

Working Democracy

Our abundant ways to effect change

As one among the fortunate who are still employed, I look over the past week of work and volunteering with a great deal of gratitude – for some choices our country made long ago, last Nov. 4, and today.

Monday. I'm compiling materials for a coalition of 15 conservation groups, all of whom have the long-term health of southern Utah's national forests as some portion of their 2009 work schedule, whether their organization focuses on oil and gas extraction, livestock grazing, off-road vehicle use, clearcutting, lead bullets and condors or the forests' no-longer eternal springs.

Tuesday. 1) A phone strategy conference with border citizens working for a better solution to Mexican-U.S. social and economic disparities than an environment- and community-destroying Berlin wall. They're poor, they're new to activism and they're planning to teach citizens from 40 states how to lobby Congress for better approaches. 2) A phone strategy conference with three other people to plan a Working Beavers gathering in Spokane, Wash., with scientists, ranchers, conservationists and economists. (Yes, beaver are an economically sound watershed investment). 3) I bike to the Bijou to see *Milk*, the story of how Harvey Milk and his gay neighbors helped San Francisco, then California and ultimately our country understand why gay people deserve as many human rights as heterosexuals.

Wednesday. 1) A phone conference with fellow moderators of an upcoming "NEPA at 40" gathering. This conference will celebrate the 40th birthday of my favorite environmental law (National Environmental Policy Act) next to the Administrative Procedures Act (APA) and Freedom of Information Act (FOIA). The last two laws effectively discourage our government from acting secretly or dictatorially; the first requires that our government at least *consider* reasonable alternatives to behaving badly environmentally – including reasonable alternatives you, as a citizen, propose. 2) A phone conference to develop a reasonable alternative to proposed clearcutting of aspen and conifers on one national forest under NEPA. 3) A Citizens for Public Accountability meeting, working toward a prioritization of effective campaigns for keeping Eugene and Lane County governments accountable to all of us.

Thursday. 1) Twenty-five Eugeneans meet for the umpteenth time to inch toward our final report on options for west Eugene to simultaneously enhance its transportation, businesses, environment, and neighborhoods. (Are we having fun yet? Not always, but we're gonna get there.) 2) A second movie in one week (which is a personal record): *Frost/Nixon*, in which a lightweight, British TV talk show host and a humorless researcher help our country hold an ex-president to our rule of law as well as ethics.

Friday. Going to court is averted via a ninth and final version of a joint "appeal resolution" between two conservation groups and one national forest: we'll jointly examine conditions on a subalpine sheep allotment that I contend is being battered beyond legal standards for forests. Government, citizens and scientists will all look at the same piece of ground at the same time this summer.

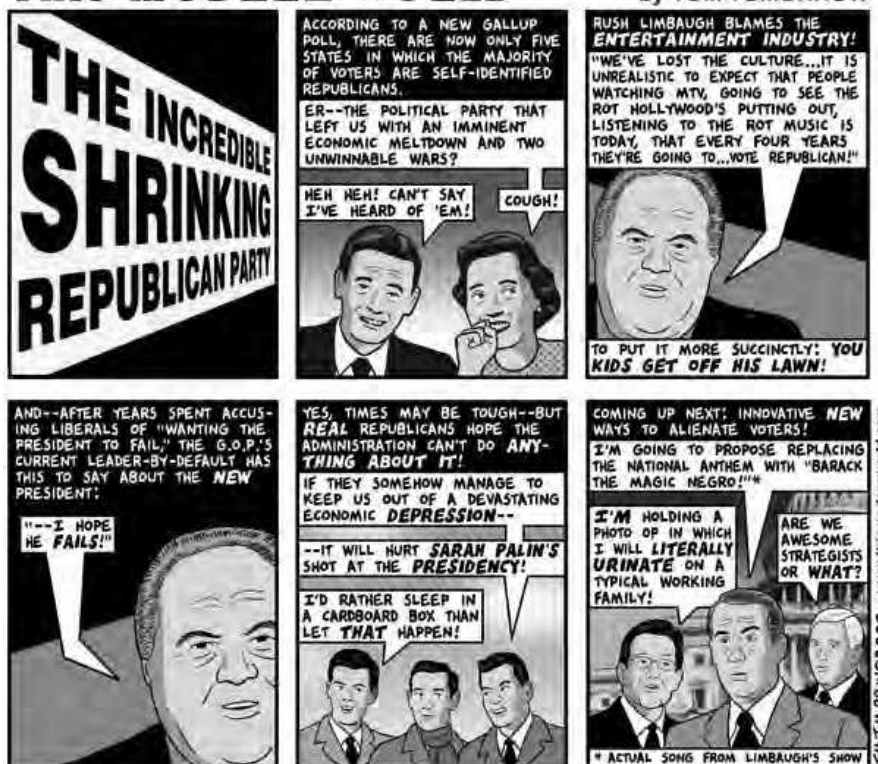
Here's to our country's incredible democracy, citizens and shared lands.

