

Living with risks, personal decision



J.D.
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FROM THE HEADWATERS
OF DRY CREEK

In preparation for our summer in the mountains, let's imagine that we live in the late 1830's. Our pal, Frenchy LePeu, is on his way to a fur trappers' rendezvous in the big valley east of the Tetons. He is decked-out in a buckskin waistcoat and leggings. He sports a full black beard, and his hair is tied back with a scrap of green calico given to him by sweet Jeannette down in New Orleans.

Trailing behind him are three scrawny ponies hauling bundles of beaver pelts destined to be sold to representatives of John Jacob Astor and turned into top hats for the fancy gentlemen of New York and London. The air is thin and the horses are lathered by their loads.

Just below the pass, Frenchy leads the pack string through the aspens and willow brush to a still, deep pool on Elisa Creek, where he and the horses drink of clear mountain snowmelt and spring water. An hour later, they crest the divide and see wisps of smoke from the encampment far down on the valley floor.

The rendezvous is a sales convention, a time for swapping lies and learning news,

for wrestling and gambling and sucking down straight grain whiskey. It is party time, payday, a shindig of feasting and dancing, late nights and late mornings.

On the eighth morning, Frenchy awakes with a hooting good case of the Teton two-step. His guts are in a diamond hitch. He spends the day beating a path between his bedroll and the pit privy, trying to keep from soiling his britches. He blames Old Shatterhand's biscuits, the rotgut whiskey, the Shoshone dog jerky, civilization in general, but we here in the medical issues without underpants division of know-it-all enterprises suggest that Frenchy most likely suffers from what today would be called giardiasis, "beaver fever," contracted by ingesting just a single, teeny organism up there on the divide where he watered the stock.

Giardia lamblia was named by its isolators, Alfred Giard, a French microbiologist, and Friedrich Lambl, a Czech epidemiologist. It is a teensy organism, smaller than a particle of clay. When magnified 15,000 times, a single specimen resembles a cross between Robin Hood's hat and Maid Marion's birth control diaphragm. There are eight wavy armlike dinglebobs (flagella) hanging off the life form. Underneath in the front is a suction-cup doohickey by which the critter attaches itself to the upper small intestine of mammals and begins its irritating business.

Giardia is not a new organism. In 1681,

one year after inventing the microscope, Leeuwenhoek observed Giardia lamblia when examining his own, er, stools, and described it in his journals but did not name it. It is not an uncommon parasite. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention calls it "the most commonly diagnosed flagellate of the human intestinal tract." One in 13 otherwise healthy Americans is infected, and a human can carry around a good-sized colony of Giardia without suffering the trapper's trots.

At the stage in its life that the organism is able to hook itself to the small intestine, it also has the capability to reproduce by splitting itself in half lengthwise and does so rather rapidly, at 75 minute intervals. If we apply a little math, we see that the 2-4-8-16-32-64-128-256 progression can result in a bunch of critters in a short time. After seven or eight days, the lining of one's plumbing is so irritated it is incapable of absorbing liquids and things run right on through. This can be accompanied by nausea and fever.

Just when the human body has developed defenses, when the diarrhea diminishes, the Giardia cells change form and undergo encystation, creating tough cell walls suited to survival in the cruel, outside-the-bowel world. They now resemble tiny football helmets, flagella tucked, ready to cannonball into the environment. These cysts, passed in the feces of humans, dogs, rodents, cattle, sheep, cats and, yes, beavers, wash into the

surface waters of the planet. It was in cyst form that Frenchy ingested them up on the divide. One cyst is potentially enough of a dose to begin the process.

How might have Frenchy avoided the Wyoming waltz? Had he lived today he might've employed one of the portable filtration devices used by backpackers. Drag races between these tools have shown that even the most expensive of them is less than perfect and the cheaper ones only about twenty percent effective. In order to be killed by iodine or chlorine, Giardia must be treated for a longer time than is currently required by EPA standards for drinking water.

The surest way Frenchy might have avoided the Montana mambo was to have taken the time to boil the creek water. The cysts, while able to survive long spells of sub-zero winter, are killed at coffee temperatures, 150 degrees Fahrenheit and above.

Or we could always gamble. Giardia is not always present. Maybe you are already a carrier and can be infected without being symptomatic. Ultimately, it is your personal decision what to do with your body, what kind of risks you wish to take, so you may well be able to drink from creeks without consequence, but if you lose the bet, be prepared to launder your undies.

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



BARBARA
WRIGHT

OTHER VIEWS

BMCC news, real disturbing

Recently Blue Mountain Community College President Mark Browning released the news that the college would be losing one whole department.

I find this real disturbing considering when I first started at BMCC in the fall of 1973, Wally McCray was talking about making BMCC a four-year-college in the next five years. According to Cindy Timmons, who sits on the foundation board at BMCC, Browning is saying that BMCC will become a vocational-technical school within 10 years. That, my friends, is total BS.

