

## CURSED FONT

Your choice of Helvetica Bold typeface on the cover of last week's issue [7/31] was both alarming and disappointing. I had hoped that *EW* was more enlightened. But your use of that font shows that further awareness is needed.

Helvetica is a curse on society. Aesthetically it is a scar on the landscape. It is drab and modern and completely uninspiring. It is less of a choice than a default. But the gravest danger posed by Helvetica is homogenization.

Look around. Helvetica is everywhere! Helvetica is like the English language or McDonald's or top 40 music. Not only are these entities bland, but their cancerous growth displaces an unimaginably rich diversity of pre-existing cultural amenities.

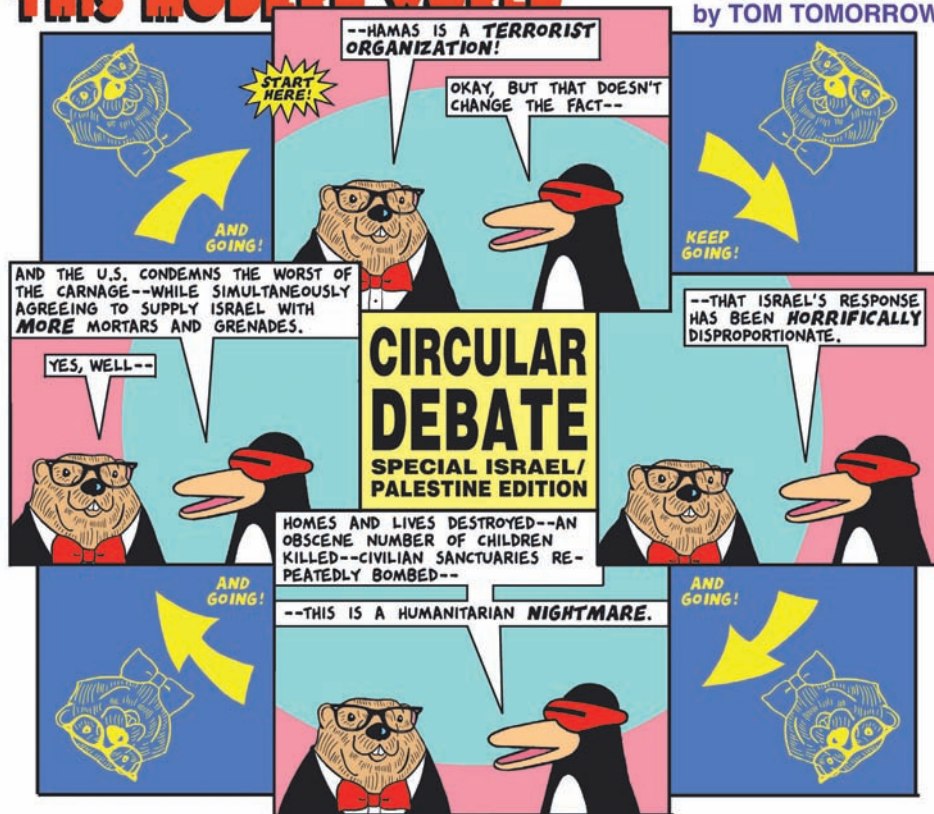
Why would *EW* foster cultural homogenization, and so needlessly? Many other fonts offer suitable substitutes. Please consider an alternative typeface for future covers.

With your help we can eradicate Helvetica once and for all.

Blake Andrews  
Eugene

## THIS MODERN WORLD

by TOM TOMORROW



## UNBALANCED PANEL

Does planning in Eugene represent all sectors? Membership on the Eugene Planning Commission may not! The Planning Commission is one of the most important commissions in city government, as its website attests: [eugene-or.gov/pc](http://eugene-or.gov/pc). Members are appointed by the City Council.

For some time it has been seven positions and seven men. Recently the council appointed one woman. One female member, six male members: possibly not the balance of men and women in the community, nor the balance of protected-class persons in the community (possibly) nor the balance of persons of varying economic classes in the community (probably).

The council might consider creating a membership on this commission that responds to its charge: "Now, especially, is a critical time for the planning commission to make a difference in Eugene's future as Eugene is in the midst of many important projects that will define our community's character for years to come," and, "Without their assistance (the assistance of the members of the commission), many complex and significant matters might not be brought to the City Council's attention and risk receiving only a limited review" (see website above).

