

Hard Lessons Lost

Are we doomed to repeat history?

It appears we're really not great at taking care of the world we've been given.

A month ago I read *The Worst Hard Time*. It's about how 100 million acres of native grass on the semi-arid High Plains of western Kansas, the Oklahoma panhandle, northwestern Texas and southeastern Colorado were turned into dust by cattle ranchers, followed by homesteaders growing wheat, followed by drought. The dust eventually roiled into storms so black that you could not see your hand in front of your face, so prolonged that children died of dust in their lungs and cows of stomachs packed with dirt, and so vast that the High Plains clouds finally rolled into Washington, D.C., triggering Congress to establish the Soil Conservation Service. *The Worst Hard Time* weaves the stories of individual people through decades, which is appropriate, because ultimately we rip our world apart person by person, through decades.

A week ago, at a friend's house, my eye was caught by an article title on the cover of her April 2009 *National Geographic*. The headline: "Australia Goes Dry." On page 34, where the article begins, a little girl is playfully running through what looks like a brown version of the surface of the moon, her hands covering her eyes. The photo caption reads, "Simon Booth remembers when he grazed 250 head of cattle on his ranch in southeastern Australia – a sight his children Ryan and Claire may never see."

The article is a re-run of *The Worst Hard Time*. It's about how the Murray-Darling Basin of southeastern Australia, a semiarid plain the size of Spain and France combined, has been turned into a wasteland by overallocating the 1,600-mile Murray river for sheep, beef and dairy cattle and water-sucking crops like cotton and rice, followed by the worst seven years of drought in the 117 years of recorded temperature in Australia.

And this time around the drought is driven by climate change. A question is asked above the headline of the article: "What will happen when the climate starts to change and the rivers dry up and a whole way of life comes to an end? The people of the Murray-Darling Basin are finding out right now."

The article is surely the most compelling in the entire issue, and the editor's note on page 4 talks only about that story. Describing how Murray-Darling farmers had cleared 15 billion trees to establish their farms, he recalls the fun he had as a teenager knocking down trees with a bulldozer to build a logging road near Prospect, Ore. Back then, he says, he "didn't understand the potential consequences of bulldozers."

Stunningly, the facing page to the editor's note is a full-page advertisement by Southern Company, a coal company. "Common sense says, to reduce our dependence on foreign energy, let's use what's under our own feet," is the headline. Below a cartoon of a person sticking an electric plug into Appalachia (think mountaintop removal), the ad reminds us, "The U.S. has a 200-year supply of coal." In the text at the bottom of the page, the ad says, "Common sense says that if you're blessed with such an abundant resource, you ought to find a way to use it."

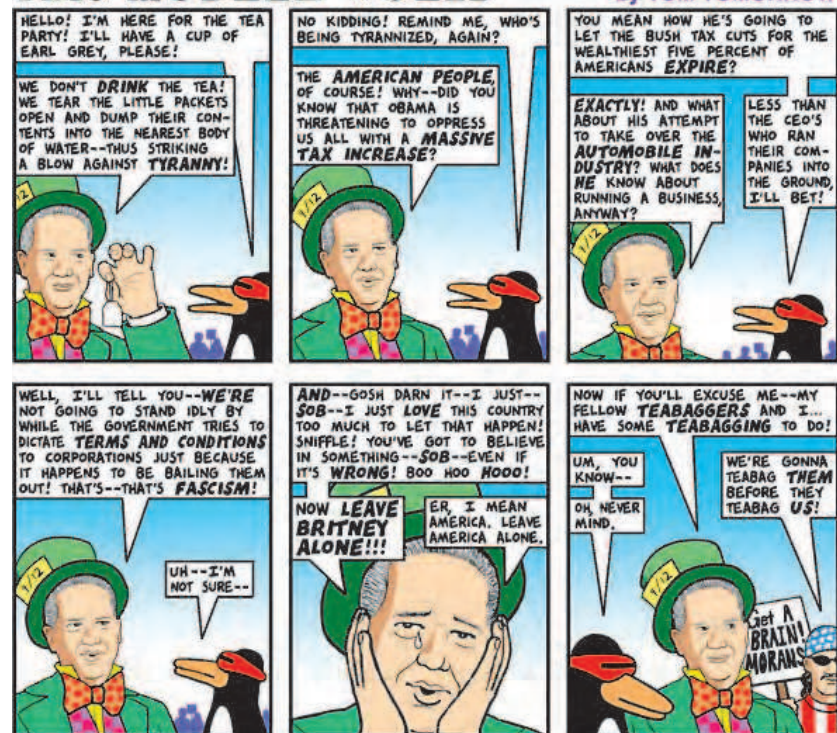
Come again?

