

MOWING FOR NANCY STIRS QUESTIONS

Jessica Picucci's front lawn faces Willamette Street, just south of 29th, and looks great. The next-door neighbor's grass stands two feet high. Other nearby yards are weed sanctuaries. Picucci says that a Nancy Nathanson campaigner mowed her lawn in exchange for permission to place the mayoral candidate's yard sign in full view of traffic on Eugene's busy north-south thoroughfare.

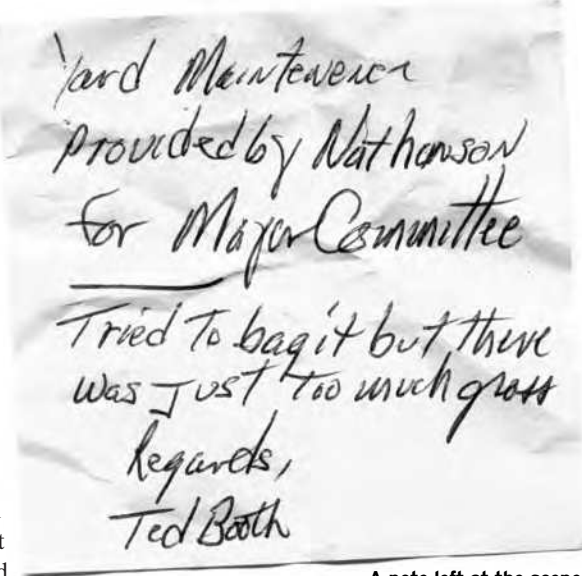
Ted Booth, long-time Nathanson friend and campaign volunteer, says offering to cut Picucci's grass was a "lark," and initially a joke. But when Booth returned later with his lawn mower, he found a Kitty Piercy sign stuck in the ground. He says he cut Picucci's lawn "to get back into her good graces." He replaced the Piercy sign with a Nathanson sign.

One Eugene attorney who asked not to be identified says such activities could be construed as illegal. Oregon's election laws (ORS 260.665) prohibits "undue influence," defined as money, employment or anything of value, to sway votes or support candidacies. Because people pay yard maintenance companies to cut their grass, it could fall under "a thing of value."

Another Eugene attorney, Lauren Regan, says, "It's imperative that Oregon's election laws are strictly enforced. If a candidate has committed or attempted to commit undue influence on Eugene citizens, their ethics should seriously be called into question."

Picucci initially agreed to the lawn mowing deal because she didn't know anything about Nathanson's politics. But after she read the April 4 *EW* issue on voting records, she switched allegiance — and lawn signs — to Kitty Piercy. She says the Piercy sign has been replaced by Nathanson's three times. She eventually called Nathanson's office and asked them to leave her Piercy sign alone.

For all of her yard-sign hassles, Picucci says, Booth should have cut her backyard, too. — Michele Taylor



A note left at the scene.

MEISNER ENDORSEMENT RAISES EYEBROWS

How can a Eugene City Council member with only a 10 percent environmental voting record from the Oregon League of Environmental Voters land an endorsement from another major statewide environmental group?

Incumbent Ward 7 Councilor Scott Meisner was endorsed by the Oregon Natural Resources Council (ONRC) and is using the stamp of approval to diffuse heavy criticism of his recent voting record (see *EW* cover story, 4/8). His opponent, Andrea Ortiz, was also endorsed by ONRC.

"We endorsed Scott because he had been there for us on federal forest issues from day one," says Jeremy Hall of ONRC. Hall says Meisner "championed a letter through the Eugene City Council back in 1997" that calls on stronger forest protection and modification of sales, including Blue River Face, that is being logged right now. "He went on to support ending logging old growth and mature forests in the entire Northwest Forest Plan area."



Scott Meisner

THIS MODERN WORLD

by TOM TOMORROW



"There are questions about his record on other environmental issues," says Hall, "but Scott has been there for us on federal forest issues."

Jim Baker of ONRC says the group relied on questionnaires, interviews, committee meetings and "personal knowledge." "We knew it was going to be a difficult decision to make," he says.

