

**Siuslaw News**  
**P.O. Box 10**  
**Florence, OR 97439**

# Opinion

## EXTRAORDINARY PEOPLE

CATHERINE J. ROURKE  
 For the Siuslaw News

### Albert J. Brauer



missions together in Africa and Asia. Today they have 16 grandchildren plus two great-grandchildren on the way this spring.

“Traumas are often big turning points in our lives,” he said. “We have to trust that God will take care of us in tough times.”

Al learned that as a young boy during the Great Depression. Born just two months after the Wall Street Crash of 1929, Al grew up in the same small “Dust Bowl” town as comedian Johnny Carson. In fact, both attended the same high school in Norfolk, Neb., where he remembers watching Carson perform magic tricks.

“Johnny was a very clever, charismatic and classy guy,” Al said. “You could tell he had a bright future.”

But so did Al. Following his father’s footsteps as a family doctor and orthopedic surgeon, he earned his medical degree from the University of Nebraska College of Medicine in 1955. He met his first wife at college and they married while Al was still in medical school.

Al completed his residency at a hospital in Eugene and, after serving in the Navy, eventually opened a private practice in Florence in 1968.

**“I JUST WANTED TO SUPPORT IMPROVING SERVICES FOR THE COMMUNITY.”**

—AL BRAUER

Al vividly recalls the fishing and logging town of nearly 50 years ago in need of a good hospital, a college and banking services. Although he didn’t know it at the time, he would

become involved in all three endeavors.

“I wanted a small town and even Eugene was too big for me back then,” he said. “People here live the way I grew up, with a focus on family. I also grew up with temperatures of 40 below in the winter and 118 in the summer. Florence offered a good climate without those extremes.”

As a physician, he provided versatile medical services for the community, from orthopedic surgery and family medicine to obstetrics and gynecology.

“Medicine was vastly different than it is today,” he said. “We still made house calls. I’ve seen the tide turn, with doctors facing too many restrictions and too much bureaucracy. We’re losing our freedoms in so many ways in this country and medicine is one of them. It’s not healthy for a democracy.”

His advice for today’s doctors: “Keep your sanity and uphold your sacred oath. Refuse to do anything that violates your conscience.”

Al devoted eight years to help PeaceHealth Peace Harbor Medical Center open its doors in 1989 and served on the board for 19 years.

“We needed a modern hospital and had to keep pushing for progress,” he said. “Now it’s ranked

among the top 100 hospitals in the U.S.”

After retiring from medicine in 1995, Al remained committed “to make Florence a better place to

live.” He helped plan the Lane Community College campus, serving on its board for 12 years as well as on the local school board for six years.

