

news Briefs

GUNS IN FACE, BUT NOT LAWS

So would the crazy guy who laid waste to a congresswoman, federal judge, 9-year-old girl and crowd at a strip mall in Arizona with a spray of gunfire from his 30-round Glock be able to do the same in Oregon?

Hell yeah. Oregon's gun control laws are almost as weak as Arizona's. Oregon's laws rate a 17 out of 100 from the Brady Campaign to Prevent Gun Violence. By comparison Arizona rates a 2 out of 100.

Shooter Jared Loughner was rejected by the military and thrown out of college for being mentally deranged and/or on drugs, but that didn't stop him from getting a deadly weapon in Arizona, a state which doesn't even require a permit to carry a concealed weapon.

In Oregon, you need a permit, but the law requires almost no background investigation, unlike some states. In Oregon, it appears even those known to be insane may legally carry a concealed weapon almost anywhere unless there is a court order on that person explicitly forbidding it.

Oregon also has no state ban on the large capacity assault clips used in Arizona and at another recent act of terrorism in Fort Hood, Texas. Oregon also bans city and county gun laws, and Gov. John Kitzhaber and the Legislature did little to tighten gun control after Kip Kinkel sprayed the Thurston High School cafeteria with bullets in 1998.

Congress had prohibited such assault clips at the federal level, but let the law expire in 2004. The Brady Campaign has called for renewing the law in the wake of a fellow Congress member getting shot through the face, but with Democrats competing with Republicans for gun enthusiasts' votes, pundits don't see the reform getting much traction.

Local Congressman Peter DeFazio, who earned a B grade from the NRA for opposing gun control and a 50 percent rating from the Brady Campaign for supporting gun control in the most recent rankings, said of the gunned-down member of Congress, "Gabby is a stronger defender of the Second Amendment than I am." DeFazio held a press conference in Eugene this week.

The NRA gave Gabrielle Giffords a D+ rating. "I have a Glock 9 millimeter, and I'm a pretty good shot," Giffords recently told *The New York Times* while campaigning in her pro-NRA district.

DeFazio said he has a concealed weapons permit but wouldn't "broadcast" whether or not he would actually carry a

gun. "I had far more death threats as a county commissioner than in many of my years in Congress," he said.

Gun advocates have argued that the best protection for shootings like in Arizona is more guns. But it's unclear how a concealed carrier would be able to draw fast enough to shoot someone who's already taken aim with a weapon capable of firing up to 30 rounds in a matter of seconds.

— Alan Pittman and Shannon Finnell

CELEBRATING MLK AS A DAY OF SERVICE

Eugene and the rest of U.S. celebrate Martin Luther King Jr. Day Monday, Jan. 17, two days after King's birthday. Ronald Reagan signed the legislation in 1983, but it wasn't until the year 2000 that all 50 states chose to recognize the federal holiday.

"Some people think it's a black holiday, but we want it to be a people holiday," said Niyah Dotts, organizer for a free MLK event from 4 to 6 pm Sunday, Jan. 16, at the Eugene Hilton.

Dotts is excited that HONEY Inc. (Honoring Our New Ethnic Youth) is celebrating its 25th year hosting MLK events. The family-oriented event will feature youth performers from many genres. The guest speaker will be author John A. Andrews.

Other MLK events include the free "Voices of Our Youth: Tomorrow's Leaders," at 6 pm Monday at the Hult Center, featuring slam poets Justin Long-Moton and Jay Davis, and Springfield's MLK march and celebration, also on Monday, which kicks off with a march from Springfield Justice Center at 1 pm and goes to Springfield Middle School where the celebration continues. More information at www.calclane.org

King said, "Life's most urgent and persistent question is: What are you doing for others?" In 1994, Congress transformed MLK Day into a national day of community service. There are several opportunities in the Eugene area to honor King's legacy by giving back to the community

You can volunteer to prep downtown Eugene's youth center (aka the Youth MOVE Center) at 965 Oak Alley for its relaunch by repainting the interior of the center from 9 am to 2 pm. For more information call Lyndsey Tucker at 844-6134.

