

**Cottage Grove Sentinel**  
 116 N. Sixth St.  
 Cottage Grove, Ore. 97424

# Opinion

**The First Amendment**  
 Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press, or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances.

*"I never considered a difference of opinion in politics, in religion, in philosophy, as cause for withdrawing from a friend." —Thomas Jefferson (1800)*

**The Waves of Time  
 Cannot Wash Away The  
 Memory of Their Courage**



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**Letters to the Editor Policy**

The Sentinel welcomes letters to the editor as part of a community discussion of issues on the local, state and national level.

Emailed letters are preferred. Handwritten or typed letters must be signed. All letters need to include full name, address and phone number; only name and city will be printed. Letters should be limited to about 300 words. 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.

Letters that are anonymous, libelous, argumentative, sarcastic or contain accusations that are unsourced or without documentation will not be published.

Letters containing poetry or from outside The Sentinel readership area will only be published at the discretion of the editor.

**Political/Election Letters:**

Election-related letters must address pertinent or timely issues of interest to our readers at-large.

Letters must: 1) Not be a part of letter-writing campaigns on behalf of (or by) candidates; 2) Ensure any information about a candidate is accurate, fair and not from second-hand knowledge or hearsay; and 3) explain the reasons to support candidates based on personal experience and perspective rather than partisanship and campaign-style rhetoric.

Candidates themselves may not use the letters to the editor column to outline their views and platforms or to ask for votes; this constitutes paid political advertising.

As with all letters and advertising content, the newspaper, at the sole discretion of the publisher, general manager and editor, reserves the right to reject any letter that doesn't follow the above criteria.

**Send letters to:**

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**Graduating seniors: The road ahead is uniquely yours, paved by caring influence of others**



ing as something similar to chainsaw sculpture: Creative and interesting, but it would never be Michaelangelo unless I learned the tools needed to smooth the edges into something seamless.

I listened carefully to her advice and then, like any teenager, disregarded everything except that part about having "raw talent."

Surely that was enough. However, in the weeks ahead I realized it wasn't

felt my grade was, and that I'm sure my new school and its teachers would be better.

To this day, I still get knots in my stomach when I think about what I said, and how visibly upset she was by my hurtful words.

My sophomore year at Siuslaw, I was enrolled in College Prep English once again. For our first assignment, Mr. Danielson asked us to write an essay titled "At My House."

— and that energy and enthusiasm are wasted if they aren't given a direction that readers can follow.

He remains one of my favorite and most influential teachers. But I also know, if not for Mrs. Fillers' willingness to teach me an even more important lesson about writing, I may not have recognized what Mr. Danielson had to offer me.

In a few days, seniors at high schools in Cottage Grove, Crow, North Douglas and throughout the area will hear their names called, announcing their completion of high school education.

As they step forward and receive their diploma, they will also be taking their first step toward their future — thanks in no small part to family, friends and the many teachers who helped guide them to this point in their lives.

And, in the case of one newspaper editor, continues to guide them long after.

Congratulations, seniors.

Regardless of where life takes you, the road is uniquely your own and built upon your own hard work in conjunction with the caring contributions and influences of others.

And Mrs. Fillers, if you somehow ever read this...

Thank you for the "F" that changed everything.

**From the Managing Editor's Desk**

*Ned Hickson*

nearly enough in the eyes of Mrs. Fillers. I began to fail miserably on my assignments, which had shifted from creativity to the analysis of writing prose and recognizing the mechanics and devices used by writers like Shakespeare, Hawthorne, Hemingway, Emerson...

...Blah, blah, blah.

When the final grades were given, I went from having a crush on my teacher to being crushed by her and the "F" on my report card — something I had never received before.

Well, not for English.

At that point, I had learned our family was moving to Florence and I'd be attending a new school whose name I couldn't yet pronounce. With that in mind, I went to Mrs. Fillers and told her how unfair I

We were given no further instruction other than it being due the following day. When I turned in my five-page essay, I felt I was off to a good start with a teacher who would surely overlook the petty details of mechanics and grammar in favor of creativity.

When he handed back our assignments, he had written the following comment: "A+ for enthusiasm/ D+ for mechanics. What are you trying to say with your essay?"

It seemed there was no escaping what I eventually came to realize were the demands of engaged teachers unwilling to bend at the expense of a student's potential.

Mr. Danielson taught me about essay format and the need to have a logical beginning, middle and end



Admittedly, I had a bit of a crush on my high school College Prep English teacher, Mrs. Fillers, who was young, inventive and extremely encouraging to the only freshman in her class of 25 juniors and seniors.

The first semester was a breeze as she allowed us to explore creative writing with few boundaries. Each week, along with our reading assignments, we were given a new list of 20 vocabulary words — usually with a theme — that we were required to use in a story.

Most of my classmates crammed as many of those words into a single sentence as they could (The decrepit, cantankerous, ill-tempered man raised his wrinkled, weathered, sallow fist in a show of furious and frustrated rage over losing his car keys...)

I, on the other hand, fleshed out 15 to 20 pages of handwritten storyline, usually with the last five to six pages devoid of vocabulary words.

I got good grades but, as you can probably imagine, was rarely asked to read my stories in class due to the time constraints of a 45-minute period.

Throughout that semester, I noticed strange red marks on my pages with comments like "incomplete sentence," "check spelling," "punctuation needs work."

As a result, I'd get "A+" for content and creativity but "D" for mechanics.

My thinking was, *Who cares about mechanics when the story is so great?*

Mrs. Fillers did.

As we headed into the second semester, she took me aside and told me that raw talent wasn't enough, and that I needed to learn the tools of writing if I wanted to get serious.

She described my writ-

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