

The Millrace is Job One

We have the labor and expertise to do it

I know there are people in town who are being very coy and claiming that they are Millrace-neutral. I'm not one of them, and I'm not Millrace neutered either.

After many years of promoting the restoration of our Lower Millrace, the part that flows through a 30-inch pipe under Mill Street (the approach to the Ferry Street Bridge) and under EWEB to the river, I know how many prideful smiles it would put on our town if we were to finally reverse this unfortunate interment, now over a half century old.



The stars, if you'll just step outside your current limitations for a minute and look up, are in alignment. EWEB is moving off the downtown riverfront, the section between the HQ building and the Steam Plant. The courthouse has all but erased Agripac and left a bare triangle of land to its east that is begging to be included in a new public passage to the river. The Mill and Broadway district is changing hands, under new management, clearing out and calling for a San Antonio-like Millrace passage to the river to bring out the true genius of the place. Every time I pass the abandoned Chevron gas station at Broadway and Ferry, I think that this is the time. Now is the time.

OK, that's theme one. Let's add another star to that firmament.

I've long been a fan of the accomplishments of the WPA, some of which have been on display again in the new Ken Burns series on our national parks. When we were in desperate straits in the 1930s and needed to put people back to work, we somehow managed to build a legacy we admire up to this day. Almost every small town in America has a park, a school, a bridge, a Civic Stadium, a public building, murals, libraries, theaters, lodges, trails, stone walls, monuments ... that are the legacy of this period – when we were broke but far from broken.

Put one and one together, and we have the Millrace Public Works Project.

There is plenty to be done, and we have the shovels, labor and expertise to do it. We have the talent, the artists, craftspeople and designers to make it special, the way that the artisans and thoughtful workers of the '30s managed to do. We have the updated ecological knowledge to transform our Millrace system from a forgotten stretch of ditchyness into a healthy, multi-functional urban watershed.

There is plenty of work to be done – creating many jobs for the under and unemployed as we suffer through a jobless recovery. Why just rake leaves when we could be remodeling culverts so as not to decapitate canoers, as is presently the case? Or building paths from the university to downtown and the river through storm water gardens that clean the water from the urban river terrace before sending it into the Millrace and to the salmon passing by?

There is new engineering needed at the intake to bring water by gravity through the system again. We need a new passage under Franklin Boulevard at 11th that will let more water flow into the Lower Millrace again, a tunnel that is wide enough to provide a pleasant canoeing experience.

A grand public portal under 6th Avenue and the Union Pacific Railroad next to the U.S. Courthouse could open wide in the middle of the EWEB site and powerfully connect a Cannery Square at 8th and Ferry to the downtown riverfront.

There is underutilized public parkland at the Millrace intake near the Knickerbocker Bridge that could become a desirable upstream destination of a sunny, summer day. Again. Here in the place where the story of Millrace Charlie began and where it is still being whispered in the trees.

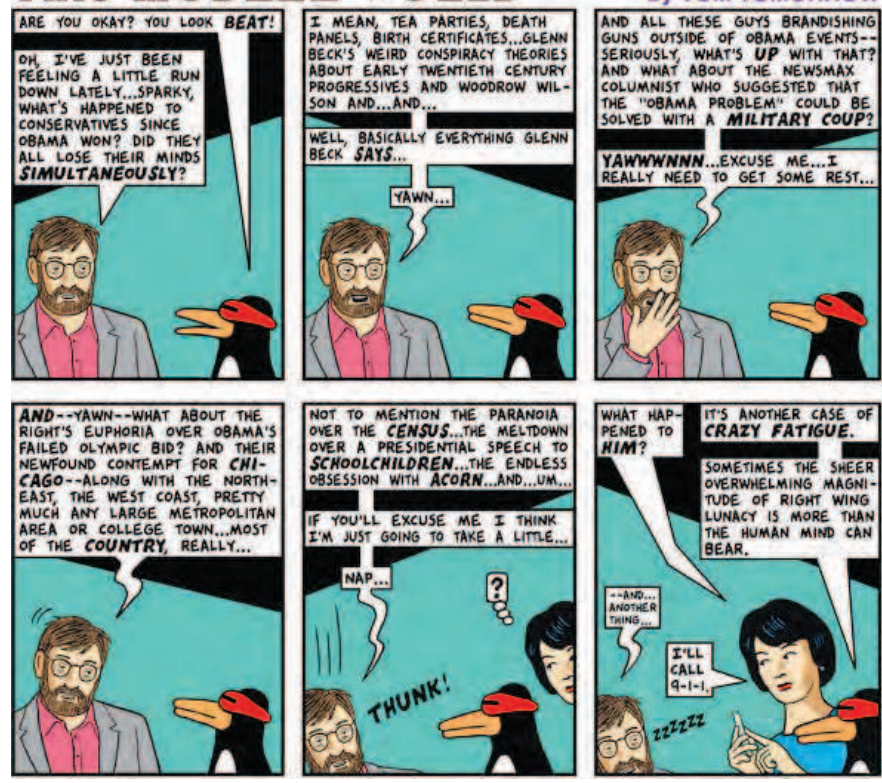
Tired of hearing about the progress that other group is making with their Springfield Millrace? Isn't it time to do something about our own?

