

TOXIC TRAIN HORNS

A report by the EPA Office of Noise Abatement and Control, published in August 1978 titled "Noise: A Health Problem," states that "noise is more than just a nuisance. It constitutes a real and present danger to people's health." The report goes on to discuss how excessive noise affects hearing loss, heart disease, children, sleep, mental and social well-being, etc. Are the train air horns in Eugene an annoyance that is just the price you pay to live here, or are they a symbol we use to show the world how liberal and tolerant we are?

Why do we put up with this? Other no-less-enlightened communities have legislated this toxin out of their lives. Train horn rules state specifically how to mitigate the noise of train horns by establishing "quiet zones" or "no horn" restrictions. Trains do not leave the tracks to arrive unannounced and randomly maraud and kill people because there are adequate safe guards in place. We have flashing lights, alarms, closing gates and an engineer who can use that air horn in emergencies. We do not require that every car and bicyclist blow an air horn every time they enter an intersection!

Autzen Stadium is loud. With a

potential increase in train traffic through Eugene will everyone who lives here have to sign waivers, like those required for Autzen Stadium employees, so we won't sue someone? Or, is suing the only way to get rid of this toxic noise pollution?

In the scheme of things, this particular train issue is a small thing. Just ask the people of Lynchburg, Virginia, or Lac-Mégantic, Quebec, but it's a very big thing in making Eugene a better place to live.

Chris Shipp
Eugene

SETTING AN EXAMPLE

Having followed the debate about the future of our downtown area for years and thinking often about the future of this city, our country and our planet, I have concluded that we are missing a *huge* opportunity if we simply tear down our old City Hall and build a new one. While debates rage about cost, etc., the greater concern is about our future, including setting proper examples for our youth and providing them opportunities to learn and grow.

Youth need opportunities to learn hands-on about how our world is built and maintained, about pride in ownership and creation, about work ethics and care.

Without concrete community examples, education is little more than a pipe dream. To simply tear down a 50-year-old structure and replace it is wasteful and inefficient. To restore it may cost more money but it will provide an example of pride in our past and hope for our future. We have the opportunity to provide a real demonstration of positive values and willingness to do the hard work of restoring our failing infrastructure and to wisely shepherd limited public resources. Please do not miss out on this opportunity.

Student internships/jobs could be built into the contract for restoration i.e. the contractors need to employ/mentor a number of youth between the ages of 18-24. Or provide training for some of our homeless population. Heck, if this was done in the midst of the Great Depression, why not now? Are we less than our ancestors?

If our neighbor town of Cottage Grove can summon the will to buy and preserve the Cottage Grove Armory as an invaluable public asset, surely our City Council can step above the fray and set a fine example by restoring our City Hall.

Mark Whitson
Eugene

NAKED ABUSE

In the wake of all the rape occurring on campus I heard the UO decided to curb its 20-year-plus free and open to the public Saturday nude figure study due to "liability issues" and "lack of funding for security" (UO lack of funding? ha-ha-ha) aka, "We're under a lot of pressure here to appear as though we're taking these mounting rape allegations seriously."

And because we all know artists, tasteful nudity and respectful study of the human form are the problem I would like to thank the Big O for being oh-so diligent and thorough in their duck hunt to end abuse on campus! Never mind taking a magnifying glass to the Athletic Department and/or the lady-bashing behavior that seems to be nationally accepted, even encouraged, amongst athletes (namely football, quack-quack) — we'd hate to watch those pristine Nike jerseys burn.

For those of you that would still like to partake in free figure study, Custom Cranium is a sweet new local joint downtown looking to support your lust for the human form. Give them a call at 525-9037.

Brittney Arlitt
Eugene

LIVING OUT BY SALLY SHEKLOW

The New Normal

'WHEN THEY KNOW WHO WE ARE'

When was the last time you went to the movies and felt like the picture validated lesbian existence? So rare, right?

I've learned not to expect any affirmation of my sexual orientation from the motion picture industry. When I venture beyond the comfort and homophobia-free haven of home to go to the cinema, I brace myself for the onslaught of sexist heterosexuality and male fantasy, which, let's face it, is pretty much the imagination span of most films out there.

But on a recent hot and sunny Saturday afternoon, Wifey and I sat in the cushy seats of a cool theater holding hands in the dark when the most amazing thing happened. I'll avoid having to give a spoiler alert here by not telling you *which* movie we went to see. Suffice it to say it has a great cast with some of our favorite powerhouse women acting in it. We were sitting there

watching this flick when one of the main characters starts making out with her neighbor who, this kiss reveals, is actually her girlfriend. The other characters in the scene register a brief moment of surprise that the two women are *together*, then they take this brazen revelation of Sapphic connection totally in stride. Everyone's cool with it. How cool is that?

What a treat to see a normalized portrayal of two women embracing and kissing in a realistic, not-for-the-male-gaze sort of way. Other than lesbian weddings and queer film festivals, when do we *ever* get to see that? Wifey and I squeezed hands. I couldn't stop smiling in the dark at the natural, sensationally unsensational portrayal of two women in love.

Times sure have changed. What a sign of progress when an unexpected twist in a mainstream movie's subplot models the normalcy and family acceptance of lesbian love. There was hardly any noticeable reaction in the theater at all. Nobody walked out in a huff, anyway.

The multi-plex didn't spontaneously combust. The ghost of Westboro Baptist Church's Fred Phelps certainly didn't descend from on high (or arise from down below) and smite us.

So a few people in the back of the theater giggled. Awkwardness at the unfamiliar is understandable. Showing two women lovingly smooch in a non-porn way is more than a little out of the ordinary. I cut the gigglers some slack — chalked it up to the "get used to it" part of our *We're here, We're queer* mantra, which does seem to be working. Nobody in the theater — or in the movie — freaked out. Seems like the big bugaboo about people like us is finally dying down.

I'm reminded of lesbian singer-songwriter Jamie Anderson's lyric "The world will change when they know who we are." That song was written some 20 years ago. How prophetic. Coming out and being open about being ourselves really is paying off. Even on the silver screen.

Not quite there yet yourself? With all the lesbian weddings going on these days — legal now here in Oregon and 19 other U.S. states (and pending in 12 more) — you should have plenty of opportunities to get used to it.

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



next level
WELLNESS
Eugene's Premier Medical Cannabis Resource

We now accept call-in orders for existing patients! 541-515-6514
145 E. 29th Ave (upstairs) In South Eugene
NEW HOURS! Monday - Saturday 10am-7pm • Sunday 12pm-6pm
nextleveldispensary.com

OFFERING A WIDE SELECTION OF HIGH QUALITY MEDICATION FOR EVERY BUDGET

Proud to be your local
Concentrate Specialist

with over
45+ Varieties
and Counting

Now an Exclusive
Headline Alternatives "Solventless" retailer!
Featuring Solvent Free
Vape Pens & Solvent Free
RAW Honey Pots!