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THIS MODERN WORLD

by TOM TOMORROW



LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

STAY IN THE GARAGE

This is in response to Jeff Albertson (3/26), who complained that his "shitty little band" did not make the *EW* and that Hank's dad who happens to work for *EW* got Hank's band name in the paper twice! Well Jeff, what can I say ... I guess your band is a shitty little band — because if it was any good it'd be in the clubs and making money. Garage bands should stay in the garage. Next time instead of complaining, come out and check out the Ty Curtis Band. You might learn a thing or two.

Kim Almasie
Eugene

DUCK SHOTS

Concerning the three UO basketball "student" athletes making the masochistic decision to plan and execute their brilliant outing at Alton Baker Park: I am hoping that they performed as usual — they missed all of their shots.

A few things about the shooting of the ducks and geese by Josh Crittle, Michael Dunigan, Teondre Williams.

1. How very intelligent of you to try to toss away the weapon in the presence of the EPD.

2. How very NCAA of Ernie Kent to say he is "very disappointed" and "This incident is a very serious matter." Where is the outrage, Coach Kent? You should have borrowed a line from *Pulp Fiction* and suggested you were heading their way with a couple of blowtorches and some pliers. Disappointed? Please.

3. If three non-student-athletes would have been caught doing the same thing would they not have found themselves in lockup for the night?

4. I think a fitting punishment would be for them to sit in a jail cell for five days and then be allowed to clean the duck pond wearing those orange reflective safety vests. The Beavers will get a kick out of that. Oh, and then they get to volunteer at the Raptor Center and look at, care for and not shoot injured birds.

5. How does the EPD know that there

were no injuries to the ducks and geese? It was 11:30 pm. What, do you think the injured birds are just gonna hang out for some more frivolity?

6. Go the hell back home, you punks! We don't need/want/condone this kind of behavior here.

Mark Brenneman
Eugene

OOH BABY

In response to Robert Jacobs' letter (3/26) suggesting that Eugene musicians focus their efforts on writing singles, I couldn't agree more. Here are some handy suggestions for songwriters to keep in mind:

1. Use a minimum of chords. One is best, two if necessary and three at the absolute maximum.

2. Your key demographic is the 13-19 age group. All lyrics should be directed at their interests. Potential song topics may include Boy Meets Girl, The Breakup or How I Found Rock 'n Roll. Regardless of topic, all lyrics must include the word "baby" at least once.

3. To aid commercial radio placement, song length should be not too long, not too short. Somewhere between 3:05 and 3:20 is acceptable. If the song includes a solo, it must be four bars in length.

4. Songs should be blemish-free. No feedback, fret twangs or muffled lyrics are permissible. In music, as in all the arts, perfection equals aesthetic value.

These are just a few suggestions to get you started. I'm sure local musicians can come up with more. Keep in mind that if you want to succeed in music, it's very important to follow these ideas. Any other musical efforts should be considered unlikely to lead to personal gain, and thus unproductive.

Blake Andrews
Eugene

SHOE, FOOT, SWITCH

I read Alan Pittman's letter concerning the role of the auditor and the administrative

off
the
waffle
authentic liège waffles

Waffle of the Week: The Nib-tella
(Filled with hazelnut cocoa spread made for us by
Nib Dessert and Wine Bar)

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