



The *Chatterbox*
Getting the picture

BY BETTY KAISER
For the Sentinel

We all like good news. It makes us happy and hopeful. On a local scale, most of us celebrated when the UO Ducks won the Rose Bowl in 2014. Yea! On an International scale, news that the Ebola crisis is on a downward trend (despite new cases) brings hope where there was none. Kudos to all those who persevered to stop this plague.

No one likes bad news. It would be nice if we could just ignore the barrage of negative stuff coming across the airwaves. Nice but not realistic. Currently, a respected anchorman on nationwide television is under fire and in danger of losing his job for not being completely truthful. Here in Oregon, our Governor has been under fire for ethics violations and resigned under pressure.

On the International scene we have constant, overwhelmingly bad news of undeclared warfare, kidnappings, mass killings, property destruction and starvation. Like you, I have many questions but no answers about these power plays and atrocities. We can't ignore this stuff, nor can we solve the problems. What do we do?

Shortly after the Brian Williams hub-bub broke loose, a "Blondie" cartoon caught my eye. It gave me a little perspective on human nature. The scene: It's a snowy day. Dagwood and his friend Herb are briskly walking to work. Their conversation goes like this:

Dagwood: "Days like this remind me of being on the veranda at The Grand Hotel in Fiji."

Herb: "When was that?" (Silence)

Dagwood: "Well, technically, this reminds me of a photo I saw in a travel magazine a long time ago...but you get the picture."

Well, I get the picture about Williams. All of us from time to time tend to embellish the facts. Maybe it's shaving a few years off our age. Making our job description sound more important than it is. Coloring our hair. Upping our school GPA. Making our children sound like brainiac angels or whatever. You get

the idea. We all do it.

The NBC anchorman belatedly confessed that he embellished being in a helicopter hit by a grenade in 2003. Actually, it was the helicopter ahead of his that was hit. Oops! Now Williams has been suspended for six months without pay and it remains to be seen if he will come back as anchorman. I have my doubts.

Frankly, I did not lose any respect for him over this. I believe that initially he was caught up in the moment and that it may have felt like his chopper was hit. Unfortunately, he never clarified his initial statement with the truth. Millions of viewers will not calculate that the majority of his career has been honest and straight arrow. They have lost complete trust in him due to this falsehood (and possibly others).

Oregon's Governor John Kitzhaber's personal and political life has been under fire for months. His fiancé, Cylvia Hayes, served as the state's first lady. As a paid consultant outside government, it was alleged that her relationship with the Governor was helping her land contracts for her business. This, among other things, chipped away at his credibility. At first, the Governor refused all calls to resign, saying, "I have broken no laws." He abruptly resigned Feb. 13, stating he had become a liability to the office. No doubt there is more to come.

The above battles are mostly political. They are sad situations but not hopeless. All concerned will emerge with their egos bruised and battered but live to work again. There are solutions. The following scenarios are real life and death battles. Wanton killing and power grabs characterize many areas of the world.

The so-called Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) is a huge topic of concern all around the world. This barbaric terrorist group is trying to establish a conservative Islamic state to encompass the Arab world. An empire. They financed their war against Infidels by taking over Mosul, the third largest city in Iraq and seizing more than \$400 million from city banks to bankroll their evil empire.

How evil? Well, women and children who did not fit the mold were the first victims. The United Nations reported

ISIS systematically killing, torturing and raping the families and children of minority groups in Iraq. Their methods included mass executions of boys, reports of beheadings, crucifixions of children and burying children alive.

ISIS' goal is to rule the entire world by fear. Their horrific beheading of hostages from the United States was followed by the gruesome beheadings of Japanese hostages and immolation of a Jordanian pilot captive. ISIS loves publicity and toys with the captives' family emotions. The young American woman who was evidently 'given' to their leader was still killed. The end is always death. Scary stuff.

And what is really going on in the Ukraine? I get it but I don't get it. Thanks to Vladimir Putin and Russia's land grab history, Russian troops and tanks are pulverizing buildings in the Ukraine. Helpless citizens are living underground in rubble and starvation. Why is Putin doing this? Because he can. He's power hungry. Can anyone stop the madness? Nope. No one wants to start a war with nuclear-armed Russia. That's the way it looks to me. What do you think?

"The world is going to hell in a hand basket" (i.e. deteriorating rapidly) was one of my dad's frequent comments during times of war and economic hardship. Looking at the events of this era I can only agree that things don't look good. The hope is that future generations will serve and not destroy their fellow humans.

In that spirit, I offer this perspective from the comic "Beetle Bailey":

Beetle: "I don't get it...mankind has been at war since the beginning of time. What's wrong with mankind? Why can't we get smart and figure it out?"

Soldier: "Because every 30 years there's a new mankind."

Now I get the picture!

