

SPORTS AND NATURE

The turf wars between naturalists and “organized sports” which Alan Pittman accurately described in his 12/24 piece (“Sports vs. Nature: What are the City’s Parks For?”) can be mitigated in the short term and avoided in the long term.

In the short term, the “organized sports” organizations (including, but not limited to: Kidsports, Little League, Babe Ruth, Pop Warner, AYSO, City of Eugene adult leagues, Oregon United Soccer Academy, FC Willamette and other youth soccer clubs) need to have a legitimate forum, where each organization has equal access to scheduling and gets a fair shake on fees. This will discourage piecemeal field development promoted by individual organizations, which encroaches on natural areas, pitting “naturalists” against “athletes.” Inconsistent and unfair scheduling processes exaggerate the field inventory problem.

In the long term, the community needs to recognize that Lane County users (not just Eugene residents) are beneficiaries of Eugene’s parks and are exacerbating the demand to an insufficient inventory of city and school athletic fields.

Lane County government should be actively planning a project similar to the Tualatin Hills Recreation Center. Such a project would include an indoor swimming pool, 16-18 soccer fields, basketball courts, baseball/softball fields and a skateboard park. Such a complex would centralize the organized sports offerings, creating enormous economic efficiencies and would put an end to the unnecessary turf wars and open land encroachment. Further, such a complex would serve individual Lane County users of all ages and would bring much needed revenues to the community via regional, state, and national tournaments.

Sports or nature? Both. Organized sports groups need to be encouraged to work collaboratively in scheduling and fee structures. County government should seize the opportunity to plan and bond a project which will satisfy naturalists, athletes, recreational users, and stimulate the tourism industry.

*Steve Barnes
Eugene*

PUTRID WATERWAY

Thank you to Kera Abraham for writing her excellent article (12/18), “A Stream-Ditch Runs Through It: Is there hope for the ditched and dirty Amazon?” (Her title ingeniously refers to Norman Maclean’s wonderfully poetic and tragic novella *A River Runs Through It*.) I live near the Fairgrounds and frequently take evening walks along the Amazon creek-ditch.

I often wonder, “Is it legal for water to be this dirty?” What has surprised me the most is the supposed level of environmentalism this city advocates, yet the appalling quality of this waterway. I have been intrigued and repulsed by the murky color and often putrid smell of water in this cement channel that still offers a home to: mallards, red-winged black

birds, killdeers, green herons, swifts, northern harrier hawks, ravens, kestrels, muskrats, raccoons, human sleepers, and arsenic, lead and *E. coli*.

Why is it taking so long to clean it up? Abraham does a fine job of listing several agencies and groups who are working to clean it up, but significantly the burden rests on individuals like you and I who live here. Taking small actions like washing your car on the lawn, driving less, not pouring cooking oil in the kitchen sink, or re-planting along the stream are necessary. In addition to individuals, it seems obvious that higher education should take some form of action. Where are the biology graduate students and professors to test the water and its impact on wildlife and humans? Or, how about the environmental law students and professors? Where are the environmental writers and teachers to galvanize the public and student population to become more involved in local environments? Who will protect the inalienable rights of water to live a free and unpolluted life? You and I must.

*Michelle Satterlee
Eugene*

THE SPIRIT OF AMAZON

I appreciate Kera Abraham’s wide-ranging and informative article on Amazon Creek and the complex issues that surround it (12/18). As one who lives in its neighborhood in southeast Eugene and who has been photographing it and walking along it for years, I’d like to offer yet another perspective.

Despite the degradation, flood control alterations and pollution of the creek over the years, a spirit still presides in its waters. This is palpable for anyone who takes the trouble to observe, who stops long enough to look. The Amazon is not a lifeless ditch.

In areas where vegetation grows, especially near 24th Avenue, I’ve watched in astonishment displays of wave patterns and plumes of light as ducks bathe and preen in the water. I’ve seen herons in the high grasses. And one day, a bearded face appeared in the silver ripples, captured in a photo — a kind of Green Man image. Ever since then, I’ve felt protective of this sometimes homely waterway. It’s a living part of our “shire.”

