

EDITORIALS & OPINIONS

The Bulletin
AN INDEPENDENT NEWSPAPER

Heidi Wright
Gerry O'Brien
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Publisher
Editor
Editorial Page Editor

Dear President Biden, about that invitation

Dear Mr. President,

We were listening to your news conference when you said you would seek more advice about what you should and shouldn't be doing from a list of notables, including "editorial writers."

As certain as we are that an invitation to the White House is coming, we thought we should write, just in case.

We would rather not go down in history as that editorial writer who suggested that the president not bring in editorial writers, but here goes: It may not be the best idea.

Editorial writers already have platforms. You can easily access the best they can do. If they aren't already giving their best, we doubt they would do much better with a White House invitation.

As an alternative, we recommend investing some time each day in a different community newspaper from around the country. They are not perfect reflections of the challenges and triumphs of their communities. The articles and letters to the editor don't necessarily easily translate into policy. Regular reading, though, can provide a potent metric. It is all the more poignant, because there are not so many anymore. Some communities no longer have a watchdog to bark.

If we had to pick something unique to The Bulletin's coverage that might suggest what should be on the presidential to-do list, what immediately comes to mind is a kind of three-way tie.

One of the high schools in the Bend-La Pine district had a graduation rate last year of 59%. Appalling. Alarming. Worrying for the future. What else could or should the federal government do to help our schools?

If you were to drive along Second Street in Bend or out on Hunnell Road, it is inescapable that this community needs better solutions for people who are homeless. There's debate within the community about what should be done. But there are not enough resources to provide housing and support to people who desperately need it.

Third, take the Warm Springs challenge. Pledge as president to only drink water bottled from a kitchen faucet from the Warm Springs Indian Reservation. Keep at that until the boil water notices go away.

An absurd action for the president to take? No more absurd than the boil-water notices that have kept returning to Warm Springs. Yes, money for improvements may be on the way. That's what we have heard for years. We'd hope that if a president can do anything, it's ensure no American spends another year worrying about what comes from their tap.

If you do end up inviting editorial writers to the White House, keep them away from the booze. And if you are interested, bet we can get you a deal on a subscription to The Bulletin.

Historical editorial: Nolan's deserved fate

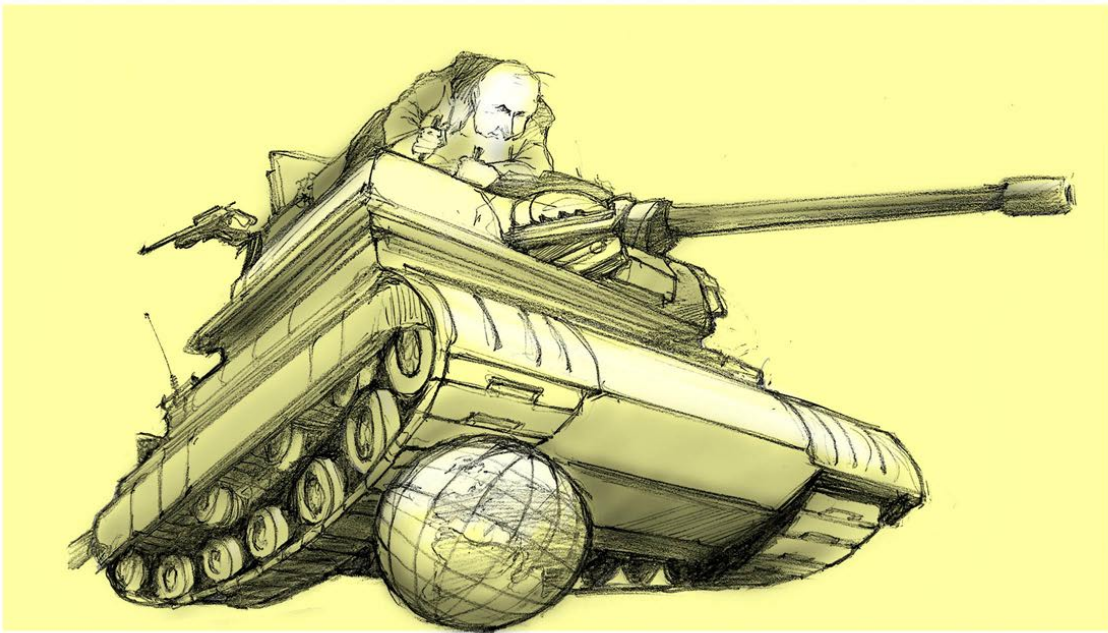
■ *Editor's note: This historical editorial originally appeared in what was then called The Bend Bulletin on March 8, 1907.*

While the charges brought by Register Nolan against The Dalles land office were under investigation it was proper to suspend judgment. Now that the case has resulted in the removal of Mr. Nolan for making baseless charges the marks of desperate politics, which The Bulletin spoke of at the time, seem to be clearer. Mr. Nolan's arbitrary course had long lost him the confidence of the people who came in contact with the office and it brought

much inconvenience and hardship to innocent persons. Before he had learned the business, he was an arrogant disaster. He had long sought to discredit his associate, Miss Anne Long. She, having almost been "brought up" in that land office, familiar with every detail, jealous of its record, and being a clear-headed business woman, naturally chafed under the criticism which the register's course brought upon the office. But she made no "roar." She let Nolan dig a pit and fall into it.... Nolan seems to occupy the position of a man who, having set out to pull a house down, merely fell off the steps and broke his own neck.