Baker says Ortiz does not know much about forest issues, but she is up to speed on pesticides and toxics in urban areas. "We think Andrea will be excellent on the issues once she gets on board. Her heart and feelings are in the right place, and she's coming on fast." — TJT

FUTURE OF EFN REMAINS UNCLEAR

Not everyone is as confident as Paul Harrison about Eugene Free Network's alliance with Emerald People's Utility District (see news brief, 4/22). Former EFN employee Gary Frazier says, "EFN will cease to exist as an independent ISP."

It seems that EFN will not be collaborating so much with EPUD as with Chambers

Multimedia Connection, to whom EPUD outsources its ISP services. Says Frazier, "[EPUD] has always basically been a name on the Internet without actually being an ISP. Several of EFN's current services, such as shell access (via telnet or SSH), mailing lists, and advanced web hosting, are not offered by EPUD or CMC at this time."

The decision to link with EPUD follows on the heels of financial woes at EFN (see 4/8 story). Harrison described EFN's plight as "a tight financial situation." However, now-former EFN employee and IWW union rep Patrick Wade describes it more specifically: "In 2004 the staff accepted a number of cut-backs to try to make ends meet. We froze our wages and put the wage scale increases in the union contract on hold, we took 20 percent hours cut, we laid off a support technician. ... however, it was clear that we were not meeting our goals and that our situation was deteriorating. We explored several possibilities, including going out of business."

Wade also says EFN is now operating with more than half the original staff laid off. Employees' hours are still down 20 percent, and changes are coming in health insurance. Either the insurance will be canceled or

SLANT

- The deadline for registering for the May 18 primary elections has come and gone and Voters' Pamphlets are in our mail boxes. Ballots will be arriving in the next few days. Hold that pen. Our endorsements issue is next week, along with more elections stories.
- City Club of Eugene is packing in standing-room-only crowds for its series of Friday lunch political programs. Coming up April 30 is the mayoral forum and last week was council candidates. It was great last week to see UO student Adam Walsh jumping into the Ward 1 fray with Bonny Bettman and Tom Slocum. He eloquently defended his youth and inexperience, and he's right that everybody starts off a novice, but there are better places for him to plug in and learn sausage making, such as city committees or his neighborhood association. Bettman was convincing in outlining the reasons why she's a perfect fit for Ward 1. Slocum attacked Bettman on old and debatable hospital siting issues, rather than focusing on her clear stands on important issues today. Maurie Denner (Ward 2) talked a lot about making decisions based on what's good for kids (who can argue with that?) but didn't say anything about sprawl and pollution being bad for kids. Slocum hedged on the big issue of expanding the UGB, calling for more study. Scott Meisner (Ward 7) was strong on the intricacies of such issues as the railyard, while his challenger Andrea Ortiz was better on vision and values. Denner complained about divisiveness on the council but we were pleased to see Betty Taylor (Ward 2) standing up to say that disagreements and lively debates serve democracy. Unopposed candidate Chris Pryor (Ward 8) gave a little speech about "leadership in the middle." We'll find out what that means when he joins the council in January. The City

Club program wasn't a real debate, but it gave us a chance to check out the candidates. Too bad it wasn't taped and broadcast on KLCC.

• Oregon's annual "eco-prom" attracted nearly 800 fancy dressed enviros and politicians to the Portland convention center April 23 for dinner and talk. Put on by the Oregon League of Conservation Voters, this party pulled the governor, attorney general, secretary of state, state treasurer, plus more than 60 local, state, and national politicians. No wonder they all come. Jonathan Poisner, the talented executive director of OLCV, estimates that 150,000 Oregon voters will be contacted this fall by his 1,500 volunteers. That's in addition to the money they're raising to put into selected races. And the important environmental scorecards they circulate to help elect friends of the environment. Speaker for the big party was John Podesta, chief of staff to President Clinton and LCV board member. You know what he said — if we care about the environment, we must defeat George Bush in November.

• We hear longtime Hendricks Park head gardener Michael Robert is hanging up his pruning shears soon and will be giving his last official tour of the park beginning at 1 pm Sunday, May 2. Meet at the Hendricks Park shelter. Roberts' knowledge of the park and its plant life is astounding and inspiring and we hope he stays involved in our city's parklands in his retirement.

SLANT includes short opinion pieces, observations and rumor-chasing notes compiled by the EW staff. Heard any good rumors lately? Contact Ted Taylor at 484-0519.