

When pigs swim

The state of Iowa contains 55,869.36 square miles, 2,987,345 humans, and 16,900,000 hogs. That works out to 52.4 humans per square mile and 302 hogs per square mile, or roughly six hogs per person. Memorize these numbers.

Set the time machine to the present. The Mississippi and several tributaries are spilling onto the 5 percent of Iowa that lies below levee height. Assuming an equal distribution of hogs across Iowa, about half a million hogs are in danger of drowning.

During the Flood of 2008, many hog producers had several days warning and took preventative measures, including shoring up the levees and trucking hogs to higher ground. Assuming that 100 hogs fit in a hog trailer, it would take 5,000 truckloads to evacuate all of our hogs. That did not happen. A bunch of hogs drowned.

An average modern hog barn contains about 2,500 animals. Let us assume that only four of these barns get inundated so we have 10,000 swimming pigs. Healthy active pigs are able to swim quite well, but the goal of hog producers is to raise a 250-pound animal in 160-180 days, so they are not getting a lot of aerobic exercise before they hit the water, and many of them drown before they can be packaged as bacon. They don't have the muscle tone to keep on treading water.

During the last flood, some free-swimming hogs did make it to higher ground by getting caught in eddies and swirling back toward the levees. This didn't work out well for them. The last place that you want to have sharp-hoofed, tough-snouted, 250-pound critters rooting around for

tender shoots and bugs is on top of the banks you've built to protect you from the waters. So, in a nod to reverse Darwinism, law enforcement agencies held an impromptu hunt and shot the pigs on the levees. The smartest and strongest pigs did not survive after all.

But wait, what about those free spirits, those surfer pigs, those that went with the flow and floated downstream to safety in strawberry fields forever? You and I and Charlotte the spider know that at least one Wilbur is out there in the wild lands tonight, dining on truffles, trying to figure out how to ditch his insecticide-impregnated eartag and trade it for a squeeze tube of sunblock and a headband.

Which brings us to the real meat, so to speak, of this narrative. Every member of my family has reacted to this idea with the assumption that I've been carried away by a mental flood. These pooh-pooh attitudes are not going to keep me from sharing with you, Dear Reader, a ground floor opportunity to invest your income tax check in this year's Surefire Million-Dollar Invention. Be advised that this newspaper column is patented, copyrighted and guaranteed to cure warts, so if you rip me off I'll dust off my Church of the Transcendental Oneness lawyer's certificate and sue your butt clear back to Bakersfield.

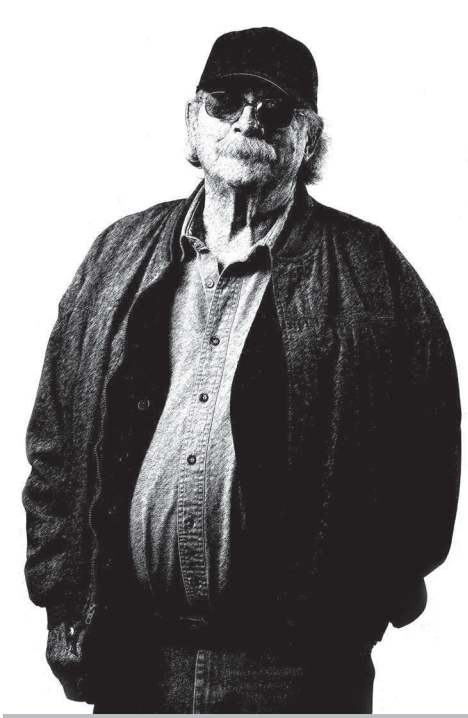
OK. Ready? Let's invent, and capitalize the PETA, the Piggy Emergency Treading Appliance. This is really a rather simple design exercise. We need to come up with a life preserver for pigs, one that can be easily and quickly attached to a hog, or 10,000 of them, in case of flood.

Our invention should be able to support

250 pounds indefinitely, be brightly colored, with room for identification number or logo, and not take up much space when not deployed. (I see racks of them hanging around the perimeter of the hog barn.) I lean toward CO2 inflation rather than closed-cell foam. Also, based on personal experience with trying to rope rogue pigs in a rainstorm, a pig doesn't have much of a neck. So, we should skip the vest design and build something with a single strap around a pig just behind its front legs that deploys with the yank of a cord. Water wings.

