



Making sure our veterans get the care they deserve

BY REP. GREG WALDEN

Several times a year, I have the privilege of greeting World War II veterans who travel to Washington, D.C. to see their memorial on the National Mall as part of the "Honor Flight" program. These brave men and women fought to protect our freedom and defeat tyranny. In the words of General John Pershing, the commander of American forces in World War I, "time will not dim the glory of their deeds."

He was right. Time will not dim the glory of their deeds. This holds true for all of America's veterans, from World War II and Korea to Vietnam to Iraq and Afghanistan. We as a nation owe our freedom to the men and women who have served in uniform.

But too often, the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) and other arms of the federal government have failed our veterans. That's why I'm working hard to pass legislation and cut through red tape to improve health care for veterans and active duty military, help them find jobs when they return home, and increase accountability and transparency at the VA.

One of the very first laws passed by Congress this year was the Clay Hunt SAV Act, which seeks to combat the terrible plague of veteran suicides. The law would help ensure that the VA's mental health and suicide prevention ef-

forts receive independent, third party oversight. And also it helps to improve accounting of available mental health services while implementing a better, community-based approach to delivering suicide prevention services.

Last year, Congress passed a law requiring the establishment of a new "Veterans Choice" program to help rural veterans get care from private providers. This was a good step, but the rollout of the new program has hit some speed bumps along the way. For example, the law that created the Choice program says that a veteran living more than 40 miles from a VA medical facility may go outside the system for care. Originally, the agency had calculated that 40 mile distance "as the crow flies" instead of the distance it took to drive there. That didn't make sense to me or many veterans I heard from in Oregon. So we passed a law to make it clear that 40 miles is defined by how far a veteran needs to drive for care. This will help veterans get the appropriate care they need in the communities where they live.

It's not just enough to make sure veterans have health care. They need jobs too. In July, the President signed into law the "Hire More Heroes Act," which will exempt veterans enrolled in health care provided by the VA or TRICARE from being counted as part of the 50 full-time em-

ployee threshold for purposes of the employer mandate in Obamacare. This ensures that employers aren't penalized for hiring veterans under the health law's mandates.

We also passed a new law to allow all veterans to get a special ID card from the VA as proof of veteran status, eliminating the need to carry and use their official military discharge papers. And the House has passed plans to increase funding for veterans programs, recoup bonuses from poorly performing VA executives who received them based on false claims, and allow the VA greater authority to remove employees if they aren't up to the job. The Senate should act on these bills right away.

I have two veterans on staff who assist Oregonians with problems at the VA, and I've already assisted over 5,000 veterans and their families. If you or a loved one needs help with the VA (or any other federal agency), please call my office toll free from the 541 area code at 800-533-3303. I'll do everything I can to get results for you. And I'll keep working to make sure our veterans get the care and benefits they've earned through their service.

Greg Walden represents Oregon's Second Congressional District, which covers 20 counties in southern, central and eastern Oregon.



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Offbeat Oregon History

The Unwritten Law: A license to kill for every (male) Oregonian

BY FINN J.D. JOHN
For the Sentinel

A century ago, the entire country was in the grip of a sort of lethal mania. You can catch references to it in old novels by nonplussed Britons like P.G. Wodehouse — a sense that the U.S., unlike England or France or Germany, was not really a country of laws. Oh, laws were fine for things like robbery and swindling and claim jumping, but when it came to crimes involving "honor," nothing but cold steel or hot lead would suffice.

The concept was popularly known as "The Unwritten Law." It was, essentially, a social sanction for honor killings.

The idea was that when a man caught another man making time with his wife, or moving in on his sister, not only was he justified to seek out the perpetrator and murder him, he was morally obligated to do so. Of course, he was taking quite a risk in answering this call, since

murder was punishable by hanging. He had to commit his deed in the hope that "no jury in the land" would allow the law to punish him for it, in his particular case.

This "right" was essentially for men only; there were a few cases of women claiming the protection of The Unwritten Law after gunning down their husbands' mistresses, but with one or two exceptions, they were not successful.

The case for The Unwritten Law is articulated beautifully in a sympathetic 1890 editorial in the Portland Morning Oregonian:

"There are certain gross offenses against persons, against the family relations, against woman, against virginity and domestic chastity, against reputation and the finer sense of moral shame, too impalpable to be measured by the coarse standards of formal law; too dependent upon circumstances to be defined by any general code; too profound and far-reaching in individual

cases to be punished adequately by any penalties prescribed by the law for all cases alike," the editor wrote.

The editorial goes on to make the case that the very illegality of honor killings was the best guarantee that the "Unwritten Law" would not be abused.

"Herein lies the salvation of the principle from abuse," the writer gushed. "Written only in the moral sense of society and never given even the popular sanction of an open jury verdict, it has never been erected into a precedent or established as a permanent general rule. No homicide ever dares plead this principle in defense ... Whether he shall come out of the court room a criminal or a rightful executioner of justice depends upon no formal statute of general principle, but only upon the workings of an unconfessed sentiment in the human mind."

