

## School board says no where will they go

Eugene has a reputation in Oregon as being a friendly city. The Eugene School Board and citizens living around Civic Stadium have put that reputation in danger.

Wednesday night the board voted five to one to accept the recommendation of Eugene School Superintendent Margaret Nichols not to allow a homeless camp to be established at the bus barn near Civic Stadium.

Nichols and neighbors cited the safety of students attending South Eugene High School as a major reason for the denial. One neighbor was quoted in Thursday's edition of *The Register-Guard* as saying that though she didn't want to "criminalize the homeless" there was no disputing "the use of alcohol and drugs is very well documented among the homeless."

These residents have seen a few too many episodes of *Cops*. Drug use among high school student is very well documented, apparently these residents are under the impression that without the car camp near the high school none of the students will use drugs. Wrong. There are probably a good number of student there who have already tried drugs, and their experiments happened even though there was no homeless car camp near their school.

Much of the testimony at Wednesday night's meeting came from people who were at one time homeless or are currently homeless. A former resident of the

Centennial car camp was quoted in *The Register-Guard* as saying, "what I needed was a place I knew my wife and children would be safe while I looked for work." A place where his wife and children would be safe, not a place where he could spend the day doped up on heroin.

So where do the homeless go from here?

At a news conference on Thursday Shelter Work Group announced plans to propose a winter car camp near Centennial Boulevard for the third year. The group also planned to examine using Armitage State Park as possible car camp site, and said it would keep looking at the bus barn as a possible site after it is vacated. Richard Greene, member of Shelter Work Group did not sound optimistic about the last option, "The school board said no. I don't personally see any reason to go back to them."

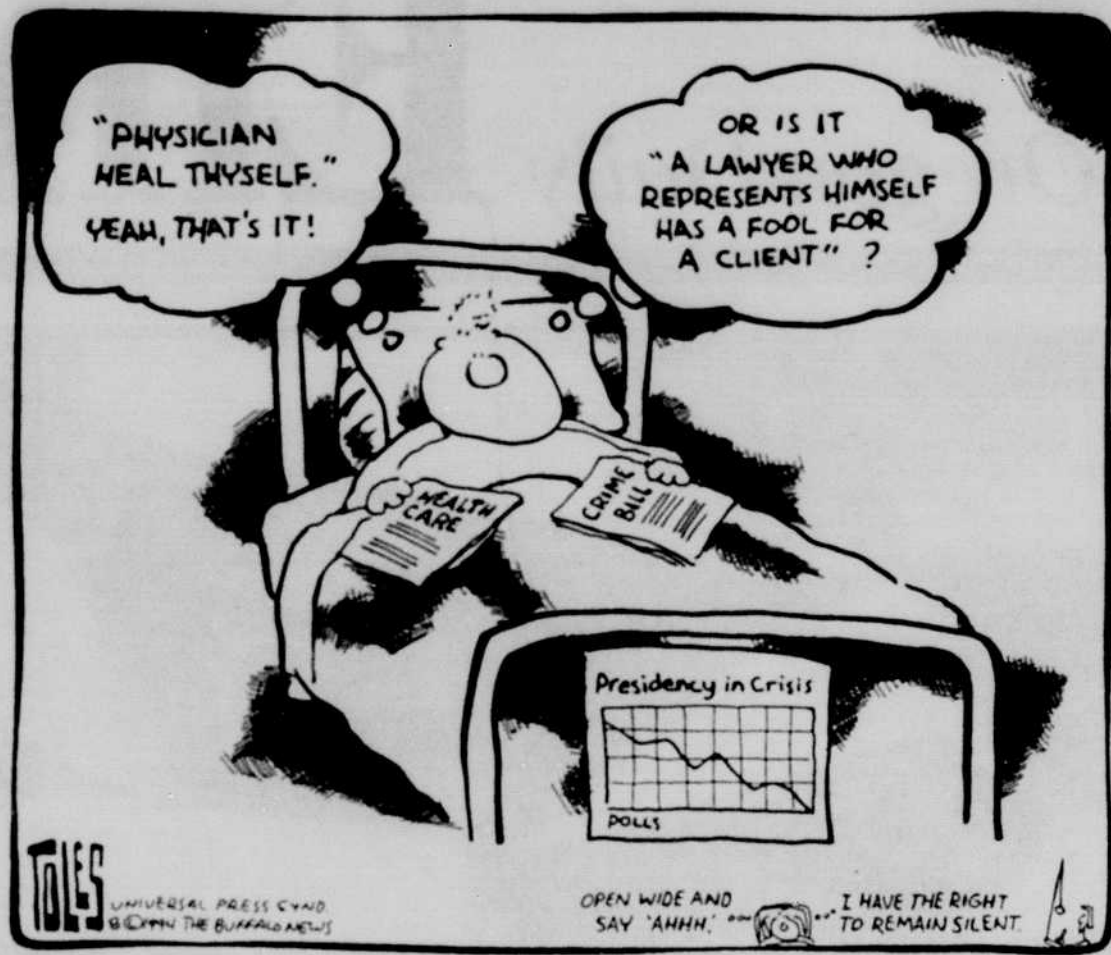
Where have compassion and empathy gone?