Let's run an imaginary beta test on our product. We are hog farmers. It is raining, the levees are failing, and we don't have enough trucks. We have 2,500 250-pound hogs in one single barn, or 625,000 pounds of pork on the hoof, worth a market price of around 75 cents per pound for a total of \$450,000 potential. No problem. We have at our ready 2,500 flotation devices (purchase price \$75,000) and we have 10 guys from Honduras to help, while we supervise.

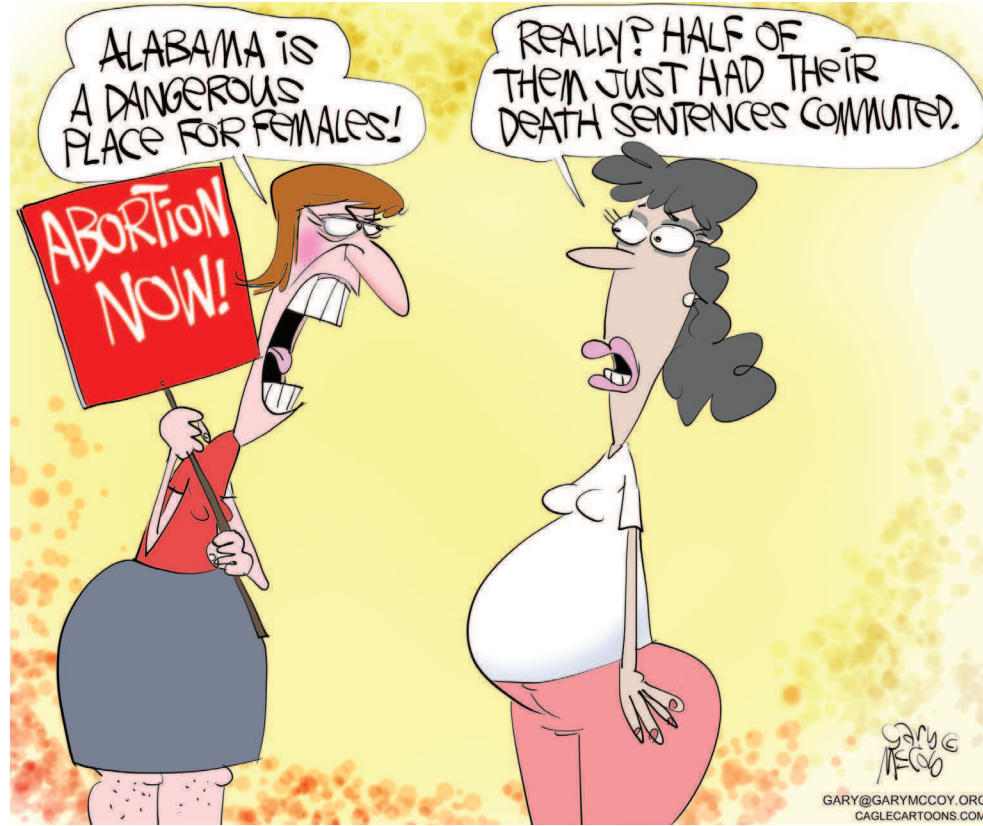
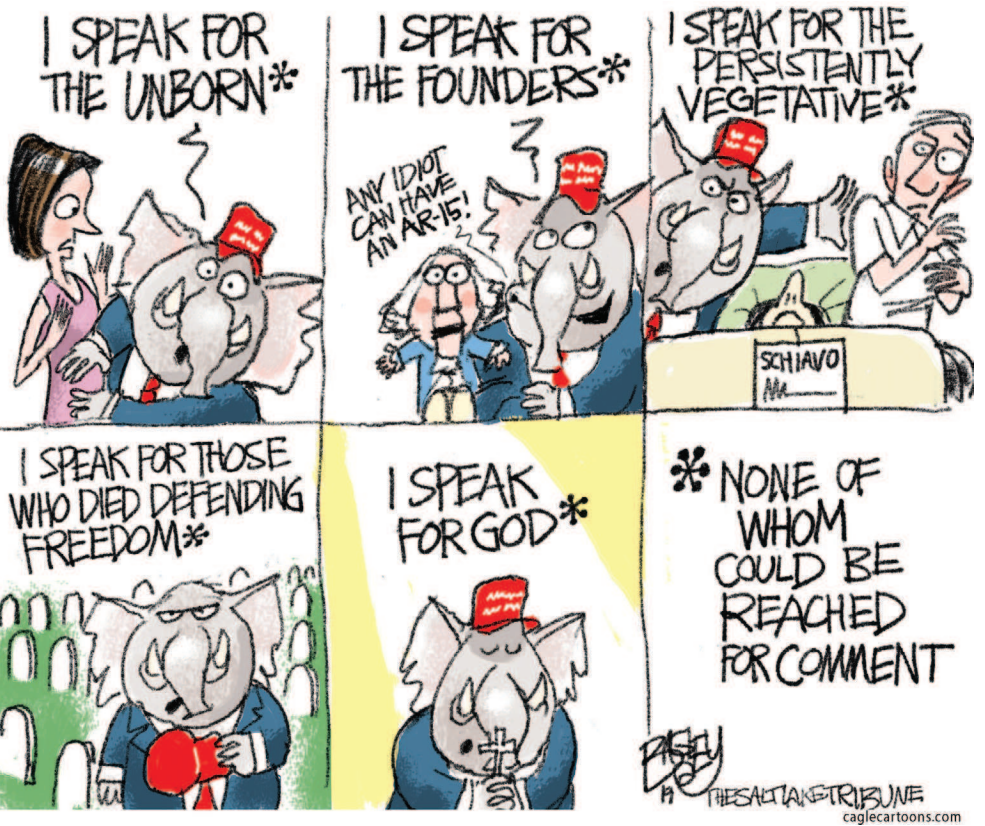
The hogs are already penned. If each guy can strap one PFD on one pig and jerk the cord in 15 seconds, we are suiting up 40 pigs per minute. It takes an hour and 10 minutes to dress the hogs against the flood. We open the doors to the barn and leave the pigs in the pens, in their bright devices, to float away if the water gets too deep. If a monster flood occurs and we save only 420 hogs, we break even on the flotation investment. If the water never rises, all the better. We send the devices back to the Pendleton Pork Protection League, LLC for a \$10 per unit (\$25,000) recharge fee and are ready for next year.



