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PERSPECTIVES

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Is the growing trend of corporate names for real places funny or frightening?

OPINION



Rob Moseley

Being a sports guy, I thought the disturbing trend of attaching corporate sponsorship to basically theoretical products was confined to the world of professional athletics. Flipping through Sports Illustrated, one reads references to games played at Cynergy Field, Qualcomm Stadium and 3Com Park. A post-New Year's edition of The Sporting News referred to college football contests sponsored by Insight.com, Federal Express and Tostitos. Christ, watch a ballgame on TV and you'll see pitching changes and instant replays with sponsors attached.

So it was with no small bit of sadness and, I'll admit, a bit of laughter, that I read in PC Computing's April issue of the latest craze in the race for big businesses to attach their names to every imaginable entity.

The city of San Francisco, not a half-hour drive from my hometown and, in my opinion, the greatest city in the world, was negotiating with a computing industry powerhouse to

change its name to San Francisco for a period of eight years. The compensation: \$1 billion.

Frightening, yes. An isolated incident, no.

Similar means of achieving a financial windfall are being considered in towns such as Dallas, Houston, Detroit and Seattle, and at least one town has already completed a deal. As of April 1, 1999, Sioux City, Iowa, will be no more. On that date, the city of Gateway will be born.

Which begs the question: Can I work on my IBM in Gateway?

It sounds ridiculous, but considering the cutthroat tactics adopted by all corporations, and especially those in the computing industry, it probably isn't that absurd a question.

And it's a type of question that's probably been raised in the past.

An Iowa city has prostituted itself before, when Dubuque was named after a meat-packing company in town. San Francisco would be continuing

the trend set by its neighbor Hercules, which was named after a gunpowder manufacturer. And I think we can all guess the impetus for the naming of Goodyear, Ariz.

I guess in the days when those names were chosen, the city and company were basically the same. There probably wasn't much else going on.

But if Bill Gates is allowed to change the name of Redmond to Microsoft, Wash., a severe conflict of interest could arise as to which computer products I could use in town.

Would Gates permit operation of Macs in Microsoft? Could I drink a Coke in Pepsi, Texas? Could I be arrested for flying United into Delta, Ga.? Would I be shot for wearing Reeboks in Nike, Ore.? And just how severely would I be flogged for driving a Chevy in Ford, Mich.?

Gotcha. The last one was a trick question. Detroit is negotiating to change its name to Hyundai. Imagine the uproar. The one true bastion of American blue-collar labor renamed

by a foreign interest.

What this signals is the complete disintegration of our social forums. No longer do we have a business forum separate from the political forum. No longer is there an entertainment forum separate from the athletic forum. The powers of all the rest combined have proven no match for the almighty dollar, and the business forum has drawn every other social realm under its umbrella.

But I guess there is one positive we residents of Eugene can take from all of this. If Hyundai does indeed become the new moniker of Detroit, there's no way the company could own the rights to two separate city names, is there?

Or are we all future residents of Hyundai II?

All of this has led me to one conclusion: From now on, I'm sticking to the sports page.

Rob Moseley is a sports reporter for the Emerald. His views do not necessarily represent those of the newspaper.

Quoted

"This horse is not a bad-boy type of horse. He's just a bad boy sometimes."

Trainer **Shug McGaughey** discussing Coronado's Quest in an Associated Press story from The Oregonian on Friday. Does a "bad-boy" horse throw horseshoes at photographers when they enter the barn?

"Their whole team outplayed us, but we still feel they're not a better team than we are."

New York Knicks center **Patrick Ewing**, after his team lost its playoff series with the Indiana Pacers 4-1, as quoted in an AP story from Thursday's Register-Guard. They won, but we still feel we won.

"Boomer is the farthest thing from a Beanie Baby."

New York Yankees manager **Joe Torre** quoted in an AP story about pitcher David Wells' perfect game in Monday's Register-Guard. Just because it was "Beanie Baby" day at the stadium doesn't mean the analogy makes sense.

