

# The Sound of Silence

We'll miss the progressive voice of Senator Paul Simon.

**E**ugene residents are rightfully proud of Wayne Morse, a Midwest native who began his political career in Eugene. But we should also be proud of Paul Simon, a Eugene native who began his political career in the Midwest.

Long before Eugene lost PeaceHealth to Springfield, Eugene lost Paul Simon to Springfield, Ill. Simon was born in Eugene in 1928, and he graduated from South Eugene High School in 1945. He enrolled at the UO, but he moved to Illinois in 1946 — one year after Wayne Morse became a U.S. Senator. I guess Simon realized that the State of Oregon was in good hands and that Illinois needed him more.

Simon entered politics in 1954, serving for 14 years in the Illinois Legislature and then winning election as Lieutenant Governor in 1968. Simon served in the U.S. House of Representatives from 1974 to 1984, and in the U.S. Senate from 1984 to 1996. *Time Magazine* reported that Simon passed more bills in 1983 than any other congressman. Among his many accomplishments, Simon helped to overhaul the federal student loan program, created a new national park, laid the groundwork for the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children and championed other legislation relating to education and job training.

Simon was part of the "South Eugene Triumvirate" that ascended to the top rungs of the political ladder in Washington, D.C. during the 1970s and 1980s. Two other alumni of South Eugene HS joined Simon in Washington: Neil Goldschmidt served as Carter's Secretary of Transportation, and Cecil Andrus served as Carter's Secretary of the Interior. Reagan may have had "Cap the Knife," but Carter had no shortage of Axemen!

No one would ever confuse Paul Simon with Dan Quayle. Simon got to Congress because of his work ethic and his strong values, not his good looks. Simon had such huge earlobes that if you saw his silhouette, you might think he was wearing earrings the size of marbles. There was some speculation that he donned his trademark bow tie to divert attention from his ears. In fact, Simon was comfortable with his appearance. Simon's supporters alluded to Abe Lincoln in joking that, "America likes ugly, honest politicians from Illinois."

We tested this theory in 1988. I was a college student on the east coast at the time, and I signed up to walk door to door for Simon's presidential campaign in New Hampshire. It was a harsh winter, and two feet of snow had fallen the night before we began our canvass. We were greeted with the warm enthusiasm that New Hampshire residents reserve for political canvassers from out of state: 1) "Welcome to the North Pole, college boy!" 2) "What part of 'no soliciting' don't you understand?" 3) "Stand on that doorstep for a few more seconds and you can canvass my friends Smith and Wesson!" Even among those who actually listened to my pitch, I heard more jokes about "Vice President Art Garfunkel" than I heard expressions of support for Paul Simon. Oh well. Simon may not have been an ideal presidential candidate, but you never would have seen him riding a tank like Michael Dukakis did.

On the stump, Simon was a passionate, folksy advocate for progressive ideals. By contrast to the so-called "Atari Democrats" like Gary Hart, Simon was an unapologetic "New Deal Democrat." When Simon spoke, he sounded themes that resonated with all people: fairness in the workplace, equal opportunity in education, and accountability at all levels of government. Simon enthralled his audience. When Simon gave a speech, hardly anyone left the room until Simon told them he was done — "sort of like a big game of 'Simon Says,'" according to one of his supporters.

After Simon died on Dec. 9, the *Register-Guard* reported that he hadn't visited Eugene since 2000, when he attended his 55-year high school reunion. In fact, Simon last visited Eugene in November 2002. He gave a lecture at the UO concerning the shortage of potable water and the need for nationwide conservation measures.

At the end of his lecture, he offered this insight: "We all change history; the only question is whether we change history for the better."

In Simon's case, there can't be any doubt that he, like Wayne Morse, left the world in better shape than he found it.

*Tom Lininger is a law professor and former county commissioner.*



Senator Paul Simon

community at large.

Either of these books would make a perfect holiday present for anyone who has ever cared for the writings, or life, of one of Lane County's most colorful and well-loved inhabitants.

*Scott Landfield  
Eugene*

## GIVE CARS A PASS

Many local environmentalists would probably be pleased to learn that in the 2000 U.S. census reports of workers 16 years and over in Eugene, 4.9 percent took public transportation to work, 5.5 percent rode a bicycle, and 6.1 percent walked, while 4.7 percent worked at home. However, even in supposedly environmentally conscious Eugene, 66.8 percent of residents drove alone to work, which is bad news for those concerned about global warming.

