

The Ghost Bike

David Minor's family responds

We are David Minor's parents, and we are responding to the letter signed "David Minor's Ghost" [quoted from in Slant, 1/15]. We are writing for three reasons. One is to comment on the inappropriateness and insensitivity of the person who wrote in as if he were David, another is to address the writer's comments about the ghost bike corner, and finally, to set the record straight about whether a bike helmet would have saved David's life.

First, we don't know the guidelines of the editorial staff in determining what letters are printed, but we would like to suggest that they consider the impact of such a letter on the family and friends of someone who has so recently died. Certainly, everyone is entitled to an opinion, but we believe opinions should be expressed in a respectful manner.

We have always felt that people who chose not to sign their names to letters were cowardly, and signing as someone's ghost goes far beyond that. As parents having lost their son, this was painful for us to read.

Since the letter was about removing the ghost bike from the corner of 13th. and Willamette, we would also like to comment on that, again from personal experience. We visit that corner on a regular basis, and absolutely every time we are there, people come up to us and thank us for tending the flowers, comment on how meaningful the ghost bike is to them or tell us how seeing the bike has made them drive or bike more carefully. We receive these same comments away from the corner as well.

Representatives of the city have told us that as long as it is not an obstruction, the bike can remain in place. We have periodically asked employees at Kinko's if it is bothering them, and have always been told it does not. In fact, we have been at the bike corner when Kinko's employees have come out to talk to us, sharing that they also appreciate its presence. Ghost Bikes are an international phenomenon. The first ones were created in St. Louis in 2003, and they have since appeared in nearly 75 cities throughout the world. Their impact is strong, their message clear to all motorists and cyclists: ride safe, follow the rules and share the road (www.ghostbikes.org). Google has more than 30 pages of ghost bike images.

If we are asked by the city or by Kinko's to remove the ghost bike, it will not be a problem. We don't feel that David's spirit resides there. He is everywhere, especially in our hearts, and we will carry him there forever.

Finally, while the issue of bike helmets, specifically related to David, has not been mentioned in *EW* in a while, it continues to come up in other publications. We would like to take this opportunity to clarify a misconception that has been widely printed and covered in all the media, which is that a bike helmet would have saved David's life. We have been told by the neurosurgeon who examined David in the emergency room that a helmet would not have made a difference due to the severity of his injuries.

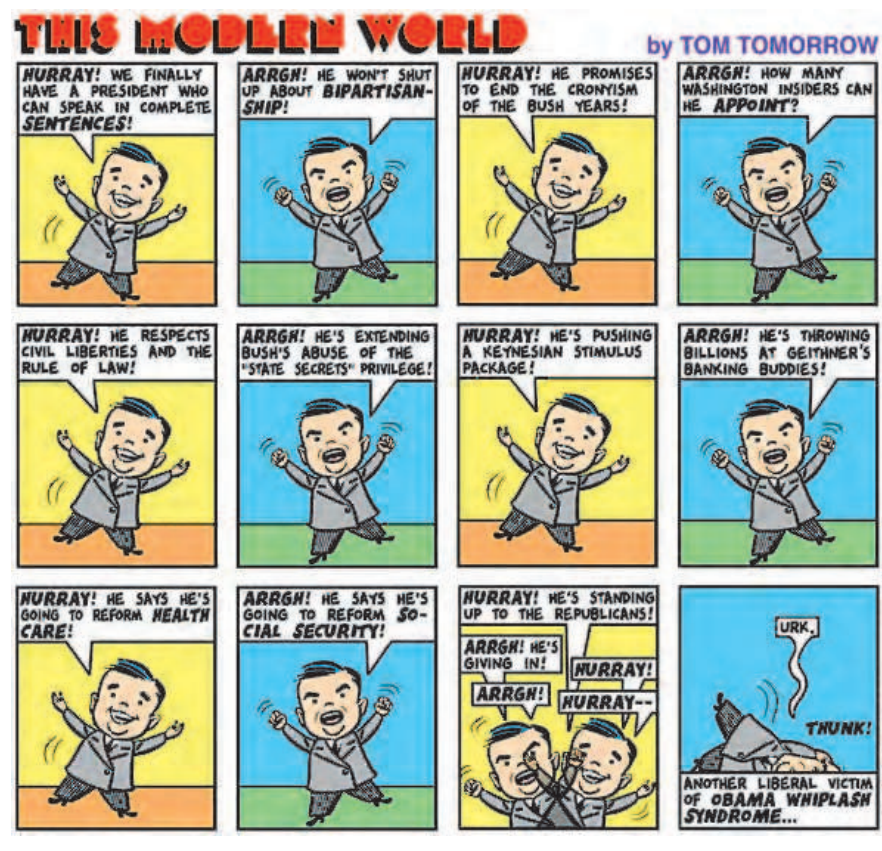
We support the use of bike helmets and wish he had worn one every time he rode his bike, but implying that it would have saved his life is not only inaccurate, it is painful for us to continue to read about our son in this way. He was so much more than "the young man who didn't wear his helmet." He was a passionate believer in the environment, sustainability and social justice, and we feel it is much more appropriate that he be remembered for these things.

