

news Briefs

FREE SPEECH ON TRIAL

The city of Eugene is pushing to prosecute anti-war activist Peter Chabarek, who was charged with criminal trespass for refusing to stop handing out anti-war leaflets in the Eugene Hilton during Sen. Gordon Smith's speech to the Rotary Club Feb. 21.

Chabarek's attorney, Brian Michaels, filed a motion to dismiss the charge on May 12, arguing that the arrest violated Chabarek's free speech rights. On June 12, Assistant City Prosecutor C. Michael Arnold asked the municipal court to deny Michaels' motion.

Chabarek and other activists had protested outside the Hilton before Smith's speech. They were not permitted inside the event itself, but Chabarek handed out anti-war leaflets in the hotel lobby, which is generally open to the public.

The Hilton manager, Rotary Club president and EPD Lt. Peter Kerns all had asked Chabarek to leave, but he refused and continued to pass out the leaflets, which called Smith an "accomplice to mass murder" for his support of the Iraq War. Eugene police

then arrested Chabarek and charged him with criminal trespass.

In his motion to dismiss the charge, Michaels argues that because the Hilton lobby was being made available to the public at the time of Smith's speech, Chabarek's free speech rights should have been protected. Arnold, in a written response, contends that the Hilton lobby was not, in fact, serving as a public forum during Smith's event because the Rotary had leased the adjoining ballroom. Free speech rights don't fly on private property.

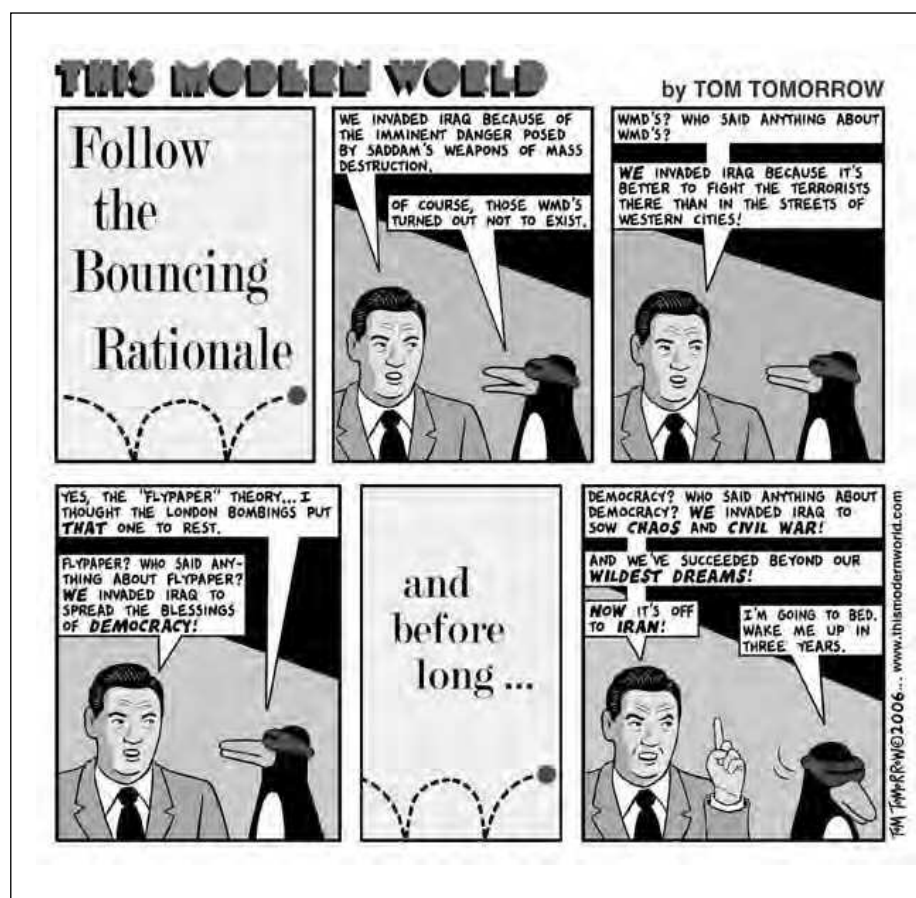
The case echoes that of Perry Patterson, who was charged with criminal trespass after refusing to leave property leased by Monaco Coach during a 2004 Republican campaign rally featuring Vice President Dick Cheney. In March, the city dropped its charge against Patterson due to new information.

But as Republicans increasingly lease private spaces for their quasi-public political events and protesters show up to exercise their free speech rights, the city expects to hear more cases like these in the future.

—Kera Abraham

SUMMER'S FREE LUNCH

Summertime's no time for hunger. In Lane County, according to FOOD For Lane County (FFLC) statistics, only about 26 percent of children who qualify for free or reduced-price lunches during the school year also find a free lunch during the summer.



