



The Procrastinator

if it's important, we'll get around to it

Special Pre-Inauguration Edition

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Please email questions or letters to the editor to TheProcrastinatorNewsletter@gmail.com

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Ways of the World: Where Not To Be on January 20

Michael Orr



Now just imagine an extra million people or two.

I think we probably all know at least someone who is going to be attending Barack Obama's inauguration in Washington next week. It's pretty hard to argue with having a chance to personally witness one of the more historic moments in recent memory. But I wonder how many of those people have ever spent any time in Washington? I wonder how many know that the bridges from Virginia into the District will be closed, that there are no hotels available in the city, that the city is smaller than seventy square miles and that the average high temperature in January is 42 degrees? I wonder if they've ever seen pictures of Martin Luther King's I Have a Dream Speech and wondered what it would be like to see over a million more people in the exact same area?

Having lived in Washington (or just outside) for two years, I can say with absolute certainty that the last place on earth I would want to be on January 20 is Washington, DC. It's going to be cold, there are going to be between one and three million people squeezed into a place that only houses 500,000 people and most of the folks there will have never been there before. The roads are going to be a disaster, the hotels are going to be booked as far away

as Richmond and Baltimore (if not Virginia Beach and Philadelphia), the airports are going to be swarming with people and the subway system is going to grind to a halt under the pressures of serving numbers of visitors never before seen in the capital.

I know that it is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to be at the inauguration of the first black President and the leader of a force for change. I will be watching every moment of the parade, oath and speech on tv and will be proud about it years from now. But it seems like a colossal waste of time and energy to try to squeeze into the District to be there in person. The number of people who will actually see Barack Obama with their own eyes will be in the thousands, not even the tens of thousands. Most people will be more than a mile away from the Capitol or the parade route and it will likely resemble Woodstock (minus the drugs, sex and hopefully mud) more than any other inauguration.

Hopefully the whole thing will go off without a hitch but I'm afraid the frustration, cold and weariness people are going to experience with security, crowds, bathrooms, trash cans, and just standing around for many hours to hear a speech doesn't turn into a riot. Most people there are going in with very good spirits and high hopes. That could either be good or bad. If good, people will be more tolerant and patient with one another. If bad, people could be let down and exhausted by everything they'll have to go through just to watch Obama on a large tv screen. Let's hope it's the former, for everyone's safety and sake. *P*

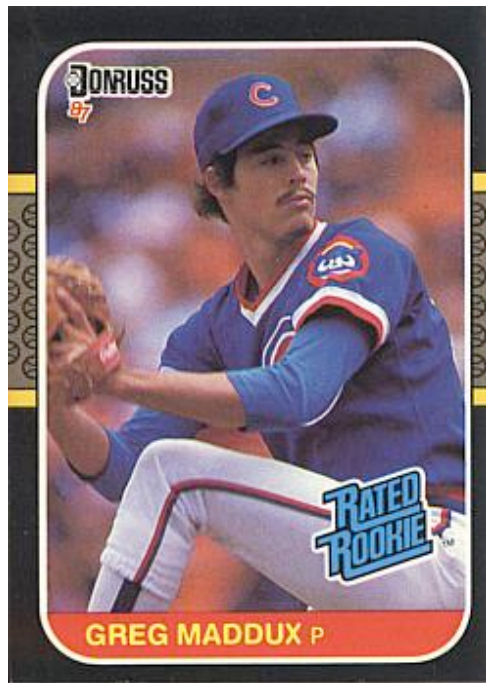
Michael will be watching it all on a tv screen as well, only from the comfort of his living room where he can be reached at mikeaorr@gmail.com

Sports: Painting the Corners

Brad Wright

There has always been a mystique surrounding America's star athletes. Their high profile existences allow us to create larger than life images to correspond to their legends. Michael Jordan elicits an image of unparalleled ability and the determination to simply will himself and his team to victory. Muhammad Ali paints a portrait of brash confidence and security in knowing he is the best. John Elway shows that God-given ability plus hard work and perseverance will pay off. In the midst of such grandiose visions of athletes with such Herculean abilities, stands Greg Maddux, the quiet artist who, content to win without fanfare, stands as one of the greatest pitchers in the history of baseball.

