

Mutterings From The Mountain by The Opinionated Oregonian™

Mount Hood: Nov 13, 2000 -- It snowed here a few days ago. Not really unexpected given we are at 2500' on one of Mount Hood's ancient glacial moraines. The Mountain, 9 miles from our home, gleams whitely now, much of its raw rock covered by the 6-8 inches of new-fallen snow. [I can hear the skiers and snowboarders cheering in the background!]

For us, with the woodshed full [we heat with a woodstove] outside work is tailing off and it is time to think of indoor delights. One, for me, is a good book, a hot woodstove nearby and, as appropriate, a drink close at hand.

Having finished of **Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire** some weeks ago [Ms. Rowling continues to impress me], I've been revisiting WW II through the British naval novels of such fine writers as Douglas Reeman, Philip McCutchan and Dudley Pope. All three fought at sea, usually in small ships which meant they experienced the war close up and highly personal. Pope, serving in the merchant fleet, was disabled out after his ship was torpedoed; his injuries eventually killed him, but not before he wrote several highly regarded histories and a couple dozen fine novels. Reeman and McCutchan are still writing. Check your library.

Which is a lengthy introduction to a gripe. And a question. Do you find yourself squinting at the newspaper or your book, blinking because the words are harder to see than in earlier years? It isn't necessarily your aging eyes that are at fault... it may be your light bulb!

In recent decades, lighting 'experts' have wooed us into buying 'soft white' bulbs which are ostensibly easier on the eyes. Unfortunately, that's a lie.

The amount of light a bulb puts out is measured in lumens. For decades, a 100w bulb put out 1740 lumens. Then came the soft white bulb, the energy saver bulb, and other designer specials. And the lumen levels dropped. I have not seen a 100w 1740 lumen bulb for years. Best I've seen is 1710 and they are increasingly harder to find. 1690 seems what's most available now but scant days ago, my wife bought home a pack of energy saver 100w bulbs which put out a paltry 1675 lumens. Try reading with one of those! An eyestrain special!

So, the next time you find yourself straining to make out the print on whatever you're reading, check the lumen level of your bulbs. You may find you are happier with two 60w [total lumens 1740] but note the total wattage as your electric bill is going to sneak UP. More profit for everyone but the end user. Grrrrr.

Notice should be given that the **18th Annual Oregon Dixieland Festival** is looming on the horizon. It's in Seaside Feb 23, 24 & 25, 2001. That's the last weekend of the month and for Jazz information, ring up 1-800-394-3303; 1-888-306-2326 will get you housing information. Be there! Trad Jazz is great fun. There'll be 9 great bands including Pat O'Neal's Riverboat Jazz Band, High Sierra Jazz Band and the Wooden Nickel Jazz Band. It's gonna be a great time and I hope to see many of you there.

I see by the papers that Lon Mabon is busy trying to revive the FrankenHomo monster for the 2002 election. I suspect he'd do this even if the vote had been 99% against his archaic and essentially unchristian viewpoint. What scares me in all this, is that from things said by his followers [members and supporters of the OCA and the Oregon Christian Coalition] is that what they really want is a Theocracy along the lines of that run by the Taliban in Afghanistan. That is, one that not only requires, as the Southern Baptists put it, wives to "submit" to their husbands, but would criminalize homosexual activity and condemn any religion that is not Christian Fundamentalist [i.e. Old Testament-based] as a religion of heathens and whose believers are clearly outside the pale. Jews, Catholics, mainline Protestants, to say nothing of non-Christian religions, would, sooner or later, be on the theocratic shitlist. And, I strongly

suspect, the Fundamentalist Theocrats would, in due course, set up Re-Education camps and stock them with those opposed to their beliefs. After all, Hitler, Stalin, and Phol Pot did it. Why not the FTs who have, as they will assure you, your best interests at heart even if you don't understand that. Brrrrr, I find that chillingly possible.

