

# Odds and Ends

What's odd never ends.

**W**ayne's world. You can't blame our local elected officials for dedicating so many monuments to the late Sen. Wayne Morse.



I'm a big Morse-o-phile myself, but I don't think we should name something after him unless it truly befits his legacy. Right now the county courthouse plaza – named "The Wayne Morse Free Speech Plaza" – seems incongruous with the ideals of its namesake. The fenced-off area at the corner of 8th and Oak looks more like a dog kennel than a free speech plaza. I applaud the efforts of Commissioner Bill Dwyer, Facilities Manager David Suchart, and a long list of civic leaders and donors who are helping to realize a grander vision for the plaza. I hope that we can report some progress on this plan in the coming weeks. I realize that money is tight and security is a concern, but the champion of free speech shouldn't be memorialized with cyclone fencing.

**Let them eat cake.** Last December, we learned that Oregon had the highest hunger rate in the nation. In June, we learned that Oregon now has the highest obesity rate among the Western states. Did Oregon solve its hunger problem over the last six months? Marie Antionette wouldn't return my phone calls, so I asked some local experts. I learned that a high obesity rate among a majority of Oregonians could obscure a high hunger rate among the poorest Oregonians. I also learned that some poor families are beset with both obesity and malnutrition. Whatever the explanation, we shouldn't stop worrying about the hunger problem in Oregon.

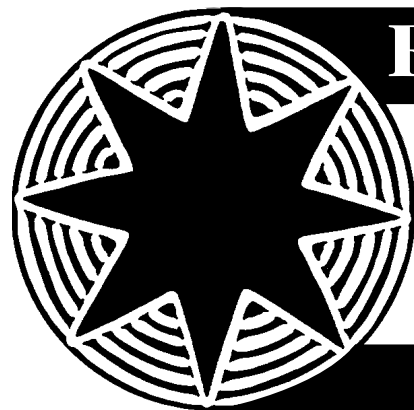
**Skeleton in the closet.** Lane County's law library is a tremendous resource. It has references for lawyers and non-lawyers alike, and it's open to everyone. I was wandering around the library recently and I found a full-size human skeleton! I guess somebody forgot to pay his library fines, and we made an example out of him. Actually, this skeleton is a model that tort lawyers use in court to show the location of their clients' injuries. Come to think of it, the skeleton would be a good prop for the commissioners to use when we approve our bare-bones budget.

**Don't panic, it's organic.** The City of Bend recently considered a proposal to ban defecation on public buses. When I heard the news, I examined our local municipal codes for provisions regulating excretions. I found out that Springfield has banned spitting on public sidewalks. Eugene, by contrast, has no specific rules against defecating or spitting. I'd like to think that the civility of Eugeneans makes such an ordinance unnecessary. More likely, Eugeneans believe their excretions are expressive conduct protected by the First Amendment.

**Off base.** Last week I met one of Eugene's wisest citizens in the video store, and he told me that I shouldn't have criticized baseball in my column on June 5. He's right: Dissing America's pastime is impolitic. (Now I suppose I'll have to shelve my draft columns criticizing mom and apple pie ...) But two other readers of *EW* detected that I'm secretly a baseball fan. These readers noticed that my column on May 8 cited the win-loss record of the Detroit Tigers, and my other writing is loaded with baseball metaphors. Now that I'm outed, I'll admit that I like watching baseball. I just don't think the state should divert funding from our schools to build a ballpark in Portland. The state should help in some way – perhaps as envisioned by HB 3606 – but not by guaranteeing bonds. When I think of baseball, I think of Barry Bonds, not state bonds.

**The home team.** If the State pays to build a baseball stadium in Portland, then all Oregonians should have a voice in naming the new team. Of course, if you leave the choice up to Lane County voters, we'll name the team after Wayne Morse. How about "The Morse Force"? As a marketing gimmick, the team could declare its independence from both the National League and the American League. And don't expect to buy any "freedom fries" at the concession stand.

*Tom Lininger is county commissioner for the East Lane District.*



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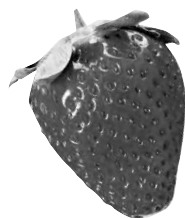


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