BMCC can be both an associates degree college and have a technical program, like they did in the '70s, '80s and up until probably 1995. And both programs can function together rather well. The faculty are willing to give up plenty as you can see: A faculty salary freeze for the coming year, despite inflation running over 8%, giving up paid faculty professional development, a savings of about \$250,000, reducing faculty overload pay by \$100,000 — \$200,000, the early retirement of four full-time faculty members, plus the internal transfer of a fifth full-time faculty member, for a total of \$450,000 in savings.

I have an idea for Browning that should bring in plenty of students and make his vocational-technical program work smoothly with his AA program. In Umatilla Hall, reclaim both the shop spaces and put an associates of arts in home construction in one shop space, get the carpenters union, International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers and plumbers and fitters to staff the program and help procure the needed tools to run the department.

Freshmen will learn how to pour a foundation, put up stem walls and rafter and sheath a roof, sophomore class will sheetrock, tape and texture as well as learn how to lay down hardwood flooring and finish the house ready for market in the summer of their graduation year. Not only will this teach the students the skills they need to find a job, but any contractor looking to hire has a choice hiring pool to draw from.

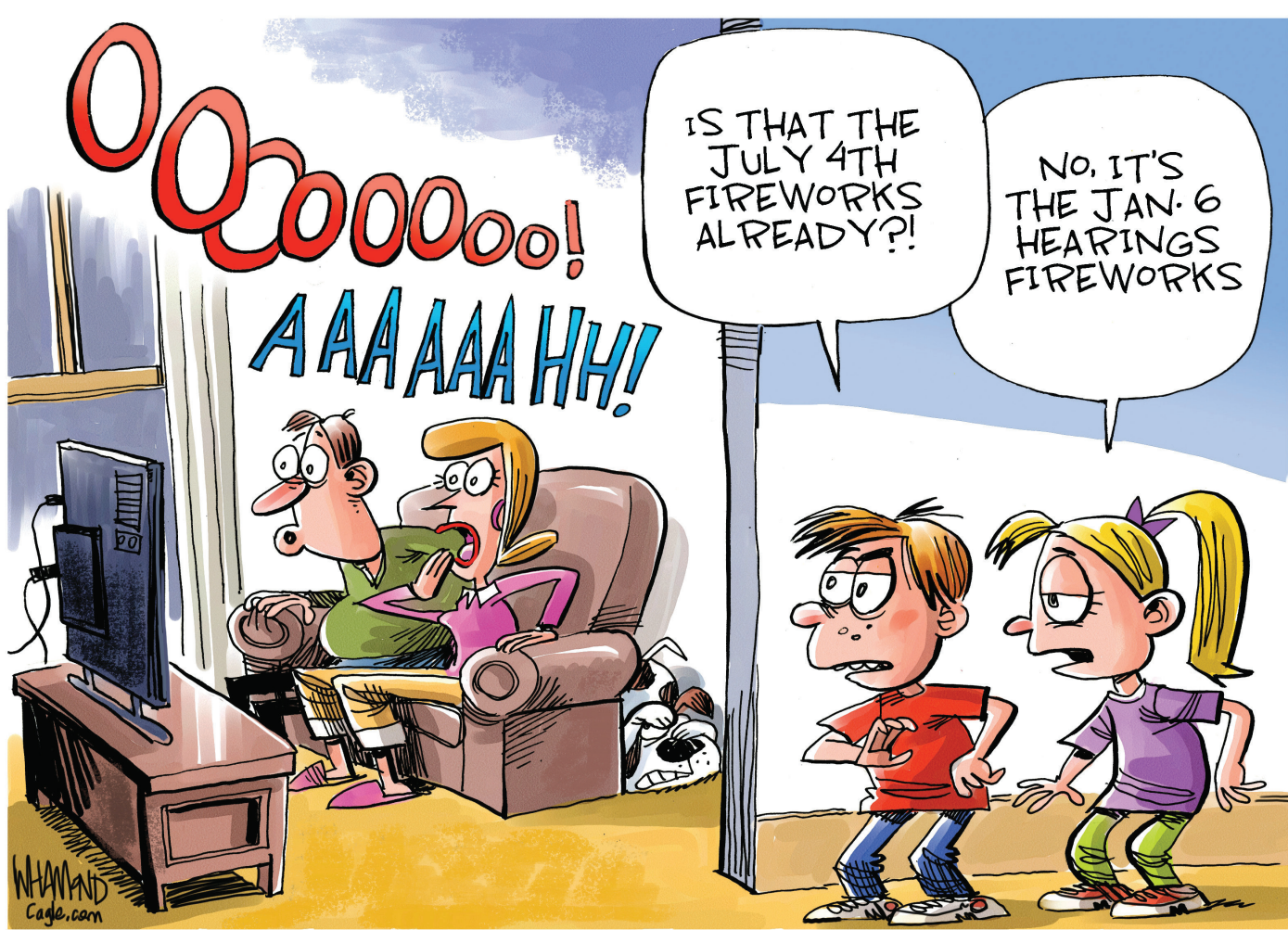
In the other shop bay, put in an antique and custom car class and those students would eventually earn an AA degree in classic and custom car restoration. There is big money in learning how to custom fabricate a car or to restore a vintage vehicle to showroom speculations. And when the student graduates he will have a portfolio to show prospective body shops that he knows what he is doing and can add to their business.

