

Commentary

## Does working class need William Shakespeare?

by SCOTT NEWTON

Picture this: A wheat farmer, covered with a fine dust, arrives home after a day of plowing on a monstrous tractor. He plops down in the easy chair, takes a sip of iced tea, and listens to the farm market report.

His son is in the same room, reading a scene from — and barely understanding — "Hamlet."

Now the farmer may wonder why, except perhaps for the excitement of a few sword fights, his son should be reading "Hamlet."

I guess my Midwestern background is evident in offering the above example. The reason it comes to mind is that I thought a lot about a former English teacher of mine this weekend when I accompanied a group of Cedar Ridge students and teachers to Ashland for a weekend at the Shakespearean Festival.

Mel, I know, would be jealous. And I can picture not only the farmer, but also Mel, who spent more than a little of his time justifying the study of Shakespeare to working-class kids.

After all, what is the use of trying to understand all that Elizabethan English?

The reason is that Shakespeare, a prolific writer with a large vocabulary, addressed nearly every question concerning our existence that could be asked.

The soliloquy in "Hamlet" concerning suicide — "To be or not to be" — is the most obvious example.

There were many, many examples in the plays I saw this weekend, and I would like very much to do them justice. I am conscientious about trying, though.

The quality of the plays, the costumes and the actors and actresses — not to mention the atmosphere of Ashland itself — make the process of explaining Shakespeare on paper a difficult assignment.

One must try to imagine what Italy might have been like in the 1500s; the men with long hair and feathers in their hats, and the women in long, heavy dresses that billow at the hips.

In "The Taming of the Shrew," Petruchio is a young man out seeking his fortune. He says:

"Such wind as scatters young men

through the world, to seek their fortunes further than at home, where small experience grows."

Isn't it true that most young people dream of what the world might hold in store, whether they seek it out or not?

Many questions are raised. Is Petruchio's physical and spiritual dominance of Katherina symbolic of the woman's role in Shakespearean times, or is it simply slapstick.

While "The Taming of the Shrew" was great entertainment, Shakespeare's history, "Henry VIII," dealt with the Reformation, when England cut itself off from the Catholic Church.

I would have edited "Henry VIII" with a sharp pencil, as its three and a half hour length was a bit much.

Regardless, it was an education. Most people cannot imagine what those days — the early 1600s — were like.

To give an indication of how close that bit of history is consider that Jamestown, Virginia, was founded in 1607.

In a time when music and television seems to often be designed to appeal to the so-called lowest common denominator, it is refreshing to know that the people of Ashland are striving for quality.

While in Ashland I saw a film on Angus Bowmer, who founded the festival in 1935.

Bowmer was going to different businesses seeking financial support, and stopped by a mill. At the time an odd piece of lumber came along, and the mill owner said that odd piece of wood was about all he would donate to the festival.

Bowmer took the piece of wood, and made a sign out of it. There is something about that spirit that I like.

Now allow me to drift back to my original question. Should Shakespeare be taught in the schools?

While the basics — reading, writing and arithmetic — should remain at the core of education, there is also a need to offer foreign languages, music, debate, literature and many other fields of study.

The belief that the schools should teach only reading, writing and arithmetic is narrow minded.

And yes, there should even be room in curriculums for a class or two on Shakespeare.



Commentary

## Content law a concern for residents of Oregon

by SENATOR BOB PACKWOOD

Just returned from a week-long swing through Oregon and thought I'd share some of the week's activities with you.

When traveling from town to town, the pace is so hectic I'm usually unable to spend the amount of time I would prefer in any one place. Since there were many events scheduled throughout the week, far more than most newspapers cover, I'd like to highlight just a few you may find interesting.

One of the benefits of being Chairman of the Commerce Committee is the ability to chair Senate hearings on issues with direct impact on the state of Oregon. On Tuesday, May 29, I chaired just such a hearing in Portland on domestic content legislation. This bill, the Fair Practices in Automotive Products Act, would require that autos imported in the future contain up to 90 percent U.S. parts and labor.

I'm deeply concerned about this bill. If we try to apply certain restrictions demanding we build everything in the United States, those restrictions will be our demise. For example, assume this legislation passes and becomes law. A precedent will be established.

