

and establishing an alternative energy grid, making all nations secure through diplomacy, goodwill and right human relations and not through endless wars, health care for all, a moral democracy, practicing the Golden Rule, embracing what unites us and what we share in common, equal rights and living wages for all, the resources of the planet belong to and must benefit all people.

There is enough for everyone if we all practice the principle of sharing along with intelligent and respectful public discourse. Imagine working for these ideas and supporting those who do. I wonder if you can?

Christopher Michaels
Eugene

TWO MORE R'S

I don't know if the "Black Christmas" article that followed the Gear Guide (12/8) was purposeful or ironic; either way the articles were well placed. The latter tempts us to continue being a good consumer while the former reminds us what self-defeating assholes we have been on this planet. Both reaffirm the contradiction of our human ways and how we do not really consider all the species with whom we inhabit this place called home.

All of us can talk up sustainability and "green"-ness all we want; yet, as anyone who pays attention knows, actions always speak volumes over words. If we do not bring greenhouse gases down to the 350 ppm ASAP, not by 2020 or 2050 as proposed, we are on the path of no return. Every time a person chooses new over used — which means incentives to cut down or dig up resources — that is self-destruction, period. And how many of those products advertised added to 350 as they came from halfway around the very planet they are helping to kill? Ask yourself: What do you really need to be happy?

In the book *Your Money or your Life*, the authors essentially ask readers how many life hours are you willing to work in order to acquire a thing. When considering buying a thing, how much time do you have to invest in order to acquire it? And what is the impact in that decision?

I would ask readers that along with the simple task of reduce, re-use and recycle, there are two other mindful options: reconsider and refuse.

Sean S. Doyle
Portland

ABSURD CITATION

Passive urban parks function as a place of respite, leisure, rest and contemplation. Landscaping an urban park usually incorporates plant materials to create a desired effect and hardscape such as walkways to accommodate areas of intensive human use. Low walls are often constructed as design elements and to create separation of space within a park. A low wall of sitting height in proximity to a walkway is often intended by a designer as an invitation for the user to rest and contemplate the park environment.

In a recent incident, a sitting park user was cited for "engaging in an activity or conduct which is disruptive or incompatible with the appropriate use of the premises." That citing of "violation" is truly absurd as

the user was in fact engaging in an activity that the park is intended for — a benefit specifically stated in Eugene's Park and Open Space website that such a space was intended for "relaxation and rest."

It is the ticketing officer who is in fact in violation of those park rules. When said officer ticketed the park user he was interfering with a lawful use of that park. Of course the days when we saw officers of the law actually held accountable to such laws are well behind us. To further claim that it was a matter of public safety is truly laughable. Perhaps we simply have an overstaffed and over-budgeted police department as officers feel need to pursue such frivolous and unwarranted activities.

Daniel Schlender
Springfield

PREPOSTEROUS OMISSION

Thanks for your consistent coverage of Occupy Eugene, forest defense and local politics (which consistently demonstrate that our "democracy" has failed, and will continue to demonstrate that fact, as accurate reporting will). Thanks for printing so many letters; I genuinely appreciate this, although maybe it's time to drop the back and forth about KLCC programming already.

Thanks also for the zombie list (11/23), though the 11-year-old who wrote in (12/1) seems to have a better understanding of the realities of zombie apocalypse than Dante (Zuñiga-West) does, but hey, at least he tried to help people be prepared. Maybe he will even turn out to be a decent reporter one day.

I also appreciate your ceasing to print "¡Ask a Mexican!" Seriously, thanks for that. However, for the third time you have left "Red Meat" out of the *Weekly*. This is preposterous and you should feel ashamed of yourself for trying to sneak this out of the paper by pulling it sporadically so that those of use who read it aren't sure if we should complain or not. Shame on you Ted (Taylor). Shame on you.

Jason Gonzales
Walton

SENSELESS FEAR

It seems to be senseless fear that would close rather than fix Occupy Eugene's campsite. Maybe a senseless hate of victims causes us to want to hide the poorest, sickest among us.

Poor people are homeless because there are no services available to take them. Shelter Care is wonderful, but it has long waiting lists and no vacancies. The Eugene Mission is filled with its regulars and does not accept people with disabilities, while many homeless persons are disabled. Couples at the Mission are separated from their help-mates and do not feel safe at the Mission.

