


**BETTE
HUSTED**
FROM HERE TO ANYWHERE

Books as literal barricades

Stories shape our world, and the stories coming from Ukraine have been so overwhelming that we want to shrink from the horror of this war. A recent Guardian headline, “Books Against Bombs: how Ukrainians are using literature to fight back,” seemed to offer a moment of hope — literature, yes — until I saw the accompanying photo: a window blocked by stacks of books. People in this residential area of Kyiv, the story said, are using books as barricades against explosions.

“There is no time to read or write now — everyone is focused on protecting their loved ones,” writes Katerina Sergatskova. But she goes on to explain where all those books had come from. To encourage vaccination against COVID-19, Ukraine had offered “culture vouchers” that people could spend on tickets to a movie or concert, a gym membership or books. People bought books, books, books.

And the next day I saw a photo in Ron Charles’s Washington Post Book Club column — a Ukrainian mother reading a children’s book to a small girl resting on her suitcase. “In such horrific conditions, periods of imaginative escape are essential for children,” Charles writes. “And books are the perfect vehicle.” A group of Polish publishers called the Universal Reading Foundation, he says, has begun to buy and distribute Ukrainian children’s books for the youngest refugees taking shelter in Poland.

Despite the obvious difficulties, this group found a warehouse in Lviv, Ukraine, that will try to send the first batch of 25,000 books to be distributed to orphanages, day cares, kindergartens, schools and libraries.

If they can get through.

As Maria Deskur, chief executive officer of Universal Reading Foundation, told Charles, “A joyful moment of book sharing and talking with a close person is the definitive moment of safety, which builds the fundamentals of our social competence, self-esteem and psychological well-being ... This is true for every child, but for these young Ukrainians who have just lived through a trauma, I would be ready to argue that their future psychological stability depends on it.”

She plans to help older children, too, teenagers who will need to redefine themselves in Poland, process what they have seen and find strength to move forward. “Whenever you take a book in your hand, it is an act of openness to someone else’s thoughts and emotions,” she said. “It is an opening to listen to other points of view; an entering through the door to dialogue and mutual understanding. Building fundamentals for that state of mind is crucial for the future.”

For democracy, she means.

Who gets to hear which stories? Will the people of Russia ever see the photo of that mother squatting on the pavement to read to her toddler, or the window barricaded by books? Will the Ukrainians who survive this war find the stories they need? And will our own school children, whose right to know — to learn to understand others as well as the realities of our history and to read the novels of a Nobel prize winning American writer — is currently under threat?

As I hear news coming from Ukraine and worry about yet another larger European war, I remember images from Wislawa Szymborska’s poem “The End and the Beginning.”

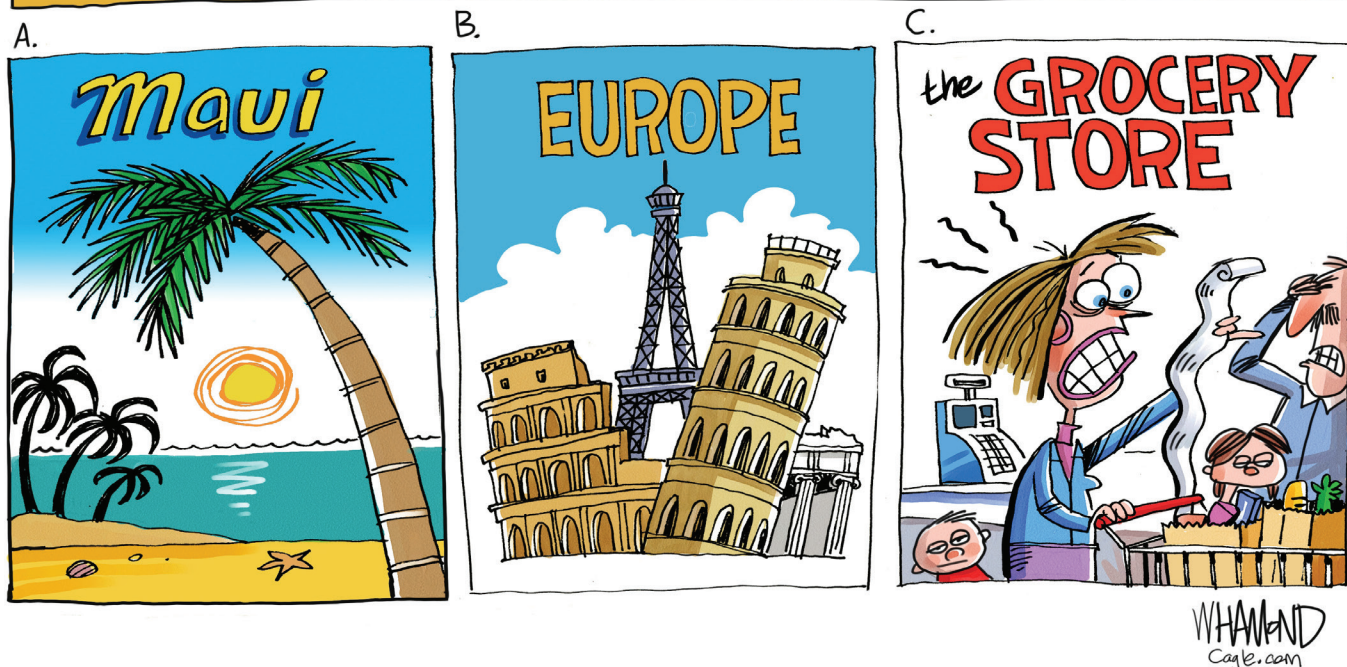
“After every war / someone has to clean up. / Things won’t / straighten themselves up, after all. / Someone has to push the rubble / to the side of the road, / so the corpse-filled wagons / can pass. / Someone has to get mired / in scum and ashes, / sofa springs, / splintered glass, / and bloody rags / ... Photogenic it’s not, / and takes years. / All the cameras have left for another war.”

