

A Step Over the Line

Getting hitched in Canada

Jeez, that felt good. Nothing like a little Canadian marriage to lift a gal's spirits. What a pleasure to walk into a downtown Vancouver (British Columbia) office, chat with the friendly notary public and walk out with an actual, legal, uncontested marriage license. Just like that. No muss, no fuss. No Oregon Family Council screeching that you're violating the sanctity of one-man/one-woman marriage. No anti-gay county commissioner scowling like you're some disgusting piece of crud stuck to the bottom of his shoe. None of that. Just a nice guy doing his job and happy to pop our wad of bills bearing The Queen's portrait into his cash drawer — and into the Canadian economy.

My bride and I had crossed the border into a country where nobody tramples on your right to marry. You simply set a date with any official marriage commissioner, show up with your notarized license and get legally married the same as any other couple can. Pretty cool. So remarkably, shockingly, unabashedly normal.

Not that I'm pushing assimilation. My message isn't that lesbian, gay, bi, trans and queer people are "just like" heteros. Why set the bar so low? LGBTQ folks have our own special contributions to make, questions to raise, comfort zones to tweak. But still, queer as we are, British Columbia treated Wifey and me like everyone else: equals under the law. A shining moment of full equality — what a terrific feeling.

We were so happy. Although if you'd seen us that afternoon in the commissioner's living room you'd never have guessed it. We both cried through the whole ceremony. I mean really. A simple civil service, and the two of us carried on like we were at some funeral. Tears of joy, I guess, but something even more than that. A spiritual and uplifting sensation of truth and affirmation that justice — equal rights for everyone — is not only possible, it's already happening.

How awesome to stand there in the kindly commissioner's modest home — Pachelbel's Canon playing not-so-subtly in the background — in front of impartial witnesses, hold the familiar hands of my partner of nineteen years and recite our vows. The same vows recited by every other couple married under Canadian law. Our bond was sealed by the power vested in this unfazed marriage commissioner, and we were pronounced married. We signed our names to the official registry, which — she told us over a pink Koala toast to our happiness — will be archived in the annals of national history forever. O! Canada.

Back here in Oregon, fair-minded people have been trying for some 34 years to end the state's reign of legal discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation and gender expression. When you read this, Oregon's state legislature is expected to have passed SB2, the Oregon Equality Act (now called the Domestic Partnership Act) and will pass HB 2007, the Oregon Family Fairness Act. These long-awaited laws will protect our access to employment, housing and public accommodation and provide legal recognition for our domestic partnerships. It's not quite total equality. But it's a huge step.

The opposition is freaked. They're still outraged at having to share the planet with us sex-crazed predatory godless queers. They're hauling out the tired old "Save Our Children" boogeyman — as if children aren't already desperate for salvation from homophobia and religious intolerance. They act like the world as we know it will end — and not in the good, rapture sort of way. Like legal recognition of our domestic partnership could somehow force fundamentalist Christians to read Dan Savage (if they don't already). It's all so frantic and fearful and stark raving wrong.

But just north of the border, across that thin geographic line, lies another, more peaceful, more accepting world where equality for everyone is already the law of the land. It can happen here. Oregon is taking one step closer to the promise of liberty and justice for all. If Canada is any indication, that's going to feel fabulous!

Sally Sheklow was voted Best Local Writer in EW's 2006-2007 Best of Eugene readers' poll.



and unicyclist and traveled around Nicaragua with the national circus bringing joy to many while working in children's health campaigns.

Twenty years ago, on April 28, 1987, while beginning construction on a small dam, Ben and two Nicaraguan coworkers were murdered by Contras, armed and paid by the U.S. government.

Ben is buried in Matagalpa, Nicaragua, and his tomb reads, "La luz que encendió brillará para siempre" — "The light that he lit will shine forever."

Please join us with the Linder family Thursday, April 26, at 4 pm in the Ben Linder Room, EMU, UO, to honor this noble man and learn how his work continues.

