance. The latter duty is what brought him to Saturday night's game.

After being honored, Gillette talked about his decades as an official.

"It's something that becomes ingrained," he said. "You either like it or you don't."



George Gillette claps for his wife, Dominie Heiser, after Gillette was honored Saturday at the Blue Mountain Conference Championships for his almost 50 years as a sports official. The crowd at the Pendleton Convention Center cheered for Heiser's willingness for her husband to travel from home so often to officiate around the state.

Staff photo by Kathy Aney

Athletes often approach him years later after recognizing him as an official.

"When someone comes up to me and says, 'Hey, aren't you a referee?' I kind of cringe," he said, "because I hope its going to be positive." It usually is.

He said still loves the job, though being an official is harder now in some ways, such as more negativity and involvement from spectators. He doesn't internalize

it. Brian Freels, who officiates football and basketball with Gillette, said coaches' tantrums and fans' comments roll right off Gillette.

"He doesn't lose his temper," Freels said. "He keeps his composure."

Gillette said he gets the usual taunts about bad eyesight when fans disagree with a call, but he usually keeps cool and suppresses sizzling one-liners that come to mind. Occasion-

ally, he must have a spectator removed from the venue.

Freels, who remembers Gillette officiating some of his own high school basketball games in Enterprise, said the award needed to happen.

"George is working on his 50th year of officiating," he said. "We wanted to recognize this guy for his endless hours and endless miles."

Grant, who originated



Contributed photo

Umpire George Gillette calls a Stanfield runner out at home plate during a state quarterfinal baseball game.

the idea, said it came to him while speaking last March at a memorial service for longtime official Bill Zyph.

"I thought, why do we wait around and talk about people after they're not around anymore," he said. "We need to take the time now to thank them for what they did."

Grant added a shout out to all officials.

"Officials are a group that has been under-appreciated," he said. "Their ranks are dwindling."

Gillette said he plans to stop officiating when his performance starts to flag.

"None of us want to continue to officiate when we're an embarrassment to the game and the kids we offi-

ciate for," he said. "You just hope you can figure out when that time comes."

Apparently, the time hasn't come yet, judging by his fans.

"The words servant leadership come to mind," said Heppner High School Principal Matt Combe. "He often officiates freshmen and other lower level games."

"He's super-meticulous and always at the top of what he's doing," said Weston-Athena Athletic Director Shawn White. "He's a consummate professional."

Contact Kathy Aney at kaney@eastoregonian.com or 541-966-0810.



Staff photo by Kathy Aney

Rep. Greg Walden, R-Oregon, speaks about former Port of Morrow Director Gary Neal on Monday at a town hall in Boardman before giving him an honorary plaque.

Walden: Meets with constituents

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called the Trump administration's policy of separating children from their parents at the border "a real mistake," but said he too supports securing the southern border.

"We see people coming for a better life, but we also see people coming across for human trafficking, drug trafficking," he said.

But he said border control had always been a bipartisan issue, and cited the Secure Fence Act of 2006, which authorized about 700 miles of fence along the southern border. He said several Democrats, including Oregon Sen. Ron Wyden and then-Congresswoman Darlene Hooley, voted for that bill. Walden also said the country needs an immigration system that provides for workforce needs and a path to citizenship.

Changing climate

Walden also talked about his goals for forest management and reducing forest fires in Oregon.

An audience member in Boardman, Steve Murray, noted in response to the recently proposed Green New Deal, Walden had said Republicans have better ideas on climate change.

"But on the Energy and Commerce Committee, you didn't hold any hearings on climate change," said Murray, who had traveled from The Dalles to hear Walden. "The biggest reason we're having forest fires isn't forest management — it's climate change. Something needs to happen."

Walden said he agreed something needed to happen, but said he focused more on expanding the energy grid to use more renewable energy.

"Climate change is real," he said, and the question is what to do about it. He said he comes down on the side of innovation to provide the answers. He pointed to the recently announced Wheatridge project, which will be built in Morrow County to combine large-scale wind, solar and battery storage power.

"This is the kind of innovation I'm for," he said. "If we don't have the right capacity, we can't put renewable energy into it."

And the U.S. has a responsibility to tackle climate change.

"It should be us," he said. "We helped create this mess, we should help clean it up."

He also said while he thinks climate change is a factor in forest fires, he focused on forest management.

"Shouldn't we try to reduce the fuel load to cut those catastrophic fires?" he said.

Bob Haechrel, also from The Dalles, said he had called Walden's office, wanting to understand if there were parts of the Green New Deal on which he felt he could work with Democrats.

"To your point on the Green New Deal, it's a resolution, not actually implemented legislation," Walden said. "Clearly, there are things we can work together on."

But he said he was

against some components of the proposed resolution.

"If the goal is to put down the cattle industry in 10 years, I'm not for that," he said. "If the goal is to put us all on high-speed rail, I don't think that will work very well. I don't want the federal government taking over that much," he said.

Debt and pot

The national debt reaching \$22 trillion is a concern, Walden said, but the real problem are programs, such as Medicare and paying the interest on the debt as opposed to defense spending. As Americans, he said, "we're going to have to have a pretty serious conversation" about the federal government not funding as many programs.