Other manufacturers, whether of steel, concrete and textiles, will want the same kind of treatment. From Oregon's standpoint, we are going to live or die by trade, especially trade with Pacific Rim countries.

Not only would this automobile domestic content legislation cost thousands of port-related jobs, but what's to stop a country from retaliatory tactics that could severely limit the Northwest agricultural and timber exports? These were just a couple of concerns addressed at the hearing.

The following day, in Eugene, I presided over yet another hearing, only this time it was through my position on the Senate Select Committee on Small Business. This session was one of several Senate hearings over a two-year period on problems faced by women in business. Currently about five times as many women as men now start small businesses. Our discussion focused on the problems of women entrepreneurs, i.e., the need for child day-care facilities near work and the need for more start-up financing for new businesses.

Throughout the trip, whether in Portland or Eugene or Southern Oregon, people asked questions about many issues, including the Columbia River Gorge and the sale of weapons to Saudi Arabia.

The only way we can ensure long-lasting protection of the Columbia Gorge — truly a

spectacular, unique natural wonder — is through legislation. To do anything other than attempt to preserve and protect the Gorge, to properly manage the Gorge so that future generations benefit from it as we did, would be a grave error. I will continue to work towards passage of this vital legislation.



The shipment of Stingers to Saudi Arabia prompted a lot of questions. I opposed the transfer of those shoulder-fired Stinger anti-aircraft missiles to Saudi Arabia. I have real misgivings about selling, giving or any other way of transferring those missiles to the Saudis due to the fact that each Stinger weighs barely 40 pounds and can easily fall into the hands of terrorists. I will carefully consider each arms proposal as it comes before Congress.

Truly, the most memorable and touching moments of the trip were spent addressing those fine young adults graduating from high school. At commencements in Jewell, Banks and Troutdale, I outlined the qualities of purpose, integrity, tolerance, discipline, imagination and zeal as elements of leadership.

Just as importantly though, I encouraged each student to do their very best and hope that 75 years later somebody looks back and says "thank you" for making life a little better.

All in all, it was a refreshing week on the road in Oregon. Though these are thousands of miles between Oregon and Washington, D.C., be assured that as the Senate continues its daily business, I will be keeping your questions and concerns uppermost in my thoughts.

Letters to the editor

## McMahan 'cared about teenagers'

We wish to thank John McMahan, Sandy Union High School principal, for his five years of dedication to the youth in the community. He really cared about the teenagers and they knew it. He helped them feel good about themselves and to be proud of SUHS.

We are very sorry that the high school board has voted for the reorganization plan, which has eliminated the principal's position and has left Mr. McMahan without a job.

After having had children in Sandy for over a period of 15 years we feel the last five have been the most productive and the school has really produced some excellent young people. We thank John for his part and wish to thank all the teachers, staff and

other administrators for making Sandy High a school of which to be proud. May it continue to keep on being the type of school the district patrons can support!

Dwayne and Donna Vedder  
Sandy

### Tri-Met aids handicapped

The Oregonian's editorial on accessible transit service was misleading and unfair to the majority of transit handicapped persons in the community.

What many forget is that the vast majority of transit handicapped persons are not helped by lift-equipped buses. Sixty percent of the transit handicapped are the frail elderly who have

trouble walking the block or two from their home to the bus stop. Of the 10,000 persons in this community who cannot use public transportation without special assistance, three-fourths live too far from a bus stop or have a disability so severe that they cannot use even a lift-equipped bus.

It is because of this reality that a citizens' advisory committee made up almost entirely of transit handicapped supporters and advocates, has called for a mixed system of lift-equipped buses and door-to-door vans. This recommendation was reached after three months of study and two public hearings.

Today, Tri-Met provides 365,000 rides per year to disabled persons with its

door-to-door van service and accessible buses. That is five times as many rides as provided by Seattle's Metro; ten times as many rides as provided by Oakland's transit system; and 600 times as many rides as provided by Sacramento's transit system. In point of fact, no other transit system in the country of similar size to Portland provides as many rides to the elderly and disabled as Tri-Met. They don't even come close.

