

SINISTER PLOT?

In the case against three Lane County commissioners, Judge Gillespie did not see “a bright line” in the law — that was his phrase. So he invented unprecedented new law, finding violations by four commissioners in sequential, one-to-one conversations. *The Register-Guard* has relentlessly criticized Handy and Sorenson, minimizing the judge’s finding that, “even Stewart participated in the process in violation of the Public Meetings Law.” This was not what the plaintiffs intended when they targeted three commissioners, including Fleenor. They intended to paralyze a progressive majority.

It was impossible at first to know who the plaintiff really was. Dumdi and Anderson didn’t pay for the case and wouldn’t say who did. Seneca Lumber Company couldn’t be a plaintiff, as its interests would come up in county deliberations. Without revealing her sponsor, Dumdi pretends to be concerned about open process — a claim that defies credulity.

When they spoke outside meetings, never as a quorum, the commissioners did not reach any decisions. The case probes personal emails, dwelling on Handy’s exuberant anticipation and advocacy as if it were some sinister plot.

Following routine procedures essential to effective functioning of any government, three commissioners provided support for constituent services. Administrator Spartz has referred to the dollar amount as “trivial.”

Incidentally, assistants for constituent services could be employed for years at a cost far below the price of this malicious lawsuit.

*Elaine Weiss
Eugene*

EYE ON PUBLIC GOOD

The value of the honest and thoughtful service offered by Commissioners Pete

Sorenson and Rob Handy is enormous. Pete has been a competent public official for years. Rob worked hard to win the privilege of representing his district, meeting virtually every constituent. Since then, he has devoted his considerable energy and commitment to navigating the sharp learning curve in a new commissioner’s life. Both attend many community meetings, contributing to the discourse and staying informed about issues that affect us all.

The basis of the decision in the commissioners’ case is not obvious to me. Can conversations among any pair of people with the same challenging job description be illegal? Everyone who works with others solves problems by chipping away at them in odd moments in the workplace. Some may be willing to spend hours deliberating at meetings. But most of us try to keep these formal occasions more efficient by investing in the personal conversations that allow open expression. Our goal is to keep public utterances civil and brief, making decisions in public without wearing out the audience.

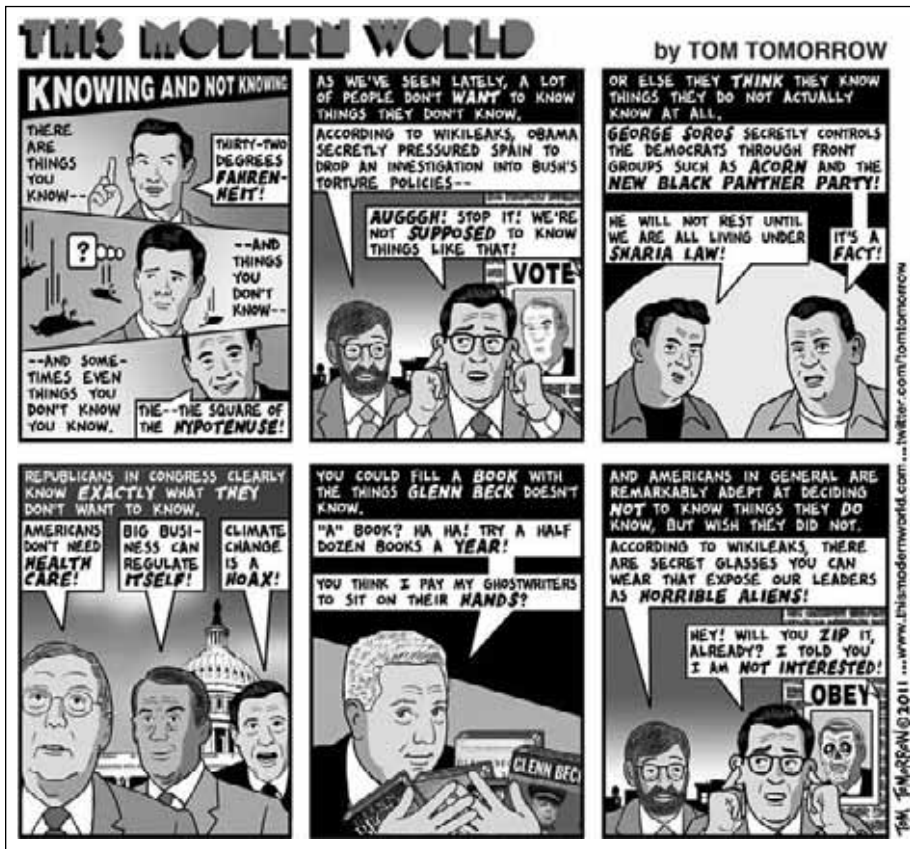
“Respectful of citizen time” and “efficient” are terms that apply to public officials who do their homework so that their transparent, on-the-record performance is focused on the public good, as they see it. “Sham” is not the word used for this intelligent approach in other settings.