And Walden is changing his tune on marijuana. One Oregon dealer in southern Oregon said the government needs to change something, Walden said, because his clients pay in stacks of cash. Walden said he is not "quite there" in legalizing cannabis, but maybe the federal government could manage it like alcohol.

But items, such as marijuana gummy bears, smack of the tobacco industry's Joe Camel methods to lure younger users, he said, and if the feds did treat marijuana like booze, states are not going to receive federal help with treatment programs.

Walden will return to Umatilla County for a town hall at the Eastern Oregon Trade and Event Center, Hermiston, on March 15 at 4 p.m.

Lockwood: Provocative press releases

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It was his handiwork behind the press release put out last week in the name of state Sen. Dennis Linthicum, R-Klamath Falls. Linthicum made what others in the Legislature considered racially insensitive remarks about a black man who died at the hands of police.

The senator hasn't backed down, and neither has his hired wordsmith.

"I have been extremely effective when there is room to do so," Lockwood said.

His style clashes with a national yearning for more racial sensitivity, bipartisanship and civil discourse.

Dempsey said Lockwood likes to launch "grenades in the public sphere" because "he knows he can get a lot of attention."

Molly Woon, Democratic Party of Oregon spokeswoman, said Lockwood is deliberately provocative.

"That is not the role of a communications person that gets a state paycheck," Woon said.

Lockwood plies his skills for Linthicum, state Sen. Kim Thatcher, R-Keizer, and state Rep. Bill Post, R-Keizer. Their legislative offices share the cost of Lockwood's state salary of \$4,700 a month.

"We hired Jonathan because he is effective at generating important conversations," Thatcher said in a statement. "The smears against him, along with the apparent petty jealousies of his abilities, are clear examples of some of what's wrong with the culture in Salem."

Post declined an interview but backed Lockwood's performance in a written statement.

"I hired Jonathan Lockwood because I loved the work he did in Colorado, the work he did in the Senate Republican office, and the work he did in Florida this past summer," Post said. "Jonathan is smart, well qualified, and has the ability to navigate the media realm."

Linthicum didn't respond to requests for interviews.

Lockwood's prime duty is to craft messaging for the legislators, but he also does research and talks with the media. Lockwood said he does strategize with other Republican legislators, but his emphasis is on the three who pay him.

A native of Denver, Lockwood started college



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Jonathan Lockwood, who writes press releases for Sen. Kim Thatcher, R-Keizer, and state Rep. Bill Post, R-Keizer, has become known for provocative verbal attacks on liberal politicians and policies.

to study fashion design but found he couldn't sew. He then tried the music industry, but a hiring freeze where he was an intern made him change course.

A friend's mom, who was a state representative in Colorado, suggested he look at politics, and he got an internship in Colorado's House Republican office.

He was soon embroiled in controversy over a television commercial attacking a U.S. senator for supporting a nuclear deal with Iran. The ad showed children counting down, a nuclear blast, and then a scorched planet.

Lockwood said that commercial, which generated an outcry, was one of his crowning achievements, because it prompted debate.

"There were efforts to shut me up then, just like there are now," Lockwood said.

In 2016, he took a job with the Senate Republican caucus in Oregon, handling communications, and the following year signed on to the gubernatorial campaign of Knute Buehler. After four months, he was out.

Lockwood said the campaign's shift to the left and conflicting political messages handcuffed him as a spokesperson.

"They beat me to the breakup," Lockwood said. Buehler's campaign officials declined comment.

Lockwood then worked for another Republican candidate before leaving the state for political jobs first in Texas and then in Florida. Lockwood, 30, returned to Oregon in December after being offered a position with the lawmakers.

His messaging for the public officials who employ him is often more personal and inflammatory than the standard party rhetoric from caucus offices. People

are quick to share what they think about him, but often off the record for fear of drawing his ire. His detractors say his loaded press releases are self-serving and that he puts raising his own profile over that of his employers.

"I think I am just speaking the truth and that some people want to turn me into a pariah so that they can assassinate someone and smear them as something they're not," Lockwood said. "The politics of personal assassination is dominating political discourse, and it is hurting people."

Yet Lockwood won't explain the evolution of the Linthicum statement. In a release entitled "I can't breathe," Lockwood blamed the death of New York's Eric Garner on high tobacco taxes, following a state proposal to increase tobacco taxes. In fact, the man died after being choked by police during an arrest.

Republican and Democratic leaders in both the House and the Senate attacked the statement. They aimed their anger not at Lockwood but at Linthicum.

Lockwood also uses his personal social media accounts to go after political opponents. On Twitter, he has 6,500 followers — twice as many as House Speaker Tina Kotek.

Woon spent seven years doing communications for Senate Democrats. She's familiar with the role and said Lockwood operates outside of the norms.

"He conducts himself in his professional life in a way that I absolutely cannot relate to," she said.

Lockwood's week was mired with conflict over press release on a proposed tobacco tax. The release spurred pushback against Lockwood's boss, Republican infighting and multiple news stories.

Asked whether he regrets the release, Lockwood paused for a few seconds, flashed a smile and shrugged his shoulders.

"As long as we keep getting told to shut up, and as long as bad policies keep coming forward, so too will the press releases," Lockwood said.

Aubrey Wieber and Paris Achen are reporters for the Oregon Capital Bureau, a collaboration of EO Media Group, Pamplin Media Group and Salem Reporter.