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COMMENTARY

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Eugene shouldn't meddle with businesses' affairs

Where to put a hospital? That has become one of the most contentious questions here in Eugene, and it has seemed to further polarize the two local political blocks.

While it's a quite simplified view, one could say that here in Eugene the "pro-business" moderate-conservatives are pitted squarely against the "anti-sprawl" progressive liberals. Although every conservative in Eugene is not for sprawl and every liberal is not against business, this does hold true to some extent.

And one can see that recently in how some in Eugene want PeaceHealth to be able to develop where it needs to and others refuse to let the health-care provider out of the downtown area.

Like a fearful lover who knows their partner wants to leave them, the Eugene City Council is resorting to frantic and questionable tactics such as re-zoning and offering to help pay for a downtown site to keep the hospital close to its present location.

Despite what the company says it needs, city councilors want their own way. Granted, not just the City Council but also several local residents, business owners and even doctors and nurses have campaigned for keeping PeaceHealth close to the city center.

But we as a community must realize we cannot force a hospital into an area that its owners argue will not work. We should be able to assume that PeaceHealth knows what is best and not impose any restrictions to fit the hospital to some fixed agenda.

Some councilors continue to argue they are only trying to preserve Eugene's downtown core. But it does not make sense how any new business would be interested in coming to Eugene in light of PeaceHealth's experience. The council's message appears to be: "Come to Eugene and your business will be left victim to city planners, councilors and activists who decide for you where and how you run your business."

It is unreasonable to argue that any business should have free reign in any community, but there is a certain point at which local governments need to back off if they want continued development in their cities.

There are many people in Eugene who do not want any development here, and they are welcome to that opinion. But that is a little unrealistic because Eugene is not some sleepy hamlet in the which the quality of life would be severely degraded with development. This is the second-largest city in the state, and it's about time the City Council realized that. Eugene is going to get nowhere by trying to keep this city in a box. Let PeaceHealth develop in North Eugene, and let's

have some new development downtown. The hospital's moving should only open up some prime real estate.

No one enjoys sprawl, but at the same time, by allowing the best development we can avoid the wrong development.

Smoking ban flawed from the start

So despite a ban, people still want to smoke? Well, that is interesting. One would think that with such a progressive and well-minded action like the City Council's ban on smoking, we would all put down our cigarettes.

But we haven't. In fact, it appears that some bar owners' fears have come true, and smokers are heading to other establishments that still allow them to light up. Tom Fieland, a manager of three local bars in which one can't smoke, told the council Monday night the ban was hurting his businesses. Especially because some managers were able to receive a reprieve from the ban with the promise they would start building a smokers' patio.

City Manager Jim Johnson will begin looking into the ordinance, and let's hope that some sanity will soon come to Eugene's tobacco laws.

If Eugene is really serious about banning smoking, then the City Council should make the law as fair as possible. This opportunity for an exemption from the ban was not well-publicized, and now some bar owners are hurting because of it. Councilors should open up the application process now, for all business owners, to solve this imbalance.

It's a safe bet that every bar will probably go for an exemption, and Eugene will be right back to where it was before the ban.

It just goes to show prohibition politics do not work.

Praise to all of Oregon's little creatures

It appears now that our great state may have earned its name because of smelt, a tiny, innocuous bait fish that Native Americans ground into oil. Two University graduate students have published an article describing a link between the Native American word for the fish, "ooligan," and "Oregon." This discovery just continues Oregon's great connection with friendly little critters. There's a beaver gracing the back of the state flag, this University's mascot is the harmless little duck and Eugene even celebrates the banana slug with a parade.

There's nothing wrong with it, and it actually is somewhat refreshing. When animals such as bears, cougars and wolves are so often used as mascots and such, it is nice to see Oregon taking a different route.

This editorial represents the views of the Emerald's editor in chief and does not necessarily represent the views of the Oregon Daily Emerald.

Weddings? They're not so scary anymore

Last Saturday, I attended my fifth wedding in two years. Because I anticipated knowing all of four people there, including the bride, I dragged a good-hearted friend home with me for the weekend. After seeing a wedding program full of married bridesmaids, hearing one of my friends inform me she'd gotten engaged on the

Fourth of July, and listening to the rampant gossip about all the other weddings on the docket, he said, "I can't wait to get back to Eugene. At least people there are screwed up in normal ways."

Unlike my suffering friend, I've been surrounded by matrimonial

bliss for long enough that I've ceased to find it traumatizing. After attending two or three of my friends' weddings, I stopped adding things to my checklist of what shouldn't be included at my own. I stopped worrying about whether I really believed people my age were ready to commit themselves to someone until death

does them part. Weddings don't scare me anymore.

Not other peoples' weddings, anyway. Like my friend who couldn't wait to return to Eugene and hordes of other people I know, the mere thought of being married makes me want to run for the hills. What is it about marriage that we find so scary? The lifetime commitment to one person, probably. At this point, I have a hard enough time keeping track of myself and my own choices, much less worrying about how I'll affect someone else's life. Marriage, of course, means always thinking about someone else, because it's not just your life anymore. And at 20 or 21 or 22, that's a sacrifice many people, including me, aren't prepared to make. Maybe that speaks well of us in a society where, even though it seems that marriage is spreading like flu in the residence halls, you hear more about the enormous divorce rate.

