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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

my words poorly. Please let me say right now, for the record: I do not consider violence or the threat of violence to be an acceptable, or possible, means for positive social change. I apologize for giving the opposite impression.

However, I must go on to challenge the large group of people in this town and elsewhere who consider themselves to be pacifists. Many of them, like Vip and others, are committed activists, not at all naïve, who regularly put their principles into practice by demonstrating and advocating for change. However, for others, it's all too easy to swear off violence (living in a relatively peaceful, protected society such as ours) and then point the finger at anarchists and radicals whose methods of protest they find offensive. How many of these self-proclaimed pacifists would then turn around and call the police without a second thought if they felt threatened by a belligerent homeless person? Is that pacifism?

The Iraq War has gone on for three years now, at the cost of hundreds of thousands of innocent lives. Some pacifists have doggedly protested the war, week after week, rain or shine — but thousands more have not. Is it pacifism to continue to pay taxes for this war? Many pacifists resist war taxes, but many more don't — ironically enough because they fear being subjected to the violence of their own government. Yet we continue to allow this government to persist in threatening us and other people the world over because we are too afraid to make our voices heard. Is that pacifism?

As I said, I do not condone violence in any form. What I do encourage is an acknowledgement of both the urgency of our problems and the failure of our political system to solve or even address these problems. In my mind, to know about and yet fail to prevent violence is in itself a form of violence — and of that, none of us is innocent.

Chris Calef
Eugene

A HOLIDAY TALE

Once upon a time (back in the early 1990s) a group of elves emerged from the woods around Fall Creek and rekindled a community tradition. At this time of the year and under cover of darkness, they did a simple act. They decorated a covered bridge. Simple and elegant, swags of fir boughs with red ribbons graced the gabled ends of the bridge. It was done as a gift to the community who use the bridge daily and those who by chance drove through on their way to someplace else. It made folks feel good!

After a couple of years of secret decorating, the community at large took up a donation with hopes that lights might be added to the display. By now, the elves had bedecked a second historic bridge in the neighborhood, and the larger village over the hill was asking those elves to decorate the largest bridge in the area. A licensed electrical elf donated time and materials to install service boxes at the bridges, and even the utility company elves supplied approved drop lines. The gift was embraced by the community, people smiled as they drove through the bridges glowing warmly, and they were joyful.

There was a rub to this tale. An ogre lived under the bridges. After a few years the ogre approached the elves and demanded that they pay homage. A permit was

required and a responsible party had to be designated. Flaggers, time lines, legal requirements. No longer red ribbon, but red tape. So be it! An elder elf stepped forward each year and took responsibility and signed, appeasing the ogre. A couple of years passed, and the burden of the gift began to tell on the elves. The community expected the decorations and anticipated the event. Some even became impatient. Finally, the ogre reared its head again. This time, in addition to the permits, insurance was required. A million gold pieces to assure that injury or damage to individuals, personal property, vehicles, the bridges themselves or other unknowns would be addressed. Yes, fear had slipped into the dance. The elder elf was weary and deferred the gift to others.

For another year or two the project continued. The ogre contacted the elf each year and demanded the homage from someone, anyone. The elder elf did not know who was now responsible. No one stepped forward to sign — and the bridges became dark again.

So, this holiday tale comes to an end. The rekindled tradition has been extinguished. The covered bridges in Fall Creek are still a beautiful part of Oregon history. They just don't burn as brightly at this time of year to evoke peace, happiness, community and good will towards each other.

Wishing all peace on earth.

Jef P. Jalof
Best Friends Farm, Fall Creek

GIVE FROM THE HEART

In the Dec. 18 *Newsweek*, columnist Jan Bryant Quinn recommends that holiday charitable givers should know more about the nonprofits to which they give. An online site that rates charities recommended by Bryant Quinn is CharityNavigator.org. The good news for those of a generous bent during the holidays is that United Way of Lane County (UWLC) has been awarded Charity Navigator's highest ranking: four stars. This ranking reflects not only on UWLC's top-notch fiscal management; it also reflects on the 40-plus regional agencies that are certified by UWLC.

If you are moved to help others less fortunate this holiday season, consider doing so through United Way. Through our county-wide network of over 40 local agencies and 60 different programs, the hungry are fed, the homeless are housed, children are cherished, seniors are supported and permanent solutions to critical issues are sought. And these services are being provided across the county from Florence to Oakridge, Springfield to Cottage Grove, and every place in between.

For a full list of the local nonprofits currently certified by UWLC, you can visit our website at www.unitedwaylane.org. Then, you can give from your heart trusting that your generous spirit is playing out with the greatest integrity in the lives of Lane County's many struggling individuals and families.

Cheryl N. Crumbley
United Way Of Lane County

LETTERS POLICY: We welcome letters on all topics and will print as many as space allows, with priority given to timely local issues. Please limit length to 250 words, keep submissions to once a month and include your address and phone number for our files. E-mail to editor@eugeneweekly.com (please put "letters" in the subject line), fax to 484-4044 or mail to 1251 Lincoln, Eugene 97401.