

been an amazing bulldog on local land use issues. From his work to save the Amazon headwaters to his advocacy for sound planning in the Envision Eugene process to his wonderfully enlightening community Conversations on the Forest, Kevin keeps many irons in the fire and has seemingly unlimited energy to accomplish the primary responsibilities of a county commissioner: digest a huge volume of information, stay focused and alert at meetings, and advocate relentlessly for sound planning and the public interest.

Since Lane County commissioners must answer their own phones with no personal staff support, it's crucial they be able to multi-task, as Kevin surely can. Over the past 10 years or so it's given me a good feeling to see Kevin trundling his huge briefcase of reference materials into yet another planning meeting, knowing he's on task watching out for the public interest, working tirelessly to guide public policy to design and build a thriving community that fits our very special Willamette Valley landscape. We'll do well to keep him on the job.

*Fergus Mclean
Dexter*

FUND MY SPECULATION

Notes from the gray matter: Since we, the people, gave millions to apartment

speculators so they'd make millions, they can provide some empty apartments for use by our currently homeless citizens. Last reports had many vacancies among the new towers, and they're still building like crazy. Where DID those Whoville folks go?

Meanwhile in Glenwood, local speculators want to build a hotel and convention center, but we must give \$8.5 million via Springfield and Lane County funds. I don't know about Springfield, but Lane County is rich! Close some health centers, cut back some deputies, all is good! The fact that convention centers usually lose dollars is not our concern!

Since we, the people, are speculating, here's a plan: I'll train ducks to attack beavers. No beavers will be killed, but they will be altered. The attack ducks nip and chew at the beavers tails until they become nutria! Not just nutria, but neutered nutria. Call them bullducks!

So I need startup cash from the city of Eugene, but not much. To train 30,000 ducks at \$500 apiece will run \$1.5 million. I have some venture capital saved up, so the city will only need to contribute \$1,499,990. See you at the next City Council meeting!

*Scott MacWilliams
Eugene*

NO HEAD SCRATCHING

In this new age of electronic super communication, I find myself, well, unable to communicate! I used to be able to pick up my phone (large enough so I could actually find it), dial up a phone number and the person I was calling would answer (meaning speak into the phone). In fact, not only would the person answer the phone call, but there would be something called a "conversation" immediately following the pick up.

Other than "dialing" (a term referring to rotary phones where users were once required to place one finger in a round opening designating a single number and move around until all digits in the phone number were hit), no fingertips were ever involved in the entire process of phone communication. And pretty much all of the words spoken during the phone conversation could be found in a common dictionary — no head-scratching abbreviations plugged into the middle of incomplete sentences that made absolutely no sense whatsoever.

Hold on, my phone is ringing. "Hello," I answer. (By the way, "hello" is a common greeting one uses when receiving a real phone call.) "Daddy, you haven't answered any of my text messages," my daughter states with frustration. I pause, walk down

the hallway to her room, and yell out, "Honey, I forgot my password again."

*Stephen Roth
Eugene*

TAXES FOR WAR

I'm unhappy to learn that 40 cents of every one of my 2013 federal tax dollars went to fund current and past wars, according to the Quaker advocacy group the Friends Committee on National Legislation.

We have some critical needs as a country — how to respond to the effects of climate change, how to repair our crumbling bridges and roadways, how to bridge the growing divide between rich and poor. I want to see more of my tax dollars going to these priorities rather than to the Pentagon.

I hope that my senators, Ron Wyden and Jeff Merkley, will work to make this happen in the coming year. They can start by eliminating the more than \$100 billion of documented waste, fraud and abuse found in the Pentagon's budget every year. We might disagree about the need to invest in the tools for war, but surely we can agree on the need to spend our tax dollars responsibly.

*Sandra Carter
Corvallis*

LIVING OUT BY SALLY SHEKLOW

Are We There Yet?

LET'S EXAMINE OUR PROGRESS TO DATE

We've been at this equality and justice thing for a long time now. Seems like we should start prepping for our "Mission Accomplished" photo op. We've come so far.

But nope. Sorry. We're not there yet.

Oh, we've definitely made progress. Just look at our movement's milestone achievements. Homosexuality officially stopped rating as a mental disorder in 1973. Our sex lives were decriminalized in 2003. In 2009, it became a federal offense to beat us up. The military stopped considering us a threat to "cohesiveness" and Don't Ask Don't Tell was overturned in 2011. At last count, 17 states and D.C. recognize same-sex marriages, and a whopping 75 percent of young adults support our freedom to marry. When just a decade ago there were no openly queer TV stars or talk-show hosts, out butch dyke Ellen rules daytime talk *and* the Oscars. And now "God Hates Fags" mastermind Fred Phelps has finally died. Did homophobia die too?

If only!

Queer-hating is still here, but can we, just for now, spare ourselves the depressing evidence? Of course we still have rampant harassment, bullying, abuse and discrimination. It's still legal in the U.S. to fire or refuse to hire LGBTQ Americans. We have way too many queer kids getting kicked out of their families, living on the streets, considering and committing suicide. We have haters on the loose attacking lesbian, gay, bi,

trans and queer people. But, for the moment, could we please skip the gruesome details and just stipulate that ignorance, bigotry and violence against us continue to gouge potholes in our long road to freedom? Thank you.

Like lots of other LGBTQ folks, my wife and I have nestled into our comfort zones. We live in a mostly progressive state in a mostly queer-friendly town. Our next-door neighbors have our backs. We both work in jobs where we don't have to hide or tone down who we are. We belong to a welcoming congregation and were married by our rabbi. We are blessed with a wealth of queer friends and queer-supportive straight friends. Our day-to-day lives rarely bump into threatening homophobic situations.

We also benefit from the privileges of being white, educated and not living in poverty. With privilege comes responsibility. That's why I speak up and interrupt homophobic jokes, stereotypes and assumptions and educate in every teachable moment. I'm not trying to be a buzzkill, I just refuse to let heterosexism kill my own buzz. I am visible and verbal about who I am, even (or especially) when it makes others uncomfortable. I know that showing my pride and self-acceptance inspires others to get on board.

There's a reason public sentiment has shifted. It's thousands and thousands of people like me, queer people, along with millions of our allies, being ourselves and sharing the truth of our lives with our families, friends, neighbors, congregations and

coworkers. And with our elected representatives. And our president. We keep pushing because our lives depend on it. We can see the day when we are all safe, free to be our whole selves, included in every aspect of society, and treated equally and protected under the law.

We're not there yet, but victory is within sight. We're getting closer and we're going faster. Whee!

Award-winning writer Sally Sheklow has been the voice of Eugene Weekly's queer conscience since 1999.

