

Campaign Echoes

Hopes rise and fall on who will lead

I remember my first entry into a discussion of presidential politics. I was 6 years old in 1952 when Adlai Stevenson was running for president against Dwight Eisenhower. This was at the height of Sen. Joseph McCarthy's investigations and such un-thoughtful films as *Red Menace* and John Wayne's *Big Jim McClain*. My father, a United Presbyterian minister, was a Republican at the time, but very much liked Adlai's intellectual and social perspective and humor and planned to vote Democratic that year. After church one day, as Dad was talking with several members, somehow the presidential election came up. I joined into the conversation, gravely reporting to the church group that although my father was registered Republican, he was going to vote Communist in November. Somehow he got out of that one. (It was only years later that Dad did lose a pastoral job as a result of his support for fair housing in then-all-white Whittier, Calif.)



Fast-forward 24 years to 1976 and my 4-year-old son Josh's first entry into a discussion of presidential politics. It was summer, and Josh, I, my husband, O'B, and 2-year old Zeke were at the Los Angeles County Fair. We were watching some Balkan folk dancers on an outdoors stage. Suddenly the music was cut off, the dancers were shooed off the stage and a phalanx of Secret Service agents took up positions across the back wall of the stage, facing the audience. In a minute we learned that Jimmy Carter, running for president against Gerald Ford, was going to give a stump speech.

"Why did the dancers stop?" Josh asked.

We explained that they left the stage so that Jimmy Carter, who was hoping to become president of the United States, could come on stage.

Josh: "Is he going to dance, too?"

O'B: "Well, sort of."

O'B put Josh on his shoulders so he could see Jimmy, and everyone proceeded to listen to a 20-minute talk. I figured Josh was probably paying most attention to the tops of people's heads while on O'B's shoulders. But, no. He apparently had listened to every one of Jimmy's sentences, because as soon as Jimmy finished, Josh noted with enthusiasm, "If he becomes president, he's going to have a lot of things to do!"

O'B assured Josh that Jimmy probably wouldn't do everything he had promised.

Twelve years later it is 1988, and I encounter my first indigenous Australian discussion of a U.S. presidential campaign. O'B, Josh, Zeke and I are in a small, crowded campground near Cairns on the northeastern coast of Australia. Perhaps a dozen or more Aboriginal people live in the campground in small trailers. Fourteen-year-old Zeke is laid up with a severe sunburn from a few hours of snorkeling without a shirt. The evening is warm, and we're lying outside our tent, on top of our sleeping bags. Several of the Aboriginal men and women are talking excitedly about Jesse Jackson's presidential candidacy.

"Do you think he can win?" one asks. The others aren't sure, but they're hopeful, and they discuss it for a while longer. This was touching. Seven thousand and eighty-six miles from Eugene, and feelings are rising and falling on a U.S. presidential campaign.

I think back on these stories spanning 36 years and their echoes in this year's campaign. A John Wayne/Big Jim McClain-type candidate. The ever-present Secret Service. The stumping, the dancing and the promising. An African-American candidate and a woman candidate. And surely some 6-year olds entering their first presidential discussions.

2008. My once-sunburned-snorkler son Zeke is volunteering for the first time in a presidential campaign. Before the California primary he was knocking on doors in an African-American neighborhood in Oakland, delivering flyers and urging folks to vote for Obama. A resident walking in the street was suspicious of why Zeke was carefully searching for particular address numbers.

"What are you doing in this neighborhood?" he demanded.

