

A RECLAIMED MEADOW

Like the “wild” sweet pea and fennel, I am a transplant to this area. While I am not a true old-timer, I have been a resident of Oakleigh and McClure Lanes for the last 24 years. Everyday my 80-year-old mother-in-law and I walk my young daughter along Oakleigh Lane to and from our neighborhood school.

When my husband, David, and I, along with our then 4-year-old (and her toys), outgrew our little house on Oakleigh, we moved one block south on McClure to a house adjacent to a large blackberry-covered lot. It was clear the vacant field would likely be built upon at some point. My husband is a teacher and I am a gardener, so it took some committed efforts to purchase the open land next to our new house. It was and remains our intent to guide its development as a community-minded place.

I have spent much of my free time in the last 24 years in meetings and work parties, caring for the public open space along the river I love. I have been deeply involved in both the planning and planting of Rasor Park. Daily garbage pickup is part of our routine. As a family, we have joined the effort of rejuvenating the once abandoned hazelnut orchard at the end of McClure Lane into a productive and safe place.

Up until a few years ago, in order to get to the bike path and the river, we had to walk out to River Road and around to either East Hilliard or McClure Lane. Accessing the river from the east end of Oakleigh meant a careful navigation though a formidable acre

of blackberries hiding barbed wire, “No Trespassing” signs and tent campers.

Over the past few years, after a massive clean up, we welcomed neighbors to enjoy the now reclaimed meadow and help keep it safe and free. I am afraid that our desire to share the space as generously as possible may have created some confusion.

As we explored the many options, the idea that emerged and sparked so much interest was cohousing, a community development which offers shared meals and tools, watchful eyes on children and elders and housing planned by its residents to provide both privacy and opportunities for friendly interactions. Cohousing is about addressing the community needs of people, rather than simply building structures to be filled with strangers.

Knowing and greeting my neighbors as we meet is a great pleasure to me and I am truly happy, even with some being critical of our plans, that neighbors on Oakleigh Lane enjoy the community we share. It is my firm belief that they will continue to do so as Oakleigh Meadow Cohousing integrates into and further enhances our neighborhood.

Joan Connolly
Eugene

PRECIOUS HABITAT

In the 21st century, we will have to learn to cherish all creatures in the commonwealth of sentient beings if we are going to preserve our fragile environment.
— Sam Keen

I’m all in favor of cohousing in the Eugene area, but the Oakleigh Meadow Cohousing project will actually do more damage and long-term destruction to the area. I don’t see this project as being environmentally beneficial to the area or to the people who live there. Developments (of any kind) that destroy the essence of having a greenway space for all beings and living things to enjoy are not appropriate for the area.

I urge Becky Taylor, Eugene city planners and whomever else involved with the Oakleigh Meadows Cohousing permit process, to not allow this to happen to our precious habitat.

Planet Glassberg
Eugene

BLACKING OUT

The sadly simple reason that there is so much redaction in the Liane Richardson investigation can be found in Commissioners Faye Stewart, Pat Farr and Pete Sorenson’s admission that, in the latest budget, the line item allowing her (Richardson) to siphon money came as a surprise to them. (“What? Read before approval? Are you daft, taxpayer?” All of that redacted blackness merely masks more evidence of their moral turpitude and incompetence.

And we thought cleaning up poop in the flowerpots was costly.

David Perham
Eugene

POOR SERVICE

There is some new life happening downtown on Broadway! It is quite a wonderful mix and variety! There is the new Bijou cinemas, the tea house next to it, Party Downtown, the Red Wagon Creamery, not to mention a few other random, rather “hip” new restaurants — some of which have already received the Best of Eugene award? Unfortunately, that award seems to have gone to their heads — due to their inability to serve and treat guests well and equally from their hearts.

Since “sustainability” seems to be the premise of their approach to food and how it is brought to your plate, one would think that the service from personnel would transcend to their communication and interest in their customers. Unfortunately, due to the classist, subtle discriminatory treatment they parlay out to a few of their customers with a “you-are-not-as-cool-as-us” attitude, I am left wondering: mmmmm, how long will they sustain their business?

Looking for equality in service.

David Wilson
Eugene

THE END IS NEAR

The street repairs are showing signs of completion but my favorite sign is the “BE PREPARED TO STOP” one; seems like a good idea. They should leave them up. Thanks for the new smooth ride.

Vince Loving
Eugene

LIVING OUT BY SALLY SHEKLOW

State of Celebration

DOORS OF DISCRIMINATION KEEP FLYING OPEN

Gotta hand it to the IRS. I don’t mean literally hand over your owed taxes — although unless you’re a valiant anti-war tax-resister doing civil disobedience, you probably should pay up, especially now that Obama is closing loopholes on tax-avoiding fat cats (no offense to felines of size). I’m saying hand some figurative credit to the Internal Revenue Service for growing a pair (that means ovaries, right?) and taking a stand for justice.

The IRS teamed up with the U.S. Treasury Department and jointly announced, much to the frothy chagrin of anti-equality homophobes, that all married couples, regardless of sexual orientation, will be treated equally under federal tax law. Can I get a “woo-hoo!”?

After decades of protesting, parading, lobbying, canvassing and coming out, the times really are a’changin’. It suddenly seems so sudden. Like the old slapstick routine where someone pounds and pushes against the closed door and then the person on the other side flings it open. Whee!

We’re in. For federal tax purposes, at least. No matter where your marriage was performed, if you’re legally married anywhere, you’re legally married everywhere. Even if you happen to live in one of the

37 same-sex marriage-ban states, like Oregon.

Side note: We’re on the verge of overturning the Constitutional ban here in the Beaver State. Volunteers are busily gathering signatures to put a marriage equality measure on our November 2014 ballot. If you haven’t yet, please sign the Oregon United for Marriage petition at oregonsaysido.org and do your part to bend the long arc of history toward justice.

Back to our nation’s government. In the wake of the Supreme Court striking down DOMA, federal agencies are hustling to unveil their compliance plans. The Department of Health and Services is all over it. HHS Secretary Kathleen Sebelius, flexing some mighty estrogen, proclaimed she’d “ensure that gay and lesbian married couples are treated equally under the law.” That means if Wifey and I ever need to be in a skilled nursing facility, Medicare Advantage has to let us be in the same facility. Rattle your walkers, folks, this is big!

All these new equality guarantees apply to couples in legally recognized same-sex marriages based on where they were married. In oddly festive legalese, this is known as the “State of Celebration.” (Also happens to describe our state of mind.)

Here’s the deal. For federal taxes and a slew of other federally regulated programs like the military

and immigration, all married same-sex couples are now considered legally married based on their State of Celebration. That’s all of us who were married, like Wifey and I were, in Canada, or any of the 16 other countries (and parts of Mexico) with marriage equality, or in California, Connecticut, Delaware, Iowa, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, Minnesota, New Hampshire, New York, Rhode Island, Vermont and Washington (state and D.C.).

Alas, queer couples who want to marry but don’t live in or have the time and money to travel to one of those places are SOL. At this moment, Social Security still denies benefits based on State of Residence. And not all of us lesbian/gay /bi/trans/ queer people are even in couples. Way too many doors remain closed. Oh, we’ll definitely keep pounding. But now we expect those closed doors to keep flying open.

Award-winning writer Sally Sheklow has been sharing what’s behind Justice’s closed doors with EW readers since 1999.

