Author steps from Appalachian poverty to Yale Law School

AT THE LIBRARY
JOE BERNT

In 1996, Hillary Clinton published the first edition of "It Takes a Village and Other Lessons Children Teach Us."

Clinton argued that a global economy, new technologies, disrupted local economies and media-driven cultural change were straining the bonds of family life. The result, she asserted, was that children were poorer physically, intellectually, emotionally and spiritually.

In arguing the importance of adult support for children, Clinton gathered examples from social scientists' findings and experiences of ordinary citizens.

Twenty years later, J. D. Vance, another Yale Law School graduate, has published a book about a community much smaller than Clinton's village. In "Hillbilly Elegy: A Memoir of a Family and Culture in Crisis," Vance examines his own life in the context of his immediate and extended families in Jackson, Kentucky, and Middletown, Ohio.

Working- and middle-class families in Middletown, where Vance spent most of his life through high school, depended on Aramco Steel for steady incomes. Since before Vance was born, however, the plant struggled in an increasingly global economy. Aramco was rescued by a merger with Kawasaki.

Vance's immediate family includes Lindsay, his older sister, and Mom, a nurse addicted to prescription drugs and to attracting, marrying and divorcing a series of men, usually following one or more fights that traumatized Vance, his sister and their neighbors.

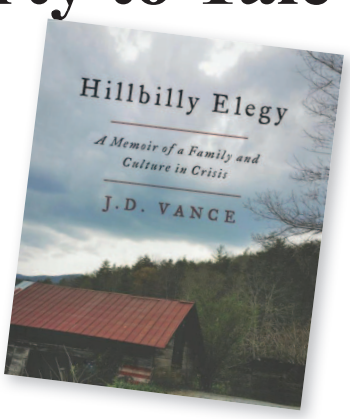
In addition to support from Lindsay, Vance depended on Mamaw, a pistol-packing grandmother from Mom's side of the family. Mamaw lived next door and offered him escape, support, advice, unconditional love and necessities.

It was Mamaw who insisted Vance study. Mamaw pushed him to take a job bagging groceries. When police arrested Mom and Vance feared children's services would place him with foster parents, he lived with Mamaw. She counseled him against joining the Marine Corps following high school, but then wrote him every day he was away.

Vance considers joining the Marines his best "life" decision. The Corps tested him, disciplined him, gave him leadership responsibilities. Taking from Mamaw, the Marines convinced Vance he could handle anything including a grueling schedule at Ohio State followed by life among privileged at Yale Law School.

Vance says he decided to write "Hillbilly Elegy" because two questions bothered him from his first days at Yale: "Why does this elite institution seem so culturally foreign?" And relatedly, why are so few kids who grow up the way I did — 'disadvantaged,' to use the vocabulary of the day — making it to our society's elite institutions?"

Vance gives readers a moving narrative to follow, from surviving a dysfunctional family in failing Appalachian towns and rescue by Mamaw and the Marine Corps



to becoming a "Yale Law Review" editor married to a classmate who clerked for Chief Justice John Roberts.

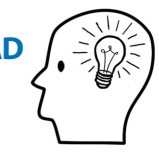
Whether this narrative answers Vance's questions seems debatable. Although he understood the importance of his success at Yale, Vance must rely on child development theories to contextualize the debilitating effects of poverty isolated in geographical pockets from which examples of wealth, education and accompanying success are nonexistent.

"Hillbilly Elegy "— which Cannon Beach Reads participants will discuss, Wednesday, March 20, at 7 p.m.—is available at the library. Marjorie MacQueen also has acquisitioned several other nonfiction titles about related social issues, including "One Person, One Vote: How Voter Suppression is Destroying Our Democracy" by Carol Anderson; "American Prison: A Reporter's Undercover Journey into the Business of Punishment" by Shane Bauer; "Rendezvous with Oblivion: Reports from a Sinking Society" by Thomas Frank and "Rising Out of Hatred: The Awakening of a Former White Nationalist " by Eli Saslow.

