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*Will Horman
Corvallis*

WHERE WE DIED FROM

Really, this is embarrassing. Worse than a get-a-life quest, it was a ghoulish waste of time. It started with a harmless musing. When we moved to Eugene in the '70s, our next-door neighbors were an elderly couple originally from North Dakota. And it turned out that most in their circle of friends were from North Dakota too.

One day (here's the ghoulish part), I was looking through *The Register-Guard's* obituaries and noticed a lot of those who had passed on were from the Dakotas. My hypothesis: A lot of folks in their 80s living in Eugene came here from North and South Dakota. How many? Well, why not

keep track from the obituaries? (Why not? Actually, everyone who knew I was doing it had reasons why not!)

Ignoring their sage advice, from March to August of last year, I tallied the birth state for each person listed. And though I did find out about the Dakotas (N.D. had the 16th most at 1.5 percent and S.D. the 22nd at 1 percent), gradually the quest morphed into a morbid contest to see what state would show up last.

Only 210 out of 667 (31 percent) came from Oregon. Most who died way too young were Oregonians but a surprising number in their 80s to 100s were, too.

California (10 percent) and Washington (5 percent) came next, followed by Illinois (3 percent). Alaska had two obits, Hawaii one, Nevada one, Wyoming three and Utah three.

After six months I quit tallying but I did keep looking for the three states that still had no obits. Kentucky came pretty quickly but Vermont held out for four more months. Finally, 15 months after the start, the last state appeared. Ironically, it turned out to be the state with the license plate motto:

"The First State" — it was the first of the 13 colonies to ratify the Constitution.

So, I suppose that if you moved to the area from Delaware, you could feel like this highly scientific survey could mean that of the next 1,500 or so people you see, you'll be the last to go. On the other hand, you really ought to find something else to think about. Most likely you'll want to get a life.

*Jim Watson
Eugene*

SLOW DOWN!

Last week I had occasion to visit friends who live in the 200 block of South 67th Street in Thurston. I was shocked at the speed most people drive from the top to the stop sign. My friend told me this goes on all of the time — I stood there in total amazement. This is a residential area, folks. Kids and dogs and cats are out and about. Summer is coming soon and more kids will be out on skateboards, bicycles, running out in traffic chasing balls, etc. Let's slow down and enjoy. Please.

*Judi Greig Lawson
Dexter*

BUCKETS OF DESTRUCTION

I recently learned KFC is using throw-away paper packaging made from rainforest trees. There is no excuse to trash rainforests, including forests critical to endangered tigers, for chicken buckets.

KFC and Yum! have no sustainability policies to exclude products connected to rainforest destruction, and the company has failed to even answer questions about its sourcing of products such as palm oil, soy and paper products.

Yum! Brands, and the suppliers it buys from, are linked to the destruction of Indonesia's rainforests through Asia Pulp & Paper. According to its own public statements, APP continues to use trees from the rainforests of Indonesia to make paper products. This has to change.

KFC needs to clean up its supply chain and stop pushing endangered wildlife like the Sumatran tigers to the brink of extinction for throw-away, fast-food packaging.

*Diana Kekule Bastron
Florence*



DESIGNMATTERS

BY JERRY DIETHELM

Empty Nest

City Hall's fir coat has gone out of style

City Hall, I too dislike it – in its present state of disrepair. It depresses with neglect. And sad to say that what it represents, a 1960s version of small city government, just isn't valid anymore. This early-Modernist, idealized square-doughnut of city's services – fire, police, courts, administration, planning, and public meetings – all wrapped around a central courtyard – has run out of steam in more ways than one.

Eugene has grown and with it the need to have more adequate homes and unique buildings for its fire and police departments, which have now moved out. Both architecturally and functionally this can be a good thing. Each new public building, like the Hult Center, the Eugene Public Library, the police station and the new LCC complex, provides an opportunity for a vital city to reshuffle its service ensemble and refresh its public face. But what to do with the emptying nest that's left behind?

From the outside today City Hall exemplifies early-Modernism at its most boring, featuring stacked block concrete walls and block long facades of heavy wood screening derogatorily referred to as its "fir coat." I remember wondering what poor souls the long horizontal building housed when I first drove along 8th Avenue in 1970 and being disappointed that it was Eugene City Hall. Even when relatively new, the opaque wood screen looked more disproportionately mechanical than elegant, more committed to some runaway idea of unity or fealty than responding to soul and sun.

Buildings of this period, however, won prizes for being excessively conceptual and unrelievedly rational as City Hall is here with its one-stop-shopping "big concept" congruent with its circle-in-a-square geometry. Elevating the building on pilotis to provide structured parking underneath unfortunately also created an island out of City Hall, disconnecting all four sides from the bustle of city life.

Perhaps the most successful element of the design remains the circular council chambers at the center of the garden keep. This public room still offers a democratic setting that works quite well.

Other public meeting rooms like the McNutt Room have been too small and awkward for too long a time. Waiting outside under the conceptually unifying breezeway during cold weather months is a good example of how a "big idea" doesn't necessarily keep one warm. Springfield's remodeled shopping center City Hall has for many years been a much friendlier and more comfortable place to meet.

Luckily for us, fir coats have gone out of style. Modernism has regained considerable warmth and moved on if not completely come in from the cold. Steam

heating is no more. Fire and police have their own homes, making earthquake upgrading easier and more affordable. County and federal offices remain close by. Much good experience has been gained at overlaying whole new lives on such older buildings as Centre Court, the Smeed Hotel and the Granary to name just a few. And of course, recycling and reusing isn't just greener and more virtuous, it's also cheaper! So, BRING it on.



Why the reluctance to consider rehabilitating City Hall? One reason is that we don't always recognize Modern as being historical because we've been immersed in our time's signature stylistic home. Stylistic eras tend to become clearer, however, when they're being left behind. Another is the way that the early Modern, with its intellectual emphasis on simple horizontal lines and machine-like efficiency, tended to eschew a humanity of form, detail, craftsmanship, and artistic finishes that made older buildings emotionally accessible and therefore harder to let go.

But there are armatures of opportunity that grow out of City Hall's very modernity. The simplicity and regularity of the underlying structural frame makes it all that much easier for the existing building to be economically undressed, reconfigured and remodeled.

A recent study by Poticha Architects shows how that process might accomplish some key community objectives. It demonstrates, for example, how the building might be opened up and connected with a plaza to 8th Avenue and Pearl Street; how the council chambers could be made more visible and symbolically important to the community; and ways that additional useful, and perhaps revenue producing space, could be added around the courtyard.

To my mind, this study, which would save the community millions, is still not quite bold enough. I propose we also shrink the central courtyard and cover it with a glass pyramid, creating an atrium that would transform the whole interior of the block. I'd like to be able to look across the 8th Avenue "great street" entrance plaza at a council chambers shining for all to see beneath its glass hat. Now that would be a City Hall worthy of our own time and time and place.

City planner Kevin Lynch famously named this time-overlying strategy a "temporal collage." Places that artfully remember themselves generate a richness of urban experience that people continue to pay to visit in cities all over the world.

Jerry Diethelm of Eugene is an architect, landscape architect and a planning and urban design consultant.