Editorials reflect the views of The Bulletin's editorial board, Publisher Heidi Wright, Editor Gerry O'Brien and Editorial Page Editor Richard Coe. They are written by Richard Coe.

Russian Diplomacy



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JANZIGER The Rutland Herald Washington Post Writers Group

Love letter to the regular pickup game

BY JAMES BOYLE

Special to The Washington Post
It's mid-January, and our New Year's resolutions are looking peaked, if they haven't already perished. A lot of them involve getting more exercise, and for lots of us that exercise has a place: the regular pickup game. Maybe you have a group that meets every weekend for volleyball or soccer or pickleball, or maybe there are folks you exercise with by running or biking or taking a yoga class.

This is a love letter to those groups. They have been hit hard by the pandemic. But they struggle along, and we need them. They foster a sense of fellowship, one where the normal hierarchies are made meaningless: Watch the investment banker preen after the insanely athletic landscaper, and star of the league, says, "Nice shot."

These games are suffused with denial and acceptance. Denial because we keep going back out there believing, despite all the evidence, that we're going to get back those six inches of vertical leap, that step of speed we lost along the way. Acceptance because, all around you, you can see others going through the same process: The players at my regular outdoor volleyball game are festooned with so many neoprene braces that we could assemble several credible wet suits. We buy ibuprofen by the tub. We laugh at ourselves and at one another.

Then, when that wonderful game comes along, the one where everything goes right, we discard all evidence of decline and see it as clear proof of a positive trend.

If you find the right group, there's a curiously delicate kindness-from-strangers that emerges. People don't associate pickup games with Brontë-level formal courtesy and consideration, but in a weird way they coexist. I have been told, with manifest and deeply appreciated dishonesty, that my play in the last game was "fine" by people who from the outside look as though politesse or kindness were the last things on their minds.

After you've single-handedly lost the game, your teammates are the only people who can cheer you. Not your spouse, not your best friend.

There are dramas, of course, and even romances. What really happened between Courtney and the Brazilian outside hitter? You don't ask, and we won't tell. It's a private and forgiving world.

My volleyball group has been together for 20 years. Rules might have changed for every other volleyball game on the planet, but on our grass court, it's still the 1980s, when many of us found the sport.

Players wash in and out with the rhythms of the seasons. A player named Vu, originally from Vietnam, was quiet when he first joined our game. We couldn't tell how good he was. Then he made an incredible play. Was it a flash in the pan? A couple of points later, he did it again and smiled modestly. "Deja ... Vu," he said. Over those two decades in the

Game That Time Forgot, marriages and hip joints have crumbled. Stalwarts move away and then fly back for a reunion game. We've suffered illnesses and professional reverses and had triumphs and recoveries. Anyone who plays in any regular pickup game in any sport could tell similar stories about their own game, their own group.

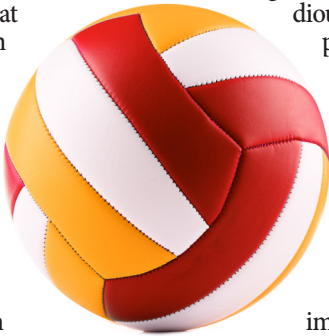
These are trivial little rituals and communities, unnoticed by the rest of the world, unchronicled. Their lore is strictly oral, their culture ephemeral. It is a subject that would bore your colleagues and friends in exactly the way that a dream that was deeply meaningful to you is unspeakably tedious when you try to explain why it mattered.

But it does. It matters very much. Hence this love letter.

These thoughts are prompted by the grief I feel about my departure from my own regular pickup game. My immune system recently decided to start eating my

nervous system, which was extremely impolite. If you were going to binge eat over the holidays, couldn't you go for smoked pork butt and fried potatoes, rather than myelin sheaths? But someday soon, I will hobble down to watch my friends play. Maybe Vu will even be back in town. And if he makes that shot, I'll say, "Deja Vu," and be comforted.

■ James Boyle is a law professor at Duke Law School.



