

Four Meetings

What really goes on at the Pacifica Forum

In a Nov. 27 letter to the editor of *The Register-Guard*, Orval Etter, leader of the Pacifica Forum discussion group, and 15 co-signers denied accusations that the group is anti-Semitic and promoting bigotry. They concluded the letter with the following statement: "All who wish accurate information about what goes on at the forum are urged to attend rather than depend on letters to the editor or on hearsay, gossip or rumor."

With that in mind, here is what I experienced when I attended the last four meetings of Pacifica Forum.

Etter is a retired UO associate professor, an expert in municipal law and policy and a cellist known for organizing concert series. The meetings described each had about 15 to 25 attendees.

November 9

Etter spent the first 15 minutes discussing a symposium on Holocaust denial that UO professors had put on the previous night in response to Pacifica Forum is bringing revisionist historian Mark Weber to campus on Nov. 4. Etter claimed Weber's speech was about Israel policy, not Holocaust denial, and that the symposium constituted an ad hominem attack on Weber.

The meeting took place on the 69th anniversary of Kristallnacht, an event where Jewish property was destroyed in the early years of Nazi Germany. In recognition of that, Etter discussed a book that he didn't give the name of until the end of his presentation — *Flashpoint* by Ingrid Weckert, who has been convicted and fined in Germany for denying the Holocaust. The point of the book, as Etter described it, was that Kristallnacht was perpetrated on Jews by Jews to make the Nazis look bad.

Numerous meeting attendees spent a question and answer period yelling at Michael Williams, a member of the Community Alliance of Lane County's (CALC) Anti-Hate Task Force who has been

monitoring Pacifica Forum meetings since 2003, accusing him of having driven away previous forum sponsors such as the Wesley Center and the UO Survival Center. Williams denied the accusations, saying that someone else had given the Wesley Center a document he had written and that the Survival Center had asked to talk to him. Another meeting attendee burst into shouting about Zionist control of the media.

November 16

Pacifica Forum attendees spent the first 15 minutes of this meeting, titled "Elie Wiesel's Hate," complaining about a Nov. 13 letter to the editor in the *R-G* by Judy Dellar that criticized the group. Etter also circulated the letter that ran in the *R-G* on Nov. 27.

Etter distributed photocopied pages from some of Wiesel's books and focused his lecture on a paragraph from Wiesel's 1968 *Legends of our Time* in which Wiesel said it was healthy for Jews to hate the perpetrators of the Holocaust. Etter argued that this statement negated Wiesel's later writings about peace.

Valdas Anelauskas, a controversial Lithuanian immigrant and writer, presented a slide show during which he said the editing process that produced the English translation of Wiesel's famous *Night* removed hostility toward Germans that had existed in the original Yiddish version.

At the end of the meeting, Etter told Williams he would be glad to have the Anti-Hate Task Force and local Jewish leaders make a presentation refuting Wiesel's "doctrine of hate." Williams told Etter to make an

offer in writing and that he would consider it. "There hasn't been anything presented about a doctrine of hate," Williams said. "There's been a lot of ranting and a lot of rambling."

(As of Dec. 17, Williams said he still had not received such an offer from Pacifica Forum. He added in an e-mail, "From past experience, I think this is something they like to say in order to show how open they are, but it is not something they have ever followed through on.")

November 30

This meeting, which was the first of a two-part series on Pearl Harbor, consisted of viewing a videotaped lecture by Gregory Douglas. Etter noted while introducing the video that while he sees Douglas' views as similar to those of revisionist historians David Irving and Mark Weber, even Weber and Irving dislike Douglas. (Weber described Douglas' work as an "elaborate hoax" on the Institute of Historical Review website.)

Douglas claims Winston Churchill had warned Franklin Roosevelt about Japanese ships approaching Pearl Harbor in advance of the attack on Dec. 7, 1941, but that Roosevelt chose to ignore the warning in order to get the U.S. involved in WWII. The bulk of the lecture focused on a book Douglas had written about Nazi Gestapo chief Heinrich Müller, who he claimed moved to Washington, D.C., after the war and advised the U.S. government on how to handle communists.

(The CIA file on Müller, now declassified and available through the National Archives online, says the CIA didn't know Müller's whereabouts after he disappeared in May 1945.)

Later, after denying that he was a conspiracy theorist, Douglas described how the

burning of the Branch Davidians' compound in Waco, Texas, and the bombing of the Oklahoma City federal building were perpetrated by the U.S. government, and he said that the U.S. government was capable of using cable TV boxes as receivers to eavesdrop on people in their homes.

December 7

Etter circulated a Bob Herbert syndicated column, stating that the Democratic Party lacked vision, to be signed by those in agreement and sent to Oregon's congressional delegation.

"This forum is more than an information forum," he said. "It's an action forum."

Etter said he had recently been complimented by two people, neither of whom had attended a forum, for his role in carrying on Pacifica Forum.

"If we sometimes think we're a voice crying in the wilderness," he said, "we're not."

Etter said that during the 1930s, he was apprehensive about the coming world war, and that Japan's attack on Pearl Harbor silenced isolationists and pacifists like him. He read an article entitled "The First Casualty" that he had written for the magazine *Fellowship* in 1951. In the article, he wrote that myths about WWII were peddled to the American people and that some Axis attacks on the U.S. were secretly provoked by the U.S. in order to increase support for the war.

Jimmy Marr discussed the book *Pearl Harbor: The Story of the Secret War* by George Morgenstern, which Weber had given the group. He said the U.S. provoked Japan to war through diplomatic demands, trade sanctions and embargoes.

Etter went on to say that the commonly accepted story of Pearl Harbor is more unbelievable than any novel and that the truth might come out if Americans were more accepting of accounts such as that of Douglas.

The meetings described in this article all took place in McKenzie Hall on the UO campus. The next meeting on Jan. 11 will take place in the Erb Memorial Union's Walnut Room; Etter said the EMU director requested the group move to a more supervised area because of controversy over Mark Weber. **EW**



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