

CLEAN IT UP

As a newcomer to Eugene, I have become increasingly confounded over the awful state of the Willamette River and the other waterways within the state of Oregon. The Willamette contains dangerously high levels of arsenic, dioxins, mercury and other harmful chemicals.

Having recently joined a household that includes a 4-year-old child, I have had to face the displeasing task of keeping her from swimming in the Willamette. We live three blocks from the river, and this is becoming more daunting by the day. She understands much in the world, but how can she understand a predicament that I cannot explain?

Gov. Kulongoski pledged during his campaign to clean up the river. We need to keep him to his promise and without delay. The Department of Environmental Quality must be empowered to crack down on illegal water pollution, conduct routine inspections and impose tougher penalties. Polluters should be made responsible for bearing the costs of keeping our waterways clean.

It was Oregon's natural beauty and conscious community that attracted me to the area. I do not wish to see these ideals abandoned — for our sake, for our children's sake and for the sake of the environment itself.

*Daniel Marks
Eugene*

WEALTHY OF HEART

So another presidential election is starting up and all the political rhetoric has begun to fly. Million dollar fund-raisers and another huge tax cut for the rich are simultaneously happening. Ironic or just politics as usual? The rich politicians presently in office, who were bankrolled by the rich in corporate offices, give these same rich huge tax breaks. This seems like quite a vicious circle and goes way beyond irony to just plain wrong!

I cannot help but feel totally out of the loop and without representation. I thought the idea was a government by the people and for the people, not by the millionaires and for the millionaires.

Our legal system equates money with free speech, and as the saying goes, money talks. I do not begrudge those with wealth the right to

buy all the commercials they want to promote their businesses. But when it comes to elections I am not so sure I like our so-called public airwaves accessible only to big money. Where is the democracy in this?

While all this talk of millions, billions and trillions goes on, at the other end of the spectrum everyday citizens give blood plasma to raise money for our schools, and services for the less fortunate are slashed. Does anyone else think that mainstream American priorities are completely backwards? If it were not for the wonderful, everyday acts of compassion, kindness and love of folks who simply care about others and doing what is right, I would be totally depressed!

There are many ways to be wealthy other than money. I wish we would elect someone for their wealth of kindness, caring, creativity and brains instead of money and how they look in front of a camera.

*Tim Boyden
Eugene*

WAS BUSH RIGHT?

I was a resident of Eugene for seven years and have been living in Southern California for the past three years. I have continually read *EW* (via Internet) for my dosage of "real news." Not only does this paper relieve homesickness, I feel *EW* battles the constant stream of propaganda that floods my world.

Now, with the complicating angles of this war pressing upon my brain, I have started to believe that maybe Bush was right to go to war. I started to feel good about the Iraqi regime coming to a violent close. I have been fed certain images (mostly from TV) and witnessed the spectacle of the Iraqi people tearing down Saddam's propaganda. Maybe it was the right thing. I just finished reading the death toll article in this week's issue (4/24).

All of my fears that this war would do nothing but hurt our own and slaughter the Iraqi people came flooding back. I am penned in by heaviness, but grateful for the reprieve of select information. I read quite a few American newspapers online, and none of them put our war faults in the limelight. In this issue and others, I can count on this paper to deliver the other side.

Don't get me wrong, I am not trying to

TOO MUCH COFFEE MAN BY SHANNON WHEELER



downgrade mainstream media. Most large publications are important to me, and I read them often. The *R-G* is one paper I will always turn to for everyday news. But the groundbreaking, passionate articles that humiliate and spotlight those who are sticking their hand in the cookie jar is invaluable to me. Thank you.

*Aubonney Wood
Los Angeles*

ply swept under the rug. Perchlorate has salted the irrigation waters of the Colorado River and has been linked to IQ reduction and ADD in children. This rocket fuel poison scandal would have made the Mad Cow scare look like a Happy Meal in comparison if not for Bush Almighty and his magic pen.

*Michael T. Hinojosa
Drain*

SWOOPING CHANGES

God, it must be great to be Bush Almighty. With one swoop of his pen he will eliminate all the responsibility for cleaning up all the toxic waste the military and defense contractors have produced and will continue to produce forever. When the spin doctor named "Readiness and Range Preservation Initiative" is finally shoved through Congress, the poisoning of our nation's vegetable food chain by the rocket fuel perchlorate will have been sim-

MINIMUM RELIEF

Right hand headline, page 3 *R-G*, 5/30 "Minimum Wage Families Won't Get Tax-Cut Checks." Left hand headline, page 2 *R-G*, same day (lift up your elbow): "Big Payoff For Halliburton Subsidiary."

Whoa, dude, mega-surprise. If it wasn't so painfully predictable, it might preempt the morning yawns. As Foghorn Leghorn might say, "Anybody, ah say, anybody payin' attention, son?"

How many more kicks from these guys be-

OUT OF COMMISSION BY TOM LININGER

Hail Mary

Praise for a great kindergarten teacher.



This is the last week of school for most students in the 4J District. It is a good time to salute our local teachers. Some critics have claimed that teachers are bilking the taxpayers, but I think the opposite is true. The taxpayers should be grateful for the energy and resourcefulness that our local teachers have shown despite inadequate funding from the State. To paraphrase Winston Churchill, "Never before have so few done so much with so little."

One teacher who deserves particular recognition is Mary Christensen-Moore. She educates, entertains and inspires over 50 kindergartners a day at Parker Elementary School. She gives taxpayers their money's worth and then some.

Does Mary work hard? Let me put it this way. If private-sector employees worked half as hard as Mary does, our gross domestic product would be a gazillion dollars. (I'd be better with numbers if Mary had been my kindergarten teacher.)

Mary shows up for work early and goes home late — after meeting with parents, designing lesson plans, and cheering for her students at basketball practice. This spring she built a cave in her classroom to teach students about nature. She has created "kinder bags" full of educational toys, books, and other materials for families to borrow. She helps to organize fundraisers for the school like jog-a-thons and burrito sales.

Mary's hard work makes her an excellent teacher. My son comes home from

Mary's class speaking Spanish, identifying bird species, and reciting biographical information about Martin Luther King Jr. The kids in Mary's class even learn how to bake bread! I'm still learning how to make toast.

What amazes me most about Mary is a phenomenon that some of the parents have termed "the Mary Mojo." She can cast a spell over her students. She entices them to enjoy learning. Rather than order the kids around, she literally sings her instructions. The kids are enraptured. Barney the purple dinosaur could walk into the middle of Mary's class and no heads would turn.

Not only does Mary teach kids well, but she also boosts their self-esteem. Mary has a kind word for every child in her class. No achievement goes unrecognized. Whether the feats are big or small, she always has plenty of kudos for the kiddos.

Children from all over the 4J District enter a lottery to enroll in Mary's class. Though Parker is a neighborhood school, Mary's class has a longer waiting list than the kindergartens at many of Eugene's so-called "magnet schools."

When I see Mary's selfless sacrifice, and then I read a letter to the editor claiming that teachers are punching the clock to collect PERS benefits, I realize why our schools are underfunded. Seventy-five percent of taxpayers in this state don't have any connection to our schools: Neither their children nor their grandchildren are presently attending public schools in Oregon. This three-quarters of the electorate doesn't know what really goes on in our schools. If the critics could spend an hour in Mary's class, we wouldn't need to sell burritos to pay for pencils at Parker Elementary School.

Tom Lininger is county commissioner for the East Lane District. He formerly served as chair of the Lane School Board Association.