New cars are not made for using a body hammer and dolly on or soldering with body lead, however let's say a '55 Chevy, it can handle both processes with ease, and trust me when I say that antique cars are selling for big money, restored or frame up restoration, and there needs to be trained young people out there to do those jobs.

Why can't BMCC be the place to go to learn a craft that will insure that you are never without a paycheck? I think it can, and I think if Browning doesn't want to make that idea a reality then he needs to find another college to run into the ground. The very idea that we can't have a bond levee until 2035 makes my blood boil because when I was at BMCC one of our jobs when we were on student council was to make sure the bond passed.

We, the community, can do that today if given the opportunity to do so and save the college for years and years to come.

Barbara Wright was born and raised in Pendleton and attended Blue Mountain Community College in the early 1970s. While at BMCC she sat on the student council and worked to help pass bond measures for the college.



Republicans splintered vote for Oregon governor with messages that didn't catch



RANDY
STAPILUS

OTHER VIEWS

Oregon may see in the coming months an extended dustup over curbing gun violence in the state, first in this fall's general election when two gun initiatives may appear on the ballot, and then at the Oregon Legislature responding to the results.

And don't be surprised if Nicholas Kristoff, whose effort to run for governor was legally rebuffed this year, doesn't figure in that discussion.

About 40% of Oregon adults live in a household with a firearm, close to the national average. Oregon politically is more amenable to gun regulation than are many of the states to its east, but it isn't at the top of the list for tough gun laws nationally.

The Giffords Law Center, which tracks gun legislation nationally, gives letter grades to the states and ranks Oregon at B-. It ranks Oregon 35th among the states for the rate of deaths from shootings, and 15th among the states for "gun safety strength."

Gun critics are organized in the state. There's been a degree of compromise here. Oregon's roots are in rural cultures and resource industries, and guns have had a welcome home in much of the state. (A provision in the state constitution says "The people shall have the right to bear arms for the defence (sic) of themselves, and the State.") Advocates aren't just the National Rifle Association; there are groups, such as Oregon Gun Owners, which reports more than 10,000 members.

Oregon is urban and suburban enough that some gun regulation has passed and been accepted without much difficulty, but public officials have been uneasy about leading the charge in that direction.

So, for example, Oregon has had

since 2015 a law in force "requiring private or unlicensed firearm sellers to conduct background checks on private or unlicensed purchasers. Oregon law also requires a prospective purchaser to undergo a background check before buying a gun at a gun show." Oregonians can ask a court to temporarily block a person's access to firearms, with a showing of necessity.

No gun limit

But the state doesn't limit sales of military-type weapons such as an AR-15, or the number of rounds in a magazine (other than for hunting), doesn't require a gap of time between buying and taking possession of a gun, or require safety standards for the weapon or safety training.

Concealed carry permits generally are allowed unless local law enforcement has a reason to think that person will constitute a danger to others. A lack of gun buyback efforts is considered a weak spot.

This suggests a pro-regulation but centrist balance for Oregon. But the ongoing string of mass shootings, most recently at Robb Elementary School in Uvalde, Texas, may return the issue to a front burner. In Oregon, it may revive memories of incidents in Clackamas and Roseburg.

All this could light a fire under two proposed ballot initiatives, numbered 17 and 18, which already have made progress in the last year. Both have obtained enough petition signatures to obtain a ballot title, which is due for publication by June 24.

No. 17, called the Reduction of Gun Violence Act, would require buyers of guns to obtain a legal permit, and law enforcement would create a state database around those filings. It also would ban magazines that include more than 10 rounds.

No. 18, the Reduction of Harm from Weapons Act, would aim to ban "manufacturing/ possessing/ transferring many semiautomatic firearms; criminal

penalties; limited exception if existing firearms registered." It would ban the manufacture of semi-automatics, and require registration by people who already own them.

Reactive approach

The advocates have rationales built into the preambles of the initiatives, and critics could (and surely will) point out the limited ability of the measures to actually stop mass shootings. More broadly, they are reactive; they don't fit into a larger systematic approach to diminishing shootings.

Is there a framework for looking at guns that makes sense of Oregon's near-centrist kind of approach, and maybe charts a direction for future action?

Kristof, a former journalist and Yamhill farmer, has suggested one. In 2017 when he was a columnist for The New York Times, he wrote about gun violence, "Gun enthusiasts often protest: Cars kill about as many people as guns, and we don't ban them! No, but automobiles are actually a model for the public health approach I'm suggesting."

Explaining that: "We don't ban cars, but we work hard to regulate them — and limit access to them — so as to reduce the death toll they cause. This has been spectacularly successful, reducing the death rate per 100 million miles driven to less than one-seventh of what it was in 1946."

Seen through the lens of regulating guns rather than banning them, the Oregon Legislature might have a useful frame of reference to "do something" about gun-related violence whether or not the initiatives pass. At least a common frame of reference, like the one Kristof suggests, would help keep the discussion from devolving into a war against the evil opposition.

Randy Stapilus has researched and written about Northwest politics and issues since 1976 for a long list of newspapers and other publications.