



Offbeat Oregon History

Incompetent Portland opium-smuggling gang had friends in high places

BY FINN J.D. JOHN
For the Sentinel

As the new day dawned on the first day of 1893, Customs Collector Jim Lotan would have told you, had you asked, that life was good.

The previous year had been good to him. After years of working his way up through the ranks in the Republican Party, he'd found himself its state party leader after Senator Joe Simon went to Washington, D.C., to join the Republican National Committee. He'd reached that position just in time to blackmail the City of Portland, which had come cap in hand asking the Legislature's permission to borrow \$200,000 for the Bull Run water project. Lotan wasn't a Legislator himself, but he was in a position to set party priorities, and he told the city he'd be glad to put their request on the priority list ... if they'd agree to buy the ramshackle, dilapidated, obsolete Stark Street Ferry from him for \$50,000. It was probably worth about \$1,500 at the time.

True, the city hadn't leaped right on that generous offer, but Lotan knew it would eventually. It had no choice, unless it wanted to continue drinking from the increasingly nasty Willamette River.

The previous year had also been the year in which Lotan had landed, through his political maneuverings, a lucrative federal appointment. He'd been named customs collector for the City of Portland. That meant his office was in charge of inspecting incoming steamer traffic, making sure nobody was smuggling drugs or Chinese laborers into the city. Not only did the job pay a fine salary, but it had other benefits for the intrepid Mr. Lotan. It opened up, shall we say, certain extracurricular money-making opportunities. After all, who was better positioned to smuggle opium into the port than the man whose job it was to prevent opium from being smuggled into port?

Yes, 1893 was shaping up to be an excellent year for Jim Lotan. One imagines him sitting back with a fat cigar by the fire at the exclusive plutocrats-only Arlington Club, of which he was a member, and relishing the prospect of the new year.

With friends like these ...

It was not to be. The problem was, to really exploit the possibilities offered by his new position, he needed to find partners who were

discreet, trustworthy and competent — partners who could keep their mouths shut. However, instead Lotan had ended up working with the Merchants' Steamship Company, owned by disreputable local wholesale grocer Nat Blum.

As smugglers, Blum and his boys were stunningly incompetent. Many of their operations were so bumbling and panicky that they would have made good comedy sketches. Almost as soon as they began their operations, the names of the MSC's ships, the Wilmington and the Haytian Republic, started appearing regularly in the news columns of the Portland papers.

