BASIC RIGHTS ISSUE

Eugene liberals, where art thou? As of this writing (Sunday, Dec. 16) the Wayne Morse Free Speech Plaza, repeat, *Free Speech Plaza*, has been legally closed by the county for, so far, six days following totally unsubstantiated health charges against SLEEPS who were protesting local anti-homeless laws there.

SLEEPS was charged with trespassing and one nonviolent protester was arrested. So now, it's just a First Amendment issue. Period. If you want to protest a war, or a budget cut at the plaza, you can't. If you want to stand there in protest, silently honoring slain children, you can't.

If you want a rally for gun control, you can't have it at the Wayne Morse Free Speech Plaza. It's closed. It has a barricade around it. Wayne Morse's statue looks down on his empty plaza.

Come on liberals, I thought this was your scene. Get out there. And all you old hippy/liberals get out there again, dammit. This is First Amendment stuff. Basic. And this is local (and check out SLEEPS while you're at it).

Peace in hard times,

Walker T. Ryan
Eugene

EDITOR'S NOTE: The fence around the plaza was removed Dec. 17. See News Briefs.

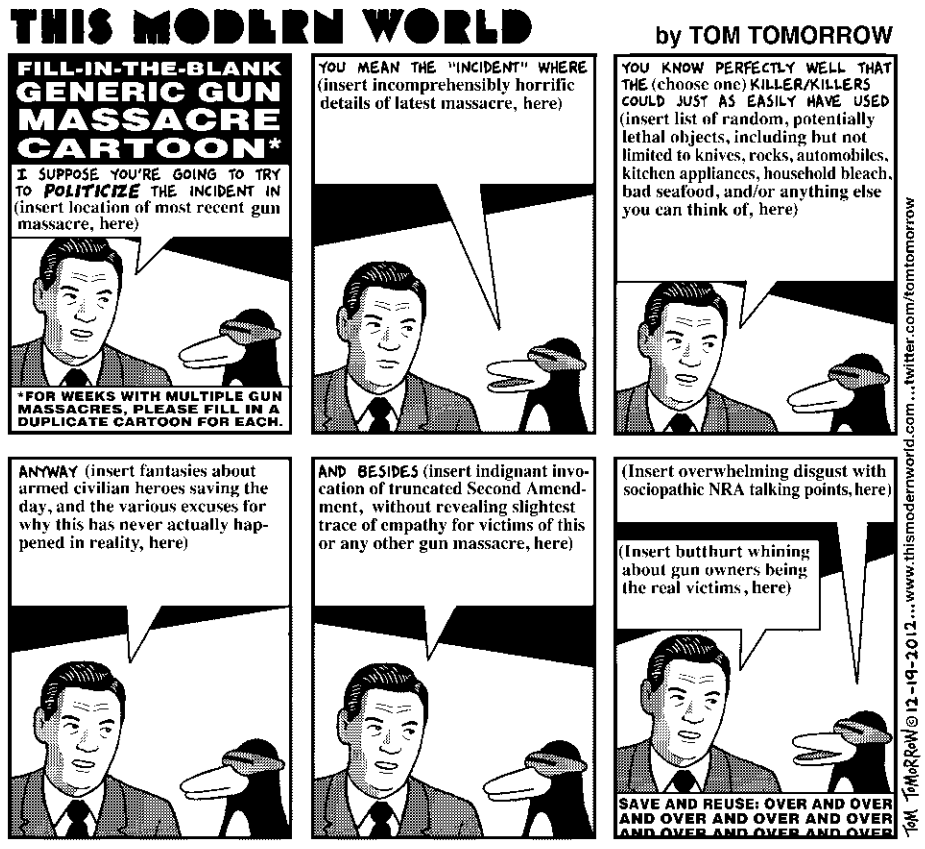
SPEECHLESS IN EUGENE

I understand Lane County workers are right now (Dec. 14) "cleaning up" after the eviction of homeless protestors from the former Wayne Morse Free Speech Plaza. (The plaza will now be renamed I assume.)

What a waste of money! I saw the plaza after the protestors left the first time on Wednesday, and it looked fine to me. Keep in mind, people walk on the plaza all the time, wearing shoes, which unless they are brand new, have probably passed through or over spit, mud, cigarette butts and possibly dog or cat poop at some time or another.

Why are the Lane County commissioners allowing Administrator Liane Richardson to spend our tax dollars in this terrible act of symbolic disgust at the homeless?

Vickie Nelson
Eugene



SENSELESS OPPOSITION

Another slaughter, this time in Connecticut, and again there are dead children. Now we'll all ask how or why an individual can take up a gun, systematically line up a target in its sights, and rend life indiscriminately from his fellow human beings. We'll hear how, before the killings, the shooter seemed either entirely normal, dangerously unhinged, or somewhere inbetween. We'll hear debates as to who should have seen the trouble signs and what could have been done to prevent it.

