

A HUMAN WALL OF SUPPORT

I was at South Eugene High School the night our community lost Cameron Ausland and Jack Harnsongkram. I was there to offer support to their friends, fellow students and parents as they gathered together, united by unspeakable sadness and grief. As director of Center for Family Development and a therapist in private practice, I have been part of a healing profession for over two decades, yet I have never encountered a more powerfully healing moment than what I experienced that night.

After waiting hours in solemn anticipation for the vans to arrive from the Oregon Coast, the students who had gathered in South's parking lot finally caught sight of their friends who were on the coast trip with Cameron and Jack. Weary from their coast ordeal, these friends approached hand in hand, accessing strength from one another. I watched in a sacred silence as the hundred who had been waiting spontaneously formed a long line, creating a human wall of loving support. The two sides came together slowly in a massive, sobbing embrace. They then created a literal circle of support, hugging, talking, crying and consoling one another. These were remarkably and tragically beautiful moments, and it was then that I knew I was no longer needed for this night. It was clear these youth intuitively knew how to connect deeply and take care of each other.

If you consider grief a portal through which we must enter in order to experience deeper levels of truth, may I suggest you follow the lead of these brilliantly compassionate teens, who are showing us

the way as they enter their pain and cope with the passing of Cameron and Jack.

David J. Mikula
Eugene

LEARN FROM L.A.

Three months ago I moved to Eugene from Southern California. I have a car and drive, but like to take the bus when possible for environmental reasons. While I can't comment on details of the debate regarding the extension of the EmX system, it has been a pleasure and a surprise to use the current system: clean, convenient, pleasant, fast, far superior to what we had in Los Angeles. It's a very positive feature for this city. I will soon be moving to West 15th and would be delighted to be able to use the EmX there.

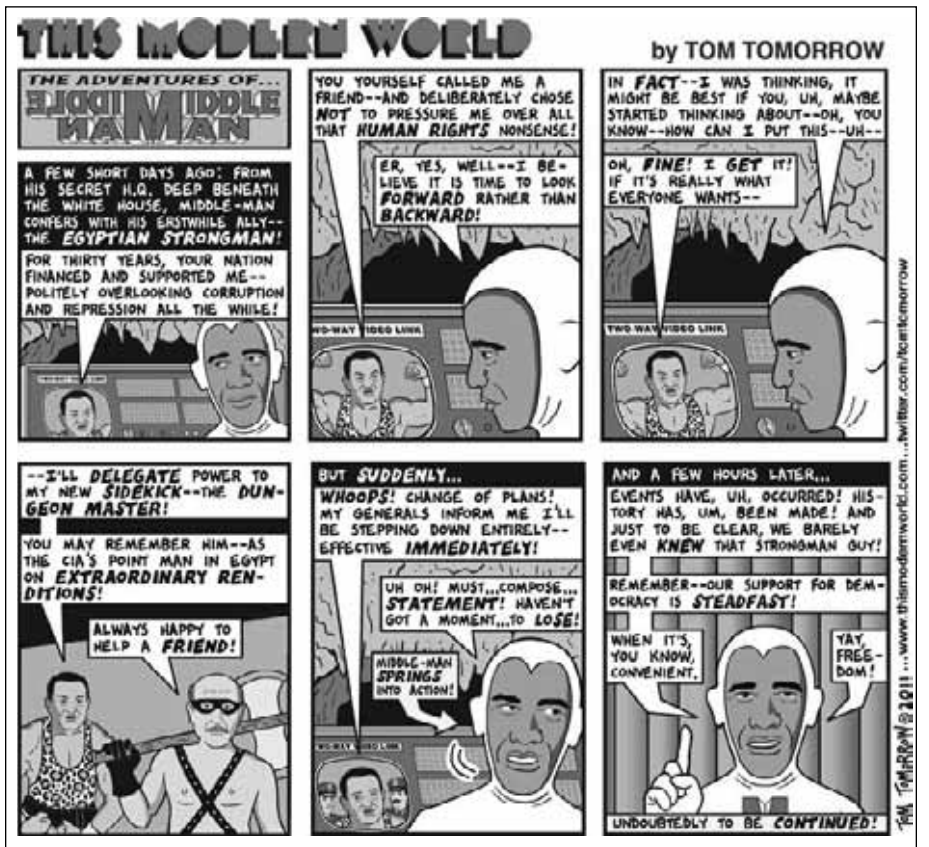
Please learn from the dreadful example of Los Angeles: At the time I left, traffic congestion was a constant frustration for us, yet development, rising costs, and local politics made it almost impossible to add mass transit lines or a subway. In coming years Eugene will be very grateful to have solved this problem while there was time.

Sara Chesluk
Eugene

OBSCENE COVER

The cover of your Feb. 10 issue was a very poor choice. It is obscene by any standards and insults all businesses that advertise within your publication. More than one business, I noticed, turned the top paper face down, and few people are picking it up from those stacks.

