

How to improve the Ferry Street Bridge

Local radio stations often try to boost their ratings by including a morning and afternoon traffic report. Interspersed among all of the talk about fender benders here and speed traps there, there are always a few moments in each report dedicated to addressing the city's most prominent traffic nightmare: the Ferry Street Bridge.

These radio reporters apply a distinct set of rules when talking about the Ferry Street Bridge. They never say traffic is moving "faster" or "slower" without adding the all-important qualifier: "... than usual for this time of day."

The city has proposed the expansion of the bridge to six lanes, in order to accommodate all the extra rush-hour traffic. Students from the architecture school at the University also provided the city with a number of alternatives. Some were more attractive than others, but all attempted to deal with the problem, which has become a daily headache for motorists who spend the day downtown but keep their homes north of the river.

Some have suggested that the expansion of the bridge will only serve to "encourage" automobile traffic, which is apparently a bad thing to some environmentally conscious members of the community. They stress alternative modes of transportation and believe that any policy that makes it easier on the motorist will, as a result, help perpetuate the environmentally degrading practice of automobile driving.

The same logic has been applied to proposals for a west Eugene parkway, which would attempt to alleviate traffic along West 11th Avenue, another major arterial that underwent expansion this summer from four lanes to five. The new parkway, like the expansion of the Ferry Street Bridge, has also been lambasted as a way of (can you believe the gall of city planners?) making driving easier.

Has anyone thought about what might happen? The city expands a bridge here, builds a new freeway there and BOOM! Eugene's just another Los Angeles, only with less sun.

So the solution seems clear: We shouldn't expand the Ferry Street Bridge. Heck, we ought to just tear it down completely. Let's see the wicked automobile drivers get to work then!

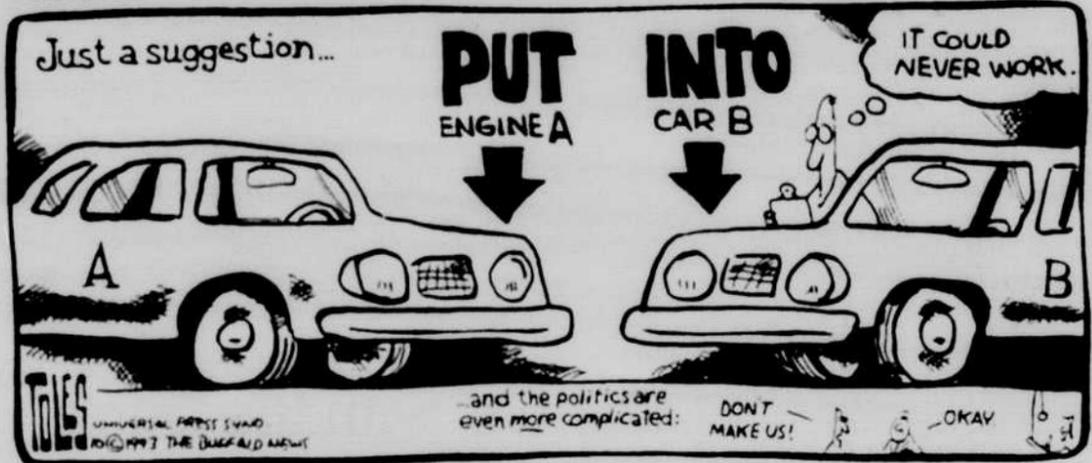
But then there would still be a lot of folks driving their despicable cars elsewhere in the city ... something would have to be done about them. Let's also knock out the Beltline, Franklin Boulevard and all of the other bridges across the Willamette.

To top it all off, we should stop funding street repairs altogether and let the whole infrastructure disintegrate. That way people's cars would not be able to pollute the air with their noxious exhaust gases, and with all of the new grass growing up between the cracks in the unattended roads and streets, the city would become all the more green. Wouldn't that be great? No more cars, no more parking lots, no more ugly pavement?