It might surprise some that Maddux was once the highest paid player in the game. Because we live in a time where athletes refer to themselves in the third person, it seems strange that someone so unassuming could command such a high salary. One need only look at his career statistics to understand why.



355 Career wins (including a record 17 consecutive seasons with at least 15 wins)
3.16 Career ERA
109 Complete Games
3,371 Strikeouts to 999 Walks
18 Gold Glove Awards
4 consecutive Cy Young Awards

Those are outstanding numbers no matter how you slice it, but they become truly staggering when contextualized by the era in which Maddux played. The last 20 years of professional baseball have been marked by an explosion of power, on both sides of the ball.

In the last decade alone, offensive records have fallen at an amazing rate, and pitchers and position players have increased arm strength to an incredible degree. This is - of course - the result of widespread steroid usage, and it is truly sad that now almost every player is cast under that shadow. Despite how the game changed around him, Maddux continued to win, even though he rarely

threw above 91 or 92 mph. In 1995, the first year after a devastating player's strike (and most likely when steroids distribution became more widespread) Maddux posted a 19-2 record, with an ungodly (or perhaps God-like) ERA of 1.63 on the season.

Despite the gaudy numbers, what made Maddux truly great were the intangible qualities he brought to the game. While some players seem to think that their statistics make them larger than their team, and even the game, Maddux was always willing to share his vast knowledge with the younger players. And when, this past season, he was asked to take a supporting role in the playoffs, he accepted without complaint.

The philosophy of modern sports is that bigger is better. Today's athletes are pushed to be better than humanly possible. As the size of the sport increases, so do the endorsements, and the egos, and, sadly, the scandals. You will never hear Greg Maddux' name connected to any negative headline. You will never hear Greg Maddux refer to himself as Greg Maddux. In fact, you might never hear Greg Maddux talk about Greg Maddux at all. What you will hear, however, is a chorus of people saying that Maddux' talent, along with the integrity and unassuming grace with which he played, has made him one of the greatest to ever play the game. *D*

Brad is still ruing the day the Cubs let Greg Maddux sign with the Braves, and can be consoled at bwright08@gmail.com

Food: A Week in Portland—What To Eat and Where

Morgen Young

I recently spent a week in Portland and came back with a new appreciation for the Northwest and the foodstuffs of the city. I avoided most tourist traps and steered clear of any non-Portland chain. So if you find yourself in the Rose City and want a few recommendations of where to dine, here are my suggestions.

This is not a Starbucks town. Portlanders are known for their appreciation for coffee and loyalty to their own brands. Though the Seattle chain exists on nearly every corner, avoid the green signs and try instead the local chain of Stumptown. Simple, straightforward coffee and a few specialty drinks (though not for you if you are of the frappuccino variety). Try the SW 3rd location.

After your caffeine fix, visit Bijou, Café next to Stumptown on 3rd for breakfast. One of the first restaurants in town to use only local and sustainable products, Bijou offers breakfast and lunch with a mix of French, Mexican and Oregon influences. The omelets are great, but a unique choice is the white





Clyde Common is at 1014 SW Stark St. in the West End

cheddar quesadilla with pumpkin seed mole.

For a quick meal, visit the many food carts in the city. Thai, Vietnamese, Mexican, Bulgarian, Polish, Indian and the list continues of ethnic cuisines available, most with multiple vegetarian choices. Typically open just for lunch, the food carts offer numerous options in the \$3 to \$7 range. A few recommendations: Asian Station at 9th and Alder in SW for Shanghai soup dumplings; Huong's Vietnamese for Pho, SW 10th; Give Pizza A Chance, SW 5th and although Thai carts abound in the city, Thai Basil at SW 2nd and Oak is one of the best. The food at the carts is fresh, local and a cheap alternative to dining indoors.

Voodoo Donuts is a Portland institution, loved by the locals and now numerous tourists, thanks to spotlights from various cable food shows. The hole in the wall shop on 3rd Avenue in Southwest is open twenty-four and serves an inexhaustible number of unique donuts. Since you are bound to be overwhelmed by the selection, order a Voodoo Dozen and thirteen different donuts will be selected for you, costing less than nine dollars.