Ten local authors will read their poems, essays and stories in "A Celebration of Life on the North Coast," a presentation of the Northwest Authors Series. Authors presenting their work include Karja Biesanz, Jon Ciminello, James Dott, Mindy Hardwick, Geno Leech, Jennifer Nightingale, Robert Pyle, Emily Ransdell, Debbie Simorte and Victoria Stoppiello. The reading, free and open to the public, begins at 7 p.m., Friday, March 1, at the library, 131 N. Hemlock. Refreshments will be served.

A waitress who showed pride, compassion

OUT OF MY HEAD
BOB DIETSCHE



Once in a while when nothing seems to be happening and my brain is on vacation, something will hit me and make me wonder why I never noticed. I've been coming to this restaurant dozens of times but there was something different about this morning. It was the waitress. Her manner. The cheerful willingness with which she went about her work as if it were a privilege and the unmistakable impression that there was no other place in the whole wide world she would rather be than right here delivering breakfast specials at Denny's.

I watched her move — with the crisp precision and grace of a ballroom dancer, even when she was balancing two large trays loaded with food.

Waitressing is no easy way to make a buck. You are on your feet most of the time and the hours are long and the pay is modest. The job security can be questionable. You have to put up with gropers, cranky cooks, and grumpy customers. The movies have not treated waitresses very well. Remember the waitress scene in "Five Easy Pieces" with Jack Nicholson (1970) and Joan Crawford's daughter belittling her mother for being a waitress in "Mildred Pierce" (1945). Did you ever hear an 8-year-old wanting to be a waitress when she grows up? I haven't.

Yet here was someone so happy to be doing work that not many want or respect. This was no ordinary run-of-the-mill job to this lady. It was her profession and she was proud of it. And the pride she displayed was infectious. She greeted everyone with a wide beaming smile that said "welcome to my enclave." And the way she made everyone feel important. It didn't seem to matter who you were, the mayor or some teenager on the skids with just enough money for a cup of coffee.

I've grown up listening to people complain about the vanishing work ethic in America. But here was proof to the contrary. It would probably never occur to her to not give anything but her best. What stood out more, was her compassion. If she weren't here, she might very well be caretaking patients in a nursing home somewhere dispensing kindness, her greatest joy. Putting her in a cubicle in some state office somewhere watching a screen all day would kill her. Barbra Streisand was right years ago when she sang "people who need people are the luckiest people in the world."

I was halfway out the door when I remembered to ask the cashier the waitress's name. "April," she said. "April Ryan."

HAPPENINGS IN BRIEF

Join county's comprehensive plan update team

Clatsop County is accepting applications for representatives on six newly-forming citizen advisory committees as part of a two-year project to update the county's six community plans and comprehensive plan.

County residents are sought to join representatives from other county boards and commissions in recruiting stakeholder input, advising staff and providing recommendations regarding the update of Clatsop County's guiding planning documents.

The plan represents the long-term land use vision for the county and sets planning policies that guide county actions regarding land use, recreational amenities, transportation networks, farm and forest lands, natural resources, housing and other aspects of the county's work, with a goal of making Clatsop County a resilient and sustainable place. This project will be the first complete update of the comprehensive pan since its original adoption in 1979.

Application forms are available from the county manager's office at 800 Exchange St., Suite 410, Astoria or at www.co.clatsop.or.us.

The deadline to apply is 4 p.m. Friday, March 1.

Be good to your heart

February is National Heart Month and Providence cardiologist Robert Morse D.O. encourages you to reflect on your habits and plan for preventive care and lifestyle changes with 10 ways to be good to your heart.

Join Providence Seaside Hospital for a presentation on heart health followed by a walk on the Prom. The free event begins at 10 a.m., Saturday, Feb. 23, at the Best Western Plus Ocean View Resort, 414 N. Prom in Seaside.

MUNICIPAL MEMO

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FOR YOUR INFORMATION
MAYOR: Sam Steidel
COUNCILORS: Mike Benefield, Nancy McCarthy, Brandon Ogilvie and Robin Risley
CITY MANAGER: Bruce St. Denis

MEETINGS MARCH 2019

5	City Council Regular Meeting	7:00 p.m.
6	City Council Work Session w/ Chamber & Escape Lodging	5:30 p.m.
12	City Council Work Session	5:30 p.m.
13	City Council Work Session (tentative)	5:30 p.m.
21	Design Review Board	6:00 p.m.
27	Preliminary Budget Committee Meeting	5:30 p.m.
28	Planning Commission	6:00 p.m.