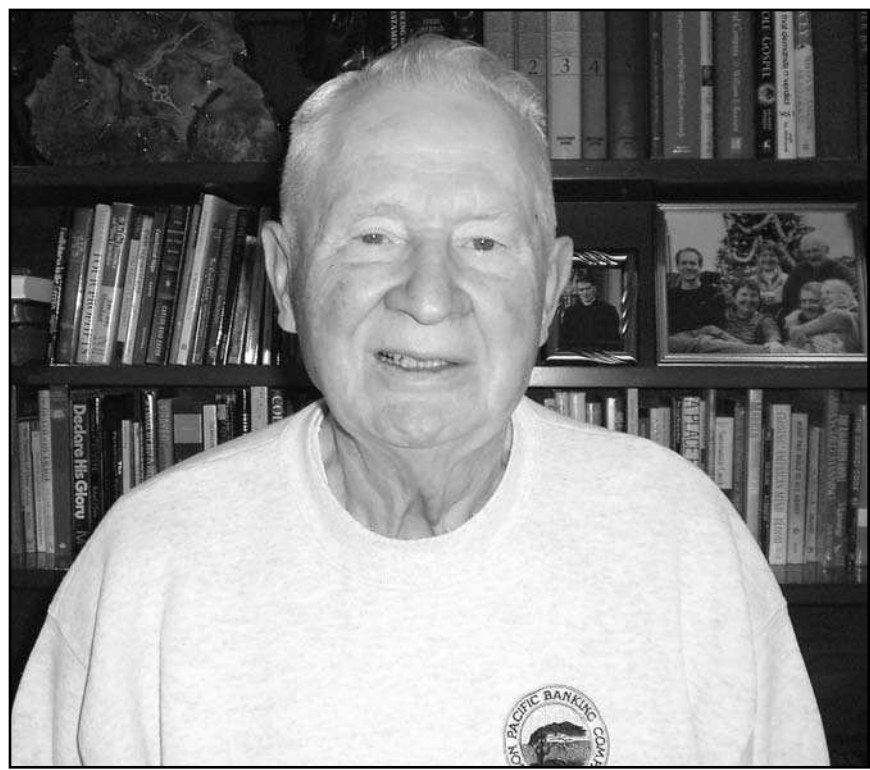


PHOTO BY CATHERINE ROURKE

**Albert Brauer has been making Florence “a better place to live” since opening a private practice here in 1968.**

But his longest tenure involved Oregon Pacific Bank (OPB), an enterprise he helped launch in 1979. At an age when most people get ready to retire, Al’s work was just beginning.

“Banking was never my idea,” he said. “A patient asked me during a medical exam if I would like to help start a bank. I just wanted to support improving services for the community.”

Al served as a founding chairman, director and board member at OPB for a total of 35 years, retiring the day before his 85th birthday in 2014.

His passion for community service also led him to establish a charitable foundation through Rotary to benefit many individuals and good causes.

“When you get to be my age, you get worn out quickly, but you still find energy to support Rotary,” he said with a smile. “The key in life is to stay positive. Things always work out for the best in the end.”

Dr. Brauer’s indefatigable contributions to Florence’s medical, educational and financial services, as well as its charitable needs, serve as living testament to that positive vision.

*Catherine J. Rourke is an award-winning writer, journalist and book editor who teaches creative writing at the Florence Regional Arts Alliance. She may be contacted at CJREditor@gmail.com.*

## LETTERS

### Advice from a first lady

Nancy Reagan has provided a partial answer to the Republican dilemma. As to Donald Trump, just say no.

Charles Walker  
 Florence

### Camp deserves our support

This is in response to Thomas Nieland’s letter to the editor (“Camp for All Youth,” March 2) about the young men from Camp Florence who volunteered to provide free haircuts for individuals at the Helping Hands program.

He asks why there is not a camp, like Camp Florence, for those youth who are not “law offenders.” Camp Florence is not a recreational facility offered to youth offenders. It is a transitional facility for incarcerated youth.

The residents of Camp Florence are serving a sentence for a crime they committed as a juvenile. The purpose of this facility is to provide programs and education to young men so that they can return to society and live positive, productive lives. The fact that some of these young men want to give back to this community by providing free haircuts to those in need, speaks very highly of who they are and how much they have changed.

It costs taxpayers \$25,000 a year to house an adult in the prison system. If we can provide skills and purpose to these youth that keeps them

from re-offending as adults, we are all winners.

Yes, we should have opportunities for all youth — absolutely! But the youth at Camp Florence who have turned their lives around, in spite of some difficult challenges in childhood, deserve our support, and so does Camp Florence, for all it does to make a difference in the lives of young people.

Bettie Egerton  
 Florence

### Stones from glass houses

I am probably the only Republican living in Florence and that makes me an outsider to be sure. After reading the letters to the editor in Saturday’s paper (“Trump’s Tyranny” and “Candidate Cannibalism,” March 5) I became not only an outsider, but a scared outsider as well. I had no idea this little community harbored such narrow, mean-spirited and either uninformed or misinformed citizens when it comes to politics and the upcoming presidential elections.

I am reminded of the old saying, people in glass houses shouldn’t throw stones.

The Republican party candidates have yet to be investigated for illegal use of a personal server with classified information held on it. Nor have they been involved in the unsettling occurrence with regards to Benghazi. Not one of the Republican candidates favors socialist ideals or allowing communism a foot hold in

our highest office.

All candidates, be they Democrats or Republicans, will always have citizens that support them or refuse to support them. That is our system and one of the privileges of living in the United States.

My disappointment with the two letters in Saturday’s paper was the lack of respect shown to the candidates. It takes a very brave person to run for any political office nowadays, especially with the world the way it

is now. My Chihuahua is Catholic so I guess he will be safe.

Elizabeth Burtleson



## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR POLICY

The Siuslaw News welcomes letters to the editor concerning issues affecting the Florence area and Lane County. Emailed letters are preferred. Handwritten or typed letters must be signed. All letters should be limited to about 300 words and must include the writer’s full name, address and phone number for verification. Letters are subject to editing for length, grammar and clarity. Publication of any letter is not guaranteed and depends on space available and the volume of letters received. Libelous and anonymous letters as well as poetry will not be published. All submissions become the property of Siuslaw News and will not be returned.

Write to: Editor@TheSiuslawNews.com

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