

Full-on Fourth



No lack of enthusiasm at local Fourth of July celebrations.

Is Lane County unpatriotic? Last week, when the Board of County Commissioners passed a resolution protesting portions of the USA PATRIOT Act, a few critics complained that we shouldn't be opposing our nation's government two days before the Fourth of July. One critic sent me an e-mail suggesting that Lane County should be renamed "The People's Republic of Lane County." (Hey, that's better than the name the critics usually call us: "Lame County.") Another guy said, "I'll bet Lane County likes the Son of Sam better than Uncle Sam."

After hearing this criticism, I was particularly interested to see how Lane County residents would celebrate the Fourth of July this year. My first stop was the festival in Creswell. I've always been impressed by the wholesome Fourth of July celebration in this small town, and 2003 was no exception. Hundreds of people showed up to enjoy barbecued chicken, patriotic music, and kids' games. The growing Latino population in Creswell was well represented at the festival.

My visit to Creswell had a few glitches. When I introduced my three-year-old son to one of my constituents, my son proclaimed, "Daddy, that man has a big belly." What do you say in a situation like that? "Sorry, sir, but these kids were raised by wolves and left on our doorstep two months ago." (Last year, when I was throwing candy to the crowd during the parade in Oakridge, my older son ran around behind me scooping up the candy before the Oakridge kids could get it.)

After our family left the festival in Creswell, we went to Alton Baker Park for the Art & the Vineyard entertainment and fireworks. While I was roaming around the park, a lot of people came up to me and commended the Board for our resolution on the PATRIOT ACT. A few people of color mentioned that they felt more comfortable now that the Board has expressed opposition to racial and religious profiling.

The festival at Alton Baker Park showcased the diversity of our county. Our family watched a children's dance troupe perform Ukrainian dances in authentic costume. The troupe included kids whose ancestry traced to both the Northern and Southern hemispheres. What a great example of the inclusive values that we celebrate on the Fourth of July.

The headline act was the Satin Love Orchestra. These guys must have made a deal with the devil to play funk music that well. Guitarist Joe Weber was decked out in an Uncle Sam costume. My boys loved the show. My youngest son had a serious case of the booty-shakes.

During the intermission, some kids took the stage and sang the national anthem. They missed a lot of notes - where's Maurice Cheeks when you need him? - but the crowd went wild.

The fireworks at Alton Baker Park always send chills down my spine. This year there wasn't much difference in the scale of the official fireworks show and the fireworks that kids were lighting off near the duck pond. Those ducks should get hazard pay on the Fourth of July. I can't believe that it's so easy for the public to buy massive fireworks in Oregon. If George Bush still can't find weapons of mass destruction in Iraq, he should just drive to ShopKo, Safeway, or any other grocery store in Eugene.

Uncle Sam may have been shaking his head when Lane County opposed the PATRIOT Act on July 2, but Uncle Sam was definitely shaking his money-maker on the stage at Alton Baker Park two days later. Judging by the enthusiasm I saw on the Fourth, I'd say the critics better think twice before they impugn the patriotism of Lane County. And the Board of County Commissioners' action last week didn't erode what makes our county great. We affirmed it.

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

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Applicants Sought for Vacant EWEB Board Seat

The Eugene Water & Electric Board of Commissioners is seeking applications to fill the Ward 6 and 7 position on the EWEB Board.

The vacant position represents the downtown, Whiteaker, and incorporated areas of Bethel/Danebo and River Road/Santa Clara, and will serve through December 31, 2004.

For an application packet contact:
Krista Hince
Secretary to the Board
484-2411.

Completed applications must be received by noon on Monday, July 14, 2003, at EWEB Headquarters.

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