Katerina Sergatskova is right: first, people need to save their families. To survive. But stories matter. On March 1, 800 American and Ukrainian poets shared a massive Zoom reading, and when American poet Ilya Kaminsky asked a friend in Odessa what he can do, the reply was, “If you want to help, send us some poems and essays. We are trying to put together a literary magazine.”

And Ukrainian president Volodymyr Zelensky has been quoting Hamlet. “The question for us now is to be or not to be,” he told the British Parliament. “I can give you a definitive answer. It’s definitely yes, to be.”

Bette Husted is a writer and a student of tai chi and the natural world. She lives in Pendleton.

WHICH EXPENSIVE TRIP DID THE AVERAGE FAMILY TAKE LAST YEAR?



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The state of rural Oregon from the road


**MARGIE
HOFFMANN**
OTHER VIEWS

I recently tuned in to President Joe Biden’s State of the Union speech roughly 90 miles outside of Bend.

While the president laid out his vision of an America recovering from the middle out, not the top down, I wove through large stands of ponderosa where the high desert meets the mountains. I crossed rivers only months away from another drought emergency declaration.

The next day, while carefully stepping through a burn scar newly blanketed in green and listening to local leaders extol the privilege of potable water, one word stuck with me: resilience.

Rural Oregonians know all about resilience.

When I first assumed my role as state director of USDA Rural Development in Oregon, I made it a priority to get out into the field and visit the rural communities we serve.

Even from a home office in Bend, it’s easy to lose perspective when talking numbers. RD Oregon invested more than \$635 million last year in loans, grants and guaranteed loans. We partnered with rural Oregon’s

public bodies, nonprofits, small businesses, and homeowners on over 2,072 projects.

These are impressive totals, but they are far more impressive when measured by their impact.

With a grant from USDA’s Rural Energy for America Program, a food co-op in Astoria invested in solar energy and now passes savings on to customers. Children in Southern Oregon will have access to critical medical care over broadband funded by USDA’s ReConnect Program.

Hundreds of families in rural, suburban and tribal communities displaced by wildfires will sleep in their own beds and wake up to running water, thanks to the vision of community changemakers and our multifamily housing and emergency water assistance programs.

These are the voices from Biden’s economy of the middle. They tell stories of perseverance.

By investing in water infrastructure and broadband, rural business opportunities and the American food supply chain, USDA is helping communities build a foundation for sustained economic growth.

Every day, RD Oregon has the privilege of working with growing local networks. As community partners, environmental stewards and innovators, we work alongside community members to assist them in realizing their vision for the community.

Together, through USDA’s Food Supply Chain Guaranteed Loan Program and the Meat and Poultry Processing Expansion Program, we will create a food supply chain that’s more robust, more diverse and fairer, so Oregon’s farms and ranches take home a greater share of profits and keep shelves stocked in their own hometowns.

USDA’s Water and Environmental Programs will help small towns replace crumbling pipes and make sure all Oregon families have safe water at home and at school while easing water bills. By ensuring equitable access to federal resources, we will answer Biden’s call to build from the middle out.

From my travels across our state, I can tell you one thing without a doubt: there are few things stronger than an Oregonian’s resolve. Through record-breaking heat waves, annual drought conditions, wildfire season and everything in between, however deep the crisis, whatever the ZIP code, Oregonians will come together to overcome and thrive.

Now, faced with a changing landscape and a climate in unknown territory, rural Oregonians have a chance to chart a new path. To lead the nation towards a sustainable, brighter future where all of America prospers.

I’ll see you on the road.

Margie Hoffmann is state director of USDA Rural Development in Oregon.

