

OREGON PROUD

In spring of this year, the Wayne Morse Historical Park Corporation announced the recipients of the Integrity in Politics Award. Oregon senators Ron Wyden and Jeff Merkley were named the co-winners.

We believe Wyden and Merkley embody the collaborative and intellectual spirit of the late Sen. Wayne Morse, which is desperately needed as this nation faces the rapid decline in its moral and civic fiber.

Further, Morse famously declared his independence with his voting record, stating on the plaque to be awarded to the senators that he would “cast my vote free of political pressure and unmoved by the threats of loss of political support.”

Details of the award presentation are still being ironed out, but Meerah Powell’s Aug. 30 cover story on Merkley shows why Oregonians should be proud of the work that Wyden and Merkley have done, not just for the state, but for all of the nation.

Johnny Earl
Eugene

THE TRUTH ABOUT MERKLEY

The *Eugene Weekly*’s promotion of Senator Merkley to be a presidential candidate (cover story, 8/30) omitted key facts.

Merkley supported Trump when Congress met to ratify the Electoral College.

Congress, not the voters, makes the

formal determination of who is president. When they met to ratify the result on Jan. 6, 2017, a few on the House side spoke in opposition to confirming the alleged electors due to suppression of minority voters (gregpalast.com) and voting machine tabulators that flipped the results in key swing states.

No senator, not even Merkley nor Wyden, dared join the dissidents on the House side and therefore no debate on Trump’s illegitimacy was permitted. Therefore, Democratic senators share responsibility for the loser of the election being installed as the president.

Sen. Merkley, like the rest of the Oregon Congressional delegation, supported the Obama administration’s \$226-million subsidy of NuScale corporation, our local nuclear power startup. Since there is no “solution” to nuclear waste, generating more is a crime against future generations of all species.

“President Merkley” seems like wishful thinking. He is probably not enough of a militarist for the Pentagon and CIA to support. (Obama had a CIA background and escalated military interventions, including drone warfare.)

The last U.S. president who called for an end to militarism was extra-judicially removed from office on Nov. 22, 1963. No president since Kennedy has dared chal-

lenge the Empire in a meaningful way. Authentic political “change” would require honesty and courage about our predicaments.

Mark Robinowitz
Eugene

THIS IS EUGENE

Dear Eugene City Council: What the hell are you doing? Really.

Let’s review. You allowed homeless people to be banned from public property, until someone realized it was heartless and unconstitutional. Nice.

You realized broken, homeless people were hanging out with their dogs downtown, so you banned them for a while (is that still a thing?) Very cool.

You noticed that homeless people smoke, so you’re sending cops to track down anybody smoking on public property. *Twilight-Zone* cool.

You gave the finger to a new state law that would help people suffering from the housing crisis, making it frustratingly difficult to build an additional unit to rent out to someone on your property. (Special thanks to Emily Semple for that punch to the poor.)

You’re trying to sanitize the city with boot and fist when most of us just need a hand. We’re tied to the tracks here, and you’re shoveling coal into the engine of a silent train coming straight at us.

I recently was no-cause evicted and I see few housing options — virtually none are affordable — and I’m a little pissed.

Yes, there are negative impacts to Eugene businesses with downtown Hoovervilles. Forcing more of us onto the streets isn’t helping. So come and work for us! Do your job and run The People’s business rather than running poor folks off the only property they have — public property.

Steven Coatsworth
Eugene

CREAMY AND LIGHT

Thank you for Art Johnson’s account of what happened to the millrace (Letters, 9/6), but there’s a bit more to the story.

When I entered the university in 1945, the millrace was already damaged, maybe by a flood. The 1946 *Oregana* quoted the ASUO as having funds to start the student union and also repair the millrace. Even though boating was impossible, the Anchorage cafe had good food — notably their delectable Anchorage cream pie.

I have never been able to duplicate that pie. It was both creamy and light. My guess is that it contained gelatin. Does anyone have the recipe? Wouldn’t wonderful to celebrate the return of the millrace with the Anchorage cream pie?