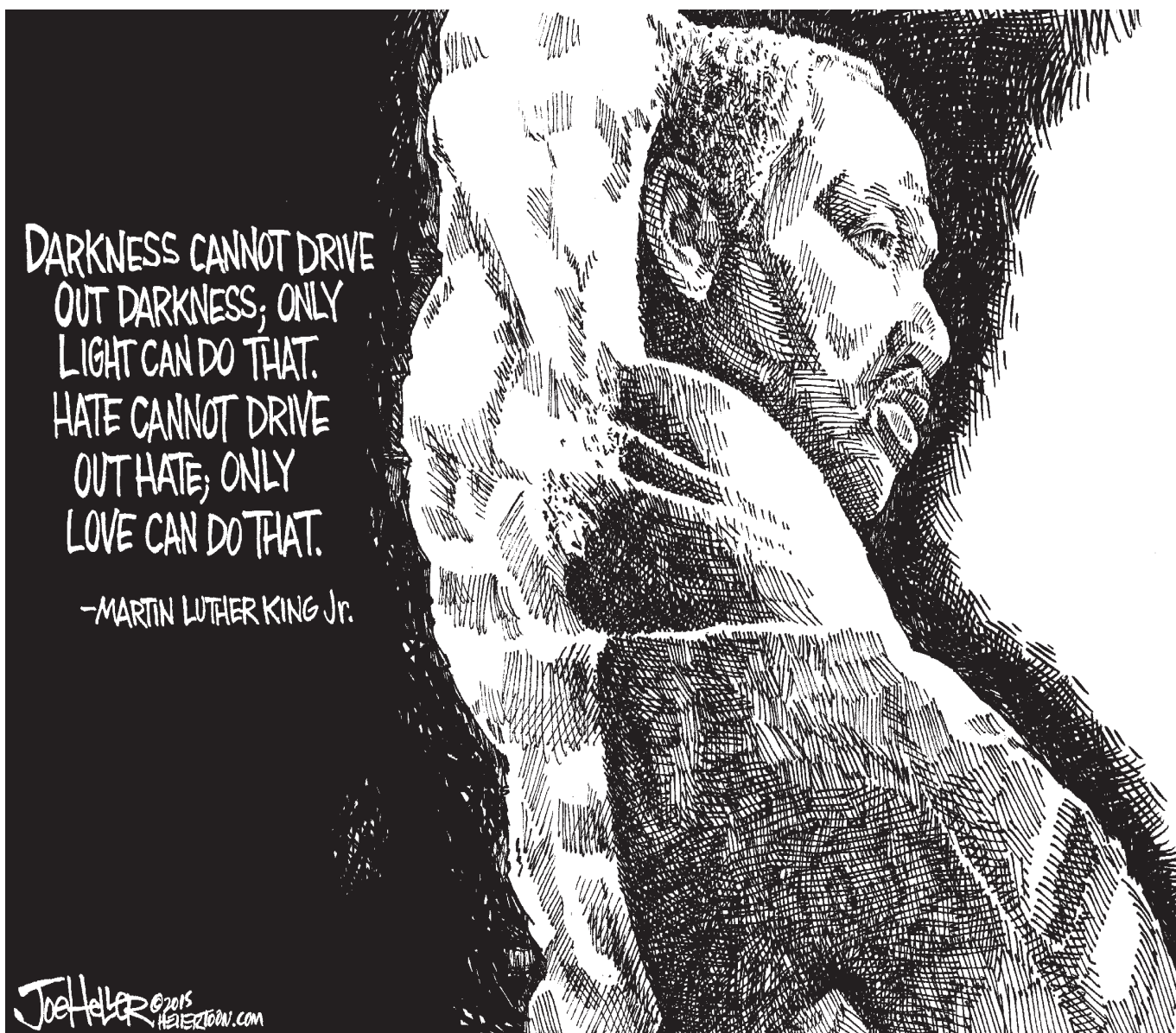
Early in the year, the Portland Evening Telegram revealed that Merchants' Steamship had been transferring Chinese immigrants at sea from one ship to another, a dangerous maneuver undertaken to avoid the expense of disinfecting the immigrants' things on arrival — and, as it later turned out, to avoid also the customs inspection that would determine that the newcomers were illegal immigrants. Each man was paying the Blum gang \$120 for this special service.

How not to smuggle dope

Word then started leaking out about the gang's opium operations, something they undertook with a breathtaking level of ineptitude. Their scheme was this: The Wilmington or Haytian Republic would put into port in Portland. By now they were well known there, so they would be examined closely; Lotan might be a friend, but he could not be seen to be favoring people that everyone knew were smugglers. But that would be OK, because by the time they got inspected, the dope would be long gone: It would have been chucked overboard in barrels a couple miles downriver, for other members of the gang to retrieve.

Now, this might sound like a fairly workable plan. But here's the catch. Apparently Blum didn't think it important to have a smuggler stationed in the river to receive the "freight." The same guy would load half a ton of opium in three or four hogshead barrels aboard the Haytian Republic in Victoria or Vancouver, then take the train to Portland, hoping to get there in time to retrieve the things from the drink. On several occasions this

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With School Choice Week approaching, tips for finding the right school for your child

BY ANDREW CAMPANELLA
For the Sentinel

If you'd like to send your child to a different school next year, now's the time to start the process of researching your options.

As Oregon prepares to commemorate National School Choice Week later this month at 110 events across the state and nearly 11,000 events nationwide, many parents will begin evaluating the educational opportunities that are available for their children.

Believe it or not, seats in schools are already beginning to fill up for the 2015-2016 school year. Interest in school choice — the process of actively choosing a public, charter, magnet, private or online school — is high. That means that waiting until the spring or the summer to begin researching schools for your children could restrict your options.

No handbook or tip sheet can truly guide parents through the entire process of selecting a school, because

choosing schools is an individual experience that will be unique to every family.

However, parents can start by making a list of the attributes that they hope to find in an ideal school. Ask yourself: what's most important to you and to the academic, social and emotional well being of your child? Is it the academic performance of a school, school safety, the instructional methods, the qualifications of teachers, the school's educational theme, a school's shared values, or other factors?

Once you've identified what matters most, start looking into the options available to you. In addition to the local public school, you may be eligible to send your child to a school outside of your ZIP code, or in a different school district. Look into nearby charter schools and magnet schools. Don't leave private and faith based schools off your list! You might be able to find scholarships to cover the costs of tuition. And for some families, online learning and

homeschooling work best.