We wouldn't want anyone to think that wearing a bicycle helmet protects you from everything. Riding a bike while wearing a helmet still requires you to follow the rules of the road and to be aware of everything around you. Again, we definitely support the use of bike helmets and the concept of all motorists, cyclists and pedestrians following the rules, being mindful of each other and sharing the road. We would also like to see safer bike lanes for cyclists and even bike boulevards where cyclists are mostly separated from motorists and pedestrians. Where helmets and helmet laws are concerned, however, we respectfully ask that everyone please leave David's name out of the discussion.

John and Susan Minor are Eugene residents.



David Minor memorial on 13th Ave. and Willamette



Letters TO THE EDITOR

MAINTAIN THE BOAR

I hunted wild boars in Poland for two years, so you can imagine my delight in reading Camilla Mortensen's well-researched report on Oregon's feral hogs ("Hog Wild" 2/5). I doff my loden hat not only to Mortensen but also to *EW* editors who encourage such a wide breadth of reporting. If Oregon offered better opportunities to hunt feral hogs, I would invite Mortensen to an extraordinary game stalking experience.

For centuries, Europeans have maintained an admirable symbiotic relationship with wild boars, thanks largely to strict game management policies. Wild hogs reportedly have roamed the Oregon territory long before statehood. Given the historical connection, caution should be employed before adopting headstrong eradication policies against this gregarious and venerable creature

John. W. Harrison
Eugene

SCHOOL DAZE

After reading Mariam Wahed's comments about what students want (Viewpoint, 1/29), I was reminded that not much has changed since I was in high school (graduated 1960). The second-class status of art, the minimizing of creativity, the pressures to jump through many mindless hoops (for the convenience of those who want to measure performance), the overly theoretical approach to math and science, and skewed sex education are exactly the same issues I experienced in high school. Of course, with these kind of symptoms, one must face the fact that the teaching profession has been hamstrung. The sheer lack of progress has no doubt driven off some of the best talent while making safe havens for bureaucrats and party-liners who are content with business as usual.

The saddest thing is that we former students have accepted the unacceptable in education, mediocrity. I accept my part in the demise of education by not doing more to help it change. I apologize to Mariam

and all students who want something better than the institutional gruel served up by so-called "educators." I would say, however, that if I have learned anything, it has been to question authority and to never just go along with the program regardless of the financial rewards. I've lived through a "money culture," and it doesn't take much of a genius to see where that has gotten us. I wish Mariam and her like-minded student population all the best. The world deserves you, now more than ever.

William Grant Macdonald
Eugene

REGRESSIVE TAX

The website <http://legisweb.state.wy.us/statutes/statutes.aspx> contains some interesting information concerning the state tax liabilities of lower income Oregonians, relative to other states. It is invariably argued (especially by representatives of Portland-area merchants, whose livelihood depends so much on catering to Washington residents who cross state lines to evade the sales tax) that Oregon has a progressive tax system because it has no sales tax and relies on a graduated income tax.

Sales taxes that exempt food, rent, utilities and most medical services leave a rather low proportion of a lower-income family's budget subject to taxation. They fall most heavily on above-median solidly middle class consumers, those well off enough to purchase a lot of consumer goods but not wealthy enough or making enough large purchases to make elaborate schemes for evading sales tax pay off.

To characterize Oregon's personal income tax as "graduated" is a cruel joke. Oregon is second only to Vermont in its maximum tax rate (9 percent versus 9.5 percent), but whereas Vermont's maximum rate kicks in at \$325,000, one of the highest thresholds in America, Oregon's kicks in at \$7300, lower than every state except Georgia and lower than the federal poverty rate. Oregon also has some of the lowest personal exemptions in the nation. This