Mary O'Brien of Eugene has worked as a public interest scientist since 1981. She can be reached at mob@efn.org



THIS MODERN WORLD

by TOM TOMORROW



LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

PARKWAY INTO PARKLAND

Alan Pittman didn't report in "Bridge Impacts" (1/22) that the city of Eugene will receive wetland acreage from ODOT — formerly allocated to the West Eugene Parkway — to mitigate disruption of parkland flanking the I-5/Willamette bridge. The number of acres is under negotiation.

The Federal Highway Administration mandates this compensation whenever a public park has construction impacts for six months or more. The Whilamut Natural Area of Alton Baker Park will be affected from this April through December 2012.

Pittman is right: The new bridges are too wide. But the same FHWA that tells ODOT it cannot design these spans any narrower also applies Rule 6(f) of its code to mitigate for impacts.

Eugene's Parks and Open Space division would maintain the additional west Eugene acreage in its natural state. (Compensatory property needn't be contiguous to an area about to be affected.)

ODOT is also working with the CPC, Eugene and Willamalane Parks to redesign a pedestrian/bike detour path with safer sightlines and a more natural canoe canal under the freeway, a quarter-mile north of the river. It will be needed when the main north bank route is closed for construction.

David Sonnichsen
Eugene

EDITOR'S NOTE: A longer Viewpoint on this topic by David Sonnichsen can be found at www.eugeneweekly.com

BORING CITY ISSUES

This letter is in response to "Nothing Worth Reading," a letter you published on Jan. 29. Apparently the author felt that the endless coverage of the inauguration on every news channel, on every news web page and in every last national newspaper was insufficient! What we really needed was for our local newspaper to completely ignore local news and events, to talk about the same stuff everyone else in the bloody world was talking about that week. Because nothing

important happens in Eugene, right?

Well, I am *also* a 20-something student, and I care deeply about "boring city growth problems" and other local issues that will have a more direct impact on my life than the president. I'm sorry that some of my peers are too easily distracted by the glamorous happenings in Washington to care about their own backyards. I assure you that I, and other faithful readers, *do* care about our backyards and count on the *Weekly* to give us local news that we can't hope for from more mainstream sources! Thank you!

Steven A. McAllister
Springfield

BROKEN JUSTICE SYSTEM

I would like to thank the *Weekly* and former council member Bonny Bettman for a very informative article (cover story, 1/29) on how this city really functions.

It would appear the real reason that the city and county release child molesters, rapists, drug addicts, car thieves, burglars, etc. to prey on our citizens is so a few special interests can enrich themselves. In the last couple of weeks the papers have been full of terrifying incidents directly linked to our broken justice system.

If the citizens of Eugene and Lane County don't get off their rear ends and stop this kind of thing then we deserve what we get. It is not that hard. People like this are like cockroaches: Shine a light on them and they run for cover.

And just a note to the people who are diverting the money to enrich themselves: Just because you pass a law to make it legal does not mean you are not a thief.

Bob Springenberg
Eugene

TOO GREAT TO HATE

We were shocked and outraged by the heinous crime committed on Jan. 9 near the UO campus by Billy Brosowski and others as reported in the *Weekly's* News Briefs (1/15). We have also been astonished by the lack of response from the Eugene community.

According to the *Weekly* article, Joshua



27 Oakway Center
(541) 683-6438

Tuesday | February 10th
5-7pm Second Tuesday Wine Class
Call 683-6438 to sign up!

Wednesday | February 11th
5-7pm Complimentary Tasting
Henry Wine group will pour wines from Spain and the Southern Hemisphere.

Saturday | February 14th
Valentine's Day:
Chocolate and Sweet Wine Tasting!

Exciting Global Flights
Over 30 Glass Pours
Small Plates Menu
Intimate Atmosphere | Wi-fi

Mon.-Thurs. 4-10pm • Fri.-Sat. 2-11pm • Sun. 2-9pm