



I have gotten to know this north coast landscape of ours through years of exploration, walking every stretch of its beaches, hiking the length of its creeks, climbing to the tops of its mountain peaks. Seldom do I travel alone. In recent years, I have walked alongside one of my closest friends: a big dog, shaggy and black, an exuberant Newfoundland mix who weighs in at one-hundred pounds. Perhaps you have seen her, carrying industrial-sized sticks on the beach or jostling with ravens for a carcass-front view; swimming laps in the creek, galloping down trails, tracking elk; rushing up to greet anxious and cringing suburbanites. Shedding and drooling profusely in our town's many wide-open spaces.

Yes, this is a dog-friendly town, a place where people take their dogs seriously. The residents of this town walk their dogs in driving winter rain. They bring their dogs to work in the daytime and sneak their dogs into public eateries at night. They will face down bears who threaten their dogs in the woods behind town, and they will carefully rid their dogs of burrs, fleas, sticks and ticks once they've returned home. Some dogs are as widely known as their owners, and I have heard more than one person identified socially - not by their proper name - but, rather, as the owner of some well-known canine about town. They know where to find the good scraps and the suckers who distribute them freely. When dogs die in this town, they are mourned publicly. They receive newspaper eulogies; grown men, gently sobbing, carve grave markers of cedar in the privacy of their own garages. Dogs are revered. Dogs are locals. It is a good place to be a dog.

And dogs have been here for a very long time. Northwest coast native peoples kept dogs as working pets. Many local dogs were bred and trained to hunt in teams, trekking out into the forest, doubling around, flushing elk and deer to well-armed human hunters lying in downwind wait. In some places along the Northwest coast, a particularly shaggy breed of dog was raised as a source of wool. The dogs' hair would be trimmed and mixed with the "cotton" of fireweed seed pods or the hair of mountain goats; spun like other types of wool, this mixture could then be dyed and woven into clothing and blankets with totemic designs. In Tillamook legends, a very powerful dog, Kashelweet, could capture whales in his teeth and bring them to shore. As Tillamook orators would explain, Kashelweet was just "that kind of dog." Elsewhere around the Pacific, dogs were equally important. Among some indigenous peoples of coastal Siberia, between northern Japan and Alaska, dog teams were often used for fishing. Like hunting dogs, these fishing dogs worked in packs to "herd" fish toward shore. They would swim out in two columns, until a call from shore instructed them to change course. The heads of each column would converge, and the whole line would begin paddling shoreward - a wet dog dragnet, chasing the fish to nets and men waiting near the beach. Our kind and their kind are both social critters, capable of some level of loosely 'symbolic' communication; under the right circumstances we work well together.

I have never attempted to make clothing out of my dog's hair, though this is a growing craze among contemporary knitters with quirky sensibilities and time on their hands. (If the terrier-sized balls of newly-shed hair I find in the corners of my home are any indication, she has plenty to spare for the future production of socks, sweaters, or even entire jet-black jumpsuits.) She is a dog of few super-canine feats - no captured whales, no herded fish. This is not to say she lacks any marketable skills. She can, for example, guard the house. As one Newfoundland owner's guidebook notes, these dogs "can sling slobber up to 20 feet," a skill certain to discourage even the most daring of intruders. As the Tillamook would say, she is just "that kind of dog." Some portion of each Newfoundlands' ancestors were working pets to Native Americans long ago, serving as small pack animals, pulling travois until the horse arrived from Eurasia and put thousands of Newfs out of work. They were popular dogs on the frontier, good at water rescue and strong enough to pull a canoe around portages. Samuel Adams had one of these big black dogs, and Lewis and Clark Expedition would bring one along on their western trek, taking uncharacteristic risks at one point so that they could retrieve their dog from Native Americans who had briefly "borrowed" it. This is not to suggest that any breed should be held in particular esteem above another. There are people in this town with strong brand-name loyalties: a German Shepherd set, a Golden Retriever group, a Corgi contingent. Many local dogs, some of the most intelligent of the bunch, are mutts.

The segmentation of dogs into distinct breeds is a point worthy of reflection: "breeds" reflect our own cultural categories and preferences, our preconceived "ideal types." Through direct intervention in their personal lives, we have shaped dogs to fit our ideals over the generations, sometimes to their detriment. Dogs are genetically flexible, so that our distant ancestors could take their wolf ancestors and, over millennia, mold them into well over 400 recognized breeds, and innumerable intermediate forms. There are no other creatures that exhibit such genetic discontinuity as the modern dog, where members of the same species can outsize one-another by Great Dane-to-Chihuahua ratios. We have done this to them because of our ancestors' longstanding desire to produce dogs with spots, comically short legs, or chronic bad hair, for our amusement. We have done this to them because of our ancestors' longstanding desire to produce living tools: sled dogs, sheep- and cattle-herding dogs, bird retrieving dogs, guard dogs, mountain and water rescue dogs, seeing-eye dogs, tracking dogs, or dogs that are ceremonially eaten. We have done this to them because of our ancestors' longstanding desire to produce docile companions, to manufacture our own best friends. In our relationships with all domesticates, there is give and there is take. When my own dog was younger, she would refuse to be put back on the leash after time on the beach. I would carry dog biscuits to coax her and - somewhat reluctantly, in exchange for a biscuit - she would agree to be put back on the leash, brought back into civilization, back into the controlling and antiseptic human world. Both of us, standing in the drizzle, slowly, cautiously, would recapitulate the first act of domestication. An ancient bargain, subtly negotiated: she gives up freedom, I give up food, we both gain a friend out of the deal. Over time, this exchange becomes second-nature, and it is a bargain we seldom regret. After ten thousand years, domestication does not come immediately and naturally to these creatures, and must - in each new generation - be relearned. Though we have remade their exteriors, there is still some slight wolfish itch inside. Look close at that dog you see on the street, the one that sits next to you, grinning, on the shuttle bus. They are enigmatic among creatures. They are sentient, social beings. They are our oldest cultural artifacts. They are, in many different, sometimes surprising ways, panting, furry mirror-images of ourselves.