I believe that the natural world responds to attention, giving out beauty to the loving eye and heart. Water, especially, reflects what’s around it: clouds, willow branches, amblers; or — bulldozers, paint cans, plastic streamers. With some help from its friends, the creek could return to life along much of its length. If citizens take the time to really see the Amazon, maybe they will be moved to join others in work to revitalize it. It cheers me that groups like the Long Tom Watershed Council exist, and that landscape architects like Jerry Diethelm are envisioning a transformed waterway circuit in which natural beauty and urban utility can be integrated.

*Claudia Lapp
Eugene*

CONFUSING THE ISSUES

A lawsuit was recently won by the family of a UO student who died while at Sacred Heart Hospital with an unexpectedly lethal illness. A few days later someone responded

TOO MUCH COFFEE MAN BY SHANNON WHEELER



with an opinion that the verdict was unfair and the defendants not guilty. His arguments were compelling, but what do I know? I’m not a doctor and I wasn’t on the jury. All I do know is that when I go to the doctor or the hospital, and they look at me for maybe seven minutes, they better have some real incentive to get it right.

Some folks say this suing business has gotten out of hand — there are too many, it’s ruining the industry, it’s limiting our choices. George Bush has declared that tort reform is a key part of his “pro-growth” agenda, saying that it, “would have made a difference” to benefit the economy. But a recent study by the National Center for State Courts found that medical malpractice lawsuits per capita have actually decreased. Fewer cases went to trial in 2002 than in 1962.

While Bush claims, “everybody pays more for health care” due to “excessive litigation,” the president of the American Tort Reform Association said in 1999, “We wouldn’t tell you or anyone that the reason to pass tort reform would be to reduce insurance rates.”

Malpractice premiums as a percentage of all health costs have declined from 0.95 percent in 1988 to 0.56 percent in 2000, while prescription drugs costs make up about 11 percent of all health costs, projected to rise to 14 percent by 2010. Controlling the cost of drugs will have far more impact on insurance premiums than malpractice reform. Despite these facts, the president and Oregon’s senators chose to support a Medicare bill that would prevent the Medicare administrator from negotiating lower prescription drug costs.

As is so often the case these days, some folks try really hard to confuse the issues. Don’t be fooled; don’t give up your power. The president and his friends are not on your side, they just want your money.

*Tim Mueller
Eugene*

BETTMAN DESERVES PRAISE

After reading the comments about City Councilor Bonny Bettman in The Register-Guard’s front-page story on Sunday, Dec. 21,

I wanted to share my own experience working with Bonny when I was a county commissioner.

I found that Bonny was always well prepared for meetings. She expressed herself eloquently, and she considered the opinions of others carefully. She was very responsive to her constituents’ concerns. She exhibited the sort of work ethic that I admire in any elected official — conservative or liberal.

I noticed that in 2003, Bonny made efforts to bridge the usual rifts in local politics. For example, in September she worked with Jack Roberts, the Executive Director of the Lane Metro Partnership, on a plan to offer incentives for McKenzie-Willamette to locate its new hospital in Eugene.

I think our community benefits from strong advocacy by both progressives and conservatives. Bonny Bettman helps to maintain the balance by zealously representing her constituents in south Eugene. I hope she wins reelection in 2004.

*Tom Liningier
Eugene*

NO CLASS

Re: “Oral Sex,” (“Living Out,” 12/18). I fail to understand why EW published this vapid, sensationalistic piece. Ms. Sheklow may teach writing, but she has no class.

*Michelle Eldridge
Eugene*

ANTI-BUSH PLATFORM

Am I alone in finding it singularly difficult if not impossible to distinguish between the Democratic contenders for president? Excepting Congressman Kucinich, the field of candidates seem intent solely upon a game of one-upmanship as to who most dislikes President Bush.

I myself have been given to knee-jerk loathing of the man. Shameful that, I admit. However, he is just a man, and as certain as no man is an island, no man is either a nation. However justified, the Democrats’ anger-driven, single-minded focus on the person of President Bush, rather than his palpably unjust policies, will be their undoing.

An anti-Bush platform cannot, by itself,