

We must be aware of warning signs of suicide

In a moment, something that should have felt distant became so deeply personal. On a wet and windy Tuesday night in January, my phone buzzed with a text message from an old friend. "Did you hear about Tyler Hilinski?"

I knew all about Tyler Hilinski. Tyler was the heir apparent quarterback for my favorite college football team, the Washington State Cougars.

Tyler was a 21-year old, handsome, professional, bright and plucky signal-caller in an offense that throws the ball over 50 times a game. Tyler was the quarterback that led the Cougars to an improbable come-from-behind September victory over Boise State, despite being down 31-10 with eight minutes to play in the fourth quarter.

Notice that in all of these descriptions, I used the phrase, "Tyler was."

Tyler was with us, with the collective Washington State community, with his teammates, with his friends and family. Tyler was with us until January 16. Tyler Hilinski killed himself.

The story came out in a blurry haze and rather quickly, as most messages do in our society. Tyler had taken his own life, in his apartment in Pullman, Washington. My

SKY BOX
SKYLER ARCHIBALD



heart ached in pain for Tyler and his family.

I want to be clear that this was not someone that I knew or had any association with, outside of rooting interest and a kinship that anyone who calls themselves a WSU Cougar might feel. So why did it impact me and so many others in such a powerful way?

Tyler had opportunities and fortune that most could only dream about. He had the full support of his parents. He was a scholarship athlete at a major institution that features one of the best offensive systems in college football. By all accounts, he was cheerful, talented, loving and kind.

But despite all those opportunities and possibilities for Tyler, he was obviously in pain. Knowing what we know now, he likely anguished under the weight of his life responsibilities and circumstances.

And that's the problem, is that at the time of his sorrow and agony, nobody knew it. Everyone assumed,



Tyler Hilinski

including me, that this young man, with a bright future, was happy and well.

There were nearly 45,000 deaths by suicide in 2016. It's the 10th leading cause of death in our country. Among those aged 15-24, it's the third leading cause of death. It's a miserable fact that we must admit, discuss and work to prevent.

In the days following Tyler's death, I thought often about others I know who have suffered a similar fate. Due to the rising number of individuals that die by suicide, it is likely that each of us knew a person, or multiple people, who are not with us anymore because of suicide.



FILE PHOTO

Each individual experience is unique and represents complex circumstances and challenges.

This is not a generic experience. These are actual people, sisters and brothers, sons and daughters, mothers and fathers. They have real families and friends, most of which are very aware of the challenges present and are doing everything possible to help and provide support.

There are things that we can all do to help prevent suicide in our sphere of influence. Suicide is often tied to a mental illness, like depression, and we know that the majority of Americans that experience depression do not receive treatment for their illness.

That's a complex issue in and of itself but certainly there is more that we can do to encourage those around us to be comfortable about mental illness and to encourage proper treatment by medical professionals.

We can break down the stigma of mental illness and encourage proper response to those episodes that so many experience. When someone

is having a suicidal thought, we must provide them with the support that they need and there are many resources that provide help.

We can encourage and practice good well-being ourselves. That's not just physical wellbeing although certainly proper exercise and nutrition play a significant role in our mental health. I feel fortunate to have chosen an occupational path that promotes well-being for our community.

Most importantly perhaps, there are two characteristics that this world needs more of: kindness and empathy.

We can be kind to each other, we can work through differences, we can as Plato requested, "Be kind, for everyone you meet is fighting a hard battle." We can be empathetic to the challenges of life that others might be experiencing. We can truly work, and it indeed is work, to develop an ability to understand and share in the feelings of others.

I miss Tyler Hilinski. I feel great sorrow for the community that came to know him, for his friends and teammates and for his family.

If you know or someone you know is struggling emotionally or having a hard time, please call the Suicide Prevention Lifeline at 1-800-273-TALK (8255).

