

O EAST OREGONIAN PINION

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OUR VIEW

Tip of the hat, kick in the pants

A tip of the hat this week to frontline workers who are putting themselves at risk by showing up to work every day to help the rest of us get food, medical care and other essentials.

At the top of this list are medical professionals across the country, some of whom are continuing to report to work despite their hospitals running out of, or severely rationing, personal protective gear, such as masks and gloves. It has gotten so bad in some parts of the country that the Providence network of hospitals is issuing a call for volunteers to sew masks at home, so that health care workers no longer have to resort to bandanas and other makeshift attempts to protect themselves.

So far, Oregon has been lucky to have only (as of Friday afternoon) 114 cases, spread out throughout the state, but that number grows daily, and we will need our doctors and nurses more than ever as it does.

We also salute pharmacists, grocery store workers, food delivery drivers, truck drivers, postal carriers, utility workers and more who form the lifeblood of our day-to-day existence and continue to show up while other Americans are able to retreat to the safety of their homes. Please, be extra nice to them in this time when frustrations and worries are running high.

A kick in the pants to those who are taking wholly unnecessary risks with others' health right now.

A video circulating social media shows thousands of college students crowding together in Florida at clubs and on beaches, telling reporters that they don't care if they catch coronavirus while partying.

While much of the focus on the dangers of COVID-19 have been focused on who is dying of it, a Centers for Disease Control and Prevention analysis this week showed that 38% of COVID-19 patients in the United States sick enough to need hospitalization between



Staff photo by Ben Lonergan

The sun sets at St. Anthony Hospital in Pendleton earlier this week as health care staff continue to care for patients.

Feb. 12 to March 16 were younger than 55. France has stated that half of its patients in intensive care for the virus have been younger than 65, and other European countries have begun to report similar results.

Those who "don't care" if they catch the virus are not only putting themselves in danger, but also risk spreading the virus friends, family, co-workers and casual contacts — some of which may be at higher risk of death and other serious complications. They're also putting the health care workers who

must treat those cases at risk.

We had our own case of unwise risk-taking in Pendleton this week with the Rainbow Cafe defying the governor's orders for restaurants and bars to switch to takeout and delivery only. This outbreak is asking for difficult sacrifices from everyone right now, but if people are making the heartbreaking choice to cancel weddings, funerals and other long-awaited major life events for the sake of their loved ones' safety, others should ask themselves what makes their wants more important.

FROM HERE TO ANYWHERE

Finding the stories we need to get us through crisis

From here to anywhere, I named this column. Because stories can do that — take us from wherever we are to anywhere else. Of course, we have to be careful, because the places they take us can be harmful, even deadly.

Just now we're all trying to make sense of a story that's been imposed on our lives. We didn't have time for this story. We were too busy living. But here it is. So we wash our hands and practice social distancing and try not to succumb to panic — or hoarding toilet paper — as we sort through the changing versions of this story and wonder what it all means.

Meanwhile, we live without school and church services and sports and concerts, art exhibitions, powwows. Pendleton Center for the Arts had to postpone this month's First Draft reading with Don Colbert, a poet I promise you will love when he returns, we hope, in October. In fact, we have some incredible storytellers lined up. (Aloha Rodeo, scheduled for May, will blow your mind.)

But, just now, it's up to each of us to seek out the stories we need.

J.D. Smith's recent *East Oregonian* column titled "Shimming the Ching" sent me to my copy of Ursula K. Le Guin's translation of Lao Tzu's "Tao Te Ching." I can't say I understood it ("the way that can be spoken is not the way," right?) but it did distract me.

I'm reading Les AuCoin's memoir "Catch and Release," too. The stories of AuCoin's life take us from a fatherless childhood lived in poverty to the United States House of Representatives in 1974, when he was only 32. He would fight for many things — affordable housing, "trickle-up" economics, wilderness protection, abortion rights, and nuclear arms control — before his return to Oregon for trout fishing, catch and release a metaphor for both succeeding and letting go.

It's a good book for me just now, because in nearly every chapter AuCoin inspires us to hope and encourages us to keep trying. Or as he told a captivated First Draft audience in February, "It's not them. It's us. It's our democracy."

Pendleton Public Library is a lifeline for

me. I have three books on order through the Sage Library System just now — Elizabeth Strout's "Olive, Again"; Louise Erdrich's latest novel "The Night Watchman"; and Beth Piatote's "The Beadworkers: Stories." They are all books I know will fill me — teach as well as entertain. I can hardly wait.

But there are times when we just want something fun to read. My brother, John — the one who's always three good books ahead of the rest of us — called to say he

was having trouble with Cormac McCarthy. He had read the first book of "The Border Trilogy" but was bogged down in the second. It's a famous series, he said. What did I think?

McCarthy is a wonderful writer, I told him, but I finished only the first book. "I just got so depressed." He's my brother, so I could confess such literary heresy. I recommended Ann Cleeves's "Shetland" mysteries

— the Jimmy Perez stories we all love to watch on TV — and he told me about Peter Bowen's "Montana Mysteries," featuring the Metis brand inspector Gabriel Du Pre. A week later the first two books in this series arrived in my mailbox with John's return address on the package.

