

# The city according to Bishoff: A nicely nutty place

■ Retired Register-Guard columnist muses on the future of Eugene — growth, anarchy, TV news and the weather

By Jack Clifford  
Oregon Daily Emerald

Don Bishoff and the newspaper business are as synonymous as Keanu Reeves and bad acting. Before he retired from the daily grind in 1999, Bishoff spent 40 years playing various roles on the printed page.

After receiving his bachelor's and master's degrees in journalism from Northwestern University, he started at the City News Bureau in Chicago and then worked in Richmond, Va. But his longest stint was at The Register-Guard, Eugene's major daily newspaper. Bishoff spent 38-plus years there as a reporter, an assistant city editor, editorial writer and a drama reviewer.

His most visible chore, however, was his final one as the paper's biting and wise-old-owl columnist. He put his personal spin on city leaders, local activists and University officials. Therefore, Bishoff — who now spends time with his wife Mary and their three children and two grandchildren — also knows Eugene quite well.

The Emerald asked the old guard of the news business to answer a few questions about the city.

**Q: What are the most pressing issues Eugene will face over the year?**

A: Same ones it's faced for the last 30 years — how to deal with growth and its ramifications. The town's too damn big, is predicted to get a lot bigger, and we're all paying the price. We're sprawled all over hell and sprawling more every day. Developers are trying to cut down all the trees in the South Hills to

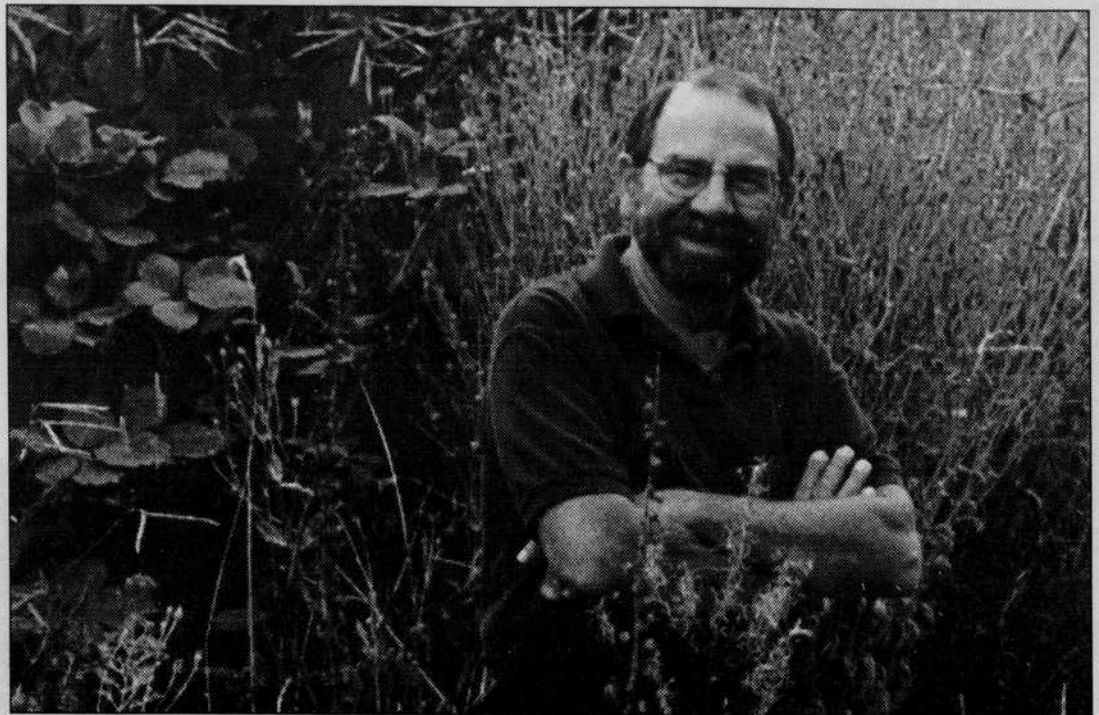
build more expensive houses that most of us can't afford. Traffic's a mess — have you been on West 11th Avenue on Friday afternoon or at River Road and Belt Line between 4 and 5 p.m.? Schools and city and county governments don't have enough money to deal with the problems that growth brings. And nobody, including me, has good answers.

**Q: Will the city of Eugene (meaning city officials and police department) and the anarchists ever come to any sort of compromise or will those two forces battle for eternity?**

A: They're doomed to eternal conflict unless the anarchists quit acting like jerks and the cops quit acting heavy-handed in dealing with them. The cops let themselves get sucked into what the anarchists want by always overreacting — dousing protesters in the trees with pepper spray on June 1, 1997, was the first wrong move. Now the cops are trying to keep news people from seeing what they're up to, adding to suspicions that it's no good. The city has a good police force and smarter-than-average leadership — all they have to do is use the smarts to not fall into the anarchists' trap of making them look bad. Why not spray the punks with whipped cream instead of pepper spray? Hard to take a frothed demonstrator seriously — and hard for him to claim police brutality.

**Q: Does the city's form of government, with so many boards, commissions and committees work or get bogged down in meetings?**

A: Nothing wrong with all those



Tom Patterson Emerald

Don Bishoff lends a humorous but informed synopsis on what it means to call Eugene home, with insights on bureaucracy, whipped cream and how to prevent becoming a 'strangled paradise.'

meetings and boards and commissions — we need more of 'em. Those boards and commissions are local citizens making local decisions, which is what local government's all about. The alternative is to leave governing up to the city manager and his staff, who are all swell fellows but not the ones to make our decisions for us, much as they might like to.

**Q: If any one person could be brought back to life and appointed as Eugene's mayor, who do you think the citizens would chose and why?**

A: They oughta choose Tom McCall, best governor Oregon ever had. He never lived in Eugene, but he was the sort of guy Eugene needs. Outrageous, courageous, visionary, charismatic, progressive, occasionally drunk and willing to take chances to lead people into doing the right thing. Ol' Tom would know what to do about those anarchists. And probably what to do about our growth problems, too, come to think of it.

**Q: People talk about Eugene's above-average livability factor. Is that aspect real or manufactured?**

A: Real. Good vibes and a nicely nutty atmosphere. Lots of great parks and rivers in and near the city, not-bad air, mountains and ocean not far away. Decent weather, if you don't go nuts from the rain, which I do every year. But unless somebody does something about the Big G, we're doomed to becoming another Seattle — a strangled paradise.

**Q: What sort of image do the various local media have?**

A: The TV stations do a largely superficial, cookie-cutter job of re-

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