

against UCLA, two fans in the bleachers got into a fight; one of them was led out in handcuffs, and the other, who fell ass over tea kettle across the railing, was hauled away in an ambulance.

A flagship program in the UO Law school, called Competition Not Conflict (CnC), took steps this week toward counter-ing the negative shift in sports culture when it brought in noted speaker Don McPherson. A former Heisman candidate out of Syracuse and pro football player, McPherson has dedicated himself to dismantling what he terms the “cheap entertainment” aspect of sports — which includes, he points out, the “narrow masculinity” of unbridled macho-ism that fosters aggression, greed, sexist attitudes and even violence against women as well as a win-at-all-cost temperament that is gladiatorial at best.

A self-declared feminist, McPherson left football “cold turkey” in 1994 and dove head first into academia in a search for answers to the questions that had been plaguing him. “As an individual, I try to keep sports in perspective in our culture, and we’ve lost that perspective,” he explains, adding that the ugly side of sports culture — outrageous salaries, “hyper-masculinity,” the primacy of victory over process — speaks to something awry in our culture at large. Sports as metaphor can act as both “canary in the coal mine or just a mirror for us,” McPherson says. For instance, he adds, the spectacle of chowderheads yelling “kill him” and “terrorist” about Obama during recent McCain/Palin rallies “parallels what’s happening in sports,” which boils down to an “I win/you die” dichotomy.

It’s not about the wholesale denigrating and dissing of sports, McPherson argues; it’s about getting things back in perspective and setting priorities in order. “I recognized a long time ago, sports is not about winning and losing,” he says. “It’s about process. We have made process an evil in our culture.” Unfortunately, McPherson adds, “the problem is going to continue to get worse,” especially with an imploding economy that leaves more and more people disenfranchised and scared. Subjected to the twin engines of fear and anger, “we are going to cling to sports,” he says.

However, McPherson sees good news in the success of Obama’s campaign, which gives evidence of a rejection of the anti-intellectualism and us vs. them attitudes of

the past decade. “There’s a move toward ‘let’s think about this for a moment,’” he says. “The evidence is there so far.”

Tori Klein, a UO law student who took over in August as director of CnC, explains that McPherson — a national figure with clout — perfectly exemplifies the organiza-tion’s goal of bridging the gap between ath-letics and academics. The program, which will touch all levels of athletic from youth to professional sports, will place emphasis on education about such issues as gender and cultural awareness, conflict resolution and communication. “We aren’t trying to elimi-nate the fun,” Klein says of the CnC’s work. “We’re refocusing. It’s a big project, but we’ve got all the time in the world.”

As one of the CnC’s first guest propo-nents of that refocusing, McPherson spoke Monday night on the issue of “Shifting Sport Culture” at the Knight Law Center — right smack in the middle, it might be noted, of the Monday Night Football broad-cast on ESPN. — *Rick Levin*

SPAY/NEUTER CLINIC TO CLOSE?

Eugene and Lane County’s efforts to stop killing so many of our stray pets have suffered another setback, and it’s not just animal advo-cates who are howling in protest.

A recent memo from Eugene Finance Director Dee Ann Raile to the mayor and the City Council said that the Eugene’s low cost spay/neuter clinic will be closed by mid-December. Animal advocates are upset over the loss of a clinic that prevented 3,000 of Eugene’s pets from breeding more unwanted animals last year. Local rescues say they doubt private vets and resources, like Willamette Animal Guild, a low cost spay and neuter clinic, will be able to fill the void.

The clinic closure has become a work-ers’ rights issue as well. Lou Sinniger, a representative of Oregon American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees (AFSCME), has filed a grievance. The clinic’s closure entails laying off three AFSCME employees.

Sinniger says that at a meeting with Raile on Oct. 9, “I asked her if there was anything we could say or do that would change her mind” about closing the clinic.

Happening people

BY PAUL NEEVEI

LURA PIERCE

Raised in Bartlesville, Okla., Lura Pierce studied English ed at Oklahoma State, then taught for three years in inner-city Louisville. “The largest junior high in the state, 90 per-cent black,” she says. “We learned about dis-crimination. It was the best thing that hap-pened to me.” As the wife of Presbyterian minister John Pierce, she lived briefly (and had kids) in Colorado and Texas, then spent 12 years in Spokane, where she raised the kids, got a degree in journalism, and taught for nine years at a private prep school. After the family moved to Eugene in 1989, she went for a Ph.D. in curriculum and instruction at UO. Dr. Pierce currently teaches sixth grade in her 18th year at Shasta Middle School. “I love teaching middle school; the kids are as honest as they can be,” she says. “I’m passionate about imparting love of learning.” Last May, Pierce’s class completed a biography project on the 23 U.S. Nobel Peace Prize winners, from Teddy Roosevelt to Al Gore, with a pre-sentation at the proposed Peace Park site in Alton Baker Park. The project earned her an award as peace educator of the year from the Nobel Peace Laureate Project. See a nine-minute video of the students’ presentation at youtube.com/user/NobelPeaceLaureate