Whoever proposed this vulgar cover pulled an "Emperor's New Clothes" stunt. I am assuming that same person is



high enough in the pecking order at EW to command surrounding peons to bow down and praise his duds. I choose to have faith that more than a few staffers were as appalled as the general public.

No doubt that Weekly ruler is pleased with being "on the edge," but the bottom line of any newsprint enterprise is advertising. No matter how obscene the cover or how radical the content, without the income through participating merchants, you will fold. If I were such a business person, I would immediately cancel any such agreement.

I can only say to those businesses who agree that this offensive emperor is

acceptably clad; I, one lowly Eugene peon, will not be reading about your wares and services in future EWs.

And to the ruler of that Weekly, "Mister, you ain't got no clothes!"

Kathryn Mason
Eugene

LOOKING LARGE

I'm a lefty Kucinich Democrat, but I think folks need to take a few steps back and see the BIG picture.

1) Most parents in the U.S. would kill to have their kids in a school district like Eugene's. So no undertaking will destroy the district. The Harvard valedicts will

natural resistance BY MARY O'BRIEN

On the Trail

Taking lessons from life, past and present

It's hard to fathom how many messages are given to a child on any given day. Last Saturday, my husband O'B, son Josh, his 5-year old son Linus and I hiked to Tamolitch Pool, the "Blue Pool" up the McKenzie River. Linus first wanted to listen to Neil Young as we drove from Eugene, particularly a song in which Young mentions 9/11 (Linus had asked what 9/11 was when listening earlier to that CD). Then he wanted to listen to a *National Geographic* book I had brought about what Charles Darwin saw in his four-year trip sailing around the world on the Beagle. While it's a picture book, the words are from Darwin's diary.

The book mentions Darwin's horror at slavery (yes, some people do this to other people); his experience of an earthquake and tsunami; a volcanic eruption; strange variations of animals otherwise familiar to Darwin; and the bones of huge animals that had become extinct. Which led to a discussion of how people at that time believed God had created each animal separately and would not let any creations go extinct. Which led to a discussion of God as opposed to gods, and Linus asks whether someone is a Christian if he or she believes in forest gods.

But then off on the trail to Blue Pool, never mind that it is a thoroughly gray day. When Linus catches up with Josh and me, he has learned from O'B how to

distinguish a cedar tree from a Douglas fir. Linus is lowered into a tree well formed when lava flowed around an ancient tree. The McKenzie River is rapids and noise beside us until we get to the Blue Pool, a rare, glassy blue about the color of the blue toilet bowl cleaner some people use.

A dipper is singing, the only bird we have heard along the trail. The bird is marching on the rocks, peering into the water. We eat lunch - with Linus' favorite being sheets of seaweed. (Josh and Linus' mom Laura had no idea he was eating seaweed until the school teacher suggested Josh and Laura provide him with seaweed in some lunches, because Linus was asking his friend Peter to share Peter's seaweed with him every day.)

But, oh my gosh, upstream of the Blue Pool there is no river. Silence. Where is it? Underground. A river can be flowing underground, appear in a pool, and roar downstream. Astounding.

Linus asks to be carried across the narrow bridge because it's icy, but just after Josh puts him down on the other side, two hikers meet us coming down, speaking briefly with us.

"They probably thought I was 3 or 4," Linus of 5 years and 2 months worries. So on the way back, he negotiates the icy bridge by himself (with nearby help). Another step away from fearing heights.

On the way back, the cut end of a huge log is moving back and forth near the trail. "Why is it



moving, Linus?" I ask. Characteristic silence while he tries to figure this out.

"Water," he finally states. He has discovered how its top 20 feet away is in the moving edge of the river. Much in the world can be figured out with observation.

A large tree has fallen over, uprooted. "We've walked so far, and the tree is still beside us," Linus remarks. These Pacific Northwest trees are REALLY tall.

Linus stands inside a tree hollowed by fire. Some trees can live after burning all the way through their trunk.

O'B says something Linus doesn't believe. "You're a fibber," he accuses O'B.

"Well, O.K., Linus. I can tell you a true story right now, or a fib. Which do you want?"

"A fib."

There are differences between truths and fibs.

A friend of mine who teaches "kiddie lit," the term for a class taken by would-be teachers about children's literature, eschewed having her college students read 40 or 50 children's books during the course, which is a common practice. Instead, she had them read no more than 10, but would ask them to report on what messages about people and the world each of those books conveyed to a child hearing or reading that book. That turned out to be extraordinarily difficult for many of the students. A child's book is just a child's book, right? Nope.

A child's day is just a child's day, right?

Mary O'Brien has worked as a public interest scientist since 1981. She is currently dividing her time between Eugene and Castle Valley, Utah.