

MUTUAL AID FOR NEXT EUGENE CELEBRATION

Will the Eugene Celebration return to "brand name" sponsorship this year? You can bank on it.

Washington Mutual Bank has signed on as the Celebration's "presenting" sponsor for 2003. Those who have enjoyed the Celebration devoid of any corporate logo these past two years may feel concerned that the event is retreating toward a more commercial position. But the organizers at Downtown Events Management, Inc. (DEMI) don't see it that way.

Steve Remington, president of the DEMI board and managing director of The Eugene Celebration, says he's appalled by the myths and misconceptions that bubble up each time they get major funding. He says he's frustrated that certain individuals still equate sponsorship with some kind of sell-out. "First off, the citizens of this town are the owners of The Eugene Celebration — DEMI is a non-profit public entity," Remington emphasizes. "Every cent that comes in, whether from sponsors or button sales, gets put back into maintaining, expanding and improving the five festivals we produce every year. The goal is always to make them the best they can possibly be."

But what about the fact that after three years of "Centennial Bank Eugene Celebration" posters, the DEMI Board voted to permanently ban that kind of sponsor-first formula? "That is precisely why we are placing 'sponsored by' after The Eugene Celebration title," Remington says.

He points out that the two years the Celebration had no title sponsor also coincided with the U.S. economy bottoming out. DEMI had to let some staff members go, and other cutbacks occurred. Now things are looking up. Remington also emphasizes that the choice of Washington Mutual wasn't arbitrary. "I am not just giving them a plug," he says. "We really do see them as a business that goes beyond most in people-friendly services. That fits our 2003 theme of Heart of the City."

"The most important point," Remington asserts, "is that sponsors get absolutely no discretionary say over content or produc-

tion. They don't call the shots. They know the Celebration can be provocative, but they sign on because they trust us to put on a relevant, interesting and fun cultural event."

— Joseph A. Lieberman

LOCAL HOUSING COSTS KEEP HEADING HIGHER

Is the inflated housing market in Eugene about to pop?

Eugene housing costs have outstripped earning power, according to Census data. In Eugene, the percentage of homeowners paying more than 30 percent of their income on housing increased from 18 percent in 1989 to 26 percent in 1999. Over the same decade, the percentage of renters spending more than 30 percent on housing increased from 49 to 51 percent.

In 1989, the average Eugene mortgage was \$678 a month. Ten years later, that average payment had swelled to \$1,129 a month. In the 1990s, the average rent increased from \$425 a month to \$621.

Census data for last year is not available, but local housing costs appear to remain high despite the state having one of the highest unemployment rates in the nation.

In the last decade, housing prices in Oregon shot up faster than any other state in the nation. Median home values increased 78 percent in Oregon from 1989 to 1999, according to the 2000 Census. At the start of the decade, the average Oregon home cost \$67,100, 15 percent less than the national average. By 1999, Oregon homes cost an average of \$152,100, 27 percent more than the national average.

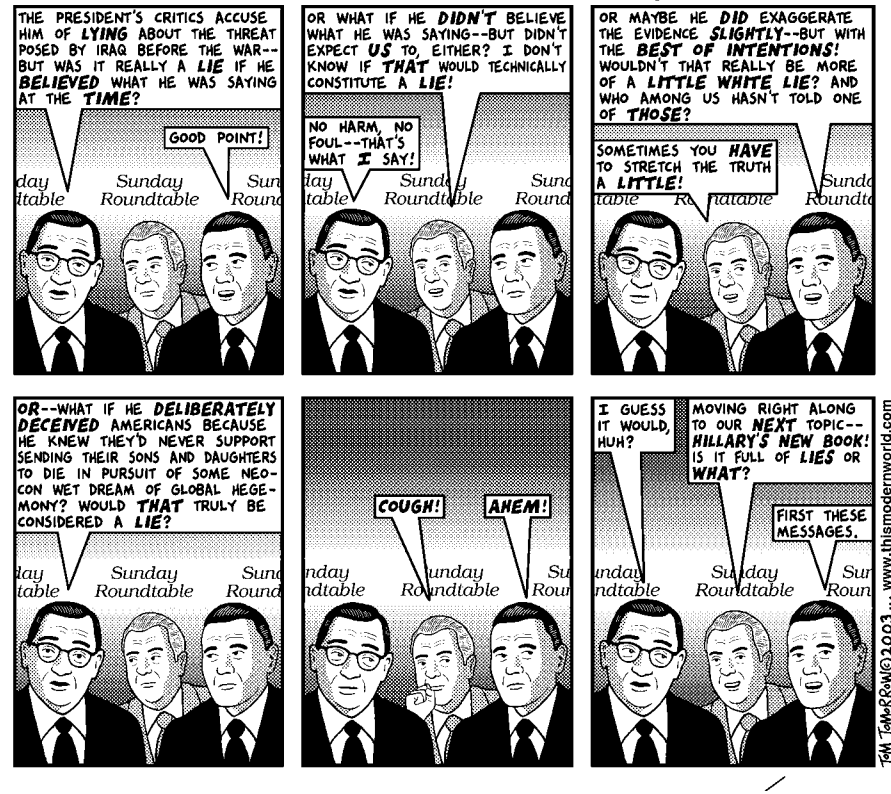
In 1990, Californians could buy a house in Oregon for about a third of what they would pay at home. By 2000, Oregon homes were averaging almost three-fourths the cost of California homes. — Alan Pittman

