

Eco-Logical Living

A bike trip to check out our northern neighbors

Many people in Eugene have a growing concern about climate change, resource depletion, increasingly unruly international relations and economic instability. With those concerns in mind, Eugene can boast of a number of creative initiatives for "eco-logical" living.



But what is going on elsewhere in the Pacific Northwest, and what can we learn from others? With that question in mind, during July I traveled more than 1,500 miles to central Washington state, Bellingham, Snohomish/Everett, Seattle and Olympia. People I visited showed me local examples of ecological culture change. I also gave presentations that touched on economics, global trends and human potential and explained how they relate to ecological culture change.

Of places I visited, favorite projects include The Hub in Bellingham – an expansive, you-fix-it, down-to-earth community bicycle center. Also, Zippy's is an upbeat and casual java bar in Everett that is home to a wide diversity of meetings and community events focused on positive culture change. Tonasket can boast of a citizen based community culture center. Seattle has numerous creative efforts that advocate downsizing lifestyles, urban gardening and alternatives to the automobile. Snohomish and Okonagon have their own green movements.

Olympia seems to have the greatest density of ecological initiatives of the towns I visited. One can stay at a permaculture bed and breakfast. But my favorite community asset was GRuB, a well organized and funded nonprofit dedicated to local food production. One of GruB's programs is installing raised bed gardens where people live, along with providing skill support for the gardens to be successful. GRuB is also youth education and volunteer oriented, collaborates with its next door neighbors and manages an in-town Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) farm.

Elsewhere in Washington, I was shocked to find dozens of suburban style developments in rural areas, far from town. The bucolic names of these places did nothing to mitigate this terrible land use. Distant from town, often in hilly areas, sometimes on islands, they are all highly dependent on cheap resources. I called my two-day bike ride on Whidbey Island the Tour of Driveways.

Perhaps the most instructive and revealing encounter for me was in the Methow Valley in central Washington near Twisp, where I had breakfast at the end of a 2-mile-long dirt road with 10 alternative locals. I asked everyone there to describe who they lived with, how far from town, their ideals and on-site resource potentials.

Individually, they were all lacking important elements of moving towards their ecological and social goals of taking care of more of their needs close to home. Difficulties included not enough people to collaborate with, not enough space, not enough financial resources, not all the skills needed and not enough time.

I suggested they consider doing an in-depth inventory of their personal and property assets and then consider discussing among themselves their respective pluses and minuses with the goal of creating a strategy that would generate the most benefits. I recommended selling the dead-end properties and creating an integrated cooperative venture among themselves at the best location.

Of course, such a strategy presents enormous challenges. The smartest choices we can make for the environment, peace on Earth and positive human potential are sharing our assets and resources in both urban and rural locations. Such strategies are the most contrary to our individualistic cultural upbringing. They are also contrary to an economy and way of life that depends on people being separate, competitive and disempowered. That economy is the source of our greatest challenges, local and global.

The tour was sobering. Sitting at Gas Works Park looking across Union Lake to downtown Seattle, with all the staggering urban elements in view – dozens of skyscrapers, elevated freeways packed with cars, sea planes landing and taking off, residences of all kinds, marinas crowded with boats – I reflected what an enormous task it is to transform the world we know into something at peace with itself. I don't think anyone really knows what sustainable is but any efforts in that direction must ultimately be honest and cooperative – and be judged not by human convenience but rather by Planet Earth.

Jan Spencer is a River Road area artist and activist involved in the Cascadia EcoFair, a "Culture Change weekend" coming up Aug. 23-26 in rural Coburg. For information and registration, visit cascadiaecofair.org or suburbanpermaculture.org or email spencerj@efn.org

"Exxon/Mobil to buy Con-Agra for a record \$12 billion in attempt to reign in bio-fuel production." "U.S. energy companies lobby Congress for sanctions against Brazil after their government takes over bio-fuel production." ... and on and on and on. See if you can think of some yourself!

