

DUMB AMERICA

Simply put, John Kerry was just too smart to be president of our country. He spoke in complete and well-articulated paragraphs, discussing a variety of complex issues and put forth viable solutions to complicated problems.

Dumb America (Midwest & Bible Belt) needs a dumb president to relate to and Bush is perfect for the job. The entire world witnessed that in his bumbling performance during the debates and with his infamous one-liners and catch phrases like "axis of evil," "He can run but he can't hide," or my personal favorite, "You're either with us or you're with the terrorists." Black or white, good or evil, right or wrong. Arrgh!!

Dumb America is lazy. They don't want to have to think, but would rather sit in front of Fox entertainment and listen to the talking heads blather on with their misinformation campaign. Their ignorance is evident in the fact that more than half of them still think Saddam Hussein was responsible for 9/11.

We are the laughingstock of the world right now, as was reflected in the headline of a British publication on Nov. 3, which read "How can 59,087,000 Americans be so dumb?" Thank God we live in a blue state!

*Julie Claybaugh
Eugene*

GET TO THE BOTTOM

As noted on *EW's* post-election cover, our planet indeed continues to spin, and the sun

still rises in the east and sets in the west. However, the election results are not yet set in stone. Our votes are funneled through the Electoral College, which assembles on Dec. 13 to formally elect a president. EC members are pledged *but not required* to vote for the candidates whom they represent.

If vote results are proven to be invalid, EC representatives might be persuaded to reconsider their vote. Furthermore, the Constitution states that Congress may debate the legitimacy of a state's electors prior to ratifying the outcome.

Mounting evidence, particularly in crucial battleground states such as Ohio and Florida, indicates that electronic voting concerns were well-founded. OnlineJournal.com has published instructive articles by Larry Chin, Thom Hartmann, Wayne Madsen, and Jackson Thoreau. Another fine source is investigative reporter Greg Palast (gregpalast.com), who broke the story of Katherine Harris' and Jeb Bush's "cleansing" of the Florida voter rolls in the 2000 election.

Reporting from Ohio, Bob Fittrakis (freepress.org) has been covering both e-voting problems and voter suppression. Fittrakis brought to light the fact that out of 638 total votes, an electronic voting machine in Gahanna, Ohio, reported 4,258 votes for Bush!

Bev Harris deserves enormous credit for blowing the whistle on the dangers of e-voting. Her organization, blackboxvoting.org, has filed numerous Freedom of Information



TOO MUCH COFFEE MAN BY SHANNON WHEELER



Act requests to get to the bottom of this debacle. Please help her by donating whatever you can afford.

*Greg Lief
Salem*

CRAZY SPENDING

In this past election, candidates for state and local office spent millions to get elected to jobs that pay next to nothing and whose very offices are supposed to represent the

voices of the people. How is this possible with all the money that is spent by the special interest groups throughout Oregon?

I believe that it is time that we the voters insist that our representatives and senators in Salem pass and forward onto the electorate a campaign finance reform amendment to the Oregon Constitution which will do the following:

- Eliminate all corporate campaign contributions.

viewpoint BY JERRY HARRIS

Musing with Skinner
At the new library



I am a library freak. In fact, my deceased wife used to tell people that there were two places people could find me – the corner bar or the library. *Green Eugene*, the bronze sculpture of Eugene Skinner, the founder of this city, sits outside the new public library. I wonder why *Whistler's Mother* wasn't put beside him for companionship. If one is going to skip 100 years of modern sculpture, why not go all the way?

The old pioneer seems to be coming off a bad night at the Horsehead bar, or maybe he is just sitting there musing over a girl with pink hair sitting on his lap. When I am at the new library I like to muse with old Skinner too, even though he can't talk, and if he could, he wouldn't speak to an African-American. Black people were severely segregated in Eugene well into the early '60s, but that is another western tale.

Until recently, the Skinner sculpture attracted a crowd of homeless youth, petty criminals, destitute dogs, circus performers, and small-time thugs from Oakland, Calif. The dogs appeared to be more interested in going inside the library than the outsiders. An old-timer sitting with The Founder and me said that he didn't mind the show. "The Eugene monsoon rain washes them all back to California when the winter comes," he said while feeding a dog. I guess a man must laugh or scowl at something.

The new library is not like the old. Some might say that it is sterile – a bit Orwellian with its computers, data (on you) banks, alarm systems, and IKEA interior. It's a bit eerie in the era of the PATRIOT Act, when Ashcroft and company have the right to know what *you* are reading. God help you if you are checking out *The Air-Conditioned Nightmare* by Henry Miller. The PATRIOT Actors might consider this a bomb-making book, and it is, considering that Miller likes dropping literary bombs on America.

Librarians, known as "culture workers" in Sweden, have always intrigued me. They are a

serious bunch, melancholic, efficient, smart, and a bit snobbish. Humor and laughter seem to escape them, at work anyway. One told me recently that he was not going to let me check out a CD. "There's a limit of five," he said. I explained to him that I had turned in my allotted five. It didn't matter. It wasn't on his computer. "Sorry pal."

Dejected, I walked away like a wimp. Maybe their anxiety was the result of all those computers that didn't need them anymore. Perhaps those electronic demons were taking their jobs. I hope that these *sui generis* culture workers are not on their way out.

I met a lot of homeless people when I worked at the library as a volunteer. It was a maddening experience. "We've replaced the ER mental ward at Sacred Heart," said one of the staff. It is certainly a luxurious place to bed down for the day. "At night I go back to my storage container – low rates – no deposit," said a rather jovial dude. He had recently lost his job and was evicted from his apartment. A smart guy, but down on his luck, he reminded me that it could happen to anyone in George Bush's America.

Then there was the guy who cussed me out. "How the fuck did *you* get a job?" "Excuse me mate, but I am handicapped and I do this one hour a day so that I don't go crazy." Of course this didn't make a dent in his demented mind, but that was it for me, back to my electric rocking chair.

I'm still a regular at the library. Mostly I search the aisles looking for books on pain, both mental and physical – no, I am not a sadist, nor am I a hypochondriac. It's just a state of mind and body. Still, life at the library runs relatively smoothly. Once in a while you meet an interesting person. The library is one of the two places where I can meet women. The other is Safeway – pretty low maintenance, as they say, when one is on the prowl.

In high school, when I was kicked out of a class for some indiscretion, I was always sent to the library as punishment. It was a strange sentence, because it was there amongst books that I discovered life. Nothing has changed. Oh, sure, we try to take root in some cozy city or town – raise a family, get divorced – but it is the books at the library or the book store that get us going again. Just think, if Eugene Skinner had read books, he might have gone off to Africa instead of sitting here on a log in front of the library looking very bored.

Jerry Harris is a sculptor and contributing writer to Eugene Weekly and has just finished his first novel, Mad Swedes and Black Men.