The Pearl District in Northwest is the trendy neighborhood of the moment in Portland. Though a bit too Yuppie for some, the Pearl is teeming with great dining options. Tea Zone on NW 11th offers beverages for those less inclined towards coffee and makes amazing bubble tea, with a choice of tapioca or coconut pearls. Everett Street Bistro, on the corner of NW 12th and Everett, serves French cuisine for breakfast, lunch and dinner. Anything on the menu is delicious and the small restaurant also sells bread, meats and cheeses. And for the upwardly trendy sorts, stop by Bay 13 on NW 13th for fresh seafood and sushi in a renovated warehouse.

The West End comprises a five square block area south of W. Burnside, between SW 9th and 14th. A hotel, a few shops, and a couple of amazing eateries are tucked in between offices and chains. Cacao sells organic local and imported chocolate and offers various, unbelievable drinking chocolates, an almost necessity to counteract the rainy winter weather. You cannot go wrong with the classic hot chocolate or for the more adventurous, sip the spicy dark chocolate, with cayenne pepper and cinnamon. For the best meal you might have in Portland, stop by Clyde Common on SW Stark at 10th. Sitting at long, communal tables you will be served local products created into unique dishes, such as french fries with harissa and crème fraîche, rosemary crème brûlée, grilled seafood with seasonal vegetables and countless other fantastic choices.

And if you happen to find yourself in Terminal C of the Minneapolis/St. Paul airport traveling to or from Portland, stop by the aptly named Sushi Japanese restaurant for the most comforting bowl of vegetable udon soup. Enoki mushrooms, lotus roots, seaweed and heaps of noodles floating in a rich broth will be one of the best meals you can find in an airport or really most typical Japanese restaurants. ♪

Morgen doesn't think there are any cities out there better than Portland for food. If you know of anything that even comes close, let her know at morgen.young@gmail.com

Bonfire of Inanities: Tebow Officially Declared 5th Prophet of the Almighty

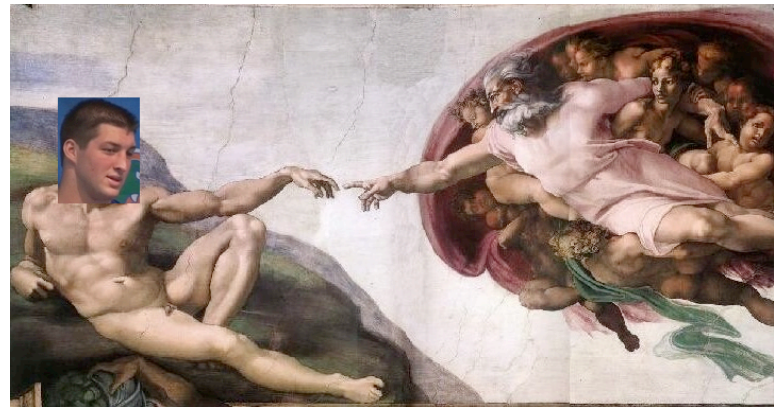
Brad Wright

At a press conference immediately following the University of Florida's football national championship, in a move that surprised no one, Yahweh, Lord and Creator of all things, announced that Florida quarterback and Heisman Trophy winner Tim Tebow will become the most recent in a prestigious line of prophets of the deity. Tebow joins the likes of Abraham, Moses, Jesus, and Muhammad as receptacles of the Divine Will.

Explaining his decision, the Alpha and the Omega stated that He took into consideration Tebow's accomplishments on and off the field. "Two national championships AND the Heisman?" a bemused God said, "Who has done that?"

And the kid lived in a leper colony for My sake!” The Lord continued extolling the virtues of Tebow, additionally citing his competitiveness, his work ethic, and “how great he is with kids.”

“You find me another person that can impact the lives of prison inmates the same way he impacts a fourth quarter drive,” challenged Jehovah. Coming to a conclusion, the Lord God stated simply “look, John Paul II was an amazing individual, he did some wonderful things, but he can’t run the option like Tim Tebow. Suffice it to say, on the eighth day I made Tebow, and I see it is good.”




