

Lost and Found in Eugene

Dog Park Tribute, Heartbreaking To-Do Lists.

In Memory

Last year, long-time Eugene resident, environmentalist, activist and professional dog-sitter Henry Hutto died after losing wars against arthritis and depression. This spring, on the first anniversary of his death, Henry's friends — human and canine — planted three big leaf maple trees and three ponderosa pines in his memory at the Morse Ranch dog park. Only in Eugene would such an undertaking invite controversy.

While the Eugene Public Works people scoped out the suitability of the dog park's western pasture, one neighbor phoned the city. He didn't want trees on his side of the park. When it came time to plant the trees, the parks people examined the dead — perhaps deliberately poisoned — tree that had been planted near the western boundary a few years earlier. They suggested digging in the middle pasture.

Henry's friends compromised, planting one big leaf maple to the west to replace the dead one and sowed the rest of the trees in the middle pasture. But another neighbor griped. She liked the middle pasture's openness, and now it was ruined.

In defiance of the city's rule against establishing tributes in public spaces (the city does not have the finances to maintain them), Henry's friends are planning to erect a memorial plaque. Henry Hutto is gone but not forgotten, and controversy in his name lives on. He'd be proud. — Michele Taylor

Finders Keepers

Outside Sam Bond's Garage on a recent Monday night, there's finally a break in the freak stretch of summer rain. Inside, the disco ball sits high above a full house waiting to hear *FOUND Magazine* Davy Rothbart. *FOUND* is a literary home for the detritus of notes and memos we leave and lose on windshields and doorjams, the wallet photos and to-do lists that catch a breeze and fly from handbags, pocketbooks and backpacks right out into the open world.

Two and a half years ago, while doing found-item stories for the radio program *This American Life*, Rothbart started collecting finds in earnest to publish in a magazine. He invited readers to participate in the hunt, and the result is now three issues of the magazine and a book. All items are published as copies of the originals, accompanied by a title and short interpretation.

Traveling from their Ann Arbor, Mich., headquarters, Rothbart, his brother Peter and crew are at Sam Bond's for the magazine's "Slapdance Across America Tour 2004." Try to get a headcount and the man at the sound board has "no idea." The man collecting money says, "I'll give you a random number — 78." This reporter's own rough count says 80 spectators to start, and another 20-something by the middle of the reading — packed tables and standing room only for geek-chic grad students, a woman with a pink hibiscus in her hair, artists, two women with sassy red buckled purses, teachers, pierced punk rockers, and a table-full of people listening and playing cards over jelly jars of Jabberwocky and hard pear cider.

Rothbart looks like something of a literary Beastie Boy. He wears long shorts and an oversized button-up sports shirt with eight athletic team patches emblazoned on the front panels, all topped by a ball cap with an Old English "D" monogram. He works the bling with two chunky gold chains, one with a palm-sized, cast gold motorbike rider dangling from it and the other with a cast gold basketball hoop.

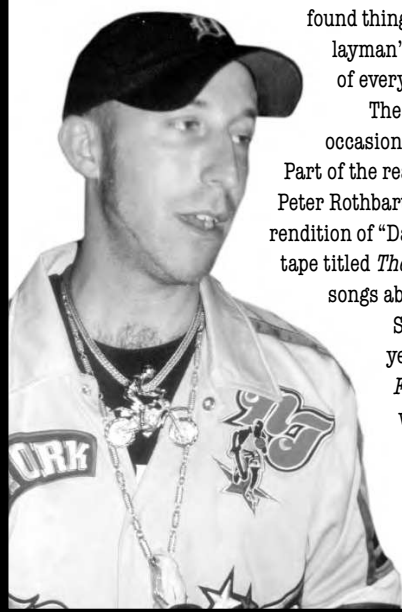
He reads from his favorite *FOUND* submissions, including love notes, hate notes, notes passed in class, failed algebra tests, monthly budgets, warning signs like this one (found by Peter): "After leaving the building, please ... Lock this door. It will prevent unauthorized people from entering the building and defecating in the washing machine. Many thanks!" And to-do lists like this one: "E-mail Corey; Introduce him to lesbians; Continue to convince self that I'm not madly in love w/him."

Items are by turns touching, hilarious, angry, bittersweet — but always startlingly honest. Twenty-nine-year-old Rothbart has "always loved this stuff." He remembers that as a child he crossed a baseball field to get to school and was fascinated by the treasures he found in the wind-blown trash collected against the baseball backstop. Fascination for found things has turned into a movement of sorts, some kind of layman's anthropology glimpsing true and close into the lives of everyday people.

The response from the audience is: riotous laughter; the occasional heartfelt sigh; periodic whoops of commiseration. Part of the reading includes *FOUND*-inspired songs performed by Peter Rothbart. Particularly wonderful is his folksy acoustic guitar rendition of "Damn, The Booty Don't Stop," based on a found cassette tape titled *The Booty Tape*. The tape is full of home-recorded rap songs about — you guessed it — booty.

