

Humble Pie

Commissioner serves desserts, then deserts.



On Wednesday, Aug. 13, I joined my fellow county commissioners in serving pie to hundreds of senior citizens at the Lane County Fair. My ineptitude as a pie cutter prompted one onlooker to call out, "Don't quit your day job." Too late.

I had already submitted my letter of resignation in May, announcing that I would leave the Board of County Commissioners on Friday, Aug. 15. I decided to step down in order to take a job as a law professor teaching ethics and other subjects. A politician teaching ethics – the critics will have fun with that one.

I wasn't proud to be leaving the board before completing my term. The first six months in office is always the hardest part, and I didn't have much time to enjoy the job once I figured out what I was doing. One of my friends at UO quoted Thomas Hobbes to sum up my tenure as a commissioner: "nasty, brutish and short." As I talked with senior citizens from the East Lane District last Wednesday, I felt disappointed that I couldn't spend more time addressing their concerns on the board.

But I was pleased that in my eight months of service, I accomplished several of my goals. The board put four new police officers on the road in rural Lane County. We funded programs for abused kids, and we stopped the closure of rural health clinics. We made safety improvements to some of Lane County's dangerous roads. We took a strong approach to enforcing land use laws. We reduced the county's use of pesticides, and we helped to conserve open space. Did I mention that I caused the sun to rise every day for the last eight months? (Wait, I should share some of the credit with Sorenson – he's up for reelection next year.)

I'm not sure who will replace me on the board. A total of 27 candidates applied for the job. The board has winnowed that list to seven. Some of the finalists are really well qualified. By comparison to the 131 applicants who lined up to replace California Gov. Gray Davis, the East Lane vacancy has attracted a pretty staid and respectable bunch. If any of the East Lane hopefuls are former porn magnates, strippers, child TV stars, or terminators, they've hidden this baggage pretty well.

There's a lot I'll miss about the board. I'll miss the "Dwyerisms." Bill Dwyer called Lane County "Camp Run-amok-a," and he said that solving the never-ending budget crisis was like "wrestling an octopus." I'll miss seeing photos of Bobby Green's grandson. I liked Anna Morrison's performance in a skit to honor Dwyer when he stepped down as chair in January. And I had a great time meeting Peter Sorenson's mom – a gracious and kind woman who introduced young Pete to politics by dragging him to meetings of the Coos Bay Water Board.

Yep, I was feeling pretty regretful during my last week in office. But ironically, this was the first time that I actually earned my kids' respect for my work as a commissioner. They hadn't been too impressed last March when I told them that daddy helps to spend a budget of \$450 million. They didn't care much when I told them in May that the board supervises 1,500 employees. Another ho-hum in June when they learned that daddy helps determine the land use rules for a county as large as Connecticut. But for one glorious day last week, daddy presided over a table covered with over 100 pieces of pie, and my kids' wide eyes made all the months of door-knocking seem worthwhile.

Tom Lininger served as the county commissioner for the East Lane District until Aug. 15. He plans to continue to write occasional columns for EW.

(www.eef.lane.edu). If you got a check, please support me in helping our kids and their schools, which are sorely underfunded. Through EEF, you can choose which 4J school to support, and even what program. It's easy. Online, use the "designation" field to let EEF know the name of the 4J school and program you wish to support.

Do you care about the arts in school, about science, about math, computers, or reading? Do you wish to support a music program? Or you can give without designation and let EEF fund specific education projects through their grants program.

Donations can also be mailed to EEF, P.O. Box 1015, Eugene 97440. Again, if you would like to make a specific donation, include the name of the school and the program on the memo line.

I am going to share this unexpected windfall by giving back to our kids' schools. If you got a check and don't feel that you can support our schools financially, can you give back in another way? You could help the environment, our hungry children, our desperate poor. But please, join me and give back 10 percent of this refund to help those in need.

*Leisha Wharfield
Eugene*

HOLE IN JUSTICE

On Friday, June 13, political prisoner Free (Jeffrey Luers) was transferred to disciplinary segregation, commonly known as "the Hole," at Oregon State Penitentiary (OSP).

Free was sent to the Hole for an article he wrote that encouraged people who are in-

involved in direct action to be more thoughtful in their actions. This would be the second time this year that authorities at OSP have responded to political expression with write-ups and time in the Hole. (Anarchist prisoners Rob "los Ricos" Thaxton and Brian McCarvill were both sent to the Hole for 120 days earlier this year, after allies on the outside sent them postcards as part of an anti-censorship campaign.)

Free is widely considered a political prisoner due to the 23-year sentence he received for an act of sabotage that injured nobody. The same week as his transfer to the Hole, the Eugene Human Rights Commission released a letter in support of a reduced sentence for Free, and suggesting that the original may have been based on his political beliefs. Now, Free is again being punished for his politics.

We encourage all individuals and groups to stand by Free during this time, and to demand his immediate reentry into general population at OSP. For more info, please visit www.freefreenow.org

*Steven Gider
Break The Chains Collective*

STOLEN GOODS?

The strategy of new bike shop owners Shane Ayrsmen and Ben Leonard to sell refurbished, recycled, used bikes is a good one. Who can argue with lower prices and reuse? I cannot. But these innovative entrepreneurs must explain how their reuse strategy is not, and will not become a method to re-sell stolen bikes and especially stolen bike components. Bike theft in Eugene is a serious



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