But here are some things to consider about weddings. Aside from being a public declaration of love, they're also a public declaration of independence. Yeah, you read that right. Think about it. Think of the bride's father giving her away as more than the tradition of the two of them walking down the aisle together. Sure, the law establishes an age where we're all adults. But it's at weddings that parents formally

surrender their authority over their children.

For the two people getting married, the wedding is an acknowledgment that they're giving up the freedom so many of us are petrified of losing — and they're ready for that. It's their declaration that they're trading the freedom to look for the right person for the freedom of not having to look anymore. It's their statement that they're adults who can make decisions together because they're secure enough with themselves to be able to consider someone else. And that's something worth celebrating.

Maybe that's why weddings don't traumatize me anymore. There are worse ways to spend an afternoon than watching my friends vow to stick it out for the people they love. Maybe if I tour the wedding circuit long enough (and there are plenty more wedding invitations in my future), I'll learn not to be afraid when I think of myself standing at the altar. I think that's far enough off in my future that for now, I can save my fears for something else: The day I open my mailbox and find the first birth announcement.

Katie Mayer is the Emerald copy chief and isn't planning on getting married anytime soon. She can be reached at kmayer@gladstone.uoregon.edu.



Katie Mayer
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Eugene: it's the happiest place in the world

GUEST COMMENTARY

Jason Borbet

I fell in love with Oregon when I was just a young lad. One summer day before I began the ninth grade, my family of five saddled up the old conversion van to take a journey. It was a less-than-stellar trip from New York to Portland. Being a raging adolescent at the time, I spent my days swearing in the back seat and plotting dark revenge on my family. By the time I reached my promised land, my two-year-old brother's incessant wailing, coupled with my 11-year-old brother's belligerence, rendered me mute and agitated. Years of therapy transpired, and by the time college applications went out, the University of Oregon was still at the top of my list. I swore I would become a Duck come hell or high waters.

When it was time to pick my new four-year home at the end of my junior year, I still wanted to attend the University. However, when reviewing the financial packages and in light of two younger brothers, I opted to be a debtless terrier at Boston University.

Oh, I don't mind being a small yapping dog living in the city that sleeps at 7:30 p.m. — it's actually rather nice. However, I knew I had sold out

and I had to become one with Oregon somehow. So, as a starry-eyed freshman I packed my things and split to Eugene for the summer. I didn't know anyone, and only through some clutch e-mailing did I land a place to stay. My first day in the laid-back land of Volkswagen mini-buses and glass-blowing shacks was one of some serious schooling.

Lesson one: The streets in Eugene are as confused as the ones of Boston. Unlike the delicious Roman layout of New York City (and Springfield, as I later found out) streets here are non-sequential. So, when arriving at the Greyhound station with my 150-pound duffel bag, tired from a transcontinental flight, I figured, "Hell, I am on East 10th, I can walk a few blocks to East 16th, right?"

Wrong. I walked for what seemed to be days, and finally someone said, "Oh, East 16th. That's about two miles past Hayward Field." Excited as I was to see the track capital of the nation, I was too exhausted and stupid to realize I could have just hailed a cab for ten bucks and saved my shoulders.

An hour later, after a cold shower under some impressive water pressure, I was on my way to check out the city I loved but had never met. This blind date taught me a most embarrassing lesson two. In line,

ready to purchase a slurpee at the local 7-Eleven, I committed the most heinous of out-of-towner crimes. I won't mention what I said, but I was told immediately that, "Hey, buddy, we haven't GONE anywhere."

Sadly, it wasn't until my third pilgrimage (this year) that I was informed that it was eu-GENE and not EU-gene. Apparently everyone I met the previous summer had a good laugh at my expense as I tried to figure out what was so funny through a vacant stare.

My pleasant revelation of that first day was finding out that if I walked across a street, cars would stop for me. Not only would they halt here in Eugene, but the drivers would smile and wave. This was a welcome reprieve from getting flipped off and threatened with castration.

Oh, and one night I spent lying on the grass. I looked up in the sky and saw these bright sparkly things. Someone told me they are called stars. Yup, Oregon is quite different from Boston, and I liked those differences. Here I am again, finding out more reasons why Eugene is the happiest place on earth.

Want to know what Boston is like? That's another issue altogether.

Jason Borbet will be a senior at Boston University but is spending his summer in Eugene.

Letters to the editor

Stein knows how to deliver results

No matter who else gets in the race, I'm supporting Beverly Stein for governor. Stein is the dynamic woman who served as CEO for Multnomah County for eight years. That means she is experienced and tested running the state's third-

largest government.

What makes Stein different? She has a proven record of results. When she was running Multnomah County, the callback time for county nurses was shortened from three hours to three minutes. We need someone running the state who knows how to deliver that kind of service.

And while other candidates have been lollygagging around, trying to

decide what to do, Stein has been hard at work. She is drawing people to her campaign. She has more than 1,500 volunteers working in almost every county in the state.

For her experience, record of results and optimism, Beverly Stein is the best choice to be our next governor.

Maggie Moore
Eugene