

Something EUGENE
Weekly



Only in EUGENE
CAN the HOT college
football team adopt
DONALD DUCK'S SON
Puddles as it's
mascot and the
local FREE PAPER
show Mickey Mouse
(Puddle's GOD FATHER)
beheaded on it's
front cover!

T.O.V. ALETICH

KEEPING IT UNIQUE

Like many of my high school friends in 1980s Eugene, I couldn't wait to explore the world. So I did. I've lived everywhere from Israel to Guatemala to New York City.

Recently, my dad moved back to town, so I visited for the first time in ages. We flew into Portland. On the drive down I felt the hills closing in, that familiar feeling of being trapped. Then we started coming down 30th into South Eugene.

And ... I loved being back. Picking up a copy of *EW* reminded me about what's special about Eugene. I loved that the end-of-year issue channeled community interests in education, music and local rivers. I loved the letter from the guy complaining about being forced to sit through religious indoctrination to get a bed in a shelter (classic rant!). I loved Jerry Diethelm's visions for a better urban environment. I loved that Eugeneans voted to end cannabis prohibition.

I loved connecting with my friends who have returned to Eugene. I loved seeing that even as Eugene has grown, it's kept its soul.

Older and slightly wiser, I feel lucky to have grown up here. Thanks for keeping it uniquely Eugene.

Jonathan "Jonny" Goldstein
New York City

OBSCENE TAX BREAKS

Because the property tax I pay isn't enough, I pay an additional levy(s) for street repair. Because the property tax I pay

isn't enough, I pay an additional levy(s) for schools. Because the property tax I pay isn't enough, the Eugene City Council wants to levy an additional bond to pay for library services.

Yet they give millions in tax dollar breaks to developers under the Multi-Unit Tax Exemption Program (MUPTE). Want an example? Keep in mind that this project gets a half million dollars a year in tax breaks while you watch the Hub on Campus video tour [wkly.ws/1wq]. That's obscene.

They intend to continue this program. Brian Obie's development downtown and the waterfront development project are already in line with their hands out. Tax breaks on some of the most valuable property in the state?

If a project isn't profitable, don't build it. And how will they determine profit? Suppose I'm a corporation making 20 percent profit and I don't qualify for a MUPTE. I simply give myself a huge raise in salary — bingo! Same income, but now the corporation is only making 9 percent in profits and it qualifies.

To the City Council: Shame on you for giving tax breaks to millionaires and then asking the rest of us to pay more. As long as you continue the MUPTE program, I will vote against any and all measures that will increase my taxes. I'm all for good streets, education and the library, as long as everyone is taxed equally.

Ted Chudy
Eugene

MIC CHECK!

BY ART BOLLMAN AND THE OCCUPY EUGENE LIBRARY COMMITTEE

Is This Eugene?

OE COMMITTEE CHALLENGES EUGENE'S SIDEWALK POLICY

As members of the Occupy Eugene Library Committee, we want to correct some of the disinformation that has been circulating regarding the arrest of one of our members who challenged the city's sidewalk privatization initiative.

We are a standing committee of Occupy Eugene. Since the beginning of Occupy Eugene in 2011, we have sponsored events of a cultural and educational nature, such as book sales, speakers and literary readings. We also share the traditional Occupy commitments to the defense of public space and of the First Amendment. Since last summer, these commitments have made us turn our attention to downtown. We do not like what we see.

Much of the vibrancy and diversity has been sucked out of downtown. Street merchants and buskers have been threatened with arrest and falsely told that they need permits to vend or play music downtown. Kesey Square was declared to be the property of food cart vendors and not a public space for the arts. The city removed benches and other places for people to sit.

More ominously, the city began urging business owners to sign up for a constitutionally dubious sidewalk vending permit that it claimed gave business

owners jurisdiction over the public sidewalks bordering their businesses. Sizzle Pie responded to this by threatening to press charges against a kid registering people to vote. Another business owner added insult to injury by putting up a sign proclaiming his block to be "Little Portland."

Our first action to test this new situation took place on Bloomsday, June 16. (Well actually, we did it a day late. This is Eugene, after all.) We joined with the world to recite James Joyce's *Ulysses* in Kesey Square. Several police officers pressured us to leave, but when we stood our ground they acknowledged our right to be there. The food cart owners have since taken care to accommodate the rest of the public.

Our most recent action was designed to test the city's sidewalk privatization initiative. "Inspired" by Barack Obama's speech last September announcing the resumption of the Iraq War, Art Bollman, one of our members, held an impromptu reading of Rudyard Kipling's military poetry at 11 pm near a corner of Sizzle Pie. Following policy, the Sizzle Pie employees called the police. Following policy, the police arrested Bollman. He spent 18 hours in jail for reciting Rudyard Kipling in public.

Endless court decisions hold that policies such as

the city's policy on sidewalks are unconstitutional. We were more than willing to challenge the law in court. However, when we publicly announced our intent to do so, the city dropped the charges. Meanwhile, this policy is still in place. The city lacks the confidence to defend its policies in court, but has the confidence to use them to arrest people.

Our elected officials are not the villains here. Nor are the police. These policies have been crafted by a cabal of unelected and unaccountable city administrators, often without the consent or even knowledge of the mayor or the Eugene City Council.

We do not like the results. First the unhoused, the buskers and the street artists and craftspeople will leave downtown. Then the people with disabilities and senior citizens. Then the galleries and the offbeat shops will leave. At best, downtown will be the home to rich, out-of-state students, and the closest thing to a cultural event will be a Ducks rally. We are left wondering where, if anywhere, the area's creative energy will resettle. Or if it will evaporate, as it has in many other cities.

A gentrified, undiverse, philistine downtown might be acceptable for some backwards city. Perhaps the business owner was correct in renaming downtown "Little Portland."

Because this doesn't seem like Eugene to us.

Art Bollman, primary author of this column, is a longtime activist, a founding member of the OE Library Committee and an avid reader who enjoys bringing literature to the people.