

next to someone drinking a glass of wine during the Dec. 8 performance by the Eugene Concert Choir in the Silva Concert Hall. This is the first time I have had this experience at the Hult Center, and it was not pleasant. To have someone drinking wine, with its overpowering smell, one foot from where I was sitting, was unacceptable.

Serving alcohol and allowing it to be consumed in the lobby seems to work well for everyone. Forcing someone to sit right next to someone drinking does not. In the Eugene/Springfield area, there are an average of 30 AA meetings and five Al-Anon meetings offered each and every day. This is not a small problem to be taken or treated lightly.

I do not remember ever getting a survey asking me whether I thought this change was a good idea or not. People have plenty of time to enjoy a drink before the beginning of the performance. The response from the Hult Center management was tepid at best. I quote from the letter I received from Jeff Goodyear and Karm Hagedorn: "With the short amount of time available during a typical intermission, letting patrons bring their beverages inside affords them an opportunity to enjoy a drink more slowly without having to quickly gulp it down. We've had very good customer feedback on this point as we've navigated our way through this change during the past months and have learned that this enhances the whole patron experience for many people which is one of our primary goals."

I hope the Hult Center will reconsider

this policy. If someone has to grab another drink at intermission, maybe it's time to start finding a meeting.

Paul Pattison
Eugene

WILL BULLETS FLY?

I have a question for all you terrified gun purchasers/worshippers. What will happen when you go where people gather and a balloon pops or a firecracker explodes or a car backfires? Will you all start shooting at each other? You are creating your own self-fulfilling prophesy.

The NRA proclaims that "the only thing that stops a bad guy with a gun is a good guy with a gun." There are no good guys with guns! The police are paid/sworn enforcers with guns. All the others are incredibly ignorant or paranoid or sadistic or worse.

Ramona McCall
Eugene

VOICES OF REASON

"We are writing to urge your support for a ban on the domestic manufacture of military-style assault weapons ... We urge you to listen to the American public and to the law enforcement community and support a ban on the further manufacture of these weapons." This is from a letter to Congress, May 13, 1994, written and signed by Presidents Ford, Carter and Reagan. If this letter was written today, rather than almost 20 years ago, the far right gun supporters would accuse these men of being liberal, gun-grabbing wackos

out to destroy the Constitution. The voices of reason can not be heard today because of all the paranoid, child-like screaming tantrums from the far right.

Michael Hinojosa
Drain

PROTECT US

Enough is enough. We need to do more to protect our citizens, especially our children, from mass shootings like the one in Newtown, Conn.

And, yes, we need a real ban on semi-automatic assault weapons and on magazines of more than 10 rounds. California's state assault weapon ban should be the model. I'm pleased to learn that California Sen. Diane Feinstein has announced that on day one of the new Congress, she will introduce a bill similar to the 1994 Federal Assault Weapons Ban signed into law by President Clinton. That life-saving bill was tragically allowed to expire in 2004, despite President Bush's assurance that he would sign the extension if passed by Congress. Now is the time for President Obama to finally back commonsense actions to prevent gun violence.

While I fully support the right of an individual to have a gun in their home for self-protection, there should be restrictions and limitations on the kinds of weapons we allow in our society. I wholeheartedly support Feinstein's effort to ban the sale, import, transfer, and possession of assault weapons and high-capacity clips, magazines, and strips. I see no reason

for these types of weapons to be in the hands of either law-abiding citizens or criminals because of their high firepower and ability to penetrate body armor which puts everyone at risk. I firmly believe that we must do all that we can to prevent gun violence in America.

It's not the whole answer. But it's an important start. As Americans, we know we are better than a country where there are 32 gun murders every day. That is why I ask you to contact Oregon Sens. Ron Wyden and Jeff Merkley and strongly urge them to sign on as co-sponsors of Feinstein's important gun violence prevention bill immediately.

Curtis Taylor
Eugene

ARM EVERYBODY

I'm not saying it's true, just that it *could* be true: What do the fashion industry and the NRA have in common? Think about it: the NRA wants to arm just about everyone in order for us to be safer, and as noted in the Second Amendment, ready to defend ourselves against the federal government.

But clearly our clothing has not been designed to comfortably haul around the appropriate weaponry. Who wants to attend Christmas parties or bar mitzvahs with an assault weapon tucked in their skirt, pants or cummerbund? I mean, really, that is so 1770s. But the NRA knows darn well we will need clothing designed to accommodate our ordnance. And who benefits? It's the economy, stupid.

Robert L. Weiss
Eugene

LIVING OUT BY SALLY SHEKLOW

Let Them Eat Cake

WHAT TO DO WITH A THREE-POUND TWINKIE

The doorbell rang. I was grating an organic beet for our dinner salad, which we'd have as soon as Wifey got home from yoga. *Ding-dong*. A quick rinse swirled magenta beet juice down the sink.

Dish towel in hand, I raced to the door. Sometimes the neighborhood tamale maker has her bilingual kid ask if I want to buy any, which I never do because we're corn and gluten free. "Hello?" I called into the dark. A UPS truck drove away.

Balanced on my doorstep sat a brown-paper package the size of a hatbox, addressed to both Wifey and me. It must've weighed five pounds. In large block letters it was stamped "PERISHABLE." Probably not a hat.

I set it on the kitchen counter and sprinkled shredded beet onto chilled romaine. The oven timer on the free-range chicken went off. Wifey was late.

The box did nothing. Determined to keep my hands off, I tossed the salad, inadvertently turning cucumber slices beet-pink. No more futzing with the salad.

The package didn't move. The urgency of the word "PERISHABLE" tested my impulse control. Maybe there was a plant inside, or potted amaryllis bulbs. I might as well give the poor thing some air. I sliced the tape and pulled back the wrapping. A red and yellow striped box with a fancy cursive logo announced "The Original Boston Coffee Cake!" A gift card ID'd our dear East-coast cousins, generous but oblivious to our dietary orientation.

Wifey arrived to the box wide open, waxed paper removed and a giant gluten-laden, sugar-iced coffee cake shimmering under our compact fluorescent lights.

Wifey read the card, not in the least troubled by the mismatch of the gift. "That's sweet of them."

We sat down to our pink salad and only slightly over-baked chicken. The cake glistened. For dessert, in homage to our relatives, we each ate a slice. I'll admit it was tasty, not unlike deservedly departed Hostess Twinkies. The label — which I didn't dare read until *after* we'd had some — gave sugar as the first ingredient and one of the only recognizable substances in there.

Wifey'd had her fill, but no way was I going to keep 48 ounces of tempting "bleached flour, modified food starch, sodium phosphate, potassium sorbate, hydrogenated cotton seed oil, propylene glycol, mono and diesters of fats and fatty acids, mono and diglycerides, dextrose, and cellulose gum" in the house.

With neighbors and friends out of town for the holidays, there was no one around to give it to. Local ducks and geese suffer from pin-wing because of people feeding them white-flour bread. It would take forever to break down in the compost bin and I'd feel guilty adding it to the landfill. Our poor old toilet has been flushing gingerly enough as it is.

I stuck the cake in my car. We've had things stolen from our cars before. No such luck. The next morning the cheerful box was still sitting in the passenger seat.

On my way across town I came to a light where a raggedy man held an "Anything Helps" cardboard sign.

I rolled down the window and hefted out the box. "You like coffee cake?"

He seemed genuinely grateful, but then so did my thank-you note to our cousins. I just hope he didn't feed it to any ducks.

Best of Eugene Award-winning writer Sally Sheklow has been striving to live clean and green in Eugene, Oregon since 1972.

