

EDITORIAL

Earth Day victories deserve protection

Twenty-five years ago people gathered across America. They demanded that people do more to protect natural resources.

Earth Day was created in response to their concerns. For one day each spring, April 22, the nation is supposed to celebrate the environment. And that day of celebration is supposed to carry over so every day could be considered Earth Day.

Earth Day celebrators need to remember the ideals of those who founded this annual gathering. The nation has been successful in recycling drives and other campaigns to save the environment.

Earth is a much better place than it used to be. Since 1970, tough legislation has saved us from environmental disasters. Congress has enacted 28 environmental laws that have resulted in cleaner air and water, brought new protection for endangered species, slowed destruction of wetlands and stopped dumping of toxic waste.

The Clean Air Act and the Bottle Bill are two examples of how government has demonstrated its commitment to the Earth. Twenty-five years ago, people didn't think twice about throwing away paper, bottles and cardboard. Today, recycling bins can be found on almost every street corner.

Thanks to environmental support triggered by Earth Day, people are thinking twice about driving their cars and polluting waterways. Businesses and restaurants are using recycled paper to promote products.

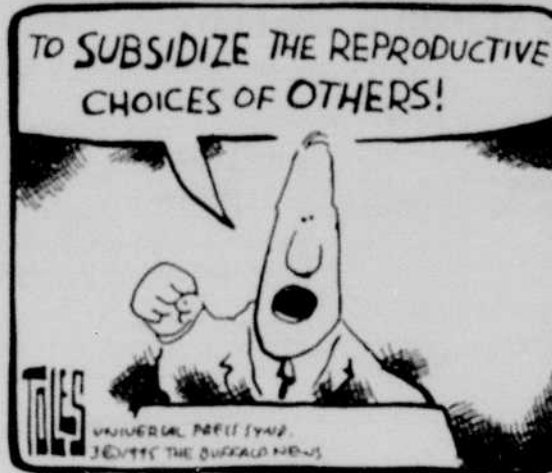
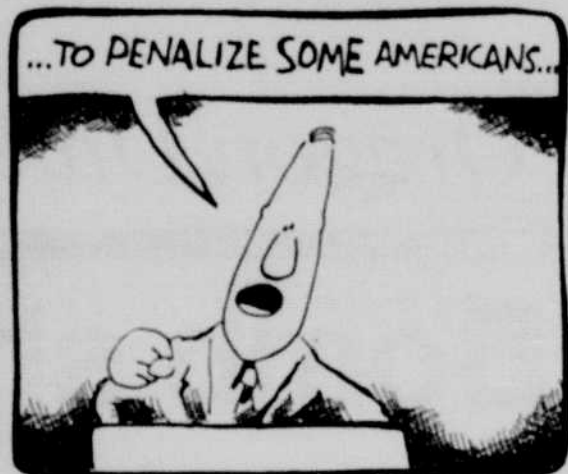
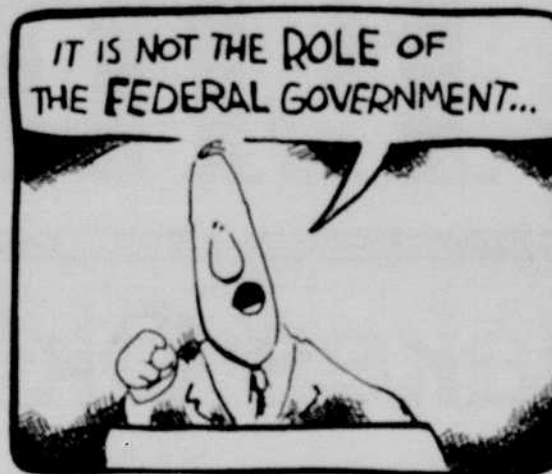
Much of the environmental successes that have resulted from the Earth Day campaign should be credited to the people who rallied to make it a national priority. Eugene residents are prime examples of people who took Earth Day's message to heart. In how many other cities do young people come together to pass an ozone protection bill?

However, we can't afford to rest on our laurels. More needs to be done. The environment is never free from the threat of human destruction.

The nation needs to make certain we don't make any disastrous steps backward. Environmental leaders say progress made since the first Earth Day could be hindered, especially considering the threat of the 104th Congress.