There is, of course, a flaw in this logic. Most murders aren't committed in cold blood. For a homicide who, for example, whips out a revolver and murders a fellow poker player after being accused of cheating, the very next topic his mind turns to is how he might escape being hanged. For literally thousands of hot-blooded killers, The

Unwritten Law offered a ray of hope: could they but convince a jury that they thought the deceased was surreptitiously getting busy with a female relative, they might walk free.

And so it was that, in the course of the 1890s, The Unwritten Law went from a long-shot throwing of oneself upon the mercy of a jury, to a habitual claim of "temporary insanity" for murderers who had killed in anything less than ice-cold blood. By 1897 or so it was beginning to become a serious problem in the Beaver State.

This is almost certainly why, just a few years after publishing that friendly editorial, the Oregonian had completely reversed its position on The Unwritten Law.

"In America we make a bloody burlesque of justice by saying that any man may safely slay his fellow if he can make a jury believe that he believed his victim was criminally intimate with his family," the paper scoffed in 1898. "Of course, on this plea any malignant wretch might cunningly contrive suspicious circumstances and situations and do murder on his pretended conviction of guilt."

This implication was almost certainly accurate. But regardless of whether or

not any murderer successfully dressed his crime up as an honor killing and got exonerated on that basis, the period from about 1896 to 1911 saw a stunning rise in the number of Unwritten Law killings. Sometimes, the killer's claim was of "temporary insanity"; sometimes they invoked the Unwritten Law directly. Most of the time, it worked — until the day came when most of the time it didn't. By the 1920s, "unwritten law" claims were rare. But while it lasted, the rule of The Unwritten Law — like that of its close cousin, vigilante justice or "Judge Lynch" — made for some very interesting frontier history.

In previous Offbeat Oregon columns we've talked about a couple of these killings.

There was, of course, the 1906 assassination of Bride of Christ "Holy Roller" cult founder F. Edmund Creffield by the brother of the woman he sexually "purified" in a religious ritual. Though he killed in cold blood and made no attempt to claim insanity, gunman George Mitchell was found not guilty and hailed as a moral hero — and, after his other sister (also a cult member) later gunned him down in precisely the

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Eat more often, gain weight

BY JOEL FUHRMAN, MD
For the Sentinel

It is well known that in recent years, restaurant portion sizes have steadily increased, and many single meals at fast food outlets and restaurants pack in enough calories for an entire day. Overall in the U.S., we are

surrounded by calorie-dense food all the time. Today, we eat more and more often than we did 20 or 30 years



ago. We eat constantly. Calorie-dense, nutrient-poor snacks are everywhere. And many of our beverages contain enough calories to be meals in themselves.

However, "eat smaller, more frequent meals" is common weight loss advice — supposedly, if we eat more often to "keep blood sugar stable," we will avoid overeating. But does this really work? Is it sound advice for reducing caloric intake overall? The research says no — eating more frequently actually appears to promote weight gain.

Since the 1970s, overweight and obesity rates in the U.S. have skyrocketed.

Also since then, the average number of eating occasions (meals plus snacks) increased from 3.5 per day to 5.0 per day, and the average number of calories consumed each day rose from 1803 to 2374.

Calorie intake in the U.S. has been increasing by an average of 28 calories per day per year

since 1977. Researchers have examined three potential drivers of increased calorie intake: portion size, number of eating occasions and calorie density of meals. Although portion sizes were responsible for much of the caloric increase up to 1991, by far, the greater number of eating occasions was the strongest driver of increased caloric intake, accounting for 22 of the 28 calories per day per year increase the researchers observed since 1977.

Snacking for most people is a reaction to what I call toxic hunger. Most people snack between meals to stop uncomfortable withdrawal symptoms from the unhealthy foods that they eat. The average number of eating occasions has increased as our diet has become more toxic, producing more cravings and withdrawal symptoms. Unhealthy food indeed does have these addictive qualities.

To maintain a healthy weight we need to eat fewer total cal-

ories; eating primarily nutrient-dense (rather than calorie-dense) foods and eating fewer times per day both will help to achieve this goal. Foods with a low calorie-density (high nutrient-density) like greens, other vegetables and fruits are associated with reduced total caloric intake, higher nutritional quality and lower body weight. Conversely, foods with a high energy-density are associated with greater caloric intake. Also, contrary to the conventional wisdom, the majority of studies have not found any weight-loss or calorie-reduction benefit to eating more frequently. Consuming a snack has been found not to cause a compensatory decrease in caloric consumption at the next meal. Ultimately, snacking most often results in increased daily caloric intake. Furthermore, most studies have shown that there is no weight loss advantage to dividing a diet of the same number of calories into a greater number of meals.

Eat only when you are truly hungry. For most people following a healthful diet, this will not be more than three times a day. The key factor for weight loss is improving the quality of your diet. Scientific research has demonstrated that eating healthy food brings a greater level of satiety and significantly reduces or eliminates the uncomfortable symptoms of toxic hunger, leading to greater meal satisfaction, reduced caloric intake and attainment of a healthy weight.

Dr. Fuhrman is a #1 New York Times best-selling author and a 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. The full reference list for this article can be found at DrFuhrman.com.

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