

Inside Baseball

The new UO stadium plan stinks

The new deal to build a baseball stadium for the UO and the Eugene Emeralds in the parking lot of Autzen Stadium undermines the appeal of minor league baseball and poisons the local fan's love of the game. It eviscerates our connection to legends of the past and demolishes our shared history. To put it simply, the new deal stinks.

It stinks for a number of reasons. First, it's a tragic, mind-boggling continuance of Eugene's sad history of bulldozing old, historic buildings in the name of modernity or expediency. Cases in point: the historic courthouse, the armory, Mac Court. In place of the courthouse, we have an eyesore that contributes nothing historically, architecturally or aesthetically to downtown, and with Mac Court we lose not only a building, but also our vital connection to teams of the past, our communal moments of heartache and celebration. All of it, gone.

This latest deal also marks the demise of one of Eugene's most unique landmarks. Built in 1938, Civic Stadium was a Works Progress Administration project and is one of the oldest stadiums in the country still hosting minor league baseball games. Enter the words "Civic Stadium" in Wikipedia's search



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engine and discover the rich history of our beloved ball park, a national envy. It has been the Emeralds' home since 1969 when the team moved to Civic Stadium from Bethel Park.

Prior to becoming the permanent home field of the Ems, Civic Stadium hosted the Eugene Caseys of the Cascade League in the 1940s and 1950s. Its construction is uniquely Eugene, with giant timbers felled from the local forests and an old fashioned scoreboard operated by local school kids.

The new deal, which promises to destroy Civic Stadium in two years, also lets the 4J School District completely off the hook for their quiet, avaricious campaign to sell off or profit from the prime piece of real estate that the stadium occupies. By seeking a court ruling that allows the district to sell the property, 4J forced the Ems to seek other opportunities to stay in Eugene. So the Ems struck a deal with the UO, which only wants a new baseball stadium to complement its new football and basketball facilities.

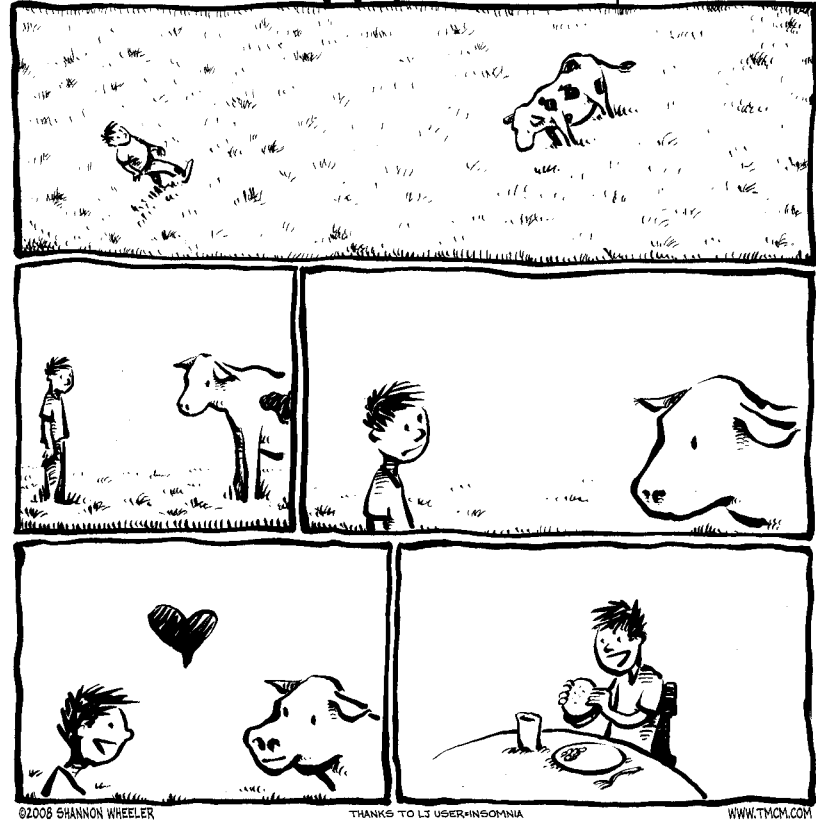
There appears to be a total and complete unwillingness on the part of 4J, the city and the UO to think creatively about ways to generate revenue from the site and preserve Civic Stadium. Couldn't a portion of the land be converted to retail space? Won't the city step up to fund some of the necessary renovations? Is the university so focused on building new sports facilities that it can't see the potential for a truly unique stadium? With the recent boom in all things "throwback," certainly Nike can understand the potential of Civic Stadium. After all, it isn't simply the sport of baseball local fans cherish; it's summer nights at the ball park, where people of all ages put aside their differences and come together to cheer on the team; it's the camaraderie, the feeling of community, it's the authenticity of place.