To find the options available to you, look at information from the Oregon Department of Education, as well as information on state-based education reform or school choice organization websites. For a directory of most schools in your area, along with parent rankings and some performance metrics, parents can visit this website: greatschools.org.

With your list of requirements and your list of schools in hand, start making appointments to visit the schools. Ask to sit in on classes, and make sure to ask as many questions as possible of teachers, the administration and support staff. You'll want to find out what motivates the adults in the building, while also seeing how the students in the classes respond to their teachers. Ask yourself: is this a place where I'd want to send my child for most of his or her weekday waking hours?

Finally, make sure to talk with other parents — and to your own children. Ask par-

ents how the schools' administrators treat parents, and whether they welcome, or discourage, parental involvement. And most importantly, ask your children about their perceptions of the schools that you've visited. Find out what excites and motivates your child at school, but also ask about their worries, concerns and apprehensions.

Making the decision to change schools certainly isn't easy. And switching schools isn't a piece of cake, either. But if you start now, and plan out the journey, you'll find that the destination — a great school for your child — is well worth the diligence and effort.

Andrew R. Campanella is the president of National School Choice Week. National School Choice Week, which runs from Jan. 25-31, 2015, is America's largest-ever celebration of opportunity in education. Campanella lives in Miramar Beach, Florida.

Salt: more concerns than just high blood pressure

BY JOEL FUHRMAN, MD
For the Sentinel

Sodium is an important mineral that is essential for proper functioning of the human body — however, the American diet contains dangerously high amounts of sodium, almost

80 percent of which comes from processed and restaurant foods. For most of human history, our



food did not contain any added salt — only the sodium present in natural foods, adding up to about 750 mg sodium per day. The dietary intake of sodium in the U.S. today is about 3500 mg/day — much more than the human body needs.

Excess dietary salt is most notorious for increasing blood pressure. Americans have a 90 percent lifetime probability of developing high blood pressure — so even if your blood pressure is normal now, if you continue to eat the typical American diet, you will certainly be at risk. Elevated blood pressure accounts for 62 percent of strokes and 49 percent of coronary heart disease. Even if you eat an otherwise healthy diet, and your arteries are free of plaque, hypertension late in life damages the delicate blood vessels of the brain, increasing the risk of hemorrhagic stroke. The American Heart Association, recognizing the significant risks of high blood pressure, has dropped its

recommended maximum sodium intake from 2300 mg to 1500 mg.

Salt also has several potentially dangerous effects that are not related to blood pressure.

Damage to the cardiovascular system: In the 1990s, it was found that the relationship between salt intake and death from stroke was stronger than the relationship between blood pressure and death from stroke; this suggested that salt had damaging effects on the cardiovascular system other than elevating blood pressure. Further research confirmed this observation, showing that long-term excess dietary sodium leads to stiffening of the arteries. Also, more recent research found that blood vessel function is suppressed within a mere 30 minutes following a high salt meal.

Damage to the kidneys: Hypertension is an important risk factor for kidney disease, but dietary sodium has other damaging effects on the kidneys.

High salt intake leads to oxidative stress in kidney tissue and is associated with a decline in kidney function.

Calcium loss from bone. High salt intake is a risk factor for osteoporosis because excess dietary sodium promotes urinary calcium loss, leading to calcium loss from bone and therefore decreased bone density. Even in the presence of a high calcium diet, high salt intake results in net calcium loss from bone.

Ulcers and stomach cancer: Salt is the strongest factor relating to stomach cancer. A high salt diet also increases growth of the ulcer-promoting bacteria *H. pylori* in the stomach, which is also a risk factor for gastric cancer.

Asthma. In asthma patients, high dietary sodium may increase severity of the disease.

Avoid added salt! Reducing dietary salt is not only important for those who already have elevated blood pressure — limiting added salt is essential for all

of us to remain in good health. It is also important to note that expensive and exotic sea salts are still salt. All salt originates from the sea — it contains over 98 percent sodium chloride, and it is not health-promoting. Sea salts may contain small amounts of trace minerals; the amounts are insignificant compared to those in natural plant foods. A high-nutrient, vegetable-based diet with plenty of G-BOMBS (greens, beans, onions, mushrooms, berries and seeds) and little or no added salt is ideal.

Dr. Fuhrman is the #1 New York Times bestselling author of Eat to Live and Super Immunity, and a board certified family physician specializing in lifestyle and nutritional medicine. Visit his informative website at DrFuhrman.com. Submit your questions and comments about this column directly to newsquestions@drfuhrman.com.

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