

Annals of an Interregnum

A tale of tortured civil rights in Lane County

Nationally and locally, we are in a period of transition, wherein the old regimes continue to exercise their power, and the new regimes are not yet in place.

Lane County District Attorney Douglas Harclerod, in the waning days of his decades-long reign, is blazing a trail of ignominy for the residents of the county, our state and our nation. Thus his tortured interpretation of conflicting rights in the case of the May 20 Taser incident at Ken Kesey Square, in which a few UO students brought an anti-roadside-pesticides skit to the heart of downtown Eugene. The EPD only became involved after Homeland Security agents activated them to squelch the protest. When the dust settled, three people had been arrested on serious criminal charges, and two sworn EPD officers had been brutal in their tactics, according to numerous onlookers.

The GOBs are on their way out, but they will not go easily, with the Eugene Police Employees Association and its real ringleader, Jim Torrey, lurking in the shadows.

To understand what happened that day, we have to go back decades to the time when the KKK's domination of Eugene and Lane County politics was the reality. Harclerod is the successor to that cabal in that he asserts the superior rights of those in positions of authority over ordinary citizens. The U.S. Constitution clearly asserts that in all cases, ordinary citizens' rights are equal to or superior to the rights of those in authority.

By linking arms with the interim Police Chief Pat Kerns, Harclerod and his deputy Alec Gardiner are attempting to shield the two protestor-accused officers from investigation by the department's Internal Affairs unit and by the independent Police Auditor Dawn Reynolds.

This good ol' boys (GOBs) end-run around the clear intent of the police auditor ordinance for investigations of serious misconduct by sworn officers to be effected "in a timely manner" is offensive both legally and morally. Also, the Civilian Review Board has certified the incident as a "community impact" issue, adding to the urgency of the need to determine if excessive force was used. We need to discipline the culprits and to modify EPD policies so this schoolyard bully tactic doesn't happen again.

The GOBs are on their way out, but they will not go easily with the Eugene Police Employees Association and its real ringleader, Jim Torrey, lurking in the shadows. Doug Harclerod and his go-along-to-get-along sidekick Alec Gardiner are hell-bent on turning the Constitution on its head, shredding all of our Constitutional rights.

If they succeed, we will go from being known as a seedbed of sustainability to the notoriety of being the only jurisdiction in the U.S. which places the rights of authority over the rights of the people. I hope our community leaders and the rest of us will rise to the occasion and send these relics to the graveyard of history where they belong.

Paul Prenskey is a longtime Eugene activist and former newspaper publisher.

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- Lane County Commission for the Advancement of Human Rights
- Community Alliance of Lane County
- Japanese American Association
- Hewa no Kane no Tsudoi EXCO
- Hiroshima Peace Action Center
- Hiroshima Council against A-and-H bombs
- Okayama COOP
- Hiroshima Tomo no Kai

The Vanished Cities

Time: **October 1, 2008 - November 30, 2008**
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Place: **The Atrium Building, 2nd floor
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