Ems fans, it's time to take action. We vow to support our team for two more summers. For two more summers, we will "walk over the hill," sit in the sun, eat ice cream out of a helmet, drink a microbrew and soak in the history of those giant timbers. For two more summers, we will watch kids change the runs, hits and errors in the scoreboard and wonder which of the current crop of Ems might make it to the Bigs; for two more summers, we will stand shoulder-to-shoulder with family and friends and root, root, root for the Emeralds. For two more summers, we will say to ourselves, as we drive by Volcanoes Stadium in Keizer, "Thank god we don't have to watch baseball in a parking lot."

Eric Jones works for the National Forest Foundation; Paul Martone is an instructor at LCC and a published writer of fiction.

How to Be Happy

by Shannon Wheeler



LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

FACTS OMITTED

It appears that Alan Pittman has joined our conservative friends in their habit of self-righteously preaching solutions that are simplistic, printable as "sound bites" and wrong. A case in point is his statement on the News Briefs page of the Feb. 21 *EW* on 4J School Choice. (Strange, I thought Ted Taylor, the *EW* editor, wrote editorials and Pittman wrote news. That distinction seems to have disappeared.)

Nowhere in this statement does he mention the demographics that motivate Russell's plan to close one of three South Eugene neighborhood elementary schools within less than a mile of each other. Nor does he mention that Russell himself has said on a number of occasions that one of those schools must be closed no matter where Eastside ends up. And of course he would never think of mentioning the 2006 recommendations of the board-mandated and approved Eastside review report to continue Eastside "as a strong, viable and effective alternative school and preserve its distinctive strategy as part of a district program of school choice."

Has any of the three neighborhood schools been reviewed recently? Is there an explanation of why Harris's enrollment continues to drop while Edison's and Parker's don't? School diversity is a complex issue which Eastside is facing head on. Unlike Pittman's simplistic approach, the Eastside community has developed a comprehensive plan. When coupled with policies on marketing, recruitment and transportation that only 4J has the authority to implement, the diversity of Eastside's population will increase significantly.

David R. Sokoloff
Eugene

AN HONORABLE MAN

On Feb. 28, environmental activist Jeff Luers' 22 years and 8 month sentence was reduced to 10 years. Mr. Luers was resentenced to 90 months for an admitted June 16, 2000,

arson that caused \$50,000 of reparable damage to three trucks, and to 30 months for an alleged, but denied, May 27, 2000, attempted arson that caused \$0 in damage.

If Lane County Assistant DA Hasselman had decided that Luers could serve the 90 months for the admitted Romania fire and the 30 months for the Tyree non-starter concurrently, he would have been free to leave the courtroom with the rest of us at 9:30 am because he has been incarcerated since his June 16, 2000, arrest, 92 months ago.

But Hasselman argued that Jeff should serve the 90 and 30 month sentences consecutively. Judge Billings agreed, even though he described Luers' statement as the most impressive he'd heard in 35 years as a lawyer, compared him to a returning war hero and heaped praise on Luers' male lawyers, Hugh Duvall and Jesse Barton. Judge Billings did note Luers' female lawyer, Lauren Regan.

As a resident of Lane County, I am disgusted that Luers did not walk out a free man on Feb. 28. It is not surprising that Luers was the most thoughtful defendant Judge Billings has encountered in 35 years — Luers was the most thoughtful and honorable man in the courtroom on Thursday.

Deborah Frisch
Eugene

SHARE OUR WEALTH

I watched the local evening news recently and saw a piece on how homeless people are being blocked off of areas under bridges where they go for shelter. They found needles and trash and fecal matter there. (Oh my!) Well, how about some compassion? How about getting compost toilets and trash bins under there? How about donating tents and sleeping bags?

Or even better, let's donate vacated buildings and hire building managers. Hire some of the homeless who need jobs? We could stop subsidizing the oil companies