

Bettman said Centennial is no more controversial than renaming anything else would have been. "I believe we need to take action tonight. Dr. King has been dead for 35 years."

Mayor Jim Torrey said renaming "the bridge would have been a better option." But he noted the strong support of the NAACP. If he were naming a Jewish memorial, Torrey said he would go with the wishes of the Jewish community, and if he were naming an African-American monument he said he would go with the wishes of the African-American community.

Councilor Kelly moved to vote on the issue immediately following the hearing, but failed to win the unanimous support required for an immediate vote. Taylor, Poling and Solomon opposed voting that night.

## Train Wreck

The council scheduled a vote on the name change for June 9. Twenty-seven renaming supporters marched to the meeting and signed up to speak at an open public comment session before the vote. But the mayor and city attorney told them that they could not directly comment on Centennial because the official record of the "quasi-judicial" matter was closed after the May public hearing.

Frustrated speakers talked around the issue and criticized the process for the name change that threatened to result in Centennial not be renamed. Many were before the council for their fourth time, with the renaming still very much in doubt.

"We went through the city process, followed the rules and then the outcome was that a few city business people didn't like it," said Henry Luvert, NAACP President Emeritus.



Marion Malcolm of Clergy And Laity Concerned (CALC) said the council should respect the African-American community's wishes. "It doesn't happen that when white people give up a little bit of control and do something that they have been asked to do by people of color that it's a big disaster. It's just fine."

Dr. Bob Bolden, an African-American

supporter of the renaming, said the city's "dishonest" process for renaming the street was "condescending and disrespectful to participants."

Jane Kramer testified that a friend had warned her against moving to Eugene. "This is known back East in Boston as a racist town."

Will Doolittle said people of color "don't

feel welcome" in Eugene. "There's a lot of racism in this city and it's institutionalized."

Coleman criticized the city for its "tendency to process something to the point that it's bland and doesn't mean anything." He quoted a poem by Langston Hughes relevant to delays in the renaming: "What happens to a dream deferred?... Does it hang like a heavy load or does it explode?"

Elliot Cook said he's lived in Chicago and other big cities, "I've seen racism but not on a scale of this town here." Cook said, "this process that's taken so long, too long, it's showing me how bigoted we are still."

Hope Marston said the city shouldn't practice "paternalistic" racism toward the African-American community. "There's racism that exists in our community that doesn't have white sheets over it."

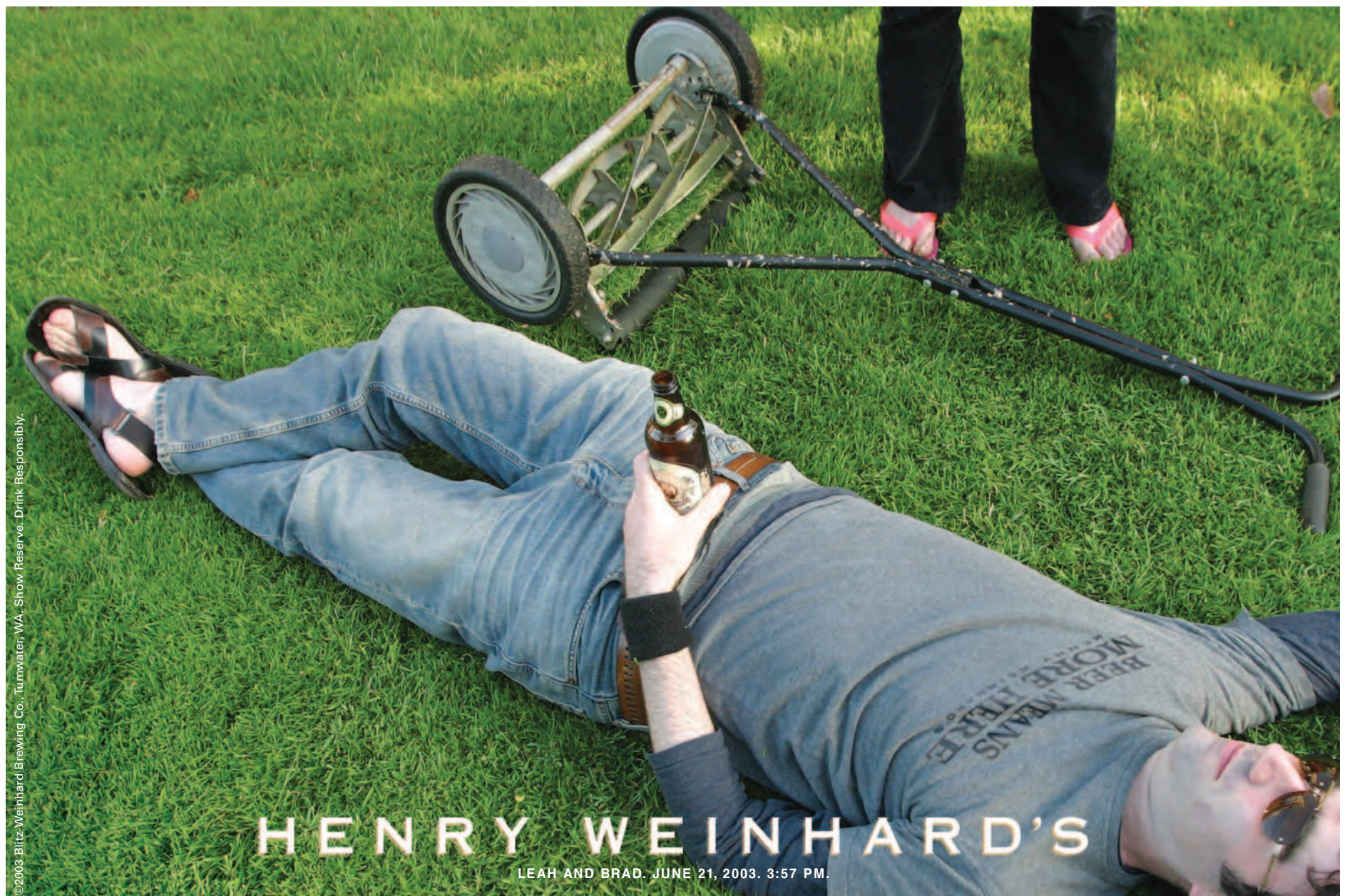
Snowden said she found the council's attitude "very troubling." She angrily addressed each councilor by name, "The lord told me to pray for you." But she said she feared, "no matter what these folks say, you'll let your narrow minds not receive what should be received."

Public radio commentator Alan Siporin said the city should listen to the NAACP's recommendation on how best to honor King. "That's all I need and I hope that's all you need."

"Tonight is going to be an historical evening," said John Cougill. "I hope and pray we can create a city that's hell-bent on reconciliation."

As it turned out, the city got more hell than reconciliation. **CW**

*Next week part II of "Crying Shame" will continue the story of Eugene's rough road to Martin Luther King Blvd.*



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