

Community Voices

Guest columns may be mailed to Commentary, The Oregonian, 1320 S.W. Broadway, Portland, OR 97201 or sent by fax to 503-294-4179 or by e-mail to commentary@news.oregonian.com. Offerings should not exceed 600 words and may be edited. For complete guidelines, phone 503-221-8150 or go to the www.oregonlive.com/oped/ Web site and click "Commentary."

When newcomers ruin a way of life

Powell Butte is farming and cattle country; a resort and BMWs would change all that

POWELL BUTTE —

Entering Powell Butte: Home of Good Crops, Good Stock & Good Neighbors." That'd be the sign next door to the Post Office, on Tom Burke's place. The letters are fading, but the words are true.

At least for now.

Despite Oregon 126's seductively fast asphalt, locals in this Central Oregon town drive conservatively. There's the school, the church and the store, and farm rigs have to cross the road. Powell Butte's heart is paced by the rhythms of cows, sheep, potatoes, garlic and mint. Seven hundred people live here, love here and die here by the seasons.

But there's new neighbors. They're healthy and slender, own a BMW convertible, and they'd likely go to a day spa to let someone exfoliate their skin — strange, not your ordinary couple, but you gotta let folks live.

Trouble is, they drive fast, don't notice kids and as for the cows ... well, cows drop stuff folks in convertibles don't much like driving through, especially when it mixes with the wind blowing through their perfect hair. They've never been to the Lord's Acre Sale, with its pit barbecue pork, beef and lamb and a host of hand-made goods

up for grabs every November since 1949. Then-Sen. John Kennedy attended once, but the past is the past, and he was a liberal anyway.

These new neighbors are bringing friends — also healthy and slender, but not lightweights. Their destination resort is planned for the Shumway Ranch, 1,800 acres of irrigated pasture and range land. If an appeal to the state from Burke and four friends doesn't work out, that land will be sliced into 900 half-million-dollar lots (condos extra), golf courses and restaurants. Prices will probably go the way of fancy Bend and Sunriver spots, with guests downing \$5 beers or \$12 glasses of wine — and paying for appetizers. Cows'll be pastured only on fine porcelain.

Down the road, the county planning commission tried to make sure newcomers from Jeld-Wen subsidiary Eagle Crest Inc., which owns Eagle Crest Resort near Redmond, the Running Y Resort near Klamath Falls and Idaho's Silver Mountain Resort, act neighborly. Commissioners conditioned their approval of the Powell Butte Resort on improving roads to carry five times today's traffic.

The luxury operation can't mess with traditions like driving cows from one pasture to the next. And anyone who buys land must accept farm practices that have made folks like Tom Burke proud enough to put welcome signs in their front yard.

Chances are resort folks will encourage graduating sixth-graders to continue their annual seven-mile trek from the school to the Shumway Ranch in covered wagons. Kids look forward to that re-enactment from the time they're in kindergarten.

Eagle Crest promises a development



IN MY OPINION

Mike Van Meter

that "will reflect the great lodges of the Northwest as well as the ranching heritage of the Powell Butte community and the Shumway Ranch." Still, there won't be wide-open spaces for the kids to camp out in, and it won't be easy to stay in agriculture.

Because of existing traffic, it takes Burke 10 minutes to cross the road now; tripling the population won't help. Land prices will rise to where ranchers and farmers won't be able to afford ranches and farms. It doesn't take a telescope to see what well-intentioned newcomers have done to Bend, 20 miles away — where population quintupled in the past 30 years, housing prices are up seven-, eight-fold and more.