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OPINION

Whistlin' Jim 'fertilizes' EMU



MARTIN FISHER

"No one loves the man whom he fears."
— Aristotle

The grassy knoll near the EMU at the corner of University Street and East 13th Avenue ought to be a bit greener this week due to the presence of Jim, who's "in the fertilizer business."

In case you missed it, Jim and three of his best buddies took to the grassy knoll Thursday afternoon to warn students that they were all going to hell. This apparently bothered some students, who made their displeasure known by spending the better part of a sunny day suggesting more colorful terms for Jim's holy "fertilizer."

For those in attendance who were not sure about their eternal fate, Jim wore a sign listing those who will burn in eternal fire, or something. Included were liars, drunkards, pot smokers, pill poppers, homosexuals, Pharisees (are they still around?) and the worst heathens of all — Mormons. Jim could have more concisely summarized his list by replacing all the classifications listed with one word — "You."

Jim is also a frustrated coach. At least that would explain "The Whistle," which Jim would blow at random moments. To his certain dismay, no one began doing wind sprints. However, with a little practice, he could have a promising career directing traffic.

Or perhaps Jim simply wants God to let him blow one of the trumpets that will supposedly signal the end of the world and

is practicing on his whistle.

Colorful as Jim was, the crowd was not to be outdone. One woman, responding to Jim's venomous attack on homosexuals, shouted, "I'm a lesbian, and I have to say that I like it!" Spectators could almost smell the sulfur erupting from Jim's nostrils after the remark.

As if that wasn't enough to cause the earth to open and Satan himself to make an appearance, two other lesbians proceeded to kneel in front of Jim and (gasp!) kiss. In public! Jim said they were worshipping Satan. If that's the case, he ought to at least be relieved that they didn't utilize more traditional methods, like sacrificing one of the squirrels that live near the EMU.

But, none of that could compare to the guy who walked up next to Jim, told him how he respected Jim for having the guts to stand up for what he believes in and proceeded to kiss Jim on the cheek. Judging from the way Jim stumbled backward, one might have thought he'd been sucker-punched.

A number of self-identified Christians challenged Jim's interpretations of the Bible and the teachings of Jesus. One man apparently made too much sense for Jim, who finally refused to listen to the man, saying, "I don't know if I want to listen to you today because you've offended me." A most ironic statement coming from someone who was in the process of offending just about everybody within earshot.

Although much of the crowd's interaction with Jim did nothing to make either side look respectable, the one truly bright moment came when an international studies student, who gave his name as Mark, stood beside Jim, described himself as a born-again Christian and proceeded to bury Jim with rational yet passionate arguments that Christianity is not about hatred and condemnation but about love and acceptance of others.

The crowd was then treated to an episode of dueling Bibles, as Jim whipped out his good book from his Bible belt (yes, he actually wears a Bible belt, a kind of gunslinger-for-God thing) and read a passage from Revelations about being judged. Mark then took his own mini-Bible out of his backpack and recited a passage urging people not to cast judgment upon others. Jim should've stuck to the whistle.

Jim has a number of other hang-ups as well, especially concerning women, whom he regards as too emotional for rational thought. When he discussed the sin of fornication, it was in regards to "you women who sleep with your boyfriends." So, men who sleep with their girlfriends are not committing the sin of fornication. If you're a guy, this is good news.

Jim also knows how to work a crowd. The couple hundred or so spectators erupted in cheers to Jim's question, "How many of you students at this college are involved in sex, drugs and rock 'n' roll?" Judging from the response, the hoofed one can expect a lot of company come Judgment Day.

"Some people are planters," Jim told the crowd. "I'm in the fertilizer business." Their wit knowing no bounds, the crowd responded with descriptions of the fertilizer — "Bullshit, bullshit."

Perhaps many of the spectators were simply confused at the event, thinking it was the Homecoming rally, which was scheduled for Friday. In fact, more people attended what one spectator referred to as the Second Coming rally than attended the Homecoming rally.

Apparently the expectation of seeing the devil is more alluring than the opportunity to see Rich Brooks or Jerry Green (neither of whom showed up Friday). Go figure.

Martin Fisher is a columnist for the Emerald.

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