CITY COUNCIL REGULAR MEETING, Feb. 5, 2019

- Introduced new Cannon Beach Emergency Manager, Mike Myers, who comes to us from the City of Portland where he was serving as he Fire Chief;
- Adopted Ordinance 19-01, amending Chapter 13.12 of the Cannon Beach Municipal Code and Repealing Ordinance 18-07 (regarding Recology franchise);
- Adopted Resolution 19-01, granting to Recology, an Oregon Corporation, a non-exclusive franchise to collect and dispose of solid waste and recyclable materials;
- Appointed Bob Lundy to serve a 4-year term on the Cannon Beach Farmers Market Committee;
- Approved a two-year extension of the city's contract with our Audit firm; Isler, CPA;
- Directed staff to gather more information before considering amending the scope of contract with the financial advisor; D.A. Davidson. Will be brought back to March 5th Council meeting;
- Approved the contract agreement with the Cannon Beach Chamber of Commerce for Promotional Program Services.

CITY COUNCIL SPECIAL MEETING - CITY HALL/POLICE STATION, Feb. 6, 2019

Bruce St. Denis, City Manager presented an update of the research and costs associated with building a new City Hall/Police Station. The RV Park was discussed as a possible site. Council discussion ensued. Council will discuss this again at a special work session on February 16, 2019.

CITY COUNCIL WORK SESSION, Feb. 12, 2019

- Ed Johnson and Marc Ward of Sea Turtles forever provided a report of the microplastic collection efforts on the beaches of Cannon Beach last summer;
- Representative of Pacific Power gave an overview presentation to Council regarding the installation of smart meters taking place in Clatsop County through June;
- Nancy Littel of the Cannon Beach Food Pantry presented their 2018 annual report;
- Carolyn Propst of the Public Works Committee presented results of the water/wastewater rate structure analysis the committee has been working on;
- Discussed changes to the water billing for residential tenants;
- Finance Director Laurie Sawrey presented the 1st and 2nd quarter FYE 2018 finance report;
- Discussed the need for the city to issue a request for proposals for an Engineer of Record;
- Discussed an agreement with the Oregon Environmental Council for fund raising for a significant art project here in Cannon Beach in honor of the Beach Bill.

CITY COUNCIL WORK SESSION, Feb. 13, 2019

Bruce St. Denis presented an update of the research and costs associated with building a new City Hall/Police Station. Council will proceed with a rating scheme to help identify which site options should be investigated more thoroughly in an attempt to identify a site for the new City Hall/ Police Station. They will review each members' rating at a future Council work session.

CITY COUNCIL WORK SESSION, Feb. 19, 2019

Council will meet with representatives from the Chamber of Commerce and Escape Lodging (re: RV Park) to discuss their program.

DESIGN REVIEW BOARD

The Design Review Board is scheduled to meet February 21st, 2019.
meeting.

PLANNING COMMISSION -

The Planning Commission met January 24th and discussed:

SR18-07, Request by Vito Cerelli for a Setback Reduction to allow the construction of a new Single-Family Residence on Ash Street off 7th and 8th Streets. Continued to February 28th meeting.

ZO 18-03, City of Cannon Beach request for Zoning Ordinance text amendments to Chapter 17.70 Tree Removal. The proposed amendments address the protection of trees from unintended damage during construction. An amendment recommendation sent to City Council for consideration.

Also held a works session re: Zoning Ordinance Amendments Related to Short-Term Rentals. A Public Hearing is scheduled for their February 28th meeting.

Of Interest…

Do you have questions regarding
SMART METERS
and other
Pacific Power programs?

Pacific Power will be hosting an informational meeting to answer your questions.

Tuesday, March 5th @ 5:30 – 7:00pm
Seaside Brewing in Seaside

Beach Volunteers Wanted!

Do you enjoy being outside and sharing your love of Haystack Rock? No experience necessary – we train! Families welcome.

Please contact:
Lisa Habecker
Education & Volunteer Coordinator
503.436.8064