The current membership balance on the commission is at risk of providing the council with "only a limited review."

Richard Guske  
Eugene

## DISSING THE WHIT

I am perplexed at the choice of cover July 31. Were you advertising the Whiteaker Block Party? The same neighborhood that has worked for years to make the Washington Jefferson Skate Park safe and healthy for families and kids?

Or were you celebrating our mayor's home neighborhood? Such a fine advertisement for our city leader. Or were you dissing all of the neighborhood as a dive? The best place to do drugs, communicate with hand gestures and hate decency and authority while drunk. Oh wait. That's funny.

Not Laughing.

Virginia Sherwood  
Eugene

## REFUSING CHILDREN

Indignation is flaring up over the flood of children from Central America across the U.S.-Mexico border. Provide sanctuary for these underage tourists? The U.S. wasn't always like this. In 1939, just before WW II, almost a thousand Jewish citizens of Europe were at sea, in limbo, fleeing from persecution by some German dictator with a goofy notion about extinguishing the entire Jewish population. Also, bleeding-heart factions in our government had the temerity to propose rescuing 20,000 German Jewish children and bringing them to the U.S. The FDR administration turned away the boatload and shot down the proposal. Talk about the good old days!

Jim Wood  
Eugene

## SAFETY IN ORANGE

Recently I worked security with a phenomenal group of people at the Lane County Fair. Our job was to make sure everyone enjoyed their weekend safely. We found a lot of lost kids and even a few lost parents! A couple of times, though, I witnessed parents pointing to me and

## LIVING OUT BY SALLY SHEKLOW

# Can't Get Used to It

THE GAY-FRIENDLY SOCIAL SHIFT IS STILL CLUMSY

Marriage apartheid's over in our state (woo hoo!) so there's no reason to continue referring to my lawfully wedded wife as "my partner." I should call her "my wife," but I still catch myself saying "partner." I did it just the other day when I was explaining why I needed my laptop screen replaced and told the tech guy that my partner stepped on it. I gauged the situation in that second-nature queer safety-check thing we do, and added, "She feels pretty bad about it."

This little coming-out moment could easily have been glossed over, but techman picked up on it. "My partner's the same way," he said. "He's awful clumsy." Family!

Home-connections like that are little high points, affirmations of who we are, like finding out someone went to your old high school or your grandparents all came from the same village outside Kiev. It was a sweet

little kinship moment and I wasn't going to spoil it by arguing that she is not, in fact, clumsy, it's just that it was dark and I'd left the laptop on the floor. In any case, "my partner, she" and "my partner, he" conveyed our identities just fine.

I could've said "my wife" but I'm used to "partner" now. At some point "partner" became the kinder, gentler term because "lover" felt too brash for mixed company, "girlfriend" didn't translate from lesbianese and Wifey and I were way beyond "roommate," although my mother, rest her soul, never did stop referring to her that way. "Partner" sounds cartoonish to me, as in Yosemite Sam's "Howdy Pardner!" but I caved. I got used to it, like I got used to wearing a swimsuit — I'd rather skinny dip, but now that I swim in a public pool I make the concession.

It's officially acceptable — in Oregon and 18 other states, anyway — for two women or two men to be spouses, but it's still new. "My wife" comes off a little

pushy and in your face when I'm not necessarily in a pushy in-your-face mood, which, believe it or not, I often am not. Sure, I call her *Wifey* in person, but referring to her as "my wife" to anyone who doesn't already know us feels awkward. As out as I am — and I am WAY out — I feel weird calling my wife "my wife" to, say, the letter carrier or my dental hygienist (not that I can say much of anything when my mouth's loaded with cleaning accoutrements).

Can a woman say "my wife" or a man say "my husband" with the same neutrality as a heterosexual mentioning their husband or wife? We're working on it. Our marriages are legal, yes, thank god(dess), and more than half of the U.S. population supports our right to marry, a hard-fought victory. But this new social shift that we've pursued for so long is still fresh. Most people I talk to are accepting and even congratulatory, which is lovely, but it makes me feel self-conscious, like I'm announcing something personal when I just want to tell Comcast that the account is in my wife's name.

Oh, well. We're here, queer and married. I guess we all have to get used to it.

Award-winning writer Sally Sheklow has been keeping *EW* readers abreast of social changes since 1999.