Programs for kids are filled, and the school districts know of more than 2,000 kids who are homeless. Programs for families with kids are filled. If there were vacancies, homeless people in Eugene with no money and no options would have already taken them.

Lane County Mental Health is very short-staffed and turns away people every day. Our hospitals take people for just a few hours and has no place to discharge them when they are released. Jails are underfunded and overcrowded, dumping known criminals into homelessness in Eugene with no shelter, no place to go.

Stille Nacht, Heilige Nacht

Childhood memories refreshed each Christmas

Christmas is a special time for me. In Germany three paid holidays are reserved for a true Christmas celebration. It is a time to reflect, a time to love and a time to share. No one is rushing to work except hospital workers, fire department and police workers who stand by for emergencies. It is a true celebration of all family members sharing the sacred, joyous time of Christ's birth.

My mother was a master of suspense. In the morning of Christmas Eve we three girls were not permitted to enter the living room. We tried in vain to catch a glimpse through the door locks, but keys were cleverly inserted, destroying any hope of revealing the tiniest clue of the secret taking place inside.

About 5 pm, the harmonious church bells were ringing and off we went to our small neighborhood church. We walked a mile in deep snow and bitter cold. The tall street gas lanterns cast their pale blue light onto the snow, evoking thousands of brilliant crystals.

What a silent, peaceful night it was!

Inside the church two freshly cut 12-foot Christmas trees flanked the altar greeting us, decorated with ornaments and white wax candles. It felt so inviting, glorious and breathtaking! The candles on the huge trees were lit as soon as the minister appeared through the side door.

The Bethlehem scene in wooden, carved figures rendered the feeling that Christmas had finally arrived: there was little baby Jesus in a wooden crib sleeping so heavenly on fresh straw. There were His Mother and Father and the animals, all kept safe in a shed. And there were the Three Holy Kings and high above in the night sky there was the brightest star we had ever seen, the Star of Bethlehem.

The minister read the ancient story of the birth of Christ. And each time we heard the magic Christmas story it felt as though we heard it for the first time. Christmas songs followed about baby Jesus and the joy He brought to Earth for all mankind, ending with my favorite song "Silent Night, Holy Night."

Pretending to follow the Star of Bethlehem, we hurried home to seek the warmth of our huge black-tiled coal and wood stove, but moreover, to discover the secret of why we were kept out of the living room.

Our great-aunt who helped raise us knew precisely when we would return from church. After ringing the door bell impatiently and brushing the fresh snow from our hats, coats and shoes, we were finally admitted. We immediately stormed into the living room.

And there it was: a fresh Christmas tree decorated with real white wax candles burning gently! We were fascinated! Silver sparkles radiated from everywhere, caused by the warm candle light which gently swayed the silver tinsel, making the tree appear alive!

And it was!

It was a moment of awe and wonder. We just stood there overwhelmed, being engulfed by the simple sacredness of it all. Our shiny eyes reflected our surprise and anticipation; our hearts leaped with joy.

A special light dinner was served. While we ate the delicious food, we watched the brilliant tree and the warm candle lights. Simple gift-giving followed: pajamas, socks, cotton handkerchiefs, a white doll, a black doll, always a book. Homemade cookies and Weihnachtsstollen with nuts and rum-soaked raisins were served with a warm drink.

It was a most memorable time to cherish.

Jan. 6, the Three Holy Kings' Day, marked the time to burn out all candles used during the festive Christmas days, along with all Christmas tree candles left on the tree. The last flickering candle on the tree was carefully watched and anticipated. Moving a bit closer and breathing lightly, we awaited its final "puff" as the light extinguished. In that very moment we closed our eyes and made a silent wish for the New Year.

This silent wish was not to be told to anyone because the energies of this wish would dissipate and thus never become reality.

Stille Nacht, Heilige Nacht.

Silent Night, Holy Night.

This is how we've celebrated Christmas for more than half a century. The only thing that has changed is that we do not go to church anymore, but have welcomed and added more global religions to celebrate this special holy event with us on Christmas Eve. Respecting all and everyone is what true peace is all about! It's in our heart, not out there somewhere.

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