In its first 100 days, Congress assaulted major environmental laws. Fred Krupp, executive director of the Environmental Defense fund, said this could be the most critical Earth Day. And former Sen. Gaylord Nelson, who founded Earth Day, said people don't know about the assaults that threatens laws inspired by the original Earth Day.

Rallies for this year's Earth Day might focus on getting a message across to Congress — something like "Don't turn back the clock." It's unfortunate people must worry about threats to established environmental laws. Energy used to save the laws we have would be better invested working for even more environmental protection.



OPINION

'Forrest Gump' not really best picture



PAUL VAN SICKLE

I know the Academy Awards ceremony was two weeks ago, but I want to appeal the Academy of Arts and Sciences in light of new information. *Forrest Gump* didn't really win for best picture.

Three days ago, I saw the film *Shawshank Redemption*. You see, it really won for best picture of 1995, only nobody knows it.

In case you didn't watch the Oscars, five pictures were nominated: *Quiz Show*, *Forrest Gump*, *Four Weddings and a Funeral*, *Pulp Fiction* and *Shawshank Redemption*. *Quiz Show*, the second best movie of the year, wasn't really acknowledged for the award, for reasons nobody understands. *Four Weddings and a Funeral* had only one problem with it — Andie MacDowell. Probably the only thing holding it back from the status of "truly great romantic comedy" if such a thing exists. *Pulp Fiction* simply wasn't good enough. And, oh yeah, *Forrest Gump*. This last one was simply too silly for me.

Let's look at the plot. Okay, a man with below-average intelligence experiences every important event in American history. And what was with that bit about running across the country a hundred times? It was so long, I think it shortened my life.

Then there was *Shawshank Redemption*. I want to be honest: this movie was amazing. I feel I need to tell the world why it really was the best movie of 1995.

Redemption is a two and a half hour epic about a man named Andy Dufrane, played by Tim Robbins, who is con-

victed for the double murder of his wife and her lover and sent to Shawshank prison for two consecutive life terms. In prison, Dufrane meets another inmate, Morgan Freeman, "a man who knows how to get things," from whose eyes the action is told and characters are exposed.

Basically, there wasn't a bad thing about this movie. Tim Robbins' career may have really gotten started after he starred in Robert Altman's *The Player*, but *Redemption* redefined him as an actor, and, in my own words, has become "one of the coolest men on the planet." As for Morgan Freeman, he has to be one of the best actors in Hollywood today; this movie proves it.

This movie spoke to me like none have probably since *Schindler's List*, and although *Redemption* doesn't carry the same emotional weight as that film, it said a lot to me about so many of those (albeit clichéd) terms: truth and 'the human spirit'. It is by staying true to his ideals and beliefs about how people treat one another that Dufrane is able to survive in Shawshank prison. He is forced to disagree with Freeman's character about how hope can destroy someone in prison, yet it is Dufrane's ability to maintain his undying hope that allows him to keep his sanity. But if anything, the movie was about respect and trust.

My problem is not so much that *Forrest Gump* won, but

rather that *Shawshank Redemption* didn't win. Unfortunately, the Academy works off the same principles that oil the gears of Hollywood. That is, a movie is good only if a lot of people bought tickets to see it. It is this attitude that allows movies like *The Bodyguard*, *Bram Stoker's Dracula*, and *Legends of the Fall* to become blockbuster money makers.

Much more money was spent on *Forrest Gump* than on any other film nominated, even if it was all on silly scenes that allowed Tom Hanks to shake hands with dead presidents, and maybe that's why it won. In my opinion, that type of opulence isn't necessary if the same scenes could be played by look-alikes (check out the film *I.Q.* for a good example of this) but then Robert Zemeckis wouldn't be the money-spending, science fiction god he is now.

So I don't know what to think. Nobody from the Academy called me up for my vote, but if they had, maybe Samuel Jackson would have won for best supporting actor, and *The Mask* would have won for best special effects. It's too late now anyway, but I had to tell someone.

By the way, if you don't believe me about Tim Robbins, go rent the Coen brothers' *Hudsucker Proxy* and *I.Q.* with Meg Ryan and Walter Matthau and you'll see what I mean.

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The Emerald reserves the right to edit any letter for length or style.