

EYE ON THE TRUTH

I was extremely saddened to hear of the death of Charles Gray (cover story, 7/13) and consider it a privilege to have had the honor of knowing him when I lived in Eugene. He kept his eye single-mindedly on truth and justice and acted accordingly as few ever do. In my view, his most notable quality was that, while he fought untiringly for those causes, he managed to be non-judgmental about the people involved. I never saw him be rude or disrespectful.

My favorite story about Charles — which occurred unfortunately before my time — was when he demonstrated the militarism and inequities of U.S. policies by creating lengths of paper to correlate with the expenditures of major government programs — health, education, welfare, housing — and defense. I believe he unrolled the papers on Kincaid in front of the UO. The roll representing defense rolled far beyond the others, giving a graphic picture of how lopsided and inhumane U.S. spending is. Someone ought to recreate it — would take a brand new roll of newsprint to represent today's defense expenditures, and it would roll right through town.

We need thousands of people with Charles' dedication and are certainly poorer with his passing.

Wanda S. Ballentine
Eagan, Minn.

POLICE AGGRESSION

In my 60 years I had not seen or been on a Critical Mass bicycle ride, but after watching a DVD of its history, I wanted to participate.

On Friday, July 28 I hitched a ride to Eugene and pedaled to 17th and Charnelton, arriving about 5:30, but there wasn't much mass. After about 10 minutes the cyclist arrival rate increased until there were about 40 bicycles and one police motorcycle. The group then proceeded north on Charnelton with no idea where to. I was near the end. The motorcycle policeman drove by in the center of the road, and cyclists were bunching up near the first intersection/traffic circle. The officer blurted over his loudspeaker something like, "Don't block traffic, get to the side of the road," and cyclists began looking back, swerving, slowing, stopping. The officer then shouted, "Come to a complete stop, OK, that's it," and he sped ahead, pulling over a shirtless young man.

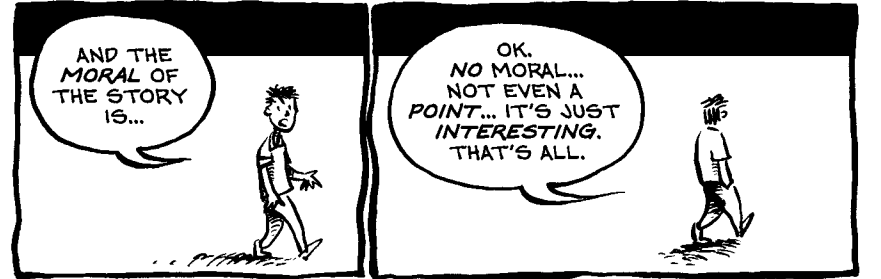
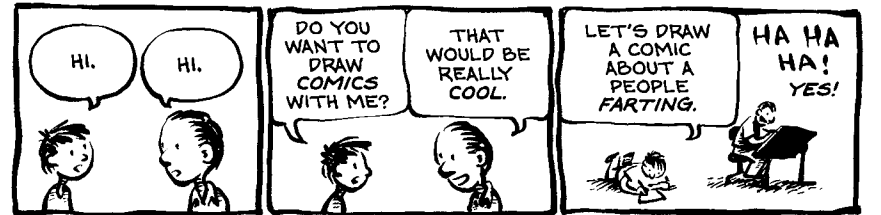
The officer parked his motorcycle diagonally about 10 feet past the intersection, nearly blocking the right lane. About five of us waited for the young man while he was ticketed. I was sickened to witness such aggressive police behavior and a little concerned about what could happen if the young man mouthed off. I did not want to abandon him to the wolves. We eventually found the rest of the group on Blair and rejoined them.

How to Be Happy

by Shannon Wheeler



A 'YOUNG-HAPPY-ME' AND AN 'OLD-HAPPY-ME' WOULD GET ALONG GREAT!



It was a happy group; people visited, some were saddened by the police aggression, but no one expressed anger or hostility.

The police motorcycle re-appeared at 5th

and Olive, impeding traffic, and I'm thinking, who's next? It was no longer comforting to see the police. Was the officer ordered to harass cyclists and why? I rode the first three Cycle Oregons, RAGBRAI, Willamette Flyways, Polar Bear Ride and others. I've never witnessed police action like this and was told by others that it is not unusual. Why do Eugene citizens tolerate police state tactics? Are bicycles such a threat?