UO's Service Learning Program has posted 16 service-oriented projects for MLK day on its website ranging from painting walls for St. Vincent de Paul, to pulling invasive plants at Mount Pisgah to fighting hunger with FOOD for Lane County. The volunteer opportunities are open to the entire community. For more details: www.serve.uoregon.edu/programs/mlk

See more events in our Calendar section this week. — Heather Cyrus

METER HOOPS REPLACE LOST BIKE PARKING

The city of Eugene bolted hoops on posts downtown this month to help make up for bike parking that was lost after the City Council ordered parking meter heads removed to create free car parking.

The city attached about 35 metal hoops to headless meter posts downtown. The city plans to install 25 more hoops in coming weeks, according to a press release.

The black metal hoops, already used in other cities, feature a bike design from Creative Metalworks in Dayton, Ore. The bolts appear to be tamper resistant to prevent bike theft.

Cyclists expressed concern about the bike parking lost when the city removed the meter heads from a 12-block area downtown in October. The council majority argued free parking would increase business downtown, but employees rather than customers have often used the spaces for parking.

City parking and transportation staff have also said they will install new

analysis BY JOSEPH A. LIEBERMAN

Raising Cain In Arizona

Within minutes after Jared Loughner was arrested for the attempted assassination of Rep. Gabrielle Giffords and the killing of six other people, internet news websites were flooded with thousands of polarized reader comments claiming Loughner was either a Tea Party-influenced, right-wing hit-man, or a drug-addled liberal left-wing psycho. Both sides cited as proof "favorite books" listed on Loughner's YouTube page, including *Mein Kampf* and *The Communist Manifesto*, along with *Brave New World* and *Animal Farm*, which come closer to reflecting his obsession about authorities controlling the masses.

Digging a little deeper, it becomes clear that Loughner attached himself to whatever philosophies or political expediencies suited his paranoid delusional fantasies. To find parallels among other homicidal predecessors, we need look no further than our own local mass murderer, Kip Kinkel, who in May 1998 slaughtered both his teacher-parents and proceeded the next morning to shoot 27 students at Thurston High in Springfield, killing two.

Like Kinkel at Thurston, Loughner was also seen as a potentially serious threat by classmates and teachers at his community college. In Loughner's online and handwritten ravings, there's a neurotic fixation concerning fake money (governments are colluding to create a unified "New World Order currency") and mind control. Kinkel similarly labored under a complex set of paranoid delusions, including a certitude that Disney dollars would soon take over our U.S. currency, Disney and the government were collaborating to censor lyrics in music, and that his auditory hallucinations might be from a satellite-controlled microchip the government had implanted in his head.

Oregon clinical psychologist Dr. Orin Bolstad, who examined Kinkel, stated that people experiencing delusional paranoid symptoms can still maintain sharp cognitive thinking, and shrewdly plan and complete a course of action. "That doesn't mean they're logical," he added.

That profile appears to fit Loughner. A current speculation is that what really set him against Rep. Giffords was her reaction to a written question he handed up to her during a previous "Congress on your Corner" event at a mall in Tucson in 2007. The note said, "What's government if words don't have meaning?" Giffords read the question, but (understandably) couldn't reply. The very same question was posted at the end of a semi-coherent screed Loughner posted in video form on the Internet Dec. 15.

What sets Loughner apart from previous shooters is that he coupled a targeted assassination with generalized mass murder. That's something new. Kinkel had an "enemies" list, but none of those students were targeted that day in 1998. As in most mass murders, including recent mall and church shootings, the killer's purpose is to inflict maximum physical, psychical and emotional damage upon a community he blames for alienating, marginalizing or rejecting him. Loughner, it seems, coupled that urge with a specific quarry who symbolically represented the government that he felt was trying to disenfranchise him.

As for the right-left debate, what we can learn from this event is how easily we've come to expect the worst from our political opponents. Using Loughner's actions as a metaphor to embody the "evil" of the other side would be convenient, but no amount of projection can camouflage the fact that this was simply one sick individual bent on a course of external and self destruction.

Joseph A. Lieberman is a Eugene freelance writer and author of School Shootings — What Every Parent and Educator Needs to Know to Protect Our Children.