June Goetze Quincy
Eugene

DEMOCRACY AND EDUCATION BY COLLEEN HUNTER AND ROSCOE CARON

Lost in Mr. Rogers’ Neighborhood

TODAY’S CORPORATE EDUCATION WOULD BREAK FRED ROGER’S HEART

For weeks, Broadway Metro packed the house with viewers of *Won’t You Be My Neighbor?*, the heartwarming film about Fred Rogers, aka Mr. Rogers. The movie’s resonance is perhaps rooted in nostalgia, or perhaps it’s a fervent desire to celebrate kindness in the mean-spirited Trump era.

At any rate, there’s nary a dry eye in the house when the credits roll.

The movie details Rogers’ philosophical grounding in child development and appropriate early childhood education. What Mr. Rogers understood was this: The thoughts and feelings of children are real. They matter. They deserve to be acknowledged and to be taken seriously. Adults need to listen to children and respond respectfully.

For those of us who have questioned what has happened to public education in the data and metrics-driven “corporate reform” era, the film also is a painful reminder of how tragically far we have ventured from Mr. Rogers’ Neighborhood — so far away that we are now lost.

As the school year begins, Oregon’s Kindergarten Readiness Assessment is kicking into gear. This was mandated by 2012’s HB 4165 and is now in its fifth year. In the first weeks of kindergarten, young children, new to the big school experience, will be taken out of their classrooms and tested in literacy, math and for “social-emotional approaches to learning.” This data will be stored in the Oregon Department of Education’s Consolidated Collections: Big data about little people. The testing-sorting-tracking of these children will be underway.

Additionally, local school districts will administer a series of standardized assessments throughout the school year. District 4J will use the easyCBM tests to monitor whether the children are on track to reach their third grade literacy goals. The “Bluebird,” “Robins” and “Sparrows” reading groups of the past are now on steroids.

Kindergarten testing is just the warm-up for what’s to come. At some local low-income (Title I) schools, the first graders are tested three times a year in both reading and math with district-mandated tests. The “low” readers are taken from the class for remediation every day, the “somewhat low” readers are tested (“progress monitored”) every two weeks and ranked accordingly. Their teacher must attend a

monthly data team meeting — during the school day — to go over the latest testing data with the administrator, counselor, Title I Coordinator, subject area leader and testing coordinator.

Where is Mr. Rogers’ neighborhood in all of this incessant data collection? Where is the time for learning for the pure joy of learning? What are the students, especially the “low readers” experiencing? For that matter, what are their teachers experiencing?

Learning to read is of tremendous importance, no doubt. But, remember, children are people. They learn at different rates, just like big people do. Children should not be labeled through “scientific” testing because they learn to read at their own pace.

Teaching children the subsets of reading skills is the hard work of reading education. It’s a complex, highly professional skill. But teaching children to love to read is of paramount importance. Yes, teach reading. But teach the love, the joy and the magic of reading above all else.

Most of our schools no longer have librarians, but they all have testing coordinators. That would break Mr. Rogers’ heart.

Aside from the corporations who make fortunes in the testing industry, most early education data-based “experts” are certainly sincere. They want children to be able to read by third grade so that they will be successful in school and in life. But many of them have lost their way. They have lost sight of Mr. Rogers’ wise insights: That the thoughts and feelings of children are real. They matter. They deserve to be acknowledged and to be taken seriously.

The children in our neighborhood deserve to have their first year of public school filled with joyful learning. They and their teachers must be defended from the current over-testing insanity.

Colleen Hunter is a retired Springfield School District elementary school teacher. Roscoe Caron is a retired Eugene School District middle school teacher. They are members of the Community Alliance for Public Education, which works “to defend public education from the damaging practices of ‘reformers’ and corporate interests.” CAPE meets the first, third and fourth Wednesdays at Perugino; oregoncape.org.