

health care. He let me bring my dog to the office. Slant should give him a second look. He's an interesting guy, and let's be brutally honest here: Slant needs new material. Usually Slant is boring as hell.

*James Johnston
Corvallis*

BASELESS COMPLAINT

It's time for local voters to get through the fog clouding the most contentious local race in the upcoming May election. That's the contest between Lane County Commissioner Pete Sorenson and his opponent, Andy Stahl.

Sorenson is still being hammered for allegedly violating the Open Meetings Law for meeting with other commissioners privately to discuss political issues. There's little or no basis for that complaint. What Sorenson (and others) did is common practice among elected officials.

As a former newspaper journalist, I covered politics for many year, from city councils to Congress. I hardly ever met an official who didn't meet with colleagues to discuss and debate issues. That's how democracy works.

Sorenson has an outstanding record as a public servant, covering many years as an Oregon state senator and a county commissioner. He also had experience as a legislative assistant in Congress. It would be hard to replace that level of accomplishment.

As a progressive legislator, he has been a leader in protecting the environment, supporting family wage jobs and getting the most bang for the public buck. His opponent in the May election, Stahl, is reputable. But his experience in the public arena is limited, and he has been associated with known conservatives.

There's only one choice that will serve the public interest — Pete Sorenson.

*Arnold Ismach
Eugene*

COVERED COAL

Let's be accurate and realistic. The statement in Camilla Mortensen's News Brief: "Coal, Coal, Go Away" (4/5) that "The Port of Coos Bay's coal export proposal ... would require open-car coal trains" is flat-out false. The port wants to export coal and bring badly needed jobs to the south coast. They are not requiring open cars. Stopping coal trains (interstate commerce) is quite impossible on a local level. Requiring coal train cars passing through our communities to be covered or otherwise prevented from spreading coal dust is doable.

*Stefan Ostrach
Eugene*

EDITOR'S NOTE: Good point. The proposal doesn't require open cars, but containing coal dust on trains is very expensive and rarely done. See www.coaltrainfacts.org

APPEASEMENT STRATEGY

South Eugene progressive and independent voters should see through Andy Stahl's attempt to capitalize on what was nothing less than a deliberate and concerted effort by the right to silence a strong, honest, effective leader and advocate, our South Eugene Commissioner Pete Sorenson.

What's disappointing is that Stahl's challenge is opportunistic. He promises to get along with a system that just spent the last year trying to destroy the career of the man he wants to replace. Count me among those who are tired of the rancor and political bickering, but Stahl's "get along" appeasement strategy has little hope of success. South Eugene voters interested in sensible, fair, government, promoting smart economic, social and environmental policies should see through the "time for a change" rhetoric and stand with their tested and proven commissioner and return Pete to office.

*Alan Leiman
Eugene*

STAHL'S AWARDS

The *Weekly's* gossip section, Slant (4/5), made insinuations against Lane commissioner candidate Andy Stahl due to Stahl's long-time friendship with a former Eugenean, Randal O'Toole.

EW fails to mention that O'Toole is the recipient of the Oregon Environmental Council's Neuberger Award for Service to the Conservation Movement and the Oregon Natural Resources Council's (now Oregon Wild) David Simon Award for Vision.

What did O'Toole do to merit these accolades? As an economist, he helped expose environmentally destructive below-cost timber sale programs on our national forests. This logging not only damaged our land and water quality, but as O'Toole pointed out repeatedly and successfully, the timber sold for less than the tax dollars spent preparing and administering the sales. O'Toole's 1988 book, *Reforming the Forest Service*, showed that most national forest controversies result from a skewed budget process that rewards Forest Service managers for losing tax dollars on environmentally destructive activities.

I can well understand why Stahl was proud to have O'Toole serve as best man at his wedding 30 years ago. Stahl will make an excellent commissioner for Lane County. He is willing to listen to and learn from smart people on all sides of challenging issues.

*Anae Rosenberg
Eugene*

EDITOR'S NOTE: Those two awards were given to Stahl more than 30 years ago, in 1978 and 1981.

