

was a bad investment.

Alham al-Samaraie was freed from a Baghdad police station in the green zone by a group of heavily armed "private" security agents. Alham, a U.S. citizen, was facing trial on 13 charges of corruption. The charges concern an estimated \$2 billion in missing funds for contracts on rebuilding Iraq's electrical infrastructure.

Alham has a home in Chicago and emailed *The Chicago Tribune* that he is OK and plans on returning home after the new year.

No wonder the Iraqi people are mad at us. They don't understand how capitalism works.

Michael T. Hinojosa
Drain

NO TURNING BACK

The international traps we continue to dig and fall into are becoming deeper and deeper. In fact, there no longer are any simple methods of escape for us. "Bring the troops home" is a nice-sounding, simple-minded slogan. We will need to go much further than that. Only with a comprehensive awareness can we avert the catastrophes looming before us in 2007.

India's nuclear weapons are directed against Pakistan's nukes. The U.S. supplies both countries with weapons and technology. The Taliban are retaking Afghanistan. There is a civil war in Iraq. Lebanon is on the brink of civil war. Saudi Arabia supports the Sunnis in Iraq; Iran supports the Shiites; and Russia supports Iran. Israeli leaders are determined to crush the Palestinians, and they continue to pressure the U.S. to assist them in aggression against Syria and Iran.

Meanwhile, in America, the leaders of both major political parties are clueless about how to stop the bloodshed and prevent a full-blown war that will cascade throughout the region. For our president and Congress, there apparently is no turning back. More troops and more weapons are on the drawing boards for 2007, and our war department and its contractors are slated to get all of the money they request.

The only two things our representatives see in the Middle East are the vast oil reserves to supply our addiction and our commitment to protect Israel — regardless of the cost in human lives and the misery foisted upon the survivors. But can we really blame our government? After all, we back their ignorance and stupidity with our actions — whether we want to acknowledge those actions or not. For example, we

need to get beyond the question that is framed for us: Do we want our gasoline coming from the bountiful oil reserves of the Middle East, or would we feel better extracting this toxic fuel by way of oil rigs competing for space off the Oregon Coast?

In 2007, we must focus on ambitious, innovative shifts in our thinking. We can begin by effecting positive changes — and not merely cosmetic ones — within our own communities. There's never a shortage of good ideas, only excuses and a lack of willpower to put them into practice.

Robert Simms
Corvallis

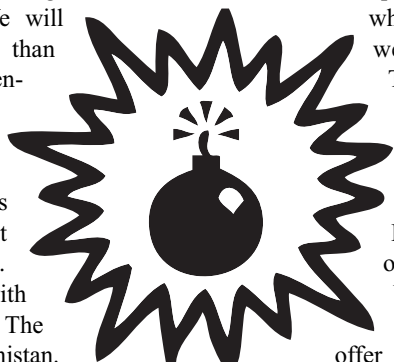
LOSE THE PLASTIC

The after the holiday hangover has made me rethink our need to define the holiday experience, the shopping, the gifts in so much plastic that I fear for my safety as I try to unwrap something the size of my thumb from its square-foot plastic coffin.

We need to return to stores where things are out on open shelves, local stores where we can buy things we can touch and see. Three or four come to mind — all locally owned: Creative Hands at 5th and Willamette, Down to Earth and Ruby Chasm on Olive near 5th, and Uncommon Scents at 18th and Willamette. All offer a shopping experience devoid of plastic and extra foam, and all offer something very intriguing for local shoppers — owners who are local. And there are more, I'm sure!

So let's start redefining sustainable: local, no extra wrapping (plastic), natural materials are better and handmade is better yet. And to this add repairable, life-long, fostering imagination, no joystick, sustainable play and enjoyment. Public transportation and streetscapes, and local repairs and services, local art, and refind/refine our vision. We are an extremely vibrant community wrapped in the dour concrete and asphalt of a gridded city. And we could so easily break out — others have, and we need this so much.

Some see Eugene as '60s, but I see the repressed '50s much more in our downtown. Stop looking to malls and national chains for the answer. It's time for Eugene to "grow up" but not block the sun. Let's learn from others, honor our history, our riverine past, grow gardens on building tops that don't shade their neighbors. Paris does this through stepped floors that rise up and back from the street, Boise closes off streets on the weekends to create their Saturday Market. Who knows where this



"Found myself in New Orleans, with a SCARECROW in my jeans. Beat my forehead through the ceiling. Drink my coffee with a hubcap. Yeah!"