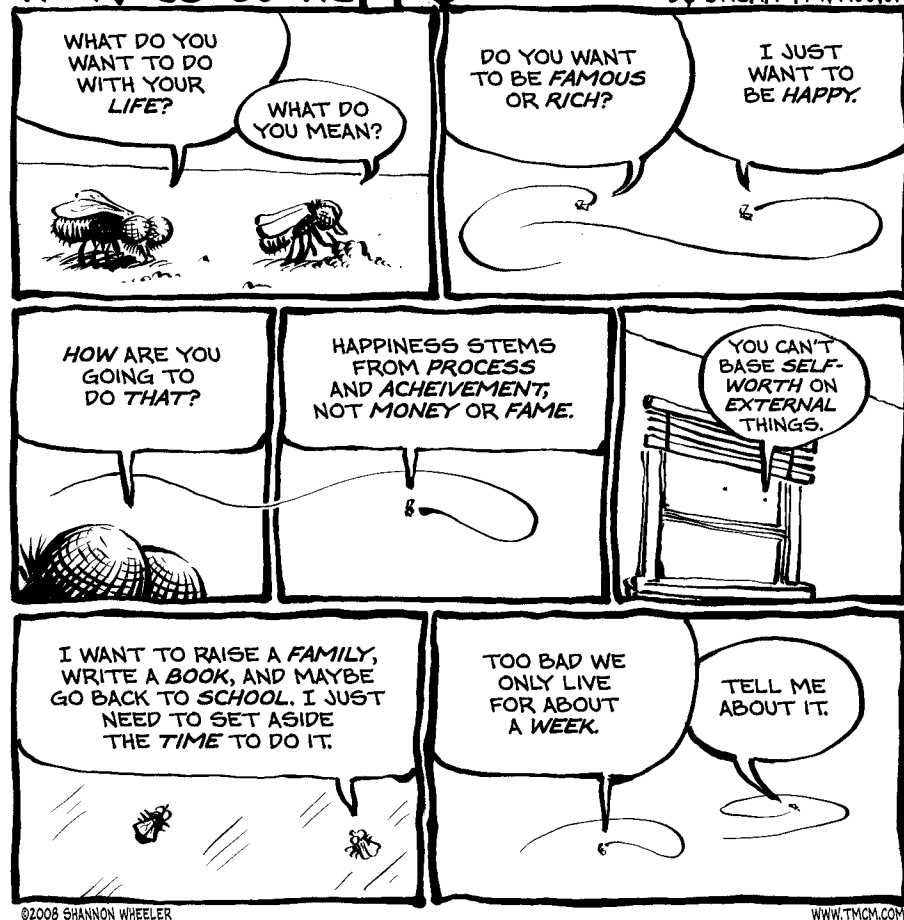
"I'm encouraging people to vote for a presidential candidate in two days," Zeke responded.

"Oh. OK," he said. And then: "I hope that black man wins."

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How to Be Happy

by Shannon Wheeler



LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

ENOUGH OF THIS CRAP

I sympathize with the authors of "Inside Baseball" (Viewpoint, 3/6) about tearing down neat old buildings. Eugene definitely has a knack for tearing down neat old things. The sadder thing is that too often they replace them with crap. The courthouse is a great example as is the downtown mall killing a vibrant cityscape. Now we're on the verge of losing Civic Stadium and McArthur Court — two venues with so much history and personality and unique odors. The problem is, these two buildings no longer serve their purpose.

As exciting as it is, McArthur Court is a very uncomfortable place to watch a basketball game, especially if you have to go to the bathroom and/or are sitting behind a pillar. Civic Stadium, I have on good authority, is terribly difficult and expensive to maintain even to its current dilapidated condition. And I've heard the bathrooms are worse than at Mac Court.

So I say, tear down these old bastions if you must, Eugene. All hail new toilets and unobstructed sightlines, easy exit in case of fire, and concession stands that pass the health department. But please, please, please, don't replace them with crap!

*Paul Roth
Springfield*

TIME TO RUBBLE

When I started reading the Viewpoint (3/6), I thought we were nearing the end of civilization as we know it. Then I realized that the writers were talking about sports stadiums.

In fretting about the new UO/Ems stadium they wrote "It eviscerates our connection to legends of the past and demolishes our shared history." Oh my!

About the new basketball arena they worry "we lose not only a building, but also a vital connection to teams of the past, our communal moments of heartache and celebration. All of it gone."

Get a grip, guys.

Civic Stadium and Mac Court are aging, ugly, deteriorating, rat-infested eyesores. Just because they are old does not make them special. I attend games at Civic, and we are season ticket holders at Mac Court. I can't wait for their replacements. They have both outlived their usefulness to the teams and the community.

And who says new facilities have to be uninspiring? Tell the Baltimore Orioles or the Colorado Rockies that their new facilities are bland. Tell the Seattle Mariners or Seahawks that new stadiums somehow kill the connection to the past. What a bunch of hooley!

Anyone who pays attention knows that the UO builds terrific sports facilities. The new basketball arena and the new baseball stadium will be first-rate additions to our community.

Life will go on long after Civic Stadium and Mac Court are rubble. Go Ducks!

*Randy Kolb
Eugene*

FISH THE PIT

Regarding the perpetual pit across from the library downtown, why don't we fill it with water, stock it with trout, plant grass sod and shrubbery around the edge, install benches and hold a couple of fishing derbies for the kiddies?

*Terry Heintz
Eugene*

CLUELESS AD

Track Town USA has shown itself to be a real throwback to the era of its origins, the 1960s. Their latest TV ad promoting the Olympic Trials consists of the words "The Whole World Is Watching" flashed over and over to the canned audio of some protesting demonstrators somewhere chanting those words. The use of this iconography to sell a sporting event is obscene. I'm guessing that the originators are clueless as to what's