

Through the Looking Glass

EYEING THIS WEEKEND'S OREGON COUNTRY FAIR



Nothing in this life is certain but death, taxes and the Oregon Country Fair. Here in Eugene, the Fair is part of our very atmosphere; it is the air we breathe. You can feel it coming weeks before it opens, wafting in the breeze like some hippie hurricane about to unleash its (not quite free) love on our stomping grounds. You can see it on the streets, with the increase of young seekers sporting ragged backpacks and dreadlocks and bare feet padding on broiling pavement. Excitement builds, mellow-yellowly, among the faithful, while some old-timers bitch that the Fair ain't what it used to be — it's all 'bout money now, so git out and let us party in the woods.

And yet the tradition goes on, undiminished, unbowed, proud in its ability to maintain the spectacle of itself, to plant its annual freak flag in the soil of the eternal sixties. Despite the tragedy shadowing this year's event — the loss of four Fair volunteers (Jerome "Roch" Delbosc D'Auzon, Robyn Leigh Weir, Christopher Robin Kent and Erin Thomas Frank Noble) in the June 23 crash of a privately rented plane — OCF general manager Charlie Ruff has promised "an amazing celebration of life and remembrance."

With a spirit of survival and celebration, the Oregon Country Fair carries on, of the people and for the people. A new loop (p. 16) debuts this time around, and around and around it goes, as the old is made new like fresh green buds on a 43-year-old tree of life.

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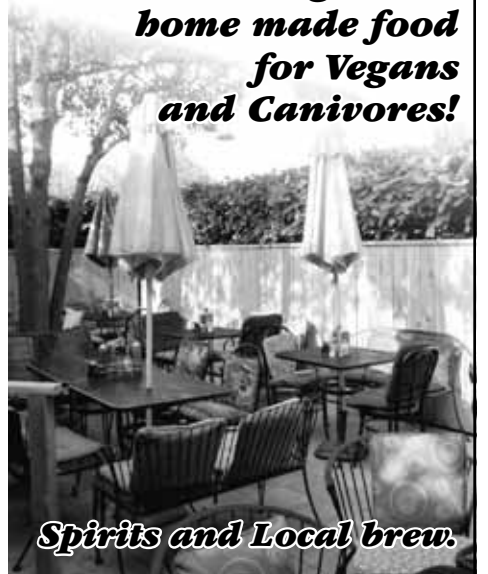


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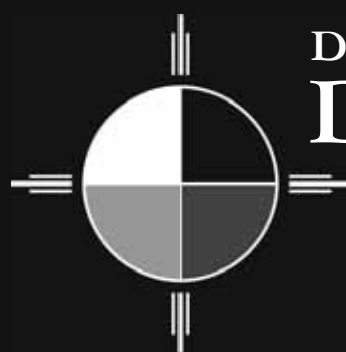
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