Ag overtime bill is a win, not a victory


**BILL
HANSELL**
OTHER VIEWS

Before even the first gavel dropped on the 2022 legislative session, I knew that one of the most consequential bills of my legislative career would be considered.

House Bill 4002, or the agriculture overtime bill, was a divisive bill from the start and presented the Oregon Legislature with two options. One that would favor one side to the detriment of the rest of Oregon, especially the agricultural economy. This is what I called a win — a win for a select few at the cost of the rest of us. The other path included compromise, good-faith negotiation and a bill that would generate support from both parties. This is what I called a victory — a victory for all of Oregon.

I worked hard to get a victory, not just a win on agriculture overtime. But the final result was a win — a win for Willamette Valley liberal special interests who donate money to the majority Democrat’s

campaign funds.

It will make these groups feel good about themselves, but it won’t make Oregonians better off. HB 4002 will result in higher prices at the grocery store for working families, hours and pay capped for agricultural workers, and ultimately the shuttering of small family farms that fill my district.

Agriculture is a unique industry. During harvest seasons, it requires long hours to reap all the crops before frost or rains come. In ranching, there is even more nuance.

The bottom line is that farmers and ranchers don’t set their own prices, they have to take whatever price the markets are offering. The Democrats advanced an argument about ag overtime that essentially stated a bushel of wheat harvested in the 41st hour is worth 50% more than one harvested at the fifth hour. Anyone who has grown up around farms knows that that is not true. And requiring farmers to pay their workers as such soon will result in a dwindling number of family farms to even employ these workers.

HB 4002 leveled all these unique distinctions in agriculture and mandated a one-size-fits-all “solution” that is really no solution at all. The “olive-branches” that Democrats extended, the agricultural community never

asked for. One example: Under this new overtime pay mandate, family farms now will be able to apply for tax credits to ease the burden of the new overtime pay mandate. Now taxpayers will be subsidizing this new program. Farmers and ranchers never asked for that, but the majority decided that is what would be best for them.

I worked hard to come to a compromise. Simple adjustments for seasonality, flexible scheduling, and recognizing the difference between the kinds of agriculture would have helped. But the majority party rejected all these and charged ahead with what seemed to be a predetermined outcome, driven by their special interest groups.

I know how much Oregon’s farmers and ranchers care about their employees and their families. HB 4002 will now force those farmers and ranchers to make difficult decisions about how much they can afford their employees to work. I grew up on these kinds of farms, and I am afraid that under this policy, less and less of those farms will be around in the future.

Sen. Bill Hansell, R-Athens, is in his 10th year representing the seven counties that make up Senate District 29.

River Democracy Act protects water, restores forest health


**JAMES
JOHNSTON**
OTHER VIEWS

Oregon’s most important natural resource is water. Continued access to cool, clean water is critical for agriculture, high tech industry, recreation, fish and wildlife habitat, to say nothing of drinking water.

As a native Oregonian, angler and scientist who studies fire and forest health, I’m glad that Sen. Ron Wyden is working to expand Wild and Scenic River designations on select federal lands in Oregon.

Protecting Oregon’s pristine rivers and streams isn’t inconsistent with restoring forests and protecting communities from catastrophic wildfire. We can’t restore forests without protecting streams and rivers, and we can’t protect streams and rivers without restoring forests.

Our climate is changing for the worse.

In the coming decades we can expect hotter summers, shallower snow packs and longer fire seasons.

The Wild and Scenic River designations that will be created by the River Democracy Act introduced by Oregon Sens. Wyden and Jeff Merkley will keep rivers and streams in their free-flowing state. That means more water will be available for fish, wildlife and people downstream. Forests alongside streams need water from free-flowing rivers to be resistant to fire and drought. Healthy forests in turn provide shade and contribute wood that provides in-stream fish habitat.

New Wild and Scenic River designations respect private property rights and only apply to federal lands. On federal lands, the River Democracy Act will require comprehensive management plans for new wild and scenic river stretches that require protection of native species and active management of areas at high risk of catastrophic wildfire that threaten clean water.

Equally important, the bill establishes an appropriation of at least \$30 million a year to ensure that fire risk reduction work

is carried out.

Many decades of neglect have contributed to degraded watersheds and out-of-control wildfires. Oregonians need to be prepared for many decades of work including storm-proofing road systems, in-stream habitat enhancement, thinning overly dense forest stands and reintroducing fire under favorable weather conditions.

Federal legislation like the River Democracy Act can be part of the solution.

In addition to more federal investments, we need honest communication and accountability among stakeholders here in Oregon.

There is room for improvements to the River Democracy Act, and I hope Oregonians will read about the River Democracy Act at wyden.senate.gov and share ideas about the act and other steps that are necessary to protect water quality and restore forests with Wyden.

James Johnston is a forest ecologist at Oregon State University. The views he expressed are his own and do not represent OSU.