

# Lessons in Survival

Some crimes carry their own punishment

**H**ari Dass Baba once wrote, "If a pickpocket meets a saint, he sees only his pockets." If a tweaker breaks into the house of an addictions educator to steal his computer, he sees only the few dollars he can get from fencing it, not the wealth of information that could free him.



I was recently a crime victim. I suspect Tweaker B (TB), known to the police for committing meth-related house burglaries and other mayhem, including assaults on homeless people. TB was identified by the pod of homeless people who roam the neighborhood; he apparently used them for protective cover to scope the house. Clearly he knew who lived here well enough to pry open a window immediately after I left to drop the cat at the vet. I slipped from my usual precautions and didn't alarm the house. TB was able to enter the house, grab my personal laptop, out and visible because I was doing grades (and hadn't backed up the machine yet), and walk out only to greet the contractor, who assumed because TB came out of the front door and said "How's it going?" that he was someone working for me.

The laptop was hidden in his backpack, so as he strolled to where his bike was parked in my driveway and rode off, he completed the illusion that he was harmless.

Imagine my surprise when preparing to record more grades – the machine was gone! This is the machine that had all the pictures of my recently deceased grandson, family pictures, class and television show PowerPoints, personal music projects and poetics – in short, a creative and personal life.

*Register-Guard* columnist Bob Welch wrote of being mugged in Portland by black people. In my 23 years in Oregon, only white people have committed crimes against me, leading to thoughts of self-blame: "You're in enemy territory, you never let your guard down, because there is always someone willing to steal that which is precious to you."

**T**o forgive is not to forget, but to let go of your attachment to anger. After the initial rage wore off in the first few days – fantasizing slow torture, "Russian detox" comes to mind (an actual practice: handcuffing a person to a metal bed and letting them go through drug withdrawal), I made the rounds of pawnshops and the like, offering rewards to the homeless pod for information, showing them the only physical pictures of my grandson.

I came to this sitting on my front porch: Hearing a voice sounding like a horror film demon from the homeless pod talk about eating fried chicken, watermelons, I strained to hear a reference to "porch monkey." No matter. I've come to see being black in Oregon as less a burden than a responsibility. I can be the deeper human here.

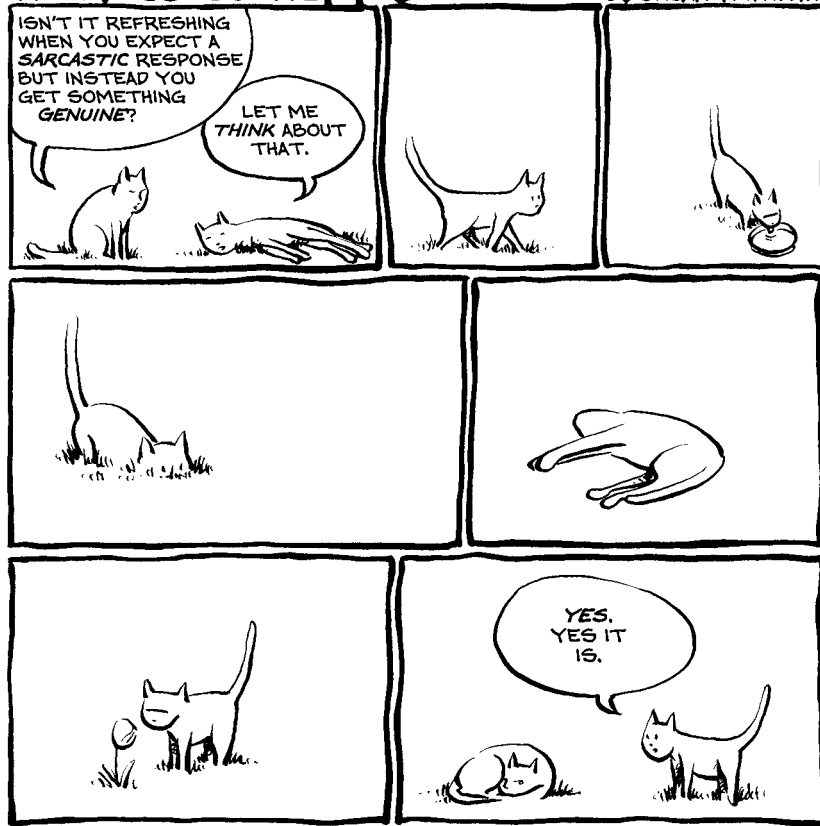
There is no hell or torture I could think of worse than being a multiple virus-infected methamphetamine addict reduced to home burglaries. They are already on a death spiral; and having seen death by AIDS and hepatitis C, it's already something that I wouldn't wish on my worst enemy.

