

Celebrating the earth — every day

Eugene residents might not know it, but this is Earthweek.

Local media have made a bigger deal about National Secretary Week than the week set aside for people to share and celebrate the earth. And that's sad.

Don't get us wrong. We've nothing against secretaries. It's just that we think knowing about the problems and possibilities of the earth are more important than sending flowers to secretaries once a year.

"Environmental consciousness" is a hackneyed, nebulous term. But pollution, weatherization, bicycling, conservation, endangered species, alternative energy — these are all concrete concepts being discussed this week.

It's a week of interesting people, interesting

presentations, interesting discussions. We've had Rolling Thunder and Cecil Andrus and Galen Rowell. We've seen cheetahs and gorillas and slide shows.

We applaud the Survival's Center's efforts to make "environmental consciousness" so much fun. They've done a good job.

But it's also a week for serious contemplation

OURS

about where humanity is — and where it's going.

Writing your congressman, weatherizing your home, conserving energy, saving sea turtles — these are the things the sponsors are encouraging. And they're worth encouraging.

The Millrace cleanup is the best example of

awareness that leads to action. Each year, the Greeks drain and clean the Millrace. It happens this afternoon, and all are invited to participate.

Surviving the last decades of this century will be more than a matter of luck. The hapless oblivion humans have exercised will not be easily reversed. In many cases, it cannot be reversed.

It will take more than one Earthweek a year. It will take constant awareness of every human action, and its influence upon the future of earth — the future of humanity.

But Earthweek is a good start.

We can't let it stop here. Maybe, someday, people will be aware of their responsibilities as people. And being kind to the earth and our fellow humans — secretaries included — will be more than something we do once a year.

YOURS

Being human

I was at the EMU the other day watching the space shuttle land safely after orbiting the earth 36 times. It was a truly exhilarating experience and it brought back fond memories of previous American manned space flights.

I remember vividly when John Glenn went up for the first time in 1962. I was allowed to stay home from school so I could watch the launch on television. Indeed, I can openly admit that I am vicariously rewarded every time we make a new inroad into space. Humanity has certainly come a long way in its quest for the stars.

However, something happened at the moment the shuttle touched down that sullied the spirit of the occasion for me. That something, that momentary break in the beauty of the instant was a shout of "lets see the Russians top that!"... a sentiment I am sure was echoed across our nation. But does anyone realize that when we espouse this competitive spirit and whip up our nationalistic fervor we are just defeating ourselves as human beings? What we are doing is transmuting our collective humanity into nothing more than higher (higher?) organisms competing for the upper rung of the social ladder. Are we really a nation of mere social climbers?

Perhaps the person who voiced this sentiment is only inexperienced in this world we live in. Maybe he has never seen a real live Russian. He may think (as a current Secretary of State believes) that Russians live under rocks and one needs only to turn over the nearest stone to see just how close they are to taking over our great nation state. He could think that because they live under rocks they have similar physiologies to snakes, with scales and no feet and as such don't deserve to be thought of as human beings.

Well citizens of this great and glorious democracy, I have a surprise for you, yes... you guessed it. Russians are people too. This may surprise you, but many of those creatures with names such as whites, blacks, Jews, Christians, gays, straights and, yes, even "jocks" are really human beings.

So maybe, just maybe, we could turn to one of these "humans" one day and not say "lets see you top that," but instead say, "would you like to work together on this?"

Bradley Passenger
Sophomore, psychology

Ignored patriotism

The letter by Jerry Peyton prompts me to hop onto the "let's discuss America" bandwagon. Peyton cries out against the "David Isenberg types" (his quotes, not mine), those who criticize this country and the capitalistic society in which we live.

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Well Jerry, I'm just as qualified by your terms to talk of my working experience, my jobs in high school to keep me in clothes and supplies kept me out until the wee hours of the morning six night a week. I also served in the Navy (just like Dave Isenberg) and, miracle of miracles, I even saw some action off the coast of Vietnam. During my education in college, I have held various jobs involving both labor and intelligence, in fact, I hold two right now that require my attention during the week and the weekends.

I guess this makes me qualified to discuss this country as well. You see, Jerry, I love this country. Yep, I'm one of those guys who signed on for military service because of a blind patriotic feeling toward doing what's right. Unfortunately, the love I've given has been ignored.

I don't feel as good anymore when I hear somebody say we are "the greatest country in the world." If this country is so great, then why are we supporting a government that insists on killing its people for practicing freedom of speech? I would think we'd be helping the people of El Salvador against an oppressive government instead of the other way around.

Another thing, Jerry, is if this country is so great, why is so much of the American budget going to defense when we have the capability to destroy all enemies (both foreign and domestic) a dozen times over? Why isn't this country trying

to help its people cope with the rampant inflation and unemployment? I guess it's easier to let people starve and freeze than to give them a free lunch, right Jerry?

One more thing, Jerry, I may not agree with all that the "vociferous liberals" (my quotes) like Dave Isenberg may say, but I'll defend to the death their right to say whatever they feel. After all, its part of being an American to defend free speech, right Jerry?

Michael Riley
Senior, sociology

Campus traffic

Apparently, several pedestrians on the University of Oregon campus have been hit by bikes and injured. Obviously, something has to be done. The transportation subcommittee of the Campus Planning Committee held an open meeting April 17 to discuss a proposed amendment that would ban bike-riding from practically all campus sidewalks. I regret that my privilege of sharing campus walkways is threatened by the careless riding of a small minority of fellow bicyclists. As I said at the meeting, there are probably less restrictive alternatives (that haven't been tried yet) to facilitate pedestrian-bicyclist cooperation.

I suggest a campaign to publicize the problem and to educate the public in how to alleviate it. First, everyone should realize that pedestrians have the right of

way over bikes on sidewalks. This city regulation should be made more salient to University students and extended to campus. Bicyclists should also: ride cautiously around corners in case a pedestrian is coming the other way; realize that a relatively slow riding speed around campus is necessary to reduce accidents; limit riding to paved areas so costly repairs for bike ruts can't be used as a reason for stricter bike-riding regulation.

Pedestrians, for their part, could make room for bikes on sidewalks as they do for fellow pedestrians. Also, pedestrians should avoid crossing in front of bikes on the major bike thoroughfares (like 13th and 15th Avenues). Pedestrians usually don't consciously step in the path of motor vehicles on the roads. They should show bicyclists similar respect on the roads and bike paths.

I call on student transportation groups and appropriate University committees to publicize the pedestrian-bicyclist problem and to educate the public in the simple courtesies that could defuse this problem. I call on the local newspapers and electronic media to report consequential pedestrian-bicyclist accidents and any efforts to reduce the frequency of such accidents. I call on campus bicyclists and pedestrians to show the University community that we can cooperate without the restrictive proposed amendment.

Bill White
Graduate, special education