Keep in mind that at UO (Eugene's largest workplace), all students, staff and faculty have a bus pass, whether they like it or not. Also, Eugene employers can buy unlimited bus rides for \$3 per person per month, so long as they provide the benefit for all employees.

Cars are an important source of social status, invidious distinction, and conspicuous consumption. People need to stop trying to be higher up on the totem pole than others. Everyone should be just ordinary folks. We are running out of time.

*Milton Takei  
Eugene*

## FOWL HYPOCRISY

I am replying to Aaron Silverman of Greener Pasture's Poultry Creative Growers (11/26). Just because you let the turkeys roam free, play in the dirt, and peck at the ground doesn't give you or anyone else the right to kill them. None of us needs to eat turkeys to survive. Anyone can live a healthy, enjoyable life without consuming any animal products. Don't be so arrogant as to use the words "humaneness" and "butchering" in the same sentence when referring to the deaths of these animals.

Remember, nonviolence begins at breakfast.

*Ginny Johnson  
Eugene*

## MASTER WHITWASH

It would be too much to say that the rosy view of the British sea-going imperialism during the 19th century offered by Lois Wadsworth's worshipful review of *Master and Commander* (11/20) reveals the true Anglophilic Wadsworth and a conservative traditionalist in liberal clothing. I've enjoyed many of her reviews — when she's not ruining my to-be viewing experience by over-elaborating the plot. By her witness I don't doubt that artistically speaking *Master* and the historical novels upon which it's based represent together a compelling level of talent put to work.

I too have a weakness for views of tall old ships of the sea-going kind. One must always beware of what seem to be harmless vices though. Behind the commander lurks the sadist.

The ships of the British line were instrumental vehicles in English capitalism's massively cruel and inhumane plundering of Third World countries around the globe. The British came, took, slaughtered, subjugated, ruled, and redrew national and regional boundaries according to their will and liking.

They monstrously forced opium consumption into the fabric of Chinese society. Compared to the masters of the British trade, the resulting retribution and liberation Mao instigated during the last century was heroic beyond all masters and commanders of the British seafaring line.

I've often noted Wadsworth's aversion to all films with a sado-masochistic content. I presume *Master and Commander* therefore spares us witness of the merciless flogging of men that was a standby in the British disciplinary naval machinery. If you like the movie, do read the excellent fiction behind it, says Wadsworth. I suggest instead a reading of Melville's *Billy Budd* to learn what it means to say goodbye to the Rights of Man when a common sailor is impressed into British service against his will during this era.

*John A. Hickam  
Eugene*

## WAITING TO FAIL

The proposed Bush and Republican Congress energy bill is yet another action that will only benefit those corporations that have been dictating our future to benefit themselves and that will increase the problems of the majority of our citizens. It will lead to increased pollution of the environment, global warming and climate change, and do little to create energy independence. The result will be greater health problems, and all the negative results of climate change. In tandem with the proposed changes in Medicare (to supposedly provide help with the cost of drugs for the elderly of which I am one) these are yet more failures waiting to happen. They will not keep drug costs down because there is no provision for controlling pharmaceutical costs.

The energy bill, which was crafted in secret with the help of Vice-President Cheney, would give extra help to fossil fuels (with the exception of the support for ethanol), which will run out before long at the rate we are using them up. It will ignore the possibility of alternative sources of clean energy from solar, wind and other sources which would be virtually inexhaustible and for which we have the technology available right now. The latter option has been ignored and underfunded for decades, while so-called "clean" nuclear power has been generously supported at the expense of the U.S. taxpayer and with no plan for the disposal of radioactive wastes that threaten us all. Our government leaders are held hostage because of the immense expense of elections — another failed system which no longer represents the interests of most U.S. citizens.

All of the proposals of this administration have neglected the real needs of people by taking us into war and creating huge deficits that our children and grandchildren will be paying for. We need to take a clear look at present policies and take back our government!

*Portia Foster  
Eugene*

## LIP TRIP

Sustainability — more than lip service, but lip service is what Eugene does best (cover story, 11/13).

I'm third generation and retired. I can remember when most of the schools had adequate money and tended to the tasks education required. Heck, Lane County had so much money they would blacktop roads that