CALI VS. OREGON

I don't mean to pick on Ian Korn for his letter ("California Bashin'," 4/12), but I always find it to be ironic (and humorous) when people come to Eugene and then

complain that the place is "growing" or "changing." I mean ... *hello*. And the Cali versus Oregon issue: From an historic perspective California and Oregon have always been on different ideological paths. For instance, we had Tom McCall as governor when Cali had Ronald Reagan — both were Republicans but McCall created the nation's first bottle deposit bill, created urban growth boundaries to protect farm land, cleaned up the Willamette (which was pretty much an open sewer for industrial waste before he was governor) and he made the ocean beaches and beach access a public right. While Reagan was sending the storm troopers into UC-Berkley, McCall hosted a Woodstock-style rock concert.

In California many beaches are still posted "No Trespassing." I've even had dogs sent after me while trying to enjoy a beach in Cali. And count the number of orchards that have been replaced by "Junk in the Box's" between Palo Alto and Sunnyvale. But getting back to the development issue: I think what Ian is reminding us of, is that we need to get back to our Oregonian ideological roots, (ideals) that may have been diluted by the influx of Californians into Oregon. Just saying.

*Mark Barbour
Eugene*

BEYOND POINTLESS

In regards to "Leaf-Blowers Suck," yes, leaf blowers really suck! Especially when dealing with wet debris, which seems beyond pointless. This hatred also includes getting struck on a few occasions by flying debris from this machine while riding my bike down the Amazon path. All the while the operator seems to be indifferent about it. Every sunny day is ruined by their noise pollution.

*Jennifer Kellin
Eugene*

Living OUT BY SALLY SHEKLOW

Culture Shock

Pondering Freddie's sad little Passover section

You'd think any big grocery store in a city the size of Eugene, especially a store founded by a Jew like Fred Meyer, would stock plenty of kosher-for-Passover Passover food during Passover. You'd think.

On the sixth night of Passover, I figured I'd pick up one more box of matzo just to make sure we had enough to last until the end of the eight-day holiday during which observant Jews eat matzo instead of bread. Matzo symbolizes Jews' exodus from slavery in Egypt when we were in too big a hurry to let our dough rise so we bolted to freedom with unleavened bread. A quick grocery stop for a box of matzo shouldn't end up symbolizing my people's 40 years of wandering in the desert.

I wandered. First, past two huge displays of close-out Easter candy, 50 percent off! What a deal for fans of chocolate bunnies and peeps.

I wandered up to a young man in a Fred Meyer apron. "Where can I find the Passover foods?" He seemed stunned, like he knew he should know but just couldn't recall.

"Like matzo? Gefilte fish?" I must've been speaking a foreign language. "Maybe aisle 10?"

Ah, the "Ethnic" section. Tortillas, soy sauce, falafel mix. No Matzo.

I wandered into a check-out line, "Passover food?"

The busy cashier nodded toward the other end of the store, "Try 'Natural Choices.'" She continued ringing up bacon and Wonderbread. "Natural Choices" had lots of granola and whole grain bread, all *chametz*, forbidden on Passover.

I wandered past a couple of guys taking inventory. "Is there a manager around?"

"She's over in Customer Service."

I hoped my ascension to the Customer Service desk would end my wandering.

"I think we had a rack of Passover stuff at the end of the Pet Care section," the manager said. Her co-worker added "And it's all half off!"

Half off on Easter candy a few days after Easter I understand. But Passover food half off during Passover seemed a bad business idea. At this point I'd have happily paid double for a box of matzo.



At long last, past rows of pet food, nestled near the dog toys and kitty litter, stood a narrow rack that housed Fred Meyer's sad little Passover "section." The top shelves held nine pink waxed paper-wrapped packs of matzo — five boxes in each. Anyone who could use that much matzo this late in Passover is either feeding the Lost Tribes of Israel or will soon be found in the laxative aisle.

Just the Matzo super-packs — no individual boxes — and a few *yartzeit* candles and other random Jewish provisions with no particular association to Passover, plus some miscellaneous non-Jewish items that other shoppers had decided not to buy and left on the conveniently empty Passover display shelves.

Now, I can see having a hard time finding matzo in rural Oregon. Our rural Jews are probably used to traveling to a bigger town for holiday supplies. But in Eugene? Really? Am I THAT far out of the mainstream here?

It's not like I was trying to buy a rainbow flag.

Award-winning writer Sally Sheklow has been sharing her pain in EW since 1999.