

Finding a personal connection amid the tragedy

How can we process yet another campus shooting?

By R.J. Marx
Cannon Beach Gazette

I remember where I was when I first heard the news of the Sandy Hook school shootings in Newtown, Connecticut. I was about 25 miles away at a Christmas party, when a columnist came in and said “there was a shooting in Newtown, maybe at a school.”

We took in the news, but didn’t put down our forks. Even then, the thought was, “Oh, just another random shooting.” It’s that easy to be jaded.

As the day went on, the magnitude of the horrific incident unfolded.

On the morning of Dec. 14, Adam Lanza, 20, killed 26 people at Sandy Hook Elementary School in Newtown. Twenty of the slain were first-grade students. Others were teachers and aides. Earlier that morning, Lanza had also killed his mother in their home. He later took his own life.

My reactions Thursday in Oregon were similar to those I felt in December 2012.

After all, it was supposed to be something of a festive day in the state, marking the first day

By
R.J.
MARX



Like everywhere, the line ‘It can’t happen here’ is a tired cliché. We all know it can.

of recreational marijuana sales, the end of a fight that had divided citizens for years and backed up city council calendars like a clogged water pipe. That Thursday night, we were prepared for the somber airing of Oregon Public Broadcasting’s “Unprepared,” the documentary on the threat of a Cascadia Subduction Zone megaquake. Enough gravitas for one day.

Then the news.

Not another campus shooting. Not to hear the news from the small city of Roseburg in central Oregon.

Yet that was exactly what we were hearing. As the day unfolded, we learned a 26-year-old man had shot and killed nine people in

an introductory English composition class at Roseburg’s Umpqua Community College before dying, either in a shootout or by his own hand.

Media briefings flowed in from the Douglas County Sheriff’s Office. CNN, Fox, MSNBC — all were there. The shooter, Christopher Sean Harper-Mercer, was described as a California transplant with a fetish for military gear and weapons. A loner. Nobody knew much about him.

In hours, the incident spurred gun debate anew, brought President Obama and the National Rifle Association to the fore, and invoked Sandy Hook, Aurora, Colorado, and Virginia Tech.

And then we on the coast received concerned calls and emails. To many people outside the state, Roseburg might as well be Portland. “Was this near you?” “Are you all right?” “God, how horrible!”

I barely know Roseburg, other than for its proximity to Eugene, where my son went to college. I think we’ve driven through it a couple of times. Roseburg sounds like a nice, family community, a lot like Newtown.

In reality, Oregon is a big state and Roseburg is far away from Clatsop County.

So I told my concerned East Coast friends, “No, it wasn’t near us. We are all right. And yes, it was horrible.”



CRAIG RUTTLE/AP PHOTO

A young mourner is escorted from the funeral of teacher Anne Marie Murphy at the St. Mary Of The Assumption Church in Katonah, N.Y., Dec. 20, 2012.

It all felt so glib and impersonal, as if it was just another layer of cushion from tragedy.

Then I remembered the aftermath of Sandy Hook. One of the victims, Anne Marie Murphy, was a local resident. Murphy, 52, was employed by the Newtown Board of Education as a teacher at Sandy Hook Elementary. She happened to be the sister of my dentist, and although she had lived in Newtown for 14 years, she was born and raised in our little New York community. Her body was found cradling 6-year-old special-needs student Dylan Hockley, who also died in the massacre.

The Roman Catholic Church held a funeral Mass six days later. It was filled to overflowing with people who remembered her. The Archbishop of New York, Timothy Cardinal Dolan, conducted



Anne Marie Murphy, victim of the 2012 Newtown, Connecticut shooting.

SUBMITTED PHOTO/EO MEDIA GROUP

the funeral. In an obituary, Anne Marie Murphy was remembered for her love of the arts, walks in the outdoors and, most importantly, her family.

Later Thursday afternoon, a man came into The Seaside Signal office and had a hollow look on his face. “I went to that college, you know,” he said. “It was 30 years ago. But I went to that college.”

It was this connection — tenuous as it might be. Much like that we felt with Anne Marie Murphy in our New York town, that we both dread and yet need. We need something to link to our personal core, a connection, slim as it might be, of a friend of a friend, someone we once worked with or just recognition of a place we passed through and stopped for lunch.

My connection, this time, is Oregon. No state has a stronger identity. Like everywhere, the line “It can’t happen here” is a tired cliché. We all know it can. The question is, what are we going to do about it?

R.J. Marx can be reached at rmarx@cannonbeachgazette.com.

