

TEARS OF PRIDE

I read the cover story "The Value of Vets" (6/9) and would like to give kudos to the *Weekly* for bringing this very serious issue to the forefront, especially during wartime. It needed to be said and those women need to be heard and valued and cared for with love and compassion.

I also wanted to say that I am a female vet who joined the Navy during Desert Storm at age 21 and my four year experience was the single best decision I ever made. I was stationed for three years after "A" school in Guam on a base that was comprised of 120 personnel, only seven of them female. I was consistently, even as an E-3 and E-4, treated with the utmost love and respect by

my fellow shipmates and by the officers on base. I am pretty sure the other females I shared that time with would say the same as I never once recall hearing about this sort of treatment while there.

And, since I have been in Oregon I have had a major surgery at the Portland VA and was treated far better there than any time I had been in the private sector and continue to receive good service, even during a time that I needed the help of a therapist to work out non-military related issues. My primary care physician, Ann Towers, has been the single best doctor I have ever had in my entire life.

I am not telling this story to discount what has happened to these women, no.

I just want to contribute and juxtapose that story with another reality about the military, or the Navy at least because it's what I know. The Navy taught me to pay attention to detail, to be proud of who I am, to stand up for myself, to speak in public, to be a leader, to take care of my body, to take pride in my space, my appearance and comrades. The Navy taught me how to be a better woman, a better human being. That was something I never learned in school, and rarely at home for that matter.

I am so very sorry that these women experienced these horrible offenses and my heart goes out to them. But for me, the Navy and my experience there fills me

with so much pride that it can still bring me to tears. Happy tears.

*Michele Walter
Eugene*

EQUALITY FOR ALL

Eugene Councilor Mike Clark plans to propose that members of the City Council recite the Pledge of Allegiance at its biweekly council sessions. It is always important to appreciate the historical context within which such iconic cultural statements arise and the intentions of their authors.

The author of the Pledge of Allegiance was Francis Bellamy, who initially wrote the Pledge in 1892 for school children. Bellamy has been described as a Christian socialist who, according to a recent book by Jeffrey Owen Jones and Peter Meyer, *The Pledge: A History of the Pledge of Allegiance* (2010), championed "the rights of working people and the equal distribution of economic resources, which he believed was inherent in the teachings of Jesus."

Bellamy had originally wanted the wording of the Pledge to include the term "equality," as in "with liberty, justice, and equality for all." But he is said to have dropped the term "equality" out of fear that the Pledge would be popularly rejected by those who believed that men and women, and whites and people of color, were not equal. If the City Council wishes to recite the Pledge at its meetings, I would urge it to respect the author's original intent and include "equality" in the Pledge's wording.

*Ken Neubeck
Eugene*

PAY THOSE BILLS

I have an idea. Why can't Seneca Jones Timber Company offer to pay off the \$20,000 fines unfairly exacted against two Lane County commissioners in the public meetings lawsuit? It would go a long way toward fairness and might even be tax deductible.

*Ramona McCall
Eugene*

PUT VA DOWNTOWN

According to *EW* News Briefs (6/2) there is a federal Executive Order 12072 which requires that "the process for meeting federal space needs in urban areas shall give first consideration to a centralized community business area." This was in relationship to a proposal to build a VA clinic with 685 parking spaces on 13 acres at the edge of town.

Why not put the proposed VA clinic/hospital into the centrally located Sacred Heart hospital in downtown Eugene near the university? It already has parking, surgery rooms and an ER. It was a 400-plus bed hospital and PeaceHealth had plans to make it into a 100 bed hospital. They had to get a state certificate of need to remodel this facility so as not to adversely affect our local health care costs. It was approved at \$23 million. When I last saw an estimate it was going to cost over \$100 million. Much of the hospital was paid for with federal funds, and being a not-for-profit, property taxes were not paid for more than 60 years on this property.

PeaceHealth has a mission statement that says it wants to "promote personal and community health." ODOT is looking for



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