What The Oregonian should have recognized in its editorial is that Portland is leading the way in transportation for the elderly and handicapped. While lift-equipped buses were touted as the way of the future in the 1970s, the more progressive of han-

dicated advocates now call for a mixed system.

James E. Cowen,  
General Manager  
Tri-Met

**LETTERS POLICY**  
The Post asks that all letters to the editor be typed, double-spaced and signed. Deadline is noon, Tuesday. Letters should be accurate, free of libelous remarks and in good taste. This newspaper attempts to publish all letters it receives and may edit material lightly to conform to guidelines. Maximum length is 200 words.

Oddservations

## Toys help prepare people for life

by JAY THOMAS

If you're a parent, and if you're a run-of-the-mill parent to boot, you probably associate toys with Christmas, giving them little thought during the rest of the year.

This may not be wise, for toys are important. They do more than just empty your wallet. Time spent playing with toys helps develop a child's imagination and his ability to interact with the world. A good toy should be fun to play with, but it should be realistic in order to prepare the child for adulthood.

A check of toys currently being marketed reveals a shift back towards realism — after E.T. and monster toys, almost any shift would be towards realism — but I feel that there's still a lot of room for improvement. So, for the benefit of any toy manufacturers who might be reading this, I'm going to put forward some of my own ideas for super-realistic toys.

### WAR TOYS

These are the hot items, and they promise to get even hotter, particularly if the current administration stays in office. To please both the budding war-

monger and the budget-minded parent, I suggest a return to the plastic toy soldier sets I enjoyed as a child.

This time, however, let's get the colors right. Officers and those in support groups should be white. The infantry troops should be half white and half black, while suicide squads (we have some other name for them, but I've forgotten what it is) should be 80 percent black, and 20 percent malcontent. The enemy should be all red, preferably with horns.

Another great war toy is the one I call "Nuclear Strike." This toy set would feature a patch of simulated fused earth, a few twisted toy girders, a whole lot of little white crosses, and a supply of glow-in-the-dark powder.

For the little doctor and nurse types, the war theme need not be abandoned. A doll with interchangeable wounds sounds nifty, doesn't it? Just pull off a leg and replace it with one that's had hand-grenade experience. Or, pull off the head and... well, heck, just leave it off. Give the kids a good supply of non-staining fake blood and you've got realism.

Not into war? Well, I wouldn't say that loudly, considering the mood of the nation, but no problem. I've got other ideas that have nothing to do with war, but are still plenty realistic.

### NINE-TO-FIVE TOYS

How about an occupational hazards doll? A little more complex, but talk about lifelike. Just push one of several occupation selection buttons on the doll's back and it develops the appropriate symptom. Select MINER and it coughs; CHEMICAL HANDLER and it develops a rash; COMPUTER OPERATOR and it squints and holds its head. Great, huh? And, as a final touch, the guarantee should be so vague that a malfunction can't possibly be blamed on the manufacturer.

Of course, not every job is hazardous, so I've come up with a toy that's both positive and realistic. I call it "Factory Worker." It consists of a box with a crank on one side. The child would turn the crank eight hours a day, five days a week. After a year of cranking, a two-week break would be allowed. The toy is designed to last for a period of 45 years, after which it will be

worn out, as will be the child.

### LOVE AND MARRIAGE TOYS

See what you think of this one: a relationship toy. It would work well for six months, poorly for another six months, and then it would fall apart. Hm, come to think of it, they already make toys like that.

Why not a video game with a domestic twist? It would be played by two (probably male and female, but you never know), and the object would be to find a path through such obstacles as layoffs, inflation, adultery and unwanted children, finally arriving at a rose-covered tract home complete with three cars and a boat, carpet in every room, 32 power tools and no mortgage. I call the game "Unlikely."

### A BUSINESS TOY

I've saved this one until last because it's my personal favorite. It's an old-fashioned board game in which the object would be to build five nuclear plants with other people's money. It's complex and could take a long time to play, but it's full of surprises. In fact, it's so full of surprises that I think I'll call it "Whoops." Something like that.

Jay Thomas is a free-lance writer who lives in Sandy.