Well, as this is written, things are still confused in Florida and we still don't have a president-elect. I suppose it will all be settled by the time this sees print. Among all the commentary by learned pundits, I've noted one major omission: no one I've heard has noted that all this confusion and fussing is occurring without any armed insurgency by adherents of one side or the other. Or both. We are not fighting in the streets over this situation and that is a major strength of our democratic system. We've had presidents die in office, be murdered in office, and we've never grabbed up clubs and guns and taken to the streets. Nor has the military stepped in to 'restore order' and dictate who the new Leader is to be. Our transitions have been peaceful and orderly. Think about it. You have every right to be proud of our system and your friends and neighbors. 🍏🍏🍏

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The Bag Lady on 8

One day while I was waiting tables, I got a bag lady. She sat in back at Table 8, near the kitchen, and all she wanted was hot water for her tea bag. She had her bags everywhere, all around her. She had old raggedy clothes on and long dirty hair. I had seen her for the past couple days along Highway 101, shouting at the cars that drove past. She was about my age. "Can I bring you something to eat?" I asked her. "You can have a sandwich if you like."

"I don't eat meat," she said. I brought her a vegetarian sandwich and soup. The cooks filled up a bag with food for her, cheese and vegetables and German bread. The German bread was our specialty, a recipe from Dick's grand-mother in Pomerania.

"And how is it?" I asked. "I prefer soy cheese," she said, and then she shook her bread at me. "And I don't usually eat debris," she said. Debris now that means rubbish, doesn't it. Debris, and she waved the bread at me. Mrs. Schwartz's recipe, all the way from Germany. That's just the thing about being a waitress in Oregon: out here, everybody has got their food ideology. And when you're a waitress you get to hear it all.

They came in to eat at a seafood restaurant but they didn't eat seafood. They were vegetarians, but they could eat chicken, or they could eat fish but no chicken, and some could eat neither fish nor chicken but could have milk or eggs. Others could have milk but no eggs or vice versa and some could have no chicken, no fish, no mammals, and no eggs or milk or cheese. They ate cheese but no milk, fish but no bottomfish, salmon but not hatchery salmon, oil but no butter or butter but no oil. They had allergies to gluten or shellfish or nuts. You never saw such delicate people in your life. They could have no alcohol, poor things. They had systemic yeast and could have no wine, soy sauce, bread or mushrooms. Some could have no sugar, others no salt. They didn't eat fat and everything had to be steamed. They only drank non-fluoridated water. They wanted margarine or they were against margarine. They had opinions about everything. You can't tell them to shut up and eat, if you're their waitress. You can't say just be grateful. Be glad you have food. You have to smile and pretend you don't think they are a bunch of spoiled babies. You've got to look concerned and interested. And you've got to look like the kind of person who won't go and subvert their diet in the kitchen when nobody is looking.

And then there is the dessert tray. They'd moan and shield their eyes. They told me how many desserts they'd recently eaten, how many calories they'd had. They pulled up their shirts to show me how fat they had gotten. They didn't want anything themselves, but thought their companion should get something so they could have just a little bite. Something chocolate. I wanted to tell them that the right way to say yes to something is to say Yes! and be done with it but you're not supposed to get personally involved like that when you're someone's waitress.

My favorite customers were the ones who ate with enthusiasm, who had wine and appetizers and espresso and told stories and said thank you and, if they wanted dessert, ate it with nothing but pleasure.

"Usually, I just eat raw food," said the homeless woman at Table 8. I was busy, my whole station full and others were waiting to get in and sit down. You don't give your time away to a non-tipper, as a rule. You get people in and out, if you can. You don't throw a table away on someone eating for free. Waitressing, there is an ugly side you don't know about if you've never done it before. You get your money from tips and there is something inherently corrupting in that. But I just stood there, with the meter stopped, looking at her.

"This has been a good year for blackberries," she told me. And seeing that I was interested and likely looking for dietary advice, she said in a low voice, like this was a secret and now she was sharing it with me, "My usual diet is raw juice."

"Like orange juice?" "Juice!" She waved her hand at me. "From fruit. You make juice from fresh raw fruit. It's good for the digestion."

"But how to you manage it?" I asked. Surely being homeless was hard enough. She motioned to her bags sprawled out on the floor. "I bring my juicer with me."

She smiled at me and I looked at her mouth, where the teeth used to be.

Alison Clement is a former waitress and former vegetarian, living in Corvallis, OR.

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