

## Site at Civic better for homeless camp

Although it may be scuttled by a classic case of "Not In My Backyard" syndrome, a proposal opening a winter car camp for the homeless at a site in South Eugene should be given serious consideration.

The camp, which would be located on the grounds of the Eugene School District's bus barn alongside Civic Stadium, would be intended to replace the car camp that has been operated the past two winters in a corner of the Autzen Stadium parking lot, on Centennial Boulevard.

The Centennial site, never quite ideal, has nonetheless provided a much-needed service for area homeless who otherwise have nowhere else to go. Many individuals, couples and families have benefited from the camp, which provides a place for them to legally pitch their tents and park their cars — a place which provides at least a minimum degree of permanency, and for some, a sense of community as well.

But the Centennial site was never intended to be permanent, and local residents have been promised that the car camp would be moved as soon as a more suitable site was found.

That more suitable site is the bus barn site at Civic Stadium.

The bus barn location is superior for many reasons, particularly its proximity to the services most needed by homeless individuals seeking to get back on their feet. A short distance away is the St. Vincent de Paul First Place Center, a job referral service that also provides day care services to the homeless. Public transit, schools and laundry facilities are much more accessible at the Civic site than at Centennial. And with the possibility of using existing buildings on the site, the bus barn location might also offer permanent showers and heated central areas for cooking and gathering.

There are a number of obstacles which may delay or even prevent the relocation of the car camp to the bus barn site. The school district is not obligated to allow the city to use the space, even though it plans to move its bus maintenance and storage facilities to another location in January. If 4j balks at the idea — Superintendent Margaret Nichols has said that the car camp could move to the bus barn only temporarily, if at all — then the plan is dead in the water.

And, according to the deed, the land in question may only be used for recreational purposes, which the car camp admittedly is not. But neither is the bus barn, and nobody raised a fuss about that before.

Some neighbors of Civic Stadium have expressed opposition to the plan, predictably. Some undoubtedly perceive the homeless as dangerous or destructive or otherwise undesirable. That stigma has been largely dispelled by those campers who have lived at the Centennial camp in the past two years.

During both years of operation at Centennial, the car camp experienced no significant police problems and no physical damage was done to the site. There is no reason to believe that the Civic Stadium location would experience such problems, either.

Neighbors of the proposed site at Civic who oppose the camp's relocation should get out of the way and just let it happen. A car camp is needed this winter, and after that's established, year-round. Bemoaning the fact that it's going to be in your neighborhood is selfish and merely ignores the real need for the camp — a need which would be better served by the bus barn location than the site at Autzen Stadium.



### OPINION

## Custody case evokes 1950s



GAYLE FORMAN

Welcome to the wonderful world of the 1950s. It's such a nice place for a family to be. Every day, professional hubby sets off to work to earn a living while mommy stays home and watches the kids.

Home was where mommy belonged. That's what everyone said. She went to high school and even college so she could be well-educated and thus make a good wife. She didn't study physics in college because young women were discouraged from studying such academic subjects as they were seen as "manly," and an unseemly thing for a future wife and mother to do.

While in college, the young woman studied home economics and child psychology. It was imperative that she leave college with the skills that would make her the housewife supreme.

Once married and a mother, the wife was told over and over again that her place was at home with her family. She was fed helpful tips on how to battle her children's bed-wetting problems or how to serve up the perfect dinner party. It was drilled into her pretty little head that her life should revolve around her family, and that nothing else could or should matter as much.

But those days of June Cleaver are thankfully behind us. In our modern times, many a woman works in whatever field she chooses. No longer tied to the kitchen, we can go where we want and do what we want. We have even found a way to marry our careers and families. With the wonders of day care, today's family woman can have kids and bring home some bacon of her own.

But on Monday, July 26, a cir-

cuit judge in Michigan made it clear that the 1950s feminine mystique is still upon us. Jennifer Ireland, a 19-year-old college student, lost custody of her 3-year-old daughter. She didn't lose custody because she beat her child or left her home alone. She was not found to be an unfit parent in any way. She lost custody of her daughter Maranda because the child attended day care while her mother went to classes. The judge granted custody to the paternal grandmother, who is a self-described housewife. The child's parents were never married.

With the pound of a gavel, the judge has erased 30 years of the female struggle to reconcile her role as both mother and professional. During the 1960s, women fought to establish their roles in society as more than the baby-maker. It wasn't that women preferred children over careers; they wanted both.

But historically the role of childbearer has carried with it the responsibility of child rearer. Women found themselves in a paradoxical situation. They wanted children but they also wanted the freedom to do more with their lives than raise children. Women had to sever the leash that bound them to their duties as mother. Children needed care. Working mothers could not provide care. Out of the women's liberation movement grew the revolutionary idea of child care. Women could work and they could have a family. Day care centers started popping up and today they have become a necessity for many families.

This decision negates so much that women have struggled for and sends a dangerous message: Mothers should stay at home with their children. Mothers who choose to do otherwise will lose their children.

By living with her mother and attending child care, the judge wrote that Maranda would be "in essence raised and supervised a great part of the time by strangers." Never mind that Maranda sees the same children and caretaker daily, thus building relationships with them. Never mind that studies have

found that day care centers can help children to better develop their social skills. The scores of psychological studies touting the benefits of day care were conveniently forgotten as the judge planted his foot firmly in 1950s family values.

But the real travesty here is the message being sent to young women across the country. Ireland had her child when she was in high school. She didn't drop out of high school and become a welfare mother. She finished school and got herself a scholarship to the University of Michigan. She balanced her studies with her family by enlisting the services of a day care center.

Some conservatives in this country are wagging their fat fingers at welfare mothers. It is the young, unwed welfare mother who is sapping off the country's welfare system, they say. They claim that these unwed mothers prefer to remain unmarried and have children for the sole purpose of mooching this country's wealth.

Jennifer Ireland is a young unwed mother who is not on welfare but in college, trying to make a life for herself and her child. And her reward for her efforts? She loses her child. Talk about a double edged sword.

What Jennifer Ireland is trying to do for herself and her child deserves applause. She should be put on a pedestal and paraded around in front of all young welfare mothers as an example of what they can accomplish. She can help show young mothers that having a child does not have to mean a dead-end life of poverty. She is the shining example of what a successful welfare system would produce.

Instead of encouraging single mothers to better their lives and the lives of their children, the judge's order sends the opposite message. This decision presents women with an either or choice — child or job. That is a choice no woman should ever have to make again.

Gayle Foreman will be a columnist for the Emerald in the fall.

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