The decision by the school board is just the latest example of how extremely selfish people can be. This decision is just like people who advocate more and longer prison sentences but don't want prisons built near their homes, or people who claim that they are sympathetic to drug addicts but don't favor residential treatment centers in their neighborhoods.

There is a time to say not in my back yard: When a nuclear power plant wants to set up shop in you back yard it would be more than wise to say no because it has been proved that living next to a nuclear reactor power plant can cause harm to people, animals, and vegetation. But where you are saying no to ideas that could potentially benefit families and children or people who have been down on their luck because it may devalue your house or make you neighborhood look undesirable or because you fear something that has not been proved, that's called paranoia.

**'The school board said no. I don't personally see any reason to go back to them.'**

— Richard Greene, member of Shelter Work Group



## OPINION

# Everyone's a lawyer, that's okay

I was breast fed by Justice, and weaned on the Law. I come from a family of lawyers. My mom is a lawyer. My pop is a lawyer. They met on opposite sides of a divorce case, with my mom representing the woman, and my pop representing her estranged husband. Mom won the case. Pop won a new law partner and a girlfriend. In a case of what can only be called poetic justice, I think it's rather fitting that they are now in the process of a divorce.

My sister is a lawyer. So is her husband. They attended law school together and did really cute stuff like helped each other study for the bar exam.

Now my brother is vicariously getting into the act, and has announced his engagement to a wonderful woman. Her occupation? You guessed it.

So how have I been affected by this overabundance of esquires? For one thing, I can impress my friends by telling them some of their rights. (You know, the stuff that police and landlords neglect to inform you of.) I also have a strong sense of what's fair and what's not. When I was a wee four-year-old, my parents sent me to my room and told me to stay there. After about three minutes, I flung the door open, thrust my hands onto my hips and told them I knew my rights.

Attorneys are a strange breed. They don't like being called "sharks," or "ambulance chasers." Try it and watch them get mad. They are also quite defensive if you say that their profession takes advantage of people (kind of like journalists!)

Mom and pop used to work together in the same law office. I guess you could call it a "mom and pop" operation. Working there made for some interesting times. Especially when my mothers rich divorce clients would turn up their snobby noses at my pop's destitute criminal clients.

Yep, mom helped break up marriages and pop helped soften the jail sentences of crooks. As



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you can probably tell, none of this has made me the least bit cynical. Working at their office made me realize just how at the mercy of lawyers people are. It's as if mother Justice made up her own little language just so her little cuddly counselors could always keep busy translating it for everyone else.

One of the hardest things I had to deal with as a child was that my pop's clients were sometimes child molesters, murderers and rapists (and even an occasional flasher). One morning I woke up to see him on the front page of the newspaper next to his child molester client. "Why do you have to defend these people?" I said in tears.

That's when he taught me one of the most important lessons I have ever learned. If you are in law school, you will probably learn it too, although it's so basic I suspect that it's the easiest to forget. "Lia," he said, "everybody accused of a crime is innocent until proven guilty. And everyone, even the guilty ones, have the right to legal counsel."

When he put it that way, I could see that I had no business assuming somebody is guilty without a fair trial. And in my everyday life, I guess it has influenced me not to judge people before hearing their story. In journalism, that can make the difference between a catty, misinformed article and a realistic, compassionate one.

I loved to watch Pop spellbind a courtroom and make the uptight prosecutor look dumb.

Having a divorce lawyer for a mother can be a kick in the pants as well. I don't know many oth-

er people who joke about handing out their business cards at weddings.

The most important thing she taught me was that women could do anything. The second most important thing was that women who believe they can be anything (such as an attorney) get hassled a lot. She told me stories about coming home from law school and bursting in tears as soon as she got in the door because she didn't want all the men and the one other woman in her class to see her cry. She cried because in those days, there weren't any sexual harassment laws and her professors thought nothing of asking her opinion about whether women who got raped deserved it or not.

Yet if I were to pick one skill, just one, that is the singlemost advantage to being raised by lawyers it is this: Arguing skills. I don't always use them, especially if the argument is one not worth fighting. But if I'm in the mood, or if I'm provoked, and ESPECIALLY if I'm talking to some jerk who thinks they are smarter than the whole rest of the world, and ESPECIALLY if that jerk is WRONG, then watch out. I'll put them on the stand, make them squirm, and relish in it.

So if I think I am such hot legal stuff, then why don't I go to law school, you may ask. The answer is this: I don't think I'm hot stuff. Like most other lawyers (and journalists), I just pretend.

A career in the law just isn't for me. Although I believe in justice and fairness, I couldn't handle watching people being thwarted from true justice because of an ill-working justice system. I couldn't handle the disappointments of losing someone's case, of not doing enough to help someone.

Besides, if I worked for the Law, I couldn't break it as often.

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# Oregon Daily Emerald

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