FFLC wants to change that. Starting Monday, June 19, FFLC is offering free lunches for children and youth.

The 60 sites throughout the county include elementary schools like Brattain in Springfield and Bohemia in Cottage Grove; in Eugene, sites range from Amazon Park to the Boys & Girls Club to Peterson Barn Park. FFLC offers free meals to children 2-18 and to toddlers under 2 who are accompanied by a responsible adult, and the sites are sprinkled from Dorena to McKenzie Bridge and from

Oakridge to Florence. Times are usually noon to 1 pm on weekdays, but some sites have slightly different hours and days. For more information, call 343-2822.

CORN DOGS, 1; LETTUCE, 0

With the retirement of their in-house food service supervisor, Springfield School

SLANT

• Last spring we ran the full text of Sara Rich's talk at the Take Back Our America Rally at the Federal Building. She told a riveting tale about her daughter's decision to go AWOL from the Army when she was facing a third deployment to Iraq in less than four years (see *EW* web archives 3/30). Her daughter Suzanne Swift was facing not only the dangers of war, but also sexual harassment and fear of rape from her fellow soldiers. This week Eugene police responded to a federal warrant from the Army, and Swift was hauled off in handcuffs to face court martial or other discipline at Fort Lewis. Regardless of her war veteran status and psychological trauma, she could face harsh treatment by the military. Some will say she deserves what she gets. But where do we as a society draw the line on what we can reasonably expect of our all-voluntary military, particularly in an illegal and grossly mismanaged war? We can't help but think she's been lied to by the Army and her human rights have been violated. Regardless of the outcome, Swift's courageous decision under duress, and her mother's very public support, serve to shed light on the injustices and ironies that accompany all wars, and this war in particular.

• Big fat budget made its way through the Budget Committee this week, bound for the Eugene City Council. Hats off to the good folks who wrestle with this monster that drives city government. One relatively small item that caught our eye was new funding of \$70,000 for office cubicles and one staff person to serve eight city councilors. Council offices are in the master plans for a new City Hall, but right now councilors have no administrative support and work out of their homes. No place is set aside for meetings with constituents, city staff or the media. We were pleased

to see this budget item pass with a tie-breaking vote by Mayor Piercy. From the email discussion going around before the meeting, one would think the very foundations of Eugene's power structure were being crumbled by this small concession to council efficiency and accessibility. Seems to be some paranoia in the air. Meanwhile, we hear from our sources inside the Budget Committee that empire building is suspected in some city departments. No independent audit has been done to tell the panel whether city departments are understaffed or overstaffed.

• For those who have been following Oregon forest politics, it's been a busy week. There's the vote of confidence in OSU forestry dean Hal Salwasser, which conveniently came out in his favor, with two thirds of college students and faculty vouching for him and a quarter giving the thumbs-down. But two-thirds also support major changes to make the school less beholden to Big Timber's good old boys. Meanwhile, five green groups are asking the district court to make the Forest Service hold off on Biscuit roadless area timber sales until it considers new studies about post-fire forest ecology. On June 7, a federal judge in Medford ordered the FS not to award the sales – at least until the injunction hearing on June 14. And on June 9, Oregon and three other states filed for an immediate injunction on roadless logging while they challenge BushCo's repeal of the Roadless Rule. But we can already hear the chainsaws revving up: on June 9, Silver Creek Timber Co. won the auction on the roadless Mike's Gulch. The gov's in the forest's corner here, but some congressional pull would help. On June 6, DeFazio finally came through with a letter opposing the sales, but it would have been much more effective had it come earlier. And where's Wyden?

If the FS allows a clearcut in the roadless areas bordering Oregon's Kalmiopsis Wilderness, the nation's 60 million other roadless acres may be next.

• County Commissioner Faye Stewart found himself in a pickle last week when he was forced to make a tie-breaking vote on a Measure 37 land-use decision that had a direct impact on his family's financial future. He could have voted no and sent the case to the courts to hash out on its merits. Instead, he voted yes, a poor decision politically and environmentally, and one that is likely to haunt his career ambitions for years to come.

• If you missed the recent *Rolling Stone* cover story by Robert F. Kennedy Jr. on the newsstands, it's easy to find it online at www.rollingstone.com. The story is titled "Was the 2004 Election Stolen?" and it packages nicely the overwhelming evidence that Republican dirty tricks stole not only the election, but democracy in 2004. Will it happen again this November and again in 2008? History is filled with such shenanigans, and worse. What's changed? We now have better technology to share information, to organize, and to throw the bastards out of office. How can we do that if the elections are rigged? For better or worse, our voting system nationwide is diverse and decentralized. The 2004 national election could not have been tweaked if the numbers had not been so close. Let's make our next elections landslides for democracy, accountability, and yes, ballot counting safeguards.

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, editor@eugeneweekly.com