*Christopher Colin Willow-Oak
Eugene*

WHICH SPECIES?

Greg Norman (8/9) really seems to like his alleged facts when arguing for the execution of feral cats — instead of neutering them — because they kill birds. Let's look at some more facts. Which species is it that drives the vehicles that kill thousands of birds every day on roads and highways? Humans! Which species is it that has displaced millions of birds with the construction of urban sprawl? Humans! Which species is it that abandons thousands of cats every day, thereby creating the feral cat population in the first place? Humans again! (Do I even need to mention global warming?) The verdict in the matter of bird depredation seems to be clear here. Humans are guilty! What do you think, Mr. Norman — shall we exterminate them, too?

*Dave Ryan
Eugene*

HOME RUN IN EUGENE

Like many transplants, I moved to Eugene with the clear choice to do so, about a year and a half ago. I fell in love with the place while visiting my grandchildren, and it hasn't let me down yet. On a daily basis I relish joggers who wave, construction flaggers who smile and cashiers who ask how I am like they really do want to know!

But an experience last week just hit the home run for me. I hopped into True Value Hardware on Willamette in South Eugene with my overworked ratchet loppers. They just wouldn't ratchet anymore. Mind you, I didn't even buy them at True Value, and this was the second time I'd brought them in as misbehaving. The first time, with a sheared-off bolt, two young men put their heads together and fashioned an automotive bolt cut down to the proper length that will probably outlive me. This time I truly didn't know what was wrong. One of the young men from the previous visit, when I announced that I needed yet another genius to help me, jumped right in.

We both scratched our heads, rubbed our chins, and he spotted the problem — a very small, two-coil spring had shorn off. When he didn't have a replacement the exact right size, he pulled a paperclip out of his pocket and

began to fashion a replacement spring for me by wrapping it around a Philips screwdriver. I was floored. A manager-type gent came by and watched over his shoulder. I was bracing for him to be "advised" not to spend so much time with a customer on what would basically be a non-sale, but he got only encouragement. When I asked what the charge was, he smiled and said, "Come in again." Whoa.

I bought a new cord for my pole pruner, screening for my porch and a broom and dustpan for my daughter, but was charged nothing for what I actually came in for, which *still* isn't the point. The attention I received and the willingness to try to solve my problem is what gained them a very loyal customer.

This is part of the reason I moved to Eugene, and I'm incredibly glad that I did.

*Barbara Hall
Eugene*

BASICALLY, IT'S FRED



Fred Thompson will take us back to basics. Back to a democratic government where all borders are secure. Using border crossings where people are held accountable, whether they need help to enjoy their visit or keeping those people out who come here taking advantage of all that we citizens hold dear.

Fred Thompson will be a big sigh of relief knowing that the federal government will not be the huge hungry monster that seeks to oppress the state governments, but instead making the federal government a guiding hand for states that wish to pass laws that will work for the *people* in that state.

Basics: That is what federal government should be, not an "All things to all people."

*Michael & Linda Berry
Coburg*

GUIDED REALITY

Instead of us dwelling in what we fight against, can we find the courage to dream and believe in what we truly want and commit to one act of gratitude as if we already have it?

Imagine living in a world without war and violence. We only know safety. All have amnesty in spite of our differences. All of humanity having a deep lasting bond of love and trust cementing us as one spirit. Civil liberties? What concern? All have plenty of health care, food and shelter and can hope to grow old like the still standing Appalachian / Pacific Crest forests, harmony and balance between all genders. Plenty of alternative

WHITEAKER

Live Music ALL DAY SATURDAY, AUGUST 18TH

in conjunction with the Whiteaker Block Party

10am- Chins Vinyl Licks
 12 noon- Tom Heint
 2pm- Free the Banjo Girl
 4pm- DJ Damon
 6pm- Catorce Ninas
 8pm- Mindless Thugs & Dafura Blues

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