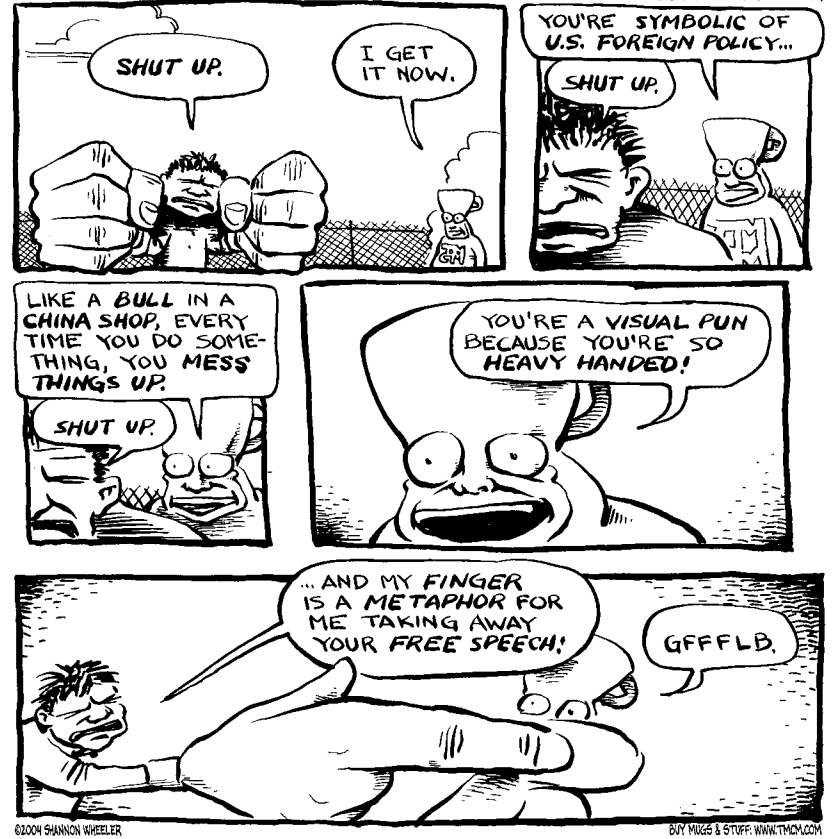
So, watch what little scraps of your life you lose; better yet, watch for what little scraps of life you can find — *FOUND* is always looking for the great stuff. Check www.foundmagazine.com for information on the tour, the magazine and how to participate.

— Bobbie Willis



Davy Rothbart

TOO MUCH COFFEE MAN BY SHANNON WHEELER



LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

ZERO COVERAGE IN R-G

I have to take exception to Jerome Garger's letter (6/3) praising *The R-G* for improving its performance and coverage. A case in point is the complete absence of any mention or coverage by the *R-G* of Al Gore's courageous speech at New York University for moveon.org, in which the former vice

president blasted the Bush administration on Iraq. After all, Gore only received 50 million votes in the last election, why should anyone care what he has to say?

Oh, sure, the speech was mentioned several days later in a few syndicated op-ed pieces. But there was *no* next day coverage by the *R-G*. This is indicative of the strangle-

REAL ARTISTS DON'T PLAY GAMES

As an artist in Eugene for more than 40 years, I have seen many true artists go under cover in this area to avoid the uncomfortable circus-like atmosphere that is created by art councils and the sycophants that want to rub elbows with artists in the hopes that they can vicariously become "artists," too. The last thing a true artist wants to do is spend his (her is implied) valuable time attending gallery openings, street shows, free talks/demonstrations, and art walks so the public can get to "know" him and supposedly support him by buying his work. Every artist is driven to create; it isn't a choice, and all these activities cut into his creative time and make him more frustrated than he already is.

Anyway, the public doesn't want to pay the real price for an original piece of art. Rather, they want "affordable, decorative" art so it isn't long before artists who go out on this commercial, socializing trail end up compromising their creativity to make art that will "please" the public, both in content and price.

So, Eugene, have your art walks, blood-sucking galleries, and academic-influenced, non-reality organizations that tout "integrated art" as high art, then sing and dance and make murals for each other thinking that you are creating an enlightened artistic community but, just so you know, real artists don't play these games. We don't come out of our shells to "please" anyone.

What you all are seeing as you stroll through the "Art Mecca of Lane County" is acceptable mediocrity or saleable art: "Oh, isn't that pretty," or "That bowl, painting, weaving ... will just match my curtains," or "Will you make me one in red?" and "You want how much?!"

Solution: For the masses, there is none. Our culture is not educated enough in creativity and how to revere the "specialness" of the artist, so they will always be content to hold up the mediocre as being the standard. For the sensitive and enlightened: Keep your distance. Approach any true artist you meet with caution; he may be having a "moment." Don't offer to buy any art, offer to pay his rent! That he'll understand.

If you think real artists are "normal" (whatever that is), you're wrong. They won't be seen at any art walks but, anyway, good luck, Eugene. I hope you all can create this "Art Mecca." The Walmart crowd will be "shocked and awed," the UO art academics will feign support while gratefully collecting their government paychecks, and the participating artists will grin and bear it while contemplating the urge to go back to their hovels to be creative rather than exploited.

Ours is a theme culture. Other cities (Sisters, Leavenworth) have found commercial success. I wish Eugene all the best. After all, an "art destination," even if all you can buy is good interior art decoration, can't be all bad. Disney did it with "wholesome family fun."

Annie Kayner
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