J.D. SMITH
FROM THE HEADWATERS
OF DRY CREEK

Note to potential investors: Don't like this opportunity? Stay tuned. After learning that several thousand turkeys drowned in the last Iowan flood, I've begun research and development on the WTF, the Wet Turkey Floater.

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



YOUR VIEWS

GOP was lied to — again

What a shock it was to find out that the liberal supermajority again misled the GOP in Oregon. Time and time again, the GOP is misled, and time and time again, they fall for the lies of the left by taking the liberals at their word to do, or not to do, something in exchange for GOP support.

Once again the liberals agreed to remove bad legislation, ie. gun control and vaccine bills, if the GOP would return to the floor to pass yet more taxes for their tax-and-spend agenda. The left, at almost heartbreak speed, are trying to bring back the two bills. How many times does the

GOP have to be lied to before the light goes on that the left will do anything to pass a bill? Wake up, Oregon GOP, it is time to stand up for the people and stop cowering to the radical left.

The left-wing radicals running Oregon claimed that President Trump's tax cuts will hurt the middle class in Oregon. While the Trump-hating left wing condemns the tax cuts, the truth comes out that, because of the tax cuts, the average Oregon taxpayer is expected to receive a \$350 plus kicker payment due to increased revenue — more than double what the state economist predicted. Not to the surprise of anyone with a brain, House Speaker Kotek already is introducing a

bill to take half of the kicker, which is taxpayers' money, to help fund some more of her pet projects.

As the radical left pushes for the decline of Oregon, the spineless GOP continues to fall for more lies.

