

ECO-ARSON TRIAL IN TACOMA

The only accused arsonist in the FBI's Operation Backfire arrests to go to trial is in court in Tacoma, Wash.

Briana Waters is accused of being a look-out in the arson that destroyed the University of Washington Center for Urban Horticulture. She is also accused of assisting in building "firebombs" with timing devices. Testimony in the case started Feb. 11, and the trial is expected to last a month.



Briana Waters

Waters, a violin teacher and mother of a 3-year-old daughter, currently lives in Berkeley, Calif., and she maintains her innocence. If she is convicted, she faces up to 35 years in prison. Eugene's Civil Liberties Defense Center (www.cldc.org/waters.html) is providing updates on the trial on its webpage. — Camilla Mortensen

READY FOR ROUNDUP READY SUGAR?

The Sierra Club, food safety advocates and organic farmers sued the USDA last month over a decision to allow sugar beet farmers to start planting Roundup Ready sugar beet seeds.

While Oregon ranks sixth in nationwide production of sugar beets, the Willamette Valley produces almost all the seeds for sugar beets grown in the U.S. These days the sugar you put in your coffee has just as good a chance of being from sugar beets as it does from sugar cane, since a little more than half of the sugar grown in the U.S. is from the beets. In 2008 the sugar you eat has an excellent chance of having grown from genetically modified seeds.

In 2005, the USDA approved a Roundup Ready sugar beet seed. Like Roundup Ready corn, alfalfa and soy the seeds are resistant to Monsanto's herbicide Roundup. Opponents to the decision argue that the environmental impacts of the seed, including cross-pollination, were not adequately assessed.

Sugar beets can cross-pollinate with Swiss chard and ordinary table beets. Roundup Ready sugar beet pollen could conceivably make its way into another farmer's organic beet crop. This has repercussions for Oregon's organic farmers who cannot use genetically modified seeds. Other Roundup Ready crops such as corn and wheat have allegedly accidentally cross-pollinated with the crops of farmers using non-genetically modified seeds.

Critics point out that the long-term affects of these genetically modified seeds are unknown. Data from American Crystal shows the company has already begun planting the biotech seeds in trial sites and plans to plant the genetically modified seeds to use in sugar in 2008. — Camilla Mortensen

LOVING YOUR LUNCH BOX

Local Eugene business owner Nancy Owen Myers has partnered up with a fellow lunch-packing moms to tackle the issue of soggy sandwiches in a reusable, washable and durable lunch box. Kids are going bananas for the roll out packs that keep their food contained, calm and collected.

The lunchboxes come in a variety of colors and hold four small plastic containers for food, a drink bottle and a salad dressing container. The packs unfold and can be used to sit on when not holding food items.

Myers and her friends got fed up with putting lunches together for their children in bags that fell apart. "The lunches would get squished, and the kids wouldn't eat the food. When they'd come home, there would be food left over in the lunches I packed for them," said Myers.

This led Myers and friends to create LunchSense, a company that launched this year that sells lunch boxes designed by Myers.

Word of mouth about the lunch boxes got out when kids around Myers's kids and their friends began taking the lunch boxes to school. "Kids are telling kids about them. They go ape for it, and they like the look of them," said Myers.

Myers hopes to launch the lunch boxes in the Pacific Northwest and on the web in the next year. She also hopes to have them made out of reusable and eco-friendly materials abroad. "Most of the materials used are made overseas. It is cheaper to have it done over there," said Myers.

She has plans for a set of lunch boxes to be used for picnics and a series of bicycle-friendly packs. She will exhibit the lunch boxes at the Better Living Home Show in Portland in March. Call 541-515-0089 to find out more about the lunch boxes.

— Mark Arellano

HEALTH CARE REFORM ON THE AGENDA

The Democratic presidential race is stirring a debate on who has the best health care plan, but few details are being discussed in the media. Meanwhile, the practical points of comprehensive health care reform are being examined in Oregon, and the public is invited to join in.

There will be a series of public meetings sponsored by the Eugene-Springfield chapter of the Archimedes Movement and Health Care for All-Oregon. The next meeting will be at 7 pm Wednesday, Feb. 27, in the EWEB Board Room, 500 E. 4th Ave. in Eugene.