Cronyism has no place in our region's public affairs

Nigel Jaquiss is a Pulitzer Prize-winning investigative reporter who writes for Willamette Week, a Portland newspaper. He came to Astoria to speak at the Columbia Forum on March 7, 2017, about the need for integrity, good judgment, and a rational thought process in the conduct of public affairs.

He also said something that's been bouncing around in my brain ever since. "Corruption in Oregon doesn't look like envelopes full of hundred-dollar bills being passed. Corruption in Oregon looks like cronyism without accountability." Cronyism without accountability. What does that mean? And why does it matter to you?

It matters to you because it's

GUEST COLUMN
LIANNE THOMPSON



your money, your tax dollars that are being spent.

It might help to consider what accountability looks and feels like.

It looks like having a plan. It looks like having a vision and a mission and goals. If the goals are SMART (specific, measurable, achievable, reality-based, and time-specific), so much the better.

One way to look at cronyism is that it means using power or authority to treat our friends differently, whether giving them a job or

looking at the methods and results of how they do a job.

Accountability should be used as a tool, not a weapon, I think. It involves communication, based on respect and affection. And it empowers us, based on appropriate rules, roles, and responsibilities.

But it's embarrassing to be measured and fail. It's unpleasant and uncomfortable to talk about not meeting a goal, especially one that matters. No wonder I've been as popular as a skunk at a picnic for asking my fellow County Commissioners and the County Manager to develop and use accountability systems for our work.

On the other hand, if we approach the questions with some compassion for ourselves, some

willingness to fail and recover, some humor and some grace. What might we be able to accomplish?

We might address our crying needs: housing, ecologically sustainable economic development, and resilience. Even if you and I are OK in today's economy, many others are not, and they're part of our community. We need to care about our people and our planet.

We need as many people as possible to have stable and adequate income. Manufacturing jobs can provide stable and adequate income in a way that other sectors often do not. Manufacturing also provides a more stable tax base for the rest of the services a healthy community needs, like schools, health care, public health, public safety, roads, and so on.

Mother Nature has blessed us with a natural resource base, but we are not adding as much value to the wood products as we might be able to do by developing cross-laminated timber and other mass timber technology, as is already done in Europe and Asia. Automation can be our friend.

Or, instead of building a dream of a better use for our people and our planet, we can attack those who ask for accountability as a way of moving us forward together. If you want a world that works for everyone, cronyism has no place. Mutually respectful and compassionate accountability does.

Lianne Thompson is District 5 member of the Clatsop County Board of Commissioners.

Getting a chill from the 'Ghost in the Stacks'

This month for my Between the Covers article I am pleased to present a brief excerpt of a short story written by local author Melissa Eskue Ousley. Melissa is an award-winning author living on the Oregon coast with her family, a neurotic dog, and a piranha. Among other awards Melissa has received, her debut novel, "Sign of the Throne," won a 2014 Reader's Favorite International Book Award and a 2014 Eric Hoffer Book Award. Her suspense novel, "Pitcher Plant," was published in May of 2017 and is set in Seaside. When she's not writing, she can be found walking along the beach, poking dead things with a stick.

I am presenting this short story as a tie-in to the upcoming fundraiser for Libraries ROCC and the Library Foundation, a joint fundraiser to support children's library services across Clatsop County. The fundraiser will be held on Saturday March 31 at the Seaside Convention Center.

Now, without further ado, here is an excerpt from the story titled "Ghost in the Stacks."

'Ghost in the Stacks'

Rebecca had heard the rumors about the library being haunted, but she never believed the stories. Edna Williams, a librarian obsessed with superstitions, once told Rebecca she'd heard strange noises coming from the non-fiction section. She had described it as a low rumble that didn't sound quite human. Rebecca figured it was probably Bill Hawkins, fast asleep in an armchair. The man snored loud enough to wake the dead. Besides, Mrs. Williams was afraid of just about everything — she jumped at the sound of wind whistling as winter storms

BETWEEN THE COVERS
ESTHER MOBERG



rattled the library's old windows.