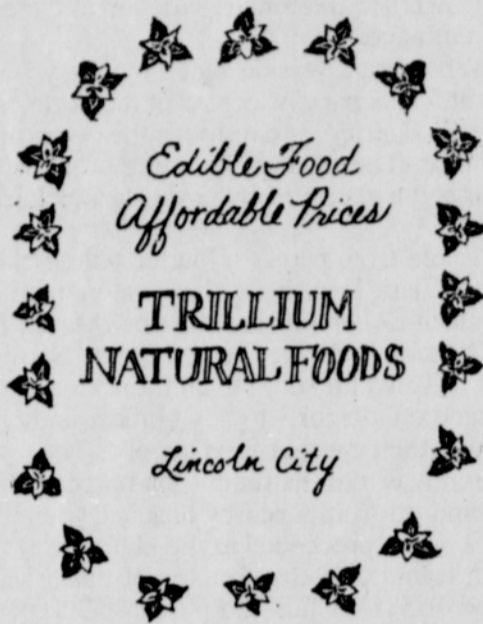
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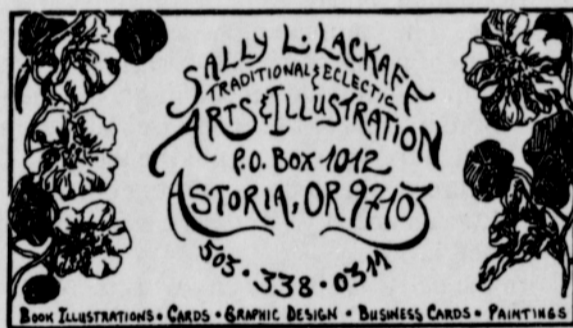
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## The Pacific Green Party of Oregon

By Margi Shindler

The Pacific Party of Oregon held its annual Convention Feb. 6 and 7 at Willamette University in Salem. I attended this gathering as a newcomer to the party, in order to learn more of what they are about, and to attend a consensus building workshop being offered at the end of the convention on Sunday.

I didn't know what to expect, knew no one personally who would be there, had no notion of how many people, what kind of venue, or what the promised overnight accommodations would be like. Let me say, before I go any further, I came away very impressed with those I met, and hopeful again about activism in these strange times.

Approximately 47 people attended the convention, representing Portland, Salem, Eugene, Corvallis, Mid-Valley, Coos County, Deshutes County and 2 of us from Clatsop County. The proceedings were conducted in a lecture room of WUs Eaton Hall. From the north window at the back of the room the dome of our Capitol Building rose high on the very next block. The golden man an imposing reminder of politics as usual. What I experienced those 2 days in Eaton Hall was not the usual political fare.

The first marked difference from conventional political events was the overall format. A facilitator, Lisbeth Boric, of The Alpha Institute, led the proceedings. She acted only as a facilitator, not as a chairperson. She skillfully employed the Consensus structure which was first developed by the Quakers 300 years ago. The consensus model of conducting meetings recognizes each member equally, encouraging all to participate. A carefully timed and organized agenda is followed. Decisions are arrived at not by vote, but by a total consensus. This process is markedly different and more democratic than Roberts Rules of Order, and it works.

To give some background to this group; The Pacific Party was formed in 1991 in response to the Gulf War. Pacific here refers to pacifist as well as this geographic region. Members of the PP are committed to nonviolence, not only to each other, but to the earth. They also support fairness for workers, sustainable resource development, community building, equal rights and responsive government. For more detail, you can read their platform on the web at /www.pacificparty.com/.

The National and International Green Party movements are the larger venue in which the PP takes part. Because of this, a major agenda item at this convention was a name change. The final outcome after difficult deliberation is the new name of The Pacific Green Party of Oregon. This name change requires members to re-register their voting status with the state quickly enough to maintain election ballot status. The risk involved in the name change is daunting, but members felt the confusion potential voters have about the connection to The Green Party needs to be alleviated.

Other items on the agenda included the welcoming letter to The Socialist Party who has agreed to merge with The PP; work on the by-laws, pledge gathering for an election fund of at least \$5000.00 to gain federal matching funds and general financial and organizational issues.

On Saturday evening, after the first days work, about half the participants shared a potluck, which included donated organic beer. Pizza choices tended toward the vegetarian, but there were a contingent of unapologetic meat fanciers as well.

The potluck was held at the office of The Oregon Peacemaker newspaper. From where I sat, I was surrounded by small grassroots periodicals. Right behind me on a shelf was our beloved Upper Left Edge. I knew then that I had come to the right place. We were put up for the night in a nice warm room at the Friends Hall. The only payment asked for was to vacuum in the morning. The Sunday afternoon workshop was first rate, and left us wanting more.

Now I believe it's time for a North Coast or Clatsop County Pacific Green Chapter. If you are interested, give me a call, Margi - 717-1387. There is also an office in Portland, located at 205 SE Grand, suite #201, ph: (503) 238-1856.

"Never underestimate that a small group of committed people can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has".

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