Ed Gunderson
Creswell

ECONOMIC BENEFIT

On July 20, the R-G published the musings of a member of the Springfield City Council, from which I inferred that he was unaware of the facts regarding the economic contributions of undocumented workers to Oregon's economy.

The Oregon Center for Public Policy located in Silverton (ocpp.org) published a cost-benefit study in April 2006 which basically shows that such workers pay more in taxes than the dollar value of Oregon public services they use.

In the first place, the work they perform is vital to certain industries in Oregon, and since they work for low wages, there is an economic benefit to consumers in terms of lower prices paid for goods and services. Secondly, a substantial percentage of their estimated \$2 billion a year they receive for their labor is spent on Oregon's goods and services. This spending creates a multiplier effect on the GDP of Oregon because their spending creates income for others to spend as well.

Thirdly, undocumented workers in Oregon DO pay taxes in the form of state income taxes, and since they pay rent, and landlords include their property taxes as part of the rent they charge, undocumented workers pay property taxes indirectly. The OCPP estimate is that such taxes total between \$66 million and \$77 million annually. Fourthly, undocumented workers pay Social Security (FICA taxes) to the federal government and are NOT eligible to receive Social Security payments.

Lastly, under Oregon law, undocumented workers are NOT eligible for services

viewpoint BY P. HALL

Racism and War
An Asian American perspective

On Aug. 6, we gathered in Eugene to commemorate the 61st anniversary of the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki and to remember the 120,000 Japanese and Japanese Americans who were incarcerated in U.S. concentration camps during WWII. As many as 75 percent of them were U.S. citizens.

As an Asian American, I was born and raised in the U.S. When I was 10, my family moved from an Asian district to a mostly white area in San Francisco. On the first day of school on the playground, a white girl asked me if I knew the Pledge of Allegiance. I can still remember my outrage. I became politicized on that day.

This is an example of what is called the "perpetual foreigner" syndrome. People can say that they want immigrants to assimilate, but my Asian American ancestors have lived in the U.S. for five generations and we are still treated like foreigners.

Many Americans today still cannot tell that I am an Asian American, that I was born in the U.S. — not in China. For decades, I have been asked "What country are you from?" "Are you from China?", "Where are you really from?" (if I answer "California"), or I have been told that I speak good English. Sometimes I weary of answering these questions. This ignorance fuels hate crimes and war. Most folks should know by now that for millions of us, this is our home. Howard University law professor Frank Wu, who wrote about the perpetual foreigner syndrome in his book *Yellow: Race in America Beyond Black and White*, says that when he is asked "Where are you really from?", he feels as if he's been mistaken for a foreigner or is being told that he cannot be a real American.

Asian Americans who have been misperceived as foreigners have been subjected to racism and bias crimes or incarcerated in concentration camps since our arrival to the U.S. in the 1800s. Historically, many acts of legislation were passed against the Chinese, including the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882, which was not repealed until 1943. During the 1920s, Asian immigrants were labeled "the yellow peril," barred from owning land and considered aliens ineligible for citizenship. Under Jim Crow-like laws, they were refused service in stores.

Although many Asian Americans have lived in the U.S. for more than a century, major disconnections and denials persist, fueling hate crimes and war. Some people still do not realize that an American can have an Asian face or a Latino face. But European Americans are rarely asked questions about their nationality.

Dehumanizing the enemy (e.g. Japan, Korea, Iraq) makes it easier for some people to bomb or harm others. The relationship between North Korea and the U.S. has been tense. Last June, North Korea fired nuclear missiles aimed in the direction of the western coast of the U.S. Their tests failed, but many other nations want to build more nuclear missiles. We clearly do not need any more nuclear weapons. We need to end the war in Iraq — and not go to war with Iran or North Korea.

I'd like to quote Ira Glasser, former director of the ACLU, from the book *It's a Free Country: Personal Freedom in America after September 11th*. Glasser called the concentration camps for people of Japanese ancestry "the single worst governmental act of racism in our history with the exception of slavery itself." I hope that history does not repeat itself and that we never again see internment camps for Asians, Asian Americans, Latinos, Middle Easterners, Muslims or others in this country.

For the sake of future generations, it's imperative that we educate ourselves about diversity, become stronger allies and usher in a new global consciousness to save this planet from a nuclear war. As the Dalai Lama has said, "It is important to realize our sameness as human beings."

This piece was adapted from an Aug. 6 speech given by the author at the Hiroshima and Nagasaki Commemoration in Eugene. Hall co-authored a book on bias crimes with civil rights lawyer Victor Hwang and has worked with local activists on racism and privilege issues