At the Library CARLA O'REILLY

Fall festival at the library was a smashing success

As we move into a time of dark, cold nights and nippy mornings, we look forward to cozying up to a fire and planning for Halloween and Thanksgiving.

At the library, we’ve already had one autumnal event, our famous annual Fall Festival. We’ve been baking, stitching, and making up beautiful gift baskets for weeks, and the result was a wonderful day of conversing with locals and visitors alike as they browsed through the library and chose warm handmade hats, scarves, and tea cozies, as well as delicious cookies and pies provided by our dedicated circle of volunteers. The festival is an important fundraiser for

the library, but it’s also a much-loved event, fun to put on and fun to attend!

Zombie Fest!!!

On Saturday, Oct. 31, children 8 and up are invited to attend a Halloween event, Zombie Fest, presented by local author Gregory Zschomler. The event consists of a book reading, Zombie games, Zombie treats, and best of all, a Zombie makeup demonstration. Though this may not be appropriate for very young children, the nicest thing about it is that it is being held from 1 to 3 p.m. so could be easily combined with annual trick-or-treating in downtown Cannon Beach. Children



CARLA O'REILLY

are encouraged to attend in their costumes!

Other upcoming library events

On Saturday, Oct. 10, author Valerie Geary will be coming to our library at 2 p.m. as part of our ongoing author series. She will be

talking about her debut novel Crooked River. The book is about two young sisters who are grieving the death of their mother. The girls are taken from Eugene to live with their father in a teepee in rural Oregon. When a body is found floating in Crooked River, the father becomes an instant suspect. Convinced that their father is not guilty, the sisters embark on a desperate attempt to save their damaged family and prove their father not guilty of the crime.

This month the Cannon Beach Reads group will meet Wednesday, Oct. 21, at 7 p.m. The group has been reading “Frog Music,” the latest novel written by author Emma Donoghue. She was born in Dublin, and now lives in Can-



BUDDIE ANDERSON PHOTO/FOR CANNON BEACH GAZETTE

ada with her family. The novel is a multifaceted murder mystery set in San Francisco in 1876. New members are welcome.

As always at the Cannon Beach Library, special events

are fun and worthwhile, but sitting at our antique table and enjoying the warmth of our fireplace are wonderful as well. We have free Wi-Fi and plenty of books of all types. Drop in to warm up!

Boac’s Bird Notes SUSAN BOAC

Buffleheads making their return to Cannon Beach

Who hasn’t noticed the migratory movements of our feather friends? Thought to happen in spring and fall, this phenomenon happens pretty much year round!

It’s easy to spot the V’s of migrating geese and ducks. Worldwide it is believed that 5 billion birds migrate, some taking on amazing feats of stamina across oceans and other nonstop distances. And some are short. Like the blue grouse, that migrates on foot (up and down a hillside)!

I am reading and highly recommend the book “Living on The Wind, Across the Hemisphere with Migratory Birds,” by Scott Weidensaul. His writing is crafted

beautifully which makes the topic even more fascinating. Weidensaul presents ideas and research about migration, timing and other specifics about types of birds and personal experiences. I would tag along with him on a bird adventure any day!

Our beloved tufted puffins have headed out to their wintering “grounds.” Puffins migrate a little differently from the “normal” movements — north in the summer and south in the winter — we often associate with these yearly departures and arrivals. Puffins head out to the ocean in August, usually north of Oregon, spending their winter about 200 miles off shore. My



SUSAN BOAC

husband Scott says the fish puffins eat swim more slowly in cold water and they seek that easy meal.

And what about the birds coming into our region for the winter? This week, I have started to see golden-crowned

sparrows. This species’ migration can be long or short. Did they fly in from nesting in Canada or Alaska or did they spend the breeding season in the forest just outside of town? Dark-eyed juncos whose migration is similar, are showing up in numbers too. My husband and I always enjoy the return of buffleheads. Have you seen one recently?

Then there are the birds that stop by for a quick rest and refueling. Sharp tailed sandpipers are causing quite a stir at the Astoria Mitigation Bank this week. This species nests in Siberia and usually takes a flight path south along the Russian coast. The book



SUSAN BOAC/FOR CANNON BEACH GAZETTE

A golden-crowned sparrow in Cannon Beach.

“Birds of Oregon” says sometimes juveniles take this alternative route along our Pacific coast on their way to south Pacific islands or Australia.

Bird walk

Please join a group of people on the first Sunday of the month for birding in the Can-

non Beach area. We will meet at the Lagoon Trail parking lot on Second Street at 9 a.m. and bird until about 11. Bring binoculars and wear appropriate clothing. Everyone is welcome!

