

Kroger's Intensity

AG candidate pushes meth intervention

A few weeks ago, I was looking at the photo series of increasingly ravaged meth-amphetamine users in a window of the Eugene bus station, when an acquaintance walked up.

"See any of your friends there?" he joked.

"Yes. My brother," I responded.

He tilted his head quizzically. "My brother used meth for several years," I said. I told him how one Christmas Day my brother arrived at our family gathering on his custom-designed motorcycle. He looked as much like Death as the small skull with glowing red eyes that was embedded in the bike's body. My brother: skinny, hollow cheeks, deep-sunken dark eyes, bad teeth. Like the Presbyterian minister father of Norman MacClean's self-destructing brother in *A River Runs Through It*, my Presbyterian minister father never could fathom what had gone wrong.

But for all his adult life, my brother, like my sister, has suffered from severe bipolar disorder. When they're up, they're manic and can be wildly irresponsible. When they're down, they can pass days in a fetal position. When you're down, there's nothing quite like meth to chemically lift you up. For a while.

A few days after pondering the meth photos, I heard Oregon attorney general candidate John Kroger speak about his intention to bring Oregon up from its shameful 45th position among the 50 states for access to meth treatment. He spoke of the folly of simply imprisoning meth users while out-of-state drug cartels fill the void left after Oregon's Legislature wisely took psuedoephedrine off pharmacy shelves. The Legislature effectively shut down most do-it-yourself meth labs but not the stream of meth into and through our state.

Meth can sound an irresistible siren song for some who are lonely, sad or working too hard, for instance, in slaughterhouses and oil fields or as a single parent holding two jobs. Mimicking adrenaline, meth offers the user some momentary pleasure, a huge energy boost and freedom from inhibitions. It suppresses appetite, promising weight loss. At no extra cost, it often throws in psychosis, brain damage, paranoia, cognitive impairment, HIV transmission and violent behavior. And it can be instantly addictive, with some effects of a single use lasting days to months. With continued use, the user's body gradually adjusts, cutting back its own production of pleasure-inducing endorphins and requiring more and more meth to provide ever-diminishing highs. A true hell hole.

While most property crime in Oregon is due to users' endless quest for money to feed their drug (especially meth) supplier, the most appalling fallout of meth use is users' abuse of their children. Imagine being the 2-year-old child of an Oregon meth addict who is turned away from drug treatment because of lack of funding. This, I sense, is a major source of Kroger's intensity about treating meth users while prosecuting established drug cartels.

Is it possible for a user to crawl out of her or his meth hole? Yes (for example, my brother did it), but not in a day or on a dime. Research shows that extended residential treatment offers the greatest turnaround potential, followed by months and years of vigilant social support. This isn't cheap, but, as Kroger points out, the most expensive in-patient treatment costs approximately two-thirds of the cost of keeping a meth user in jail, plus the recidivism is less. Moreover, states more progressive than ours regarding meth claim incarceration savings of four to seven dollars for every dollar spent on treatment.

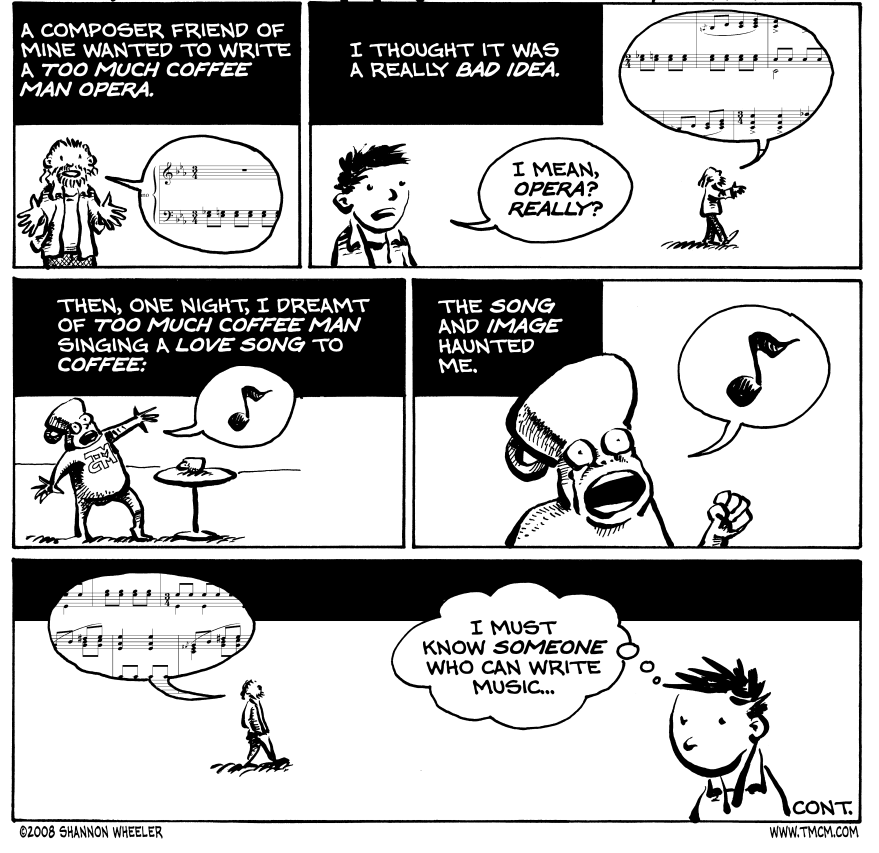
We have the chance to elect an attorney general who would help Oregon's justice staff go after a whole host of gripping problems, e.g., meth, global warming, consumer fraud and pollution, with intellect and energy – and a sense of what will really work. There's nothing incongruous at all about a determined prosecutor who advocates for prevention, treatment and supportive social networks throughout the state. It's just smart.