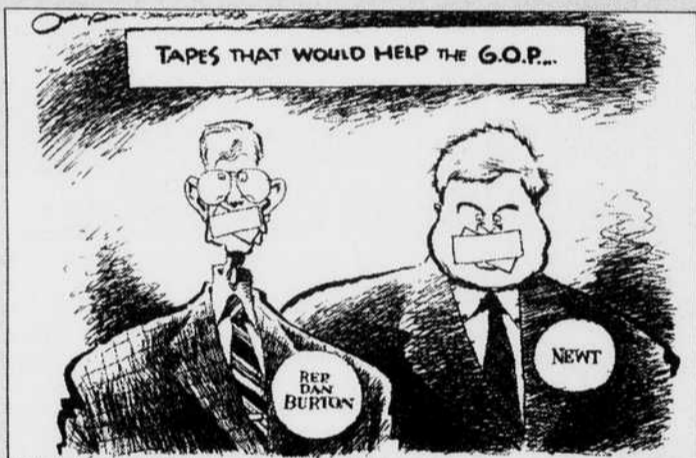
"Couldn't happen to a crazier guy, huh?"

Wells, talking about his achievement in the same story. Well, it could have happened to Torre.

"He has great width in his stance and his grip and the plane of his swing are good. He's just faster and stronger with his rotation than anyone I've seen."

Oregon golf pro **Jerry Mowlds**, commenting on Tiger Woods' swing in an Oregonian article on Wednesday. Now I understand why labor and the environment receive so little coverage in the print media — there's just so much vital information you can pack into a newspaper, after all.

DRAWING BOARD



LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

OSPIRG reality

This really has gone on long enough. Doesn't the ASUO Executive get it? I wish I could attribute Geneva Wortman's and Bill Miner's statements to poor journalism, but it seems that they really are ignorant of the student body's desires.

Wortman seemed shocked to hear that students wanted a detailed budget from OSPIRG. I'm glad to find out that she paid equal attention to both sides of the issues, seeing how fiscal accountability was the entire point of the "Honesty" campaign. Then, she incriminates herself further by making reference to OSPIRG as "we" and to "our message." Whoa! Can anyone else see the conflict of interests here?

Then our good buddy Miner lays down a fat one: "People didn't understand the implications of their votes." For crying out loud, of course we understood the implications of our votes! Why else would we have voted how we did? To ask students to "reconsider" their vote is bad enough, but to suggest complete ignorance on the part of the student body is downright offensive and insulting.

If this campus is to maintain its level of activism, then our student leaders need to open their eyes to reality and stop second guessing their constituents. If they refuse to do even this much, then I weep for the future of democracy.

Sean Williams
 Music Education

SETA overlooked

It was no surprise to see the article on the zebrafish grant (ODE, May 13) talking about how great the funding for the facility is with no discussion why it might be wrong. The Emerald has completely ignored all events and education Students for the Ethical Treatment of Animals have conducted in protest of animal research on this campus. I guess the suffering of innocent animals doesn't matter to them, no matter what the arguments are. Last year, over 2,000 students

signed a petition saying they are against the animal research on campus. I guess they don't matter either. And the more than 500 signatures from students asking for a neutral public forum discussing the moral and scientific implications of animal research is in vain as well. But then again, millions of dollars will always speak louder than the truth, no matter how horrific it is. This is just another example of big business at our school that drowns out the sincere concerns of students.

In the article it discusses how the administration has been supportive of the funding. Why shouldn't they be? They are profiting. Steadman Upham, the vice provost of research, has stated that there is no way that there will be a public forum on the issue of animal research. What about student voices? Animal research receives millions of dollars for a variety of reasons — and where are all the cures? Animals differ anatomically, psychologically, physiologically, genetically and socially. Many drugs have been put onto the market that tested "safe" on nonhuman animals but had severe side effects on humans, even death. There are many alternatives to animal research as well.

Most importantly, these animals are not humans' to manipulate, own and murder. These animals are their own beings, and by deciding their life, researchers are creating oppression and death for human and nonhuman animals. You would hope they would at least try to justify what they are doing through a public forum, but none of the animal researchers responded to the request to do so. They can get away with this, as well as the murder of innocent beings, because people continue to be ignorant of the innocent beings, because people continue to be ignorant of the issues surrounding animal research and because part of that ignorance is perpetrated by this paper.

Chelsea Lincoln
 Director, SETA