I hope Jimmy Perez is helping him as much as Gabriel Du Pre is helping me.

Sometimes what I need is poetry. It's when I'm trying to understand but can't, quite. Or needing to reach toward meaning that can't quite be reached. Because that's what poetry does.

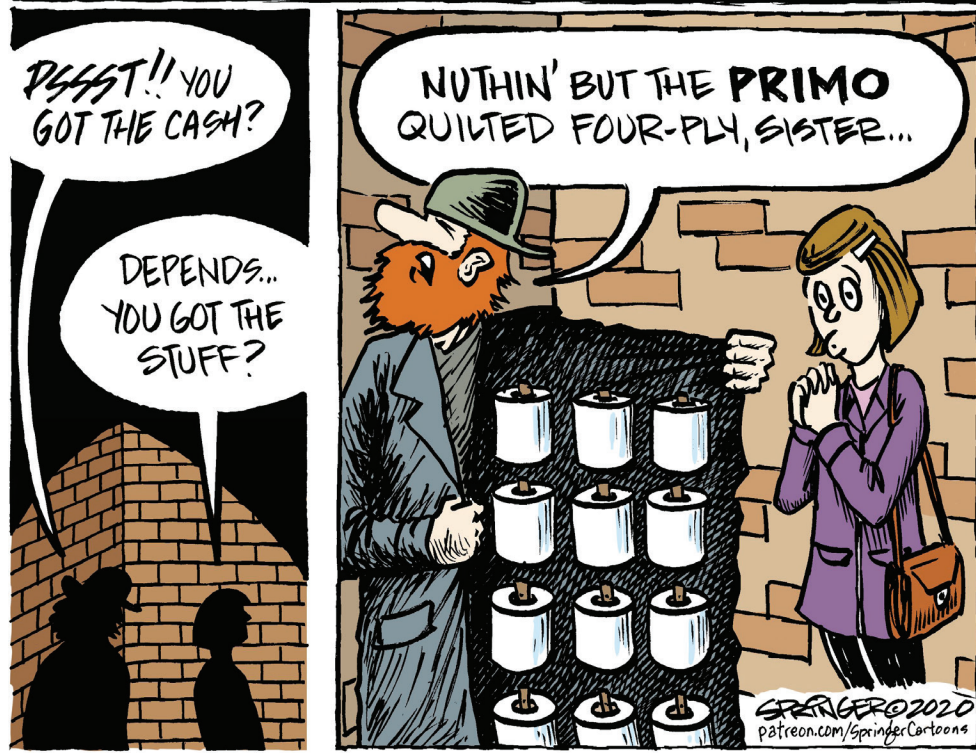
Here's the last stanza of Danusha Lamiris's poem "Insha'Allah" (translation: "that soft word meaning, 'if God wills it'") that is helping me today.

"How lightly we learn to hold hope, / as if it were an animal that could turn around / and bite your hand. And still we carry it / the way a mother would, carefully, / from one day to the next."

You can find her poem on the Poetry Foundation website, and I hope you will. But mainly I hope you find the stories you need. Now, and always.

Bette Husted is a writer and a student of T'ai Chi and the natural world. She lives in Pendleton.

OREGON IN THE TIME OF CORONAVIRUS...



YOUR VIEWS

Those who reject medical science put us all at risk

Sometimes, amid the confusion, moments of clarity arise. Regrettably, the coronavirus pandemic provides us with one such moment.

Trump and his cult followers reject science and try to convince Americans that all is well. He maintains that what the medical experts tell us is wrong. His method is "spin and sell" — never direct and honest. On March 15, he said, "Relax, we're doing great. This all will pass." We are confronted daily by the evidence that science denial is the path to disaster. Hopefully, citizens will now realize the danger of believing our government's inflated lies.

When we look at the small but vocal minority who argue climate science consensus is a myth, we find the same array of individuals. These include birthers, Holocaust deniers, Nazi apologists, chemtrail advocates, flat Earthers and all manner of conspiracy hoax lunatics who reject science but simultaneously cling to any cockamamie nonsense that comes along and appeals to their weird contrarian world view.

Those, like Trump, who reject medical science place our nation at immediate risk. Those rejecting climate science place our

planet at risk and compromise life for our children and grandchildren.

Trisha Vigil
Medford

Pendleton's taxi service needs competition

For a town this size there needs to be more than one taxi company, especially Elite. They tell you 20 minutes every time you call, no matter what, and it usually takes at least 45 minutes. There is one particular driver/dispatcher that is the worst.

I would like to know why there can't be a little competition, which would seriously help those of us that depend on taxis to get around town. I would like the mayor to know how bad their service is. They know they are the only game in town and maybe need some competition.

One of the drivers is so rude to talk to on the phone and even worse in person. If you call back to make sure they haven't missed you, he gets mad at you. Seriously, this taxi business in town needs better customer service since we are at their mercy. I don't think they care.

Tina Hunsinger
Pendleton

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