I wish I could report that everything's peachy with my brother now. The combination of bipolar disorder, diabetes, alcoholism, gang activity and meth addiction have taken their toll. He's nearly blind, and his feet hurt too much to walk to the end of his block. But he's not a meth user. He's no longer raising or in hell. There's something to be proud of there.



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How to Be Happy (OPERA ORIGIN) by Shannon Wheeler



Letters TO THE EDITOR

A PROCLAMATION

To all people of conscience: It is time, now! to withdraw from paying the U.S. federal government the war taxes which it demands.

Taxation can and does serve useful, necessary purposes when it is taxation for life. But to pay war taxes to our current government is an immoral act. Our federal government is now more than \$9 trillion in debt. Our country has become bankrupt as it pours money into devastating wars that kill and maim, that displace millions and leave entire countries destroyed; as it pours even more money into building nuclear and other weapons that can easily destroy the world in a few moments.

There can be no security that grows out of hatred and poverty, whether in some far country or right here at home. Our own security can only grow out of security around the world — the security of communities that care, of people who are able to live with dignity, the security of a renewed, living planet.

When policies and actions of a government become immoral, it becomes immoral to support them. Some among us live below a taxable income and find other ways within the law to withhold payments for war and devastation. But when taxes are "owed," we must turn within ourselves and evaluate our responses.

There are laws that are higher than those created by a government, laws of conscience and morality that we are called to obey. We are all complicit in the creating of the corrupt, immoral policies that presently rule our government and create suffering and destruction around the world. It is urgent that we seek courage to respond from a place of love. It is urgent that we seek courage to act according to our higher values. It is urgent that we seek within ourselves for a combined heart, opening to individual and national repentance and to a new kind of energy,

new life on this planet.

Peg Morton
Eugene

INFLEXIBLE EWEB

I pay my bills. Sometimes a little late. As a result of this, I pay late fees, over-limit fees and interest. When it comes to my power bill, it gets paid. It is always late because it is due upon receipt.

Unfortunately, the bill comes between pay periods. Yes, I know, plan ahead. But with three children and a house, things come up. Try on an \$800 dental bill for your 8-year-old son. Price of dental insurance prohibits my purchase of said insurance; we all know that one. Anyway, EWEB says that if you do not pay your bill on time for a set period of time, they throw a \$600 deposit on your account. That makes my bill next month about \$1,000. Come on. I find my \$300 bill hard to swallow. One thousand dollars?! That's crazy.

Furthermore, I was told that if I don't pay the full amount, as they add it to the bill amount, they will shut me off.

So what do I do? I haven't signed a contract. I didn't sign an agreement to have a deposit attached to me as a result of late payment. Don't get me wrong or misunderstand: I do pay my bill to this corporation. It's just late, not even 30 days late. So, if I pay this deposit, they will take my bill amount out of my deposit. After two months, my deposit will be gone and I will have paid my bill four times for two months. I don't feel like a customer anymore. I guess policy requires me to pay, question, but pay no matter what. I'm not asking for my bill to go away or to not have to pay.

Of course, bending the rules for one person would mean that a policy might change for everyone, but is that such a bad thing? I'm sure that I'm not the only person with a family who has this problem. Maybe the answer is for all the undesirable