Susan has spent her life enjoying the great outdoors from the lakes and woods of Northern Minnesota, Mt. Adams in Washington and now the Oregon beach environs. After spending many pleasurable hours driving her avid birder parents around, she has taken up birding as a passion, to the mixed emotions of her husband Scott. The Boacs reside on the Neawanna Creek in Seaside where their backyard is a birder’s paradise.

LETTERS

Appeasement 2.0

Most people understand that Neville Chamberlain’s 1938 appeasement to Nazi Germany helped fuel World War II, which killed over 50 million people. The Iran Agreement is in the same category, as it does nothing to preserve security or freedom of the U.S. or Israel. This agreement gives Iran the following benefits:

- \$150 billion dollars to sponsor terrorism throughout the Middle East, Western Europe and U.S.
- It maintains Iran’s nuclear enrichment programs, which keeps 6,000 operational centers (5,000 centrifuges and another 1,000 for advance research).
- It lacks verifiable inspection and a verification system. Having Iran inspectors is like giving bank robber Willy Sutton approval to guard the bank vault. Giving Iran a

23-day advance notice of inspection, rather than instant inspection, is unacceptable; Iran can hide and move everything in 23 days.

- It is a temporary agreement, 10 years at most, and some provisions are only for 8.4 years.
- Iran can upgrade weapons systems to target Israel and the U.S.
- Iran is in current violation of more than 20 international agreements, giving weapons to the terrorist group Hezbollah and the Syrian president, Bashar al-Assad.
- There are unknown side agreements that are probably in Iran’s favor.

At this crucial time, we need statesmen, not political Obama puppets like Senators Ron Wyden and Jeff Merkley, who support this agreement. Just ask Democratic Senators Chuck Summer, Ben Cardin and Bob Menendez, who are

against this agreement.

Ron Wyden must not be reelected in November 2016.

As Benjamin Franklin stated, “Those who would give up essential liberty, to purchase a little temporary safety, deserve neither liberty nor safety.”

**Larry Sparks
Cannon Beach**

Tree pruning violates the city’s ordinance

In his column “Cannon Shots: Much ado about something” Cannon Beach Gazette, Sept. 11, R.J. Marx wrote about the honor of Cannon Beach being designated Tree City USA. He then juxtaposed this honor with the irony at the time of the city’s designating two ancient spruce trees for removal at north 5th and Larch streets. A few residents wrote letters to get this wrong-headed decision by the city works

director revoked. However an even larger irony looms over our new Tree City USA membership.

While still awaiting a decision from the Land Use Board of Appeals regarding his property at 532 N. Laurel St., Jeff Nicholson has had his 17 spruce trees mutilated by over-pruning into what one arborist refers to as “toilet brush” trees, leaving the trees open for disease and wind damage. What Mr. Nicholson did accomplish was creating a great view of the ocean from his property, even though these trees are protected by city ordinance 17.70.030 which states that all trees north of Ecola Creek and west of Laurel Street must be pruned to meet International Standards of Arboriculture. The city planner allowed Mr. Nicholson to violate these standards because he did not make sure an arborist was

on Mr. Nicholson’s property when the work was done as was the case when trees growing in the area of the Chapman Point Homeowners Association were pruned recently.

Again, it took concerned citizens to discover the mutilation of Mr. Nicholson’s trees. Only after more letters were written did the city planner and city manager have an arborist take a look. When the city arborist was finally called upon to inspect, he did not even go onto Mr. Nicholson’s property. Instead by looking through binoculars, he determined that 17 trees were overpruned. After the city then levied an appropriate fine, Mr. Nicholson hired an arborist who claimed that only four trees were badly limbed. With no explanation from the city planner or city manager, Mr. Nicholson’s fine was then reduced by half. The view

achieved by this pruning will no doubt be worth the cost to Mr. Nicholson. If being a member of Tree City USA is to be meaningful at all, the city of Cannon Beach will need to take the responsibility of being vigilant to assure that tree ordinances are followed. Otherwise it will be Tree City in word but not in deed.

**Diane Amos
Elizabeth Lorish**

A thank-you from Hall of Fame Committee

The Seaside High School Hall of Fame Induction Committee consisting of Jim Auld, Tom Maltman, James Folk, Stubby Lyons, Wally Hamer, Dr. Shelia Roley, Larry Elliott, Gene Gilbertson and Donna Sunell wish to thank Gearhart Market, led by Molly Lowenberg, Teryn Law and their crew for presenting