

FAREWELL, SHEKLOW

It was with mixed feelings that I read Sally Sheklow's annual Thanksgiving column (*EW*, 11/22). Her contributions to the *Eugene Weekly* have always been, for me, the highlight of your publication. Her writing covered local, global, personal, political and societal matters. And this was her last column for the *Weekly*.

The quality of Sheklow's pieces, plus their timeliness, has contributed excellence to the *Weekly's* material.

I'll also miss the boldness she brought to her writing, which she so skillfully combined with kindness and a big dose of humor.

Lynne Schwartz
Eugene

STUCK WITH GUNS

In response to John Kiely's letter to the editor (Letters 11/9), I agree, Congress has been woefully inactive in passing sensible solutions to our nation's gun violence problems. However, he was in error; I have been a sponsor of the ban on bump stocks since the bill was introduced on Oct. 4.

After the horrific events in Las Vegas, I stood with former representative and

gun violence survivor Gabby Giffords and Representative John Lewis on the steps of the U.S. Capitol Building and called on Republican Leadership to take immediate action to curb gun violence. That same day I went to the House floor and called directly on Speaker Ryan to name a Select Committee to investigate the causes of and lessen the potential for gun violence and to bring to the floor a vote on comprehensive background check legislation that includes closing the gun show loophole and the individual internet sale loophole.

In addition, I firmly believe bump stocks and other devices that convert a semiautomatic weapon into something that is virtually a fully automatic weapon should be banned. That's why I joined as an original co-sponsor of the Automatic Gun Fire Prevention Act, which would ban such devices.

I've pushed for sensible, commonsense solutions to our nation's gun problems for years. The unfortunate reality is that Republicans will not allow a House vote on any gun control legislation — no matter how sensible it is. I will continue to push for better legislation to curb our nation's gun violence problem, but frankly until the

majority changes, we will be stuck with the status quo.

Congressman Peter DeFazio
Springfield

WELCOME TO POTTERSVILLE

In the last *Eugene Weekly* (11/20, pg. 3), I see a big ad from the city of Eugene with a photo of bundled-up folks getting warm by a fire. The ad says there will be tents, fire pits and outdoor heaters in the Park Blocks.

Wow, is the city finally doing something for the homeless people? But no, this is EUGfun! Fun for the people who already have shelter and heat at home. For them, it is not only legal for them to have tents and fires in the park, but funded by the city! Wow.

The Egan Warming Center (run by St. Vinnie, not the city) only operates when the temperature is below 30, and they served more than 1,600 homeless people last winter. FYI: 32 degrees is freezing.

The Egan Warming Center needs more volunteers. I just signed up on their website at eganwarmingcenter.com. You can too.

Also, a question for the folks running

EUGfun!: How do these outdoor heaters fit into the city climate recovery plan?

Sharon Blick
Eugene

ALL LIVES MATTER, ETC.

I'm sorry, Kate Lemley (Letters, 11/30), that you had your lawn sign stolen. Yes, black lives matter; so do brown, white and any other color.

If you could move past your color-blind attitudes, you would see a world that will only find peace and justice when we focus on kindness and love — no distinction by race, religion, etc.

Suggested reading for you is the Dalai Lama, Dr. King and Sri Chinmoy ("Be universal in your Love. You will see the universe to be a picture of your own being").

Don French
Eugene

ROLL OVER, VAN GOGH

In reference to Karen Lee's comments regarding digital art and its absence of a soul as stated by printmaker Tallmadge Doyle (Letters, 12/7): I agree wholeheartedly with Doyle and strongly disagree with Lee.

As a working full-time artist, I know that

VIEWPOINT BY EDWARD J. KAME'ENUI

Ode to the McKenzie River

QUESTION: WHICH RIVER QUENCHES THE THIRST OF APPROXIMATELY 200,000 PEOPLE?

What is the sole water source for Eugene?

I didn't know the answer either, and I actually live on the McKenzie. Like you, I know now: the McKenzie River.

There is another question you are no doubt now asking: So if you live on the McKenzie, do you fly fish?

No, I don't. I know, it's hard to fathom, and I've endured the puzzled disdain of many a fly fisherman, particularly those who have yet to master the upstream mend. I've been asked many, many times: "How do you live on the McKenzie and not fly fish?" I should have a witty retort, but I don't. I'm still working on it.

I'm also working on learning more about this incredible river, although I've been quietly resistant to reaching after the facts about the McKenzie. It's as if I've secretly harbored the idea that learning more technical stuff about this river would actually diminish its beauty.

Clearly, I've not fully abandoned my Keatsian English undergraduate roots when it comes to nature. John Keats, the English Romantic poet well known for "Beauty is truth, truth beauty," insisted that we accept the uncertainty, mystery and doubt about the natural world "without any irritable reaching after fact and reason." He had a point, one that I unwittingly embraced without fully acknowledging it.

But Keats would no doubt change his mind if he knew that the "truth beauty" of the McKenzie was threatened. No doubt, he would insist on an "irritable reaching after fact and reason." He might even turn to

real science for his facts and reason.

The bold truth is that the boundless beauty of the McKenzie River is not a given, or as poets and philosophers like to say, *immutable* — far from it.

As trite as it sounds, rivers like the McKenzie are indeed "... the veins and arteries of our communities. They give us clean drinking water and are the lifeblood of the ecosystem that sustain us all," as Amy Kober of American Rivers writes in *Water Currents* on April 7, 2015.

Don't misunderstand my concern. The McKenzie is not on the list of America's Most Endangered Rivers of 2017, at least not yet — not like the Colorado River in the Grand Canyon, which suffers from a battery of threats including a proposed industrial-scale construction project and radioactive pollution from uranium mining, or the Smith River in Montana, cherished for its floating and fishing but threatened by a proposed copper mine at its headwaters, or our own Columbia River and its outdated dam operations threatening the healthy runs of salmon.

The McKenzie is not immediately threatened. Your drinking water is safe, for now. In fact, the McKenzie River is one of the cleanest and healthiest rivers in the nation, asserts the McKenzie River Trust (MRT).

But it wouldn't take much to change this course of events, because much of the McKenzie, according to the MRT, "runs through privately owned land, leaving it vulnerable to development of a kind that could forever alter its pristine character."

A month after I moved to the McKenzie almost a decade ago, I was consumed by it, which provoked my inner Keats to offer this ode to it:

I now live on the river,
where the McKenzie widens and
moves judiciously
and today threateningly,
a few quiet steps
from my door.

I arrived here late in life,
but each day,
the McKenzie cleanses
the cold worry from my hands.
I now know, I will die here.

A week ago, it snowed on the river,
wet flakes the size of taro leaves
fell magically and relentlessly.

I watched the snow and
understood its purpose
as it fell on Ray's rock
with the quiet nod of a promise.

Whether you live on the McKenzie — a 90-mile tributary of the Willamette River — drink its clear and clean water, angle its fish, float and bounce on its strong currents or simply enjoy it from a distance, you intuitively understand that it represents a singular promise — one that an 18th-century Romantic poet fully understood about such natural forces: Beauty is truth, truth beauty. What more do we need to know about a river?

Edward J. Kame'enui, a University of Oregon professor in the Department of Education, is a resident on the McKenzie River. He also served on the faculty of the University of Montana (1980-83), and Purdue University (1983-1987) prior to his appointment at the UO in 1988.