*Bryan Moore
Eugene*

DON'T RECALL GREEN

I don't usually agree with Commissioner Bobby Green's votes on legislation, but the recall is unfair and wrong. Green voted for a tax to preserve the jobs and county services he realizes are important to everyone living in Lane County. I might not like this flat tax proposal, but it is no reason to recall Green. What we need is fair tax reform, not recalls. So let's work for positive change, and I think Green will join us.

*Ruth Duemler
Eugene*

NOTHING GUARANTEED

The Eugene City Council has the power, but apparently not the imagination, to bring our downtown back to life. They have tried and failed before with the redevelopment of Broadway west of Charnelton. Many of the retail spaces created as an adjunct to Symantec, which has since abandoned Eugene for Springfield, are still vacant, as are a number of the pricey apartments above. The street below is usually empty except at night when it often becomes a popular hangout for street people.

While the city council is again looking at big time developers for Broadway with ready subsidies and other incentives, they should understand that more new buildings alone will not guarantee the creation of a lively downtown. If the council had wanted a bustling commercial Broadway, they should have done something before Oakway Center gobbled up the city's retail slack.

But the city council still has an opportunity to do something. The Tango Center has proposed that the city exercise its option and purchase the center and several smaller adjacent buildings as a nucleus of city-supported development. Given the right support by the city, the spacious Tango Center could serve Eugene with even more events, entertainment and education, and it could spin off a gradual revival of West Broadway without demolishing the perfectly usable adjacent structures. The council could use similar incentives offered to developers to attract locally owned businesses into these retail spaces.

A pro-active campaign to revive West Broadway would cost less than the developer-subsidy option and give the city more control.

*Russ DesAulnier
Eugene*

REAL ESTATE SCAMS

The April 12 *EW* did a public service ex-

posing some of the city's never-ending real estate scams.

The article about the city's alleged attorney (who also serves big developers — a severe conflict of interest) hints at the solution. The job title of "City Manager" appears to be — on the surface — a person tasked with carrying out the policies decided by democratically elected officials. However, in Eugene, the manager often wields more power than those selected by the voters. Changing the city manager to be an implementer of policy instead of the creator of policy would help reduce the nondemocratic aspect of city of Eugene planning decisions.

Jerry Diethelm's article about the new I-5 Willamette River bridge missed four points. First, the existing (old) bridge was dangerously cracked due to excessive truck weights (Oregon trucks are allowed to be heavier than those in California). Second, the replacement bridge for the damaged structure should have been built once, not twice. The "temporary" I-5 bridges in the Eugene area cost tens of millions and required enormous inputs of concrete and steel. Third, planning for major highway upgrades (the new bridge would be much wider than the older one) needs to admit the world is at peak oil and further traffic increases are unlikely on the downslope of the oil peak. Finally, expanding I-5 is part of a NAFTA superhighway program being pushed by the states of Oregon, Washington and California — see www.road-scholar.org for details.

*Mark Robinowitz
Eugene*

CLOUDED VISION

Eugene seems to be a city with a fragmented heart, a passionless soul and a clouded vision. It is a city that has been forced to grow under the pressure of demographics and an expanding economy. But, like so many other cities, it is a city that has grown without guidance from a vision. It is a city that has simply stumbled into

the future after having made many well-intentioned but uninformed decisions about how to grow.

While the mayor, the city council and city planners collectively have the ultimate authority to make decisions that determine Eugene's future, before exercising that authority they — and we all — have the inescapable obligation to inform ourselves of what it is that makes a city vibrant, sophisticated, resonant, dynamic, playful and, most importantly, a place that everyone cherishes because it serves and promotes these qualities.

If the city council and City Manager Dennis Taylor intend to render a decision of this magnitude about KWG's proposal by April 25 before having fulfilled this obligation, then on April 26, the residents of Eugene need to begin actions to recall him and all council members.

What's important and at stake is not meeting a deadline to choose KWG's shopping mall or "local diversity" as the best way to fulfill the wish to "save downtown." What's at stake and most important at this moment is recognizing that those with the authority to make such decisions may in fact not be qualified to do so. They may not even have to live with them. But the rest of us will.

*Matthew Lubic
Eugene*

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