HERBICIDE SPRAYING OK AS A 'LAST RESORT'

After wrangling the last few months with the issue of herbicide use on county roads and byways, the Board of County Commissioners has drafted the Last Resort Herbicide Policy. It will, according to

THIS MODERN WORLD

by TOM TOMORROW



Commissioner Pete Sorenson, go to public hearing for consideration as an ordinance on July 16. The new policy will require Public Works to consider herbicide control of vegetation only as a last resort, after all "mechanical, manual, biological and cultural techniques" have been tried first.

Input on drafting the policy has come from Public Works, Vegetation Management Advisory Committee (VMAC), Northwest Coalition for Alternatives to Pesticides (NCAP) and a subcommittee of the Health Advisory Committee (HAC).

Aimee Code of NCAP says the new policy will allow more feedback and consideration of the effects of herbicides before spraying occurs. It will, says Code, have "the check of the Board of Health and the Department of Public Health ..." The current policy has only internal checks. The new one will allow the Board of Health/BCC to evaluate all chemicals Public Works is considering to control roadside vegetation.

Bev Hollander, of the HAC subcommittee, says that when they were assigned along

with VMAC to look at how the policy could work, "We, as a subcommittee, took it literally. It could only work if the Board of County Commissioners made it an ordinance. ... It needed to have teeth in it and be enforceable."

The issue of herbicide use and toxicity dangers has proven a point of contention for the BCC. In a May 22 R-G story, Commissioner Anna Morrison was quoted saying, "On the issue of toxic versus non-toxic, the scientific support for me as a policy-maker is just not there." In a Feb. 19 BCC meeting, Commissioner Green also expressed concern and disagreement with a last resort policy. Commissioners Dwyer, Linger and Sorenson, however, felt that other technologies should be explored before resorting to chemical spraying.

An award-winning story by Judy Yablonski in EW April 18, 2002 (see archives at www.eugeneweekly.com) described a \$100,000 independent audit in 1997, paid for by the county, that recommended elimination of all roadside herbicide spraying due to inefficiency, environmental damage and lawsuits. Sorenson

SLANT

• Tom Linger goes off the County Commission Aug. 15 to take a law school job and about 20 appointee hopefuls from the East Lane District have been calling commissioners, hanging around and warming audience chairs in commish meetings. Some are seasoned public servants, some have political agendas and aspirations, and some are likely just after the \$70,000 a year salary. The commissioners can't legally pick Linger's replacement until after Linger is gone, and the appointment will only be until the May 2004 elections. This is an important swing vote and we hear rumors of elaborate political strategizing behind the scenes. Sen. Tony Corcoran would make an excellent commissioner, but the timing's not right. He's up to his nose hairs in state funding battles and this legislative session could drag out all summer. Corcoran says this week he's not a candidate for appointment, but will he run in May when he's between sessions? Meanwhile, some names being kicked around for the appointment include Faye Stewart, Al King, Cedric Hayden, Cindy Weeldreyer and a couple of small town mayors in the district. Applications are now available and must be turned in by July 14.

• If you're placing bets on when the legislative session ends, note that State Treasurer Edwards casually told the Eugene City Club last Friday that it could be the end of August. That's sooner than Phil Barnhart predicts. He says Labor Day or even into October — but he might be kidding. Already *The Oregonian* has run a front-page story about the daily cost of keeping the legislature in session, \$22,000 excluding legislators' salaries. More such stories are sure to follow.

• A colleague tells us that Bonny Bettman has decided to run for re-election to her City Council seat. That's good news for progressives, partly because of her electability. She fared unusually well in R-G coverage during the debate on re-naming Centennial boulevard for Martin Luther King Jr.

• A Portland party last weekend celebrating Judge Ted Goodwin's 80th birthday paid lots of attention to his recent majority opinion that removed "under God" from the Pledge of Allegiance. He's a UO graduate who started his legal career in Eugene, eventually rising to the U. S. Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit in 1971. Current UO Dean Laird Kirkpatrick called him probably the most fa-

mous graduate of the UO School of Law. That great line from Albert Camus, a Frenchman indeed, was the only quote on Judge Goodwin's 80th birthday program — "I should like to be able to love my country and still love justice."

• A reader tells us she received an Orwellian letter of response June 10 from Sen. Gordon Smith regarding Iraq, saying, "We have no intention of imposing our form of government or our culture. The foundation for democracy is now being laid and our military forces will leave as soon as we've accomplished our mission ..."

• President Bush's religious fervor is no secret, but it does explain some of his staggeringly ill-advised foreign policies and priorities. In the Israeli newspaper *Haaretz* June 26, Bush is quoted as saying, "God told me to strike at al-Qaida and I struck them, and then He instructed me to strike at Saddam, which I did, and now I am determined to solve the problem in the Middle East. If you help me, I will act, and if not, the elections will come and I will have to focus on them."