• The **Eugene mayor’s race** is neck and neck between Democrat Kitty Piercy and erstwhile Republican Jim Torrey. Here’s a look at the key Torrey rhetoric vs. reality. Torrey knows business? Torrey’s business was selling ugly highway billboards, not running a city. Torrey is a uniter? As mayor, Torrey cast more than a dozen tie votes, threatened a “train wreck” if progressives were elected and bashed his opponents on conservative talk radio. Torrey will improve government relations? Torrey is endorsed by small-town Republican and conservative mayors, but Piercy will have better relations with the Democratic state and federal representatives who can deliver millions of dol-lars to Eugene. Torrey will rein in the police union? Torrey opposes indepen-dent external review and would let the police union, which gave Torrey \$20,000, run City Hall.

What this really is about is the environment and livability. Piercy would protect both for all Eugene. Torrey would give Eugene to the gravel miners and developers who have invested an unprecedented half-million dollars in his campaign.

• **Going postal with your voting?** The ballot is heavy and the postage required this time is 59 cents. Save yourself some money by dropping off ballots at the election office or any of the official white boxes around town. We hear two people at the UO campus are collecting ballots in unofficial boxes, but we really don’t know their intentions. An official ballot box is near the campus post office.

• **EW’s “Endorsements at a Glance”** is running again this week, and we’ve added two races. **Brad Avakian** gets our nod for the nonpartisan labor com-missioner. Avakian was appointed to the post when Dan Gardner resigned to take a lobbying job. Avakian is a former civil rights attorney, was a capable and effective legislator, and is performing well in his new position. We are also adding **Don Nordin** of Cottage Grove as our favorite for House District 7, encompassing parts of Lane and Douglas counties. Nordin’s long history of community involvement and his progressive perspectives offer a refreshing change from Republican Bruce Hanna’s conservative agenda. Nordin tells us he had to laugh when he saw the **R-G** editorial board reject him, along with Kitty Piercy and Rob Handy. “I’m in good company,” he says.

• **The R-G’s RiverBend Magazine** Sunday is a glossy 76-page magazine produced by PeaceHealth’s PR department in cahoots with the newspaper’s Special Publications Division, an odd marriage of convenience that blurs the line between advertising and editorial. For most readers, it’s not obvious who wrote the fluffy content. We also noticed the **R-G** recently advertised for an entry-level reporter while laying off half a dozen seasoned journalists. Experience is expensive.

• **Our mixed-message endorsement** of Eugene’s street-repair Measure 20-146 has raised a few eyebrows. Last week’s news story points out the problems in the measure and our endorsement itself is tepid. One caller asked if our “yes” was a typo. The bottom line: Eugene’s street infrastructure is crumbling and delaying repairs will just make it more expensive later. \$36 million is not much compared to our repair backlog estimated at \$173 million. This measure is the only plan our divided City Council would agree to; and we trust the judgment of Mayor Piercy and Councilors Bettman and Taylor, who all support the measure.

• **EW’s** always outrageous **Best of Eugene Awards Show** is Friday night at the McDonald Theater, and we invite everyone who likes bad jokes, dirty tricks and local politicians to join the party. Top local musicians will rock the stage and zany presenters will include The Donkey Show guys, Ken Babbs, Walker T. Ryan, Leigh Anne Jasheway-Bryant and some surprise guests. It’s all a benefit for White Bird, so scrounge up 10 bucks and join the fun. Doors open at 7 pm, show begins at 8.

• Eugene police hosted a **“Prevention Convention”** Oct. 18, a community event featuring Sexual Assault Support Services and other nonprofit groups volunteering with police officers to provide classes on more than a dozen topics, from property crime prevention to disaster preparedness to gun safety. It was a commendable effort to educate kids and adults in how they can work with police in making our city safer; and to build trust between police and the community. But the timing of this high-profile PR event is suspect. It happened the same day most Eugeneans got their ballots, and on those ballots are two items with heavy police implications: Eugene Measure 20-146 strengthens the police auditor function; and the mayoral race pits Kitty Piercy, a strong advocate for independent police review, against Jim Torrey, who favors less police oversight. The police and their union are far from neutral on these ballot items.

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