

BEAUTY IN THE CRACKS

As an alternative to more buildings downtown, how about some grass, flowers and trees? There's a reason birds and bees and human beings naturally flock to them.

City leaders seem hell-bent on filling every downtown space with concrete, providing green for the moneyed interests but only gray for the rest of us. There's beauty lying dormant in the cracks.

One such crack is Kesey Square. Wouldn't a little bit of nature in the center of things be preferable to yet more metropolis? We need Beauty to tame the Beast.

Ken Kesey looked at things differently. Maybe we should too when considering what to do with this eponymous public space.

*Benton Elliott
Eugene*

DREAMS OF COMPASSION

I dream of a Eugene where bicycles and pedestrians outnumber cars by a significant ratio. I dream of pleasant interactions with neighbors as we ride bikes or go for walks rather than insular existences in the blocks

of steel that take us from work to home and back. I dream of community involvement and living life rather than rushing home to binge-watch the latest Netflix release.

I dream of a culture that celebrates creativity and knowledge, rather than who can be the most violent football player, MMA fighter, marksman, etc. (roller derby is OK, ha ha).

Lastly, and perhaps most importantly, I dream of a Eugene that is full of compassion and respect for our fellow women, men and children. Eugene is ahead of many cities in this, but we still have a long way to go. Simple compassion and respect for others in our daily interactions and political decision-making could cure so many of the societal ills we see today. The best thing about compassion and respect is that it can begin at the individual level. You can do something. You do have power.

*James Brains
Eugene*

WIDE SPOT IN THE ROAD

After reading the Dec. 24 *EW*, I dream of Glenwood development that includes input from the residents of this beautiful

neighborhood. As usual, Springfield, Eugene and now even the *Weekly*, choose to listen to developers' ideas rather than the dreams of those of us who live here. What a shame. This is a lovely area with big trees, amazing yards and affordable housing. When that is gone, Glenwood will be nothing more than an over-developed wide spot in the road with student housing and "affordable" apartments blocking the view of the river.

Development will inevitably happen, but it should not happen to the detriment of local homeowners. So let us dream of a Glenwood that includes open spaces, a riverfront bike path and regular old houses with yards.

*Kris Maenz
Eugene*

SMILE ON EACH OTHER

I live at the Eugene Mission and have been there for the last three months after being released from prison. A shout-out to the Mission: I love what they are doing as a wellness center, getting people off the streets and transitioning to housing and employment.

But what I really want to talk about is this: I want to nominate January as Eugene's official "Smile Month." After all, simple kindness goes a long way, and smiles are free.

*Richard J. Lindhardt
Eugene*

REPUBLICAN BRAINS

The secret of Donald Trump's popularity among the majority of Republicans can be explained by science: "Neuroscience Reveals Brain Difference Between Republicans and Democrats" (see sciencedaily.com).

Basically, conservative Republicans are controlled by their reptile brains that react out of fear. Democrat socialists have evolved beyond the reptile brain and operate out of reason and empathy.

The good news is that all the polls are showing that Bernie Sanders and his empathetic brain would beat Trump and his reptilian brain in the general election.

Humans are evolving, and there is hope for our children's future.

*Michael T. Hinojosa
Drain*

VIEWPOINT

BY KAREN B. OLCH

A Community Mourns

PEG MORTON'S LIFE SOWED SEEDS OF PEACE AND JUSTICE

This community lost a truly stellar human being Dec. 19. Peg Morton, one of the best that the human race had to offer, sailed off into the great mystery surrounded by loved ones, on a courageous journey that started only 13 days before with an intentional fast to end her life.

Her astounding life affected countless individuals in this community. Peg was an unstoppable force for good in this world. In her work to create a more just, peaceful and sane world, Peg lived with the fiercest integrity and with a passion that boggled one's mind. She treated everyone as her equal, regardless of age, cultural difference or social standing.

You could see her at the noon peace vigil at the Eugene Public Library, singing with the Raging Grannies, standing with the Women in Black at their peace vigils and organizing Taxes for Peace Not War actions at the Eugene Post Office every April 15. The list of her community activism was endless. Wherever there was a cause for peace and social justice, Peg was there.



PEG MORTON AT A EUGENE CELEBRATION PARADE

Her passion was matched by a neverending well of energy, which slowed a bit in later years, but even after declaring that she was "retiring" from activist work, she never really stopped. Peg was a longtime Quaker and stood solemnly and steadfastly by nonviolent principles. She was relentless in speaking truth to power and accepted the consequences of her actions, including numerous arrests and time spent in a federal prison for an arrest at a protest of the School of the Americas at Fort Benning, Georgia, when she was well into her 70s. She unwaveringly stood up for what she felt was right and just, the

end goal being to create a more peaceful sustainable planet that held space for everyone. We should all be so driven.

Peg walked her talk like no one I have ever known. She lived simply and without extravagance. She gave freely of her time, her ideas and her energy. She was quick to burst into song, and her radiant smile beamed right through you.

As she moved through life, Peg sowed seeds of

inspiration. I feel confident those seeds will keep sprouting and blooming even after her passing from this earth. There are so many of us holding a renewed or continued commitment to our activism and making the world a better place, all because of this woman whose fierceness, dedication, compassion, love, kindness, passion and relentlessness touched our lives in some way.

How do we walk through this loss? Though Peg had talked for years of ending her life on her own terms, none of us were ready for this final ride with her. It felt surreal, heart-wrenching and heart opening all at the same time. It was precious in ways that are difficult to put into words, but that are perhaps known to those who have walked this path towards death with a beloved one.

It's now our task to hold each other up as we mourn the loss of our beloved Peg and to carry on the work that she so diligently put forth into the world. Our greatest tribute to her can be to stand strong for what we believe it, to do something every single day to make the world a more just and peaceful place, to look people right in the eye and truly listen to what they have to say, to respect everyone, and last but not least, to laugh and sing more. As we hold each other up in the light of her love, let our focus be on continuing her legacy.

May we be filled with Peg's light and love. May we be filled with Peg's fierce integrity and passion. May we go inward and be led by spirit to do the right thing. May we speak with clarity and honesty. May we be burst into song at every opportunity. May we laugh well. May we know that she is still with us, just in a different form. May it always be so.

There will be a community memorial/celebration of life for her in January. The date will be announced through a variety of community networks.

Karen B. Olch of Eugene is a fiber artist who works with disadvantaged youth. She was a Happening People profile in EW Dec. 12, 2010.