

Community Tattoo

A 12-step program for getting unbranded

I was at the City Council meeting the night Rob Hankins sold them the T-shirt he was wearing that proclaimed Eugene "The World's Greatest City for the Arts and Outdoors." He drew his line in the air, so to speak, and all the chickens were mesmerized, patriotically aroused but clueless that they were being branded by a master — who, it turned out, was about to leave for a better paying job in Ohio. I quickly checked for my wallet and was reminded of the pre-Google encyclopedia salesman who always began their phone pitch with, "Do you believe in education in the home?"

I'd say "No, I do not," and the smart ones would hang up quickly and move on to more tractable territory. But if they persevered — call it level II — I'd hit them up for a contribution to my campaign to end telephone solicitation.

And if they clung to my ear — level III — I'd talk them down with an uninterrupted diatribe about our abject failure to support art and music in our schools or to insist on a Eugene Arts Center downtown in the World's Greatest City for the Arts and Outdoors.

My point is that the best defense against a level-three sales job such as the Hankins pitch is to be prepared with some real convictions and an authentic, secure sense of one's own identity.

Getting branded is much like getting a community tattoo. But getting unbranded is more painful because there is no instant laser removal for logos that are more than skin deep. How does one become unbranded? It requires (at minimum) a 12-step program.

1. First you have to be willing to admit to an excess of aspiration and grandiosity and be willing to stand up and confess: "My name is Eugene and I've been claiming that I'm the world's greatest ..." Remember, we started out as "Skinner's Mud Hole."

2. You must be able to make fun of your slogan and the business of branding. "Eugene, Where Slogans Overeat."

3. Go ahead: Vent your cynicism. It's important to get it all out. "First you have to get clean and sober in order to land North by Northwest of Normal." "Home of Pretty Good Streets." "Developus Interruptus." "A Little Above Butt Ugly." "Kitty-Corner From Reality." "Where Democracy Rains." "Home Of The Historic Eugene Millrace Cover-up." "Downtown Eugene: What Doesn't Happen Here Stays Here."

4. I know it's far more fun to be nasty, but try to think back to who you were when you were who you are: "Tracktown, U.S.A. Home of the UO and the Oregon Ducks." "Home of Her Slimeness the S.L.U.G. Queen & the Oregon Country Fair." "River City."

5. Vigorously challenge and repel such myths as, "The People's Republic of Eugene." "Leaf, Libertinism and the Pursuit of Hippyness." Remember when there was a Bill of Rights? "The VW Bus Graveyard." Point out that this first slogan comes from people who don't really believe in participatory democracy because it inconveniences their limbic love affair with the severing of raw resources whatever the social and ecological costs. Point out that the second comes mostly from the dyslexic-minded who took the slogan "Make Love Not War" seriously. These are the same people who still haven't noticed that the pursuit of colonialism is backward or that their "new way forward" is really the reverse. Re: VW buses. Recycle the peace signs, which are needed once again.

6. Avoid paying out thousands for "Be All That You Can Be," and consider the more Eugenean "Bike All That You Can Bike."

7. Vigorously remove the negatives, such as "Not Springfield," "Valley of Denial," (de-Nile) and especially the (cough! cough!) tear-inducing "Field Burning Catcher of the Rye."

8. Don't try to kid a kiddier as in: "More Beautiful Than the Amalfi Coast." Besides, the Oregon Country Fair is the world's greatest (ephemeral) city for the arts and outdoors.

9. Now list some more civic strengths and reasonable aspirations. OK, even some unreasonable ones. To borrow from the poet: "Ah, but a [city's] reach should exceed [its] grasp. Or what's a heaven for?" (R. Browning).

10. Dwell on and draw forth the highest aspirations, but remember step one. One of mine would be to take the good plans we write for our neighborhoods, transportation and local resources and not just roll them over when big money makes big moves. Another concerns art and music.

11. Accentuate the best of Eugene, and follow through on those aspirations that make a motto more than flack and air. "We Talk a Lot Here Civically Because We're Smart." "If You've Got An Hour, You're in the Cascades or on the Coast." "Our Schools Are Better Than Your Schools."

12. Now you're ready to try again. Drop those big pants on that triple bottom line, reach for the moon and turn around.



The triple bottom line

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drawing as therapy

by harvey dickson



people think we don't understand what they're doing? We're onto you, people! Thanks, *EW*, for bringing this community an alternative form of local journalism.

Hugo Ball
Eugene

ADULTS ONLY?

I appreciate *EW*'s desire to fairly represent Eugene's diverse population. There is a tendency, though, I feel, to overdo it when it comes to sex and sexual orientation.

Sometimes I wonder: Is this a publication that represents the gay community? Or is this a publication geared towards adults only, who have some kind of preoccupation with sex?

This is just the way I often feel after reading the *EW*. I could be considered a liberal, eco-conscious person, but I have to say that the *EW* has gone overboard, especially by including "Savage Love."

I have two teenaged daughters, and I don't really want them to read the *EW* anymore because it contains subject matter meant for adults only, especially "Savage Love." They see the *EW* wherever they go, at their favorite cafés, at stores, and all they have to do is pick it up to read some pretty hardcore porn, which I don't think they can find so easily in any other way.

I don't think most teenagers are ready for that kind of stuff. But thanks to you guys, you've made it available all over the city. I think it's a good time for the *EW* to take a look at values: Who reads your paper, and how does it represent our "alternative" community? And what does "alternative" mean to you?

Keep in mind what kind of effect you can have on the young people in our community,

not to mention readers who can be sensitive to sexually explicit articles and advertisements.

Julie Jeffrey
Eugene

PUBLIC RADIO NEEDED

Now more than ever we need a viable alternative to commercial (broadcast) media, who often muzzle critical voices and offer up stale infotainment instead of diverse cultural fare and balanced news perspectives — the kind of work that PBS, NPR, Free Speech Radio, Democracy Now, The Pacifica Radio Network and other public media do so well.

John Galloway
Eugene

GARBAGE OUT

To Larry Lippert, concerning your letter to the editor titled "Rim Each Other" (2/8): Sir, you obviously wrote this letter for the sole purpose of getting a reaction, so I'll bite.

You got exactly one thing correct in your writing. "This community deserves better than a piece of garbage," is what you wrote. I agree, and so I suggest you take your own advice and move *yourself* out of town.

Segments such as "Savage Love" are not to blame for any ills of this or any other community; instead, it is what you are exhibiting — intolerance — that is. Have you ever considered choosing your battles a bit more carefully? It is my hope and belief that the attorney general and prosecutor will laugh at you as hard as I did upon reading this hate-filled tripe.

You are nothing short of totally insulting in your letter, using phrases like, "Your paper at times has some good articles, written not well, but ...," and "Maybe you and this Mr. Savage should rim each other," not to mention the name calling: "idiot" and "slime ball." Then you go on to say, "freedom of speech ... never intended for you to abuse it in such a flagrant way." But that is precisely what you have done with this letter — pure vitriol hurling.

And if you honestly believe that getting rid of "Savage Love" will stop children's exposure to "questionable" subject matter, then you have much larger problems than Mr. Dan Savage.

So. Do us all a favor: Either remove the burnished pole from your kiester, or leave Eugene and take the rest of the sanctimo-