We'll hear guns villainized and we'll hear guns canonized, but one question must be answered: How many people will need to die in these senseless, gruesome massacres, before those who oppose eliminating or severely restricting guns in our society will finally agree that opposition to gun control can be explained no more easily than can the reasoning of the killer?

Ed McLaughlin
Eugene

LET TEACHERS CARRY

As I recoil in horror and try not to cry at the very thought of what just happened in Connecticut, would all of the sane adults in the room please stand up and acknowledge that murderous, psychotic animals will always find ways to murder children in bunches with or without guns? I will let you use your imagination. Just read the news if you have no imagination.

Now, would all of the liberal teachers in the room who are gun-haters and would take them all away from law-abiding citizens, if given the chance, please stand up and explain to the rest of us why you would rather cower in a corner with your precious babies, *our* precious babies, and risk being slaughtered alongside them like bleating sheep?

If I lost a child to a craven, murderous coward, but knew her teacher died shooting back, maybe, just maybe, I could someday go on.

Quit giving teachers apples. Let them carry.

Brian Palmer
Eugene

LIVING OUT BY SALLY SHEKLOW

Queering It Quandary

BIG OL' LESBIANS NO LONGER STAND OUT

My fitness class lets me tune out life's chaos and tune in to my body. Like me, the other women here focus on the workout, all of us sweating and grunting to the beat. Our group ranges from new moms to long-time widows, and all ages in between. A lot of us, like me, are in our 60s. As far as I know, I'm the only homo. But you wouldn't know that to look at us. Except for a few ponytails and pinned-back buns, everyone has pretty much the same short haircut. Dykey. I fit right in.

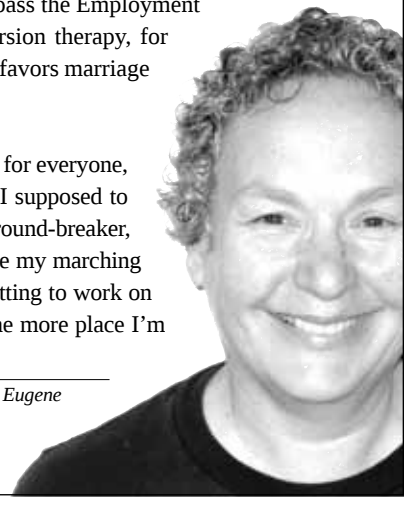
This troubles me. Not because I begrudge all women the freedom to wear their hair however they please, but because the dyke-do is the norm. Like other LGBTQ people in the long liberation struggle, I've dedicated my life to queering the dominant paradigm. Now that the dominant paradigm is shifting, queering it is getting harder to do. It's not that I'm tired or assimilated or resigned, but looking and acting like a hardcore lesbian doesn't wallop the status quo like it once did. At least in my neck of the Pacific Northwest woods.

Sure, women in politics and media and otherwise in the public eye gussy up and comply with a certain standard image of how a woman is supposed to look, but where I live, lots of women have liberated themselves from that confining standard. These gals do crunches with generally keep their hair short, wear sensible shoes, and don't tolerate shit from men. Those traits used to evoke assumptions of being "that way." Not any more.

Based on what I pick up from locker room chatter, these aging fitness buffs don't obsess on attracting or aggrandizing men. Like me, they just want to stay healthy and keep enjoying life. We all pump and stretch, shower and dress as part of the same tribe. I can mention "my partner, she" and nobody blinks an eye. Apparently these gals have met out lesbians before, if not in person then at least on TV (Thank you Goddess Ellen!). Times have changed. My queerness doesn't rock their boat in the least. They walk out of the gym in sweats or jeans and sneakers just like I do. No biggie.

I'm still the same out and proud dyke I've always been, but I don't look much different than the straight, bi, and who-knows-what women at this club. Is this a sign that we've made it, queered the paradigm so much that being a big ol' lesbian is no longer all that queer?

Or is this the price of winning equality under the law? Oh, I know we're not all the way there yet. We still have to overturn DOMA, pass the Employment Non-Discrimination Act, and finish conquering aversion therapy, for starters. But the balance has tipped. Public sentiment favors marriage and workplace equality and ending gender-bullying.



Victory seems inevitable and imminent.

Of course we'll keep pushing for full human rights for everyone, We're in this for the long haul. Meanwhile, how am I supposed to keep queering things up? I like being a pioneer and a ground-breaker, but the ground here has already been broken. What are my marching orders now? Do I have to find a more homophobic setting to work on my abs, quads and lats? Or can I just enjoy having one more place I'm free to be myself? ■

Sally Sheklow is a freelance writer who has been a part of the Eugene community since 1972.