-Beck

Wandering Goat Coffee Company
268 Madison • (541) 344-5161
www.WanderingGoat.com



Need the perfect holiday gift for her or him?
Our physicians can help.

**GIFT CERTIFICATES AVAILABLE
20% OFF Hair Removal Treatments**

and all other services which include:
Spider Veins, Skin Rejuvenation, Acne, Sun Damage
FREE CONSULTATION for Varicose Veins • Affordable Rates

MD Laser Clinic
SPECIALIZING IN VEIN AND COSMETIC CARE

860 Beltline Rd.
Springfield
541-681-8599

EUGENE'S OPEN URBAN LOUNGE



MIDTOWN BISTRO

REASONABLY PRICED BREAKFAST & LUNCH MENUS
COMFORTABLE ATMOSPHERE FREE WI/FI

SPECIALTIES INCLUDE HAZELNUT WAFFLES ★ FIRE ROASTED WOOD OVEN PIZZAS
BRIOCHE' FRENCH TOAST ★ FARMERS SCRAMBLE ★ CRAB CAKES ★ GREEK SALAD

MIDTOWN COFFEE

SERANO COFFEE BLENDS ★ FINE PASTRIES & DESSERTS
CRAFT BREWED SPECIALTY BEVERAGES

MIDTOWN MARKETPLACE IN THE HEART OF EUGENE
1591 WILLAMETTE STREET ★ EUGENE



The Shedd Institute



John H. Haines, MD
Kent A. Karren, MD
The Eye Center

434-7000
www.theshedd.org

Classes & Private Lessons
for all ages, skill-levels & interests

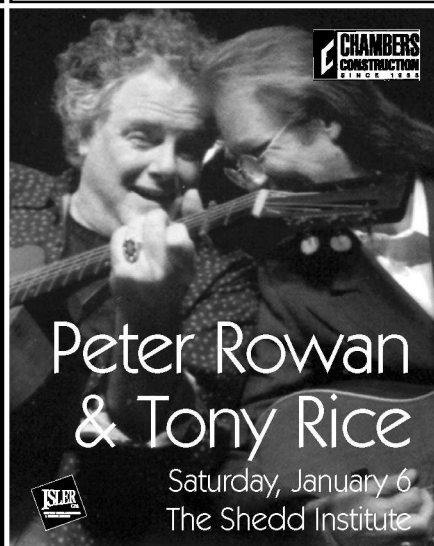
Upcoming Concerts

- 01.06 Peter Rowan & Tony Rice
- 01.11 Odette
- 01.18&20 Maria Jette: Wings of Gold
Treasures of Latin America
- 01.21 Mose Allison
- 02.03-18 Jazz Kings: Swingin' On A Star
- 02.06 Kenny Barron
- 02.16 Jake Shimabukuro
- 02.17 Dawn Upshaw (Hult)
- 03.02-4 Jazz Party at The Shedd
- 05.03 Emmy Lou Harris (Hult)

— Visit www.theshedd.org for full schedule —

GIVE MUSIC

Shedd Gift Certificates 434-7000



Peter Rowan & Tony Rice

Saturday, January 6
The Shedd Institute



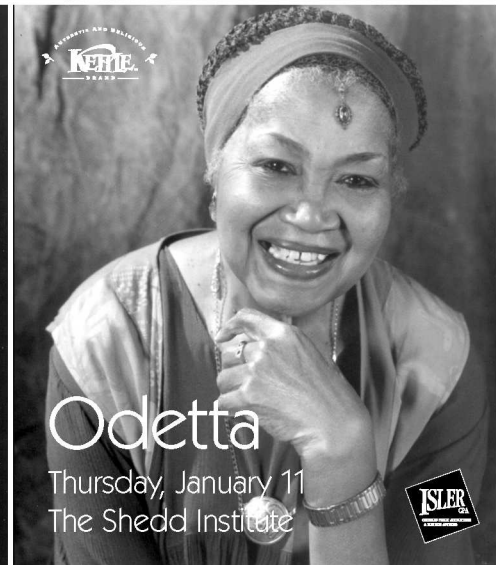
Maria Jette

Sonja Thompson
Fritz Gearhart

Wings of Gold

Treasures of Latin America
Jardin Antiguo - Jan 18
Duerme Negro - Jan 20
The Shedd Institute

Changed Date!



Odette

Thursday, January 11
The Shedd Institute