Betty Kaiser's Chatterbox is about people, places, family, and other matters of the heart. Contact her at 942-1317 or via e-mail — bchatty@bettykaiser.com

COMMUNITY BRIEFS

Taste of Creswell

Those interested in local food options are encouraged to attend the first-ever Taste of Creswell event on Friday, Feb. 20 from 6-9 p.m. at the Creswell Community Center, located at 99 S. 1st St. There will be live music, dancing and appearances by the local Creswell business community. The event is free.

Fefafe at the Opal Center

The Opal Center for Arts and Education present Fefafe, an authentic West African performance troupe that presents the traditional culture and sounds of Guinea, West Africa on Saturday, Feb. 21 at 8 p.m. Tickets are \$12 in advance or \$15 at the door.

The name, Fefafe, translates from their Susu language to "Something is Coming," and the group performed at the Oregon Country Fair in 2014.

After touring professionally around the world, these Guinean artists have recently settled in the Eugene area.

Masons trade bikes for books

The annual Bikes for Books reading incentive program sponsored by the Cottage Grove Masonic Lodge #51 A.F. & A. M in collaboration with South Lane School District kicks off on Feb. 17 and runs through May 15. Students in grades K-5 may participate in the program and could earn a bicycle and helmet if the goal of reading 13 books (at grade level) is met during the eligibility window.

Students keep a record of the books read and parents and teachers are involved throughout the process. Difficult reading or exceptionally long books can be counted as two books with teacher approval. Those students who have completed reading 13 books will have their name put into a drawing for a bike and helmet. The drawing will be held in late May or early June with winners being awarded the prize during each elementary school's end of year assembly.

This year's Bikes for Books event is held in memory of Ray Peckenpaugh. Those seeking further information regarding the Bikes for Books incentive program may contact their elementary student's school office manager.

Humor columnist, author to donate book to library

It's been 16 years since Ned Hickson began writing for Siuslaw News as a sports editor and humor columnist. In that time he has won more than two-dozen awards from both the Oregon Newspaper Publishers Association and Society of Professional Journalists, and is now a nationally syndicated feature with News Media Corporation.

In his book "Humor at the Speed of Life," he brings together his best columns from over the years.

"These are the columns that prompted the most emails, calls and, in one case, a note tied to fruitcake thrown through my window," said Hickson, who will be donating a copy of his book to the Cottage Grove Library on Saturday, Feb. 21, as well as reading some selections during a special book signing from 2 to 3 p.m.

"Over the years, I've gotten lots of great emails and letters from folks in Cottage Grove who read the Sentinel, so making a copy of the book available at the Library seemed like a perfect fit," said Hickson. "I was going to say it's long overdue, but that doesn't go over well at libraries."

In addition to reading excerpts from his book, Hickson will also have copies available for purchase and signing.

"I truly believe humor brings people together in a way nothing else does," Hickson said. "I like knowing my book can bring a smile to people's faces. Even without photos of me in my bathing suit."

The Cottage Grove Library is located at 700 East Gibbs Ave.

For more information, contact the Library at 541-942-3828.

OFFBEAT

Continued from page 4A

followed a more careful path. That was the group led by Douglas County Sheriff C.F. Cathcart and Constable George Quine of the nearby town of Riddle.

Quine, the small-town cop, was an amateur detective. Carefully looking through the evidence at the scene, he made some very important observations.

First, he found a campsite near the railroad tracks, the ashes of its campfire barely cooled. A close inspection turned up the robbers' discarded masks, made from flour sacks. And around the campfire ashes, he found a set of boot tracks with a distinctive pattern of nails in the heel.

Quine also learned, probably from recovering a dud dynamite stick, that the dynamite used had been giant powder, a type used by hard-rock miners.

Some of the passengers had seen the lead robber's face through the thin fabric of the flour-sack mask and given a pretty good description. After

hearing about it, a Riddle resident named Stilly Riddle reported there were three men who had been working at Nichols Station — one of whom matched the description — who had disappeared shortly after the robbery. One of them, a fellow named John Case, habitually wore a white hat with a buckskin band. The cops knew both men.

And, to a man, they immediately realized they had their perpetrator. The question was, could they prove it?

They could — sort of. But there would be another train robbery before Case could be stopped. We'll talk about that next week.

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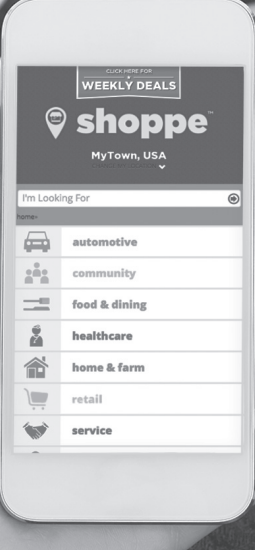
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