

Sergeant Blue

At the Blue Doughnut Café



I went into the Blue Doughnut last week to bolster my stereotypes and ended up having to holster my misunderstandings.

You'll remember the Blue Doughnut from an earlier piece I wrote. It's the café at the street level in the new Police Building, just north across 7th Ave. from the Lane County Courthouse. The one that replaced the anonymous glass curtain-wall building owned by the state that slept there between the Courthouse and the County Parking Garage on 6th.

You'll also recall the new layers of parking we added to the county garage in order to get rid of the old Butterfly lot and restore the North Park Block.

It had been a long, hard sell to move the police department, but there it was, in spite of several painful post-Lara/Magana missteps that had once again shaken public confidence in our blue force and its leadership.

Signaling a bright new day, the Hacker-designed City Hall surrogate had hooked up at the basement level to the existing tunnel running from the Courthouse to the Lane County Parking Garage, making it especially convenient to bring prisoners safely to court.

Moving there had also changed the earthquake status of City Hall. Removing both the police and fire departments from the old building had reduced City Hall's earthquake code requirements and opened up new options for its remodeling and reuse.

"You People"

Sergeant Blue was sitting on his usual stool. In my most ingratiating manner I inquired, "Do they order extra-wide stools just to accommodate 'you people'?"

Unfazed, he turned from his jumbo-glazed doughnut with a grin, "I know you're just tasing me," he said, with a missing e. "But there are many shades of blue, you know, just as there is a wide range of difference between legitimate demonstrators and real terrorists.

"You can tell your readers that I believe in the Bill of Rights and will continue to do whatever I can as middle management in the EPD to right our local Bill of Wrongs.

"I went to the police academy, not the fascist training school, and I don't want to see our young people hurt because they want passionately to improve our society. My kids go to school here too. I'm a father and a member of this community and I'm committed to its well-being."

He lowered his voice, "And I'm voting for Kitty, not Jim Torrey, because I know she really cares about providing the social services we need to make my job easier. Drugs are our biggest problem. We need to get people off drugs, find places for them to sleep, train them for jobs, and not just put them all in jail"

“Code Blue.”

“Not all of us support the present leadership of the Police Employees Union either, you know, but we do support our union. We have a dangerous job and need to be able to protect our rights too. Regrettably the union’s recent articles and actions in our name shame us all. It’s especially ironic that it was Bonny on the council who was behind the most recent city-county funds exchange that will help us to continue to pay for public safety. People expect better judgment from all of us and rightly so. So, we’ll take care of it. I’m calling for a “Code Blue.”

“What’s a ‘Code Blue,’ I asked?” “You can’t handle the truth,” he replied.

What did he think about building more public spaces downtown? So many of our downtown business leaders and local investors had lost heart, predicting that they would just attract more problems.

“We can make them work, he said, but the community needs to realize that adequate policing, good lighting and basic public services have to be a part of the design. Of the five recent proposals for 10th and Charnelton, only one, the WG Proposal, had any public space built in. And it was partially fenced off, not well connected, hedging its bets. I’ve traveled. I know what real cities are like. On those days when I’m not wearing this uniform, I want to be able to sit outside across from the library with my kids and listen to the music of the fountain in the sun.”

“I know Eugene won’t become a real city without its parks and squares, its plazas, sculpture, artwork, fountains and arcades. But it will take more foot patrols and watchful eyes on the things and places that we own together to make the urban experience satisfying and successful. We should all want that. We’ll have to be willing to pay for it.”

The Shadow People

“And we won’t always have the shadow people from Homeland Security creeping around and causing trouble at our public events, spreading paranoia, and turning our Jolly Pesticide Pranksters into “joule cases.” – We need to be careful but not afraid.”

“Jewel cases, I asked, thinking CDs?” No, joules, he replied spelling it out, and meaning DC and the electrical measure of tasing - one watt for one second. Know what some are calling the second round of tasing? Re-volting. Ha. Ha. Ha.

Didn’t he worry about being so open about these matters with me?

“No, no one will ever know,” he said. “No one from the Chief on down reads or pays any attention to the Eugene Weekly.”