Letters policy

We welcome your letters. Letters should be limited to one issue, contain no more than 250 words and include the writer's phone number and address for verification. We edit letters for brevity, grammar, taste and legal reasons. We reject poetry, personal attacks, form letters, letters submitted elsewhere and those appropriate for other sections of The Bulletin. Writers are limited to one letter or guest column every 30 days.

Guest columns

Your submissions should be between 550 and 650 words and must include the writer's phone number and address for verification. We edit submissions for brevity, grammar, taste and legal reasons. We reject those submitted elsewhere. Locally submitted columns alternate with national columnists and commentaries. Writers are limited to one letter or guest column every 30 days.

How to submit

Please address your submission to either My Nickel's Worth or Guest Column and mail, fax or email it to The Bulletin. Email submissions are preferred.

Email: letters@bendbulletin.com
Write: My Nickel's Worth/Guest Column
P.O. Box 6020
Bend, OR 97708
Fax: 541-385-5804

The ER is used to stress, but omicron made our jobs impossible

BY MEGAN L. RANNEY

Special to The Washington Post
Walking into a shift in the emergency department these days feels a bit like entering a disaster zone.

There are 50-odd patients in the waiting room needing to be seen. A number of beds are closed in the emergency department and across the rest of the hospital because of a lack of staffing. We're holding a half-dozen acute mental health patients who desperately need care because there's no room in psychiatric hospitals. A few bed-bound patients are ready to leave but don't have a ride to wherever they're going, so they'll be spending the night with us; there's no one to drive the ambulances to transport them. And a couple dozen more patients have been waiting on emergency department stretchers for hours after evaluation, until an intensive care unit, medical or surgical bed becomes available. Meanwhile, we can't use these emergency department staff or beds to care for those sitting in the waiting room with yet-

to-be-diagnosed problems. Instead, I'm scanning the waiting room list to try to find the "needle in the haystack" — someone with a life-threatening illness that we haven't identified yet.

By the time the patients make it to me, I'm playing catch-up on their pain, their illness and their frustration.

As an emergency physician, I thrive in challenging situations. In the best emergency care, I work with my team to quickly stabilize a sick patient, create trust with them and their family, and then come up with a clear diagnosis and therapeutic plan.

In pre-pandemic times, I was usually able to do this. The system sometimes worked against me, most often because a patient lacked the right insurance to get the tests and treatments they needed. And sometimes we struggled with an acute surge of patients. For example, on a rainy night, we'd get overwhelmed with folks who'd been in car crashes. During flu season, we'd be crowded with influenza patients for a week or two. These surges were frustrating but usually relatively short.

Depending on how you count, though, we're currently on our fourth or fifth surge of COVID-19 cases. As our health care system is pummeled by yet another wave, it's just too much. We never recovered from the last wave.

Across the country, emergency departments, intensive care units and ambulance services are overwhelmed. According to data from the Department of Health and Human Services, almost 80% of inpatient beds and 83% of intensive care unit beds are being used; other data sources suggest that these estimates do not fully account for staffing limitations and that even fewer staffed beds are available. Hospitals in almost half the states have paused or stopped nonemergency surgeries because of staffing shortages and hospital overcrowding, resulting in further stresses on the system, on patients and on providers.

As the severe cases accumulate, the distress among providers does, too. It's certainly because of the exhaustion of caring for horribly sick COVID-19 patients yet again — especially now

that the disease is so preventable. But even more, it's the moral harm from the other cases, the ones that have nothing to do with COVID-19 except that they've been overtaken by the pandemic. It's knowing that an elderly man was on a stretcher for hours with a broken hip, lying in his own urine, because there was no one to care for him. It's the emotional exhaustion from assuaging the understandable anger of families calling for updates, only to be told that their loved one has not been evaluated yet after many hours in the waiting room.

"I just don't think I can go back again tomorrow," one friend texted me after a particularly demoralizing shift. And every staff member who leaves causes a domino effect.

One small example: There are not enough emergency medical technicians. As a result, a patient might wait more than 12 hours for transportation after they are ready for discharge to a nursing facility or back home. That patient waits in a bed that could be used for someone with chest pain that might be a blood clot, belly pain that

might be appendicitis or a broken arm that needs pain meds.

Of course, this isn't just about the coronavirus. Rather, the pandemic has laid bare the myriad inefficiencies and frank failures in our health care system that we had managed to paper over until a real crisis came along.

Two years ago, I hoped the pandemic would help us marshal resources and political will to finally fix this system. But now, I worry that the fixes are not going to come. It increasingly seems that after the pandemic we'll be left with something far worse: scarcity, inaccessibility, compassion fatigue.

So yes, I will celebrate like everyone else when the omicron wave passes. But I know there will be another one — probably another coronavirus variant, but possibly something else.

My colleagues and I will keep showing up for work. Because if we don't, who will? But we have been changed — and not for the better.

■ Megan L. Ranney is an emergency physician and the academic dean of the School of Public Health at Brown University.