Beth Richardson said she saw an odd shadow lurking in historical fiction. "It was shaped like a person, but all black," Beth told Rebecca. "It felt like it was looking right at me, but then it faded. I never got a clear look at it, but it gave me goosebumps." Beth didn't scare easily — she worked on the after-school program for teens—but she looked pale as she shared her story. Rebecca wasn't sure what to think about that.

Michael Levin, who managed acquisitions, believed the ghost could be one of the library's former directors, Thomasina Gladwell, who had died in 1936. Ms. Gladwell had served as the town's first librarian, when the library was built in 1905.

Rebecca had never experienced anything weird in her three years working at the library. She usually worked the final shift of the day, ushering out patrons at eight in the evening. She was often the last person to leave, after shutting down computers, tidying shelves, and turning off the lights. If the library was haunted, wouldn't she have seen or heard something?

She hadn't though, and she'd grown to love that quiet time when she had the building to herself. Walking through the library at night felt like visiting a sanctuary. It gave Rebecca a sense of peace.

That was why Rebecca was more startled than scared when she heard a clatter near the back of the library. She had just turned off the lights and was headed toward the front door when it happened. Curious, she turned on the lights again, and sauntered over to the fiction section. There, scattered on the floor, were three books. Rebecca stared for a moment, confused. She had just walked all the aisles, making sure everything had been put back in place, re-shelving stray books set on reading tables by patrons. If there had been books left on the floor, Rebecca would have spotted them.

She shrugged and then scooped up the books so she could return them to their places on the shelves. The odd thing was, these books didn't even belong in the aisle where she'd found them. The first, "A Dirty Job," by Christopher Moore, should have been shelved two stacks down from where she stood. "The Handmaid's Tale," by Margaret Atwood, belonged four aisles to the left. The third book, "Little Fires Everywhere," by Celeste Ng, should have been filed three stacks to the right. How weird, Rebecca thought. The books couldn't have simply fallen off the shelves, unless they'd been shelved incorrectly in the first place. Well, that happened sometimes.

After putting the books back on the shelves, Rebecca walked toward the front door again. She checked the clock above the circulation desk — nearly 8:30. It was getting late, and Rebecca's golden retriever, Pumpkin, would be hungry by now. She picked

up her pace, wanting to get home.

Just as she reached the door, she heard another crash coming from the stacks. "What is going on?" she murmured. Intrigued, she turned around and walked back to the fiction section. She wasn't surprised to see two books lying on the floor in aisle G, but she was shocked to find that one of them was Celeste Ng's, a book Rebecca had shelved not five minutes before. The other was Magic Hour, by Susan Isaacs, and lay half on top of the first book. Shaking her head, Rebecca picked up the books and shelved them in alphabetical order, Isaacs then Ng. She started to wonder if the library was indeed haunted. If so, she decided, the ghost had a knack for being annoying.

Library event

I hope you enjoyed this excerpt from Melissa's story, check this article again next month for more from Melissa's spooky library story and save the date March 31 to attend the author extravaganza and little library auction at the Seaside Convention center. Doors open at 5 p.m. Tickets are available for sale at the Astoria Public Library, Beach Books, Seaside Public Library, and the Warrenton Public Library. Attendees will have a chance to bid to have a name or character placed in the short stories. I hope to see you there.

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Sunset Empire Park and Recreation District play set.

Sunset Empire Park and Recreation District to host community forum

Seaside Signal

The Sunset Empire Park and Recreation District is gathering input from the community at a series of community forums. The first forum was held in late November. The second forum, Tuesday, Feb. 20, at 4 p.m. will be held at the Bob Chisholm Community Center, 1225 Avenue A in Seaside.

The forum will be an opportunity for our community to hear directly from the consultants and architects regarding the potential options for district expansions. Attendees will have an opportunity to provide important and valued feedback that will help shape the future of the district and inform staff and district board on how to meet the recreational needs of our community. Light refreshments will be provided.

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