Legacy and labor unite! Our Millrace is job one.

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THIS MODERN WORLD

by TOM TOMORROW



LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

PROVE ZERZAN WRONG

John Zerzan was mistaken in assuming (10/8) that I meant that politicians “need to get serious” or we’ll vote them right out of office.” Politicians need to get serious because many of them are already Democrats, the slightly more environmentally conscious of the two choices we’re given in this archaic, dysfunctional “democracy,” yet the environment and civilization are still in decline.

In numerous emails with Kitty Piercy, she assures me that she receives complaints from constituents on both sides of the political spectrum, implying that she’s fair, balanced and doing the best that can reasonably be expected. But the business people and other “conservatives” whom Piercy feels obliged to placate need to understand that achieving sustainability is not something that we must balance against other considerations. There is no economy on a dead planet. The human family and the economy will achieve sustainability whether we like it or not. The longer we wait, the more traumatic the inevitable changes will be.

If environmentally leaning politicians aren’t provoking deafening shrieks of protest, recall referendums and death threats, then they are not doing enough to prevent catastrophe. For the sake of future generations, let’s prove John Zerzan wrong. I expect that Zerzan himself would like to be proven wrong about his dismal yet entirely valid prediction of the future.

Robert Bolman
Eugene

CANNIBALS TODAY

Rob Bolman uttered something very important in his Oct. 1 Viewpoint, “Denial and Delusion.” He expressed that those “running the world” may be “sociopaths who have no qualms with doing a gross disservice to future generations” and says it’s “high time that we begin examining the psychological condition of those in charge.”

I couldn’t agree more! This summer I read a book I recommend to everyone:

Columbus and Other Cannibals, The Wetiko Disease of Exploitation, Imperialism, and Terrorism, written by Native American author Jack Forbes, addresses the mental illness shared by those who take over others’ lives.

I first became aware of this history book a few years ago when John Zerzan briefly discussed it on his radio show, “Anarchy Radio.” I agree with Zerzan (Oct. 8 letter) that Bolman needs to stay out of the “voting racket” and follow his instincts regarding human civilization. We all need to figure this out and recognize that cannibalism persists to this day and needs to stop being accepted as normal behavior.

Sherry Franzen
Eugene

TASING REQUIRED

In the news story “Taser Review” (10/8), Alan Pittman fails to disclose a major fact about the case: that Van Ornum had a pesticide-spray-looking bottle and was spraying it at motorists. When police approached him, he appeared to make a threat to them. So what’s a cop to do to protect himself and the community, considering the bottle could have contained poison? A cop has to subdue the individual as quickly and effectively as possible. Van Ornum had created a dangerous situation that forced cops to take the action they did. His further resisting of arrest required him to be Tasered.

But I’m really disappointed in the way Pittman’s news story was so slanted in favor of Van Ornum. Nowhere in the story was it mentioned that Van Ornum was spraying this unknown substance at passing cars, and needed to be stopped quickly and effectively in case it was poison. Instead Pittman refers to Van Ornum as a “jaywalker,” as if that was Van Ornum’s only crime. This biased news story distorts the reality of the dangerous situation created by Van Ornum, and the subsequent, appropriate action taken by the police.

Jim Byrd
Eugene



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