On the agenda will be a presentation on the Oregon Health Fund Board's plans for the Oregon Health Plan for low-income Oregonians. Many low-income Oregonians, including many children, are not covered by the existing plan, due to lack of funding, federal restrictions on the use of federal dollars and bureaucratic obstacles. Rhonda Busek, vice-president of Lane Independent Practice Association, which is responsible for the per-

• Let's see if we have this right. A Eugene police sergeant appears to seek to **intimidate the independent police auditor** questioning his performance by using his official position to file a criminal complaint against her. The police chief, who never wanted an auditor to begin with, immediately refers the frivolous complaint to the district attorney. The DA, who works closely with police and has a clear conflict of interest, immediately launches a full-bore criminal investigation. City staff withhold information from the City Council on the complaint for more than a week. Sounds like official misconduct to us.

• **Some news in city elections.** Mayor Kitty Piercy has three challengers so far in May: Ian Goldfarb, Jim Ray and Nick Urhausen. The City Council Ward 1 open seat currently held by the retiring Bonny Bettman has George Brown and Shimeon Greenwood on the ballot, and we've heard rumors of a possible third candidate, Jason Blair, a project director at Oregon Research Institute who campaigned for the downtown urban renewal measure that Brown opposed. Blair, who also writes film reviews for *EW*, is still undecided. "I've been considering it," he tells us this week. "I think it's a huge opportunity to improve relations at the council level. My only hesitation is whether I'd have the time to do the job properly." Andrea Ortiz (Ward 7) now has a challenger, John R. Crane, a local businessman and former CEO of Kidsports. Betty Taylor (Ward 2) and Chris Pryor (Ward 8) are still running unopposed. March 6 is the filing deadline for the May primary.

• **What's Jim Torrey up to?** The former mayor wrote a letter to the editor of the *Oregon Daily Emerald* last week talking about being politically "independent" and nonpartisan and urging Democrats to vote for Barack Obama in May. OK, you can lower those eyebrows now. The longtime Bush supporter did NOT say he'd be voting for Obama in November, just supporting him in the primary. Torrey's maintaining a high profile. He's on the 4J School Board and was a guest at the conservative Rubicon Society recently, and his name pops up in phone surveys asking people how they rate local politicians. Is Torrey contemplating a last-minute filing for the mayor's race? He might be polling better than Pat Farr, and let's not forget the attempt to write in Torrey when Nancy Nathanson lost the mayoral primary to Kitty Piercy in 2004. What would Torrey's campaign slogan be? How about "A Mayor for Sprawl of Eugene"?

• Dave Hauser, president of the **Eugene Area Chamber of Commerce**, sent a letter to the mayor and councilors this week complaining about the lack of geographical balance on city boards, committees and commissions. This sounds more like a political wedge issue than a real and substantive concern. A lot of thought, consideration and recommendations go into the appointment process by the mayor and council. The Chamber didn't make a peep when Mayor Torrey stacked city panels with pro-sprawl conservatives, many of whom are still serving. Piercy and the council are actually bringing more diversity of thought and attitude to city government.

SLANT includes short opinion pieces, observations and rumor-chasing notes compiled by the EW staff. Heard any good rumors lately? Contact Ted Taylor at 484-0519, editor@eugeneweekly.com

Happening people BY PAUL NEEVEL

HAPPENING PEOPLE AT THE HULT

Twelve years ago, in February of 1996, "Happening People" made its debut as a column in *Eugene Weekly*. This photograph of artist Kari Johnson, along with her sculpture *The Revolutionary Oracle*, appeared a few months later, in June of 1996. The Oracle was one of seven pieces



included in that summer's Outside Art exhibit in downtown Eugene. As of February 2008, 670 individuals and groups, each of them nominated by readers of the *Weekly*, have been featured as Happening People. Beginning this Friday, Feb. 22, and continuing through March 29, a selection of portraits from the HP archives will be on display in the Jacobs Gallery at the Hult Center for the Performing Arts. The exhibit, titled *Telling Stories*, also includes large-format photographs of the disappearing traces of man in the wild areas of Oregon, from tidewaters to high desert, by Corvallis photographer Rich Bergeman. An opening reception is scheduled for 5:30 to 8:30 pm Friday, Feb. 22. All past, present and future Happening People are cordially invited to attend.