The irony is not lost on me that a computer used to fight addictions was stolen by a drug addict. It's a 15-inch MacBook Pro (SN W8627104VWZ); it has an impact dimple in its metal casing in the upper left hand corner of the keyboard. Certainly I'd like the machine or the data back. Failing that, I've moved on because the struggle continues. Addiction is slavery, and I'm a conductor on an underground railroad. As Harriet Tubman put it: "I have freed many slaves, and could have freed thousands more if they only knew they were slaves." You can't free a slave; they must free themselves. Just another lesson in survival.

*Mark Harris is an instructor and substance abuse prevention coordinator at LCC.*

## How to Be Happy

by Shannon Wheeler



## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### DEHUMANIZING OF LIFE

I don't know what I find more offensive, the death of 32 people at Virginia Tech or our president's comments regarding it. He calls the massacre of these innocent civilians "horrific and indescribable." While I absolutely and wholeheartedly agree with his opinion on the matter, I find it astounding that this comes from a man whose actions have resulted in a death toll thousands of times larger than 32. How dare he sit and espouse his opinion on the matter after filling our airwaves with nothing but death and destruction for the last five years?

We are hearing and will continue to hear the stories of these students whose lives were cut short, but we won't hear the stories of Iraqi and Afghan children whose bodies were mutilated by land mines, shrapnel and bullets. We are hearing about the effect the faculty had on these young people and the families left behind, but we don't hear the stories of fallen American soldiers who no longer will parent their children because their lives have been lost to a war based on lies. We will rejoice as we hear the stories of those fortunate enough to survive and begin the process of recovery, but we don't hear about the tens of thousands of soldiers coming home with physical and mental injuries that will change their lives forever.

What I find horrific and indescribable is that this administration does not see that the violence of their war and the resulting barrage of violent images in news, print, and television have resulted in the dehumanization of life. Their actions are partly to blame for this tragedy.

*Tim Broadbent  
Eugene*

### AMAZING MIDWIVES

I loved working with Paul Neevel when he interviewed me for his "Happening People" piece last week (4/12). I've gotten wonderful feedback and many people wanting to know more about the organization I run, Doulas Supporting Teens. Everyone can get more information by checking us out at [www.doulassupportingteens.org](http://www.doulassupportingteens.org)

Also, I'd like to clarify a small detail. Paul wrote, "A midwife works with the physical side of birth while a doula provides emotional and educational support." It would be more accurate to say that midwives work with the physical side of birth as well as providing emotional and educational support. Eugene's community of midwives are amazing and I didn't want them to be sold short!

Thanks, *EW*, for being a paper that keeps this town "happening"!

*Iris Bicksler  
Executive Director  
Doulas Supporting Teens*

### IT'S NOT OK

Our family donates what we feel is a fair share of our income to causes and issues, so we also receive a number of mail solicitations. The next one I receive from the Democratic Party (to whom we have donated previously), I'll send back with no check but instead include a note instead saying "It is not OK to have the Democratic National Convention in a nonunion hall owned by one of the Wal-Mart oligarchs."

Also, check out Oregon State Bill 20, intended to create a protective "buffer zone" around schools to reduce toxic pesticide exposure to children's developing brains. (Even though we know the drift goes 10+ miles, it's a start). In light of Oregon's growing rates of autism, allergies and asthma, this bill make good sense! Contact Oregon Toxics Alliance for more information.

We're in this together. Come on people: Call, write, put the pressure on!

*Deb McGee  
Eugene*

### A SHOUT OUT

I've been booking for the Downtown Lounge for about a year and a half. I'd like to give a shout out to some local bands and promoters who have really stepped it up this year and made a huge difference in the Eugene music scene.

First, Cindy Ingram is the promoter of the

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