I look forward to continued excellent service from Sorenson and Handy and to their vindication in the appeal.

*Mary Leighton
Eugene*

DIZZY BY GILLESPIE

It is hard to be a politician behind progressive ideas, a representative of underprivileged people vulnerable to society. Does Rob Handy resign his human



rights to a private life outside of politics? Is every meeting considered a “quorum” resulting in character assassination?

The Gillespie ruling, the law of public meeting loosely defined, and the allegations against Handy and Sorenson leave me dizzy. I am outraged when politicians in Washington, D.C., get away with lining up votes, and Bush gets away with murder never being sent to trail for war crimes while Handy who works his butt off for the people is being slammed by this ridiculous court ruling!

Firm in democratic principles, Rob Handy is the last person to do a backroom deal.

*Ceila Levine
Eugene*

EDUCATION VS. MUSHROOMS

We have the money to police, arrest, prosecute, lawyer up, defend, room,

board, guard and supervise people who raise mushrooms to sell to adults who eat them at hippie music shows. We do not have money to fund adequate education programs for the children of our community. We’re more than \$20 million short of a very poor job in Eugene alone. How can we afford prevention laws and forces for Deadheads dancing under the influence of mushroom intoxication, and not afford to educate our children?

Who are the crazy people making these choices? We are making bad choices; education leads to good choices. It would be better to use our resources to fund education for our children than to give a damn about Deadheads, one way or another. Mushroom-inspired hippie dancing is not a big problem in my life. How about yours?

*Daniel Betty
Eugene*

LIVING OUT BY SALLY SHEKLOW

Seeing Joan

Bring on the comedy

I took a seat with my three gal pals in the wheelchair row. This vintage concert hall was old, ornate and fabulous, like the performer we’d come to see – Joan Rivers. Yes, THE Joan Rivers, the Emmy-winning, *Can we talk?* force-of-nature comedy diva gay icon, at the Schnitz, one-night-only.

The lights dimmed and the audience cheered, including our back-row gang of four – four Jews, three chubby AARP card-carrying dykes, two breast cancer survivors, one wheelchair user. Bring on the comedy!

The Oregon Symphony was the opening act. A faggoty guest-conductor in a tux and shiny shoes pranced onto the stage and had the crowd laughing in no time. A quick check-in with my posse verified we were loving the conductor. He introduced the first piece, the overture from *Gypsy*.

While the musicians played “Everything’s Coming Up Roses,” two men in our section proved to be, shall we say, courtesy-challenged. A short, shiny-headed fellow a few seats in front of us, stumbled along his row, staggered up the aisle and returned

with a plastic cup of beer, not likely his first of the evening. Brewski sloshing in one raised hand, rhinestone clutch waving in the other, he sidled to his seat. He and his friend talked and fussed. Shushing from nearly everyone in our section proved useless.

Beer Boy was not happy. In a booming slur he hollered *Where’s Joan? We Want Joan! I didn’t come to listen to no fucking orchestra!*

An usher tromped down the aisle, snapped her fingers, pointed her flashlight and told the noisy boys they’d have to leave. The 30 or so of us within earshot of this good news applauded, leading the conductor to think we especially appreciated his witty introduction to *The NBC Theme*.

Beer Boy and his date, a lanky, goateed guy, obeyed Madame Usher. People stood to let them pass, but the burly man who had the aisle seat shoved Beer Boy, toppling them both to the floral carpet. From the dark floor arose an audible thud and a responding oof. We gal pals exchanged OMG! faces.

The lurching date wobbled in the aisle yelling *Get your hands off my boyfriend! You’re assaulting*



my boyfriend! Queers really are everywhere, even among the heckling riff-raff.

Ushers swarmed down, broke up the fight, and escorted the offending couple out. An armed cop hauled away the husky assailant. More OMG! looks exchanged.

We missed most of “The Pink Panther.” I felt a special bond with our section, though. We’d been through this traumatic incident together, understood each other’s suffering, and now we were united.

The guest conductor, oblivious, launched into the orchestra’s last number, a rousing rendition of “The Stripper.” Applause spread to a full-on ovation when Joan made her grand entrance. She grabbed the conductor’s baton and led the symphony to the song’s bumping and grinding finale.

How we cheered. Joan Rivers! Foul-mouthed woman of power, still working at 78, still making it in a man’s world, still headlining, still poking fun at Jews, lesbians, old people, fat people, breast cancer survivors and, as she delicately puts it, *fucking cripples*.

Thanks for recognizing us, Joan. We see you, too.

Award-winning writer Sally Sheklow and her as-yet-unlawfully wedded wife celebrated 23 years together last November. They live with their two cats in Eugene.