John Harvey Stanfield

PERS is the scapegoat for all Oregon's woes

Friday's *East Oregonian* had an article about our legislators wanting to keep half of the Oregon kicker to fix some highways and bridges. Whoa, does anyone remem-

ber when Oregon passed a total of 3 cents a gallon gas tax to pay for bridge repair? Where did that money go? By the way, the tax is still there.

Oregon is run, for the most part, by incompetent people in almost every department. Whenever there is a scandal, the scandal has coverups, lies, misinformation or spin. The day after it is reported, out comes an article about PERS.

PERS is the scapegoat for everything wrong with Oregon. Oregon is corrupt, breaks federal laws and thumbs their nose at federal law. Good luck when we go bankrupt.

Roesch Kishpaugh Pendleton

The story the media misses

My colleague David Bornstein points out that a lot of American journalism is based on a mistaken theory of change. That theory is: The world will get better when we show where things have gone wrong. A lot of what we do in our business is expose error, cover problems and identify conflict.

The problem with this is that we leave people feeling disempowered and depressed. People who consume a lot of media of this sort sink into this toxic vortex — alienated from people they don't know, fearful about the future. They are less mobilized to take action, not more.

Bornstein, who writes for *The New York Times* and also co-founded the Solutions Journalism Network, says that you've got to expose problems, but you've also got to describe how the problems are being tackled. The search for solutions is more exciting than the problems themselves.

But many of our colleagues don't define local social repair and community-building as news. It seems too goody-goody, too "worthy," too sincere. It won't attract eyeballs.

That's wrong.

I've spent the past year around peo-

ple who weave social fabric, and this week about 275 community weavers gathered in Washington, for a conference called #WeaveThePeople, organized by the Weave project I've been working on at the Aspen Institute.

The people at this gathering are some of the most compelling people I've ever met. Charles Perry was incarcerated for nearly two decades and now connects community members to health care systems in Chicago. Dylan Tête was an Army ranger who served in Iraq, suffered from PTSD and has built communities in New Orleans for vets. Sarah Adkins came home one Sunday to find her husband had killed their kids and himself, and she now runs a free pharmacy and leads a life of service in Appalachian Ohio.

Pancho Argüelles works in Texas, accompanying workers who have suffered spinal cord injuries on the job. He helps find the diapers, wheelchairs and other things that will allow them to live with dignity. Pancho radiates a deep wisdom, almost a holiness. As he and the others spoke about their values, the same thought kept pounding in my head: How is this not a story? Why don't we cover these people more?



DAVID BROOKS
COMMENT

At most conferences people lead with their bios, but at this gathering people led with their pain.

A prominent researcher described how she was abused as a child, and how this led her into her research into children's emotional development. A woman from South Carolina talked about loved ones she had lost and the time she tried to talk a man out of jumping off a bridge, finally confessing: If you jump, I'm going to jump, too. A man admitted that all the people he had loved had left him, and that he had lived with the trauma believing that his wife will leave him, too. In the atmosphere created this week he felt free to let go of that trauma.

It was emotionally gripping through and through. The weavers know how to open relationships with vulnerability and they know how to build connections and move to action. Their defining feature is that they are geniuses at relationship.

This was a gathering in which it was permissible to be an angry black person. Some of the African-American participants fully ventilated their anger at injustice. It was uncomfortable and searing, but the discomfort broke through barriers and moved us closer.

Martha Welch, a professor and researcher at Columbia, pointed out that our emotional health is dependent on con-

nection with others. We don't just regulate emotions ourselves. We co-regulate with others and need connection with others to keep from spinning out of control.

The weavers are acutely sensitive to states of mind that can build or mar a relationship: how people can feel more or less efficacy, depending on the emotional conditions in a room; how words like "social justice" and "biblical" can be good or bad depending on whom you are speaking with, and how much damage is done when people demand you use words their way, instead of asking: Well, what do you mean by that word?

Alexis de Tocqueville pointed out that associational life is the central feature of American life. But somehow we in the media under-cover this sector. We barely cover the most important social change agents. These people are not goody-goody. They are raw, honest and sometimes rude.

How did we in our business get in the spot where we spend 90% of our coverage on the 10% of our lives influenced by politics and 10% of our coverage on the 90% of our lives influenced by relationship, community and the places we live in every day?

David Brooks is a columnist for the New York Times.