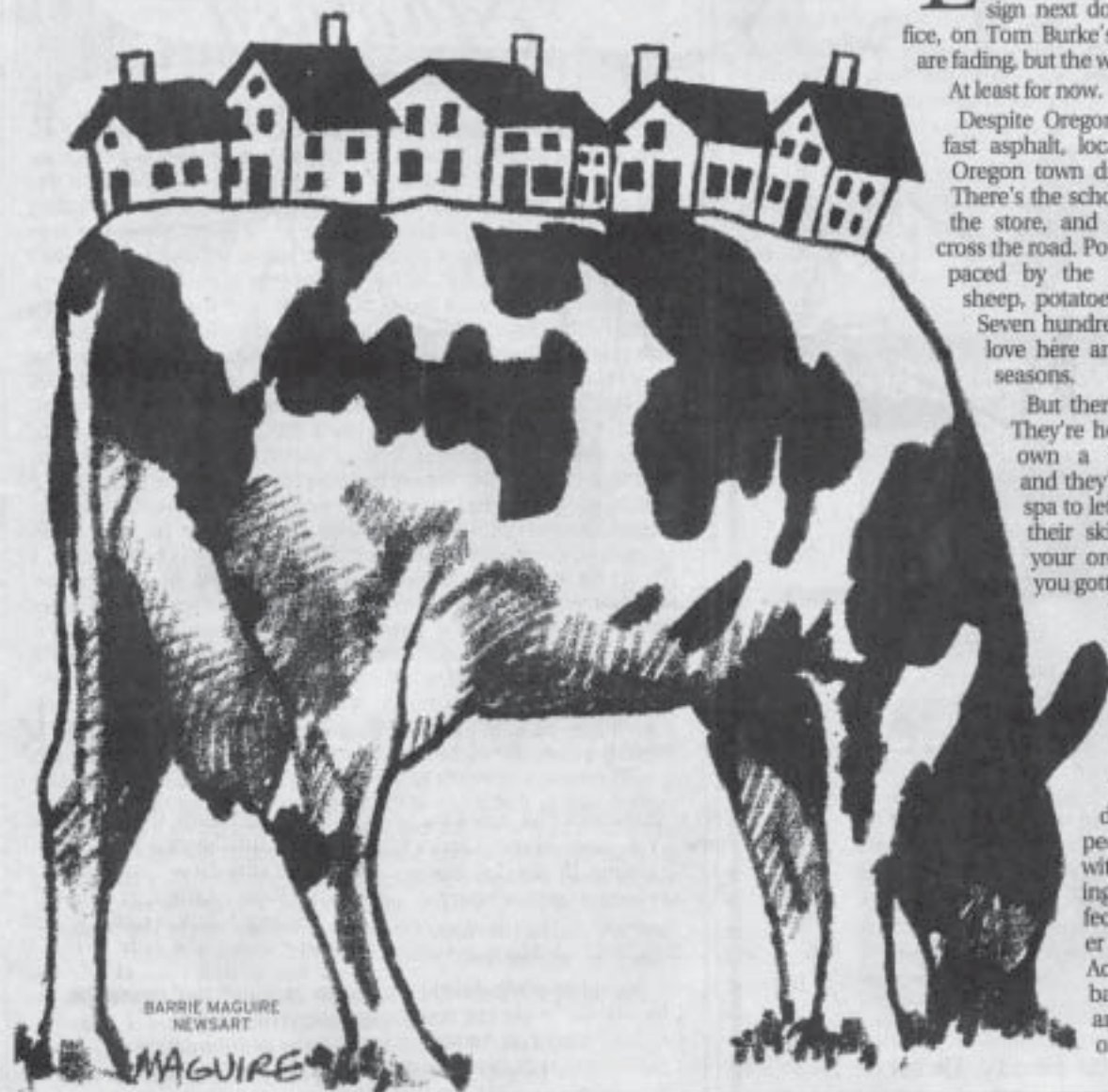
Little farms in Turnalo are appraised at \$1 million-plus — not for hay or cows, but mountain views. People get mad when a farmer tries to pay for his land by using it. Realtors even call land along irrigation ditches "waterfront property." It's true.

Laurie Monical, a 50-year-old hippie and grandmother who lives between Tom Burke's place and the soon-to-be resort, cries and talks fast whenever she thinks about it. "Powell Butte will become extinct," she says. "It'll be just another playground for the wealthy."

Burke told Prineville's weekly newspaper he understands "how the Indians felt when the white man came out here and took their land."

Monical and Burke can be forgiven for a little hyperbole. It's the neighborly thing to do. And neighborliness may be all folks have left if building starts at the end of Shumway Road.

Mike Van Meter is a freelance writer, researcher and teacher: mvanmeter@newsprose.org



BARRIE MAGUIRE NEWSART

MAGUIRE

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Generations of hatred

Question of the day: How long will we be embroiled in the aftermath of the war with Iraq, not to mention Afghanistan, and what will it cost in terms of money and lives?

Just ask the Irish, who have only recently achieved an uneasy peace after 150 years of

LETTERS BOX SCORE

Letters received in past week:..... 601

Published:..... 85

Hot topic: Iraq again drew the most attention, with 86 letters. Another 53 letters arrived on the "outing" of CIA agent

Loose-lipped leak

Well, now. Here is the chance for U.S. Attorney General John Ashcroft to use the USA Patriot Act to investigate the unpatri-

CIA LEAK

conservative columnist Robert Novak exempt?

Those who informed Novak that former Ambassador Joseph C. Wilson IV's wife is a

If Reinhard's call for capital punishment is a joke, it is not funny. If it is earnest, it is barbaric idiocy worthy of Saddam Hussein.

BOB VAN DYK