Tebow, known for his fiery temperament on the field of play, was unusually reserved whilst the Almighty explained his decision. “I’m just a bit overwhelmed right now. I mean, to win a second national title and be named the right hand of God is a lot to handle in one night!”

Ever gracious in victory, Tebow displayed the humility that has endeared him to millions of college football fans. “I just want to thank my Lord and savior Jesus Christ,” he said, with a nod to Jesus Christ, seated two chairs to his left, “and Almighty God for giving me this opportunity. This one’s for you, Gator Nation!”

This landmark decision is not without controversy, however. Followers of 19th century Persian mystic Baha’u’llah have long lobbied for their leader to take his place amongst God’s greats. “This is just another example of politics in prophecy,” an angry Baha’i exclaimed. “Our spiritual founder was interpreting the Will of God years before Tim Tebow, and yet he gets no recognition. If we were in the eastern time zone things would be a whole lot different.”

The King of Kings brushed aside such criticism countering with, “everyone knows the rules when they begin to preach in My name. Everybody plays in the same system so they really have no cause to complain when they don’t get the result they want.”

When asked what his first act as Divine Mouthpiece would be, Tebow said he was going to “go out there and give a 110% and spread the Word.” 

Brad blesses you in the name of the Father, the Son, and the TEBOW and can be reached at bwright08@gmail.com.

The Fifth Column: The Road Trip—Part I

Michael Orr

Throughout the summer of 2001 a silver, oversized Ford Econoline 150 van could be seen across thirty states, two Canadian provinces, nine National Parks and ten thousand miles of roadway. From the islands of Acadia in Maine to the Rocky Mountains, from the St. Lawrence River, across the Missouri and from the North Rim of the Grand Canyon through the plains of Kansas, Winthrop Sheldon, Wesley Marsteller and I saw America. We boarded our van in mid-June in Maine as brand-new high school graduates, both eager and naïve. Returning five weeks later we were road tested experts on the ins and outs of our country. Accents, customs, and landscapes shaped our travels as each location left its endearing or repulsive mark on our consciousness. We grew closer as friends but more importantly realized the value of our own identities and the importance of individual thought and experience. But this is not a coming-of-age tale. Rather, this story paints a picture of a trip rooted in youth, not maturity. The fun and carefree life of a recent high school graduate who upon returning from his trip remains the same person, but with far better stories to tell of far greater places.

The summer of 2001 was the final summer before the events of 9/11 changed the ways in which Americans viewed travel, security and individual freedom. In retrospect, that summer could not have been better for such adventures as a cross-country road trip. In fact, earlier in the year Wal-Mart instituted a policy allowing for truck drivers to park in the lots of their stores and sleep overnight, without cost or penalty. The stated goal in mind was to keep as many sleep-deprived drivers off of the highways and give them a place to catch a nap or short respite from the road.



Win, Wes and Mike with the Van in Eden Prairie, Minnesota on June 22, 2001

Wal-Mart's policy, however, in no way limited occupancy of their parking lots to professional truck drivers, as any vehicle could take up residence near the lumber piles, potted plants, and assembly-required backyard-jungle-gyms. With the rising of the sun one could see a stream of blurry-eyed drivers entering the Wal-Mart for a cup of coffee and a brief chat with the first-shift employees. Perhaps Wal-Mart's plan was to create a word-of-mouth phenomenon between drives and thereby increase sales as those sleeping in the lots would surely make purchases in the store before hitting the road again. Or perhaps the company's motives were as simple as the policy itself, lending a hand to the thousands of truck drivers in America. Regardless, free 'lodging' was available for anyone willing to sleep within the confines of their own vehicle.

In addition to the generosity of Wal-Mart towards the American driver, we were fortunate enough to gain access to the Econoline van. For those who are unfamiliar with an Econoline, a simple description will suffice: BIG. Under the popped top with room enough for a person to all but stand up straight, the Econoline featured four captains chairs, a backseat with the capability of folding into a bed, a television with hook-ups for a VCR and video games, and blinds on the windows for a homey feel. Within this behemoth of a vehicle, one could literally live, if stocked with enough food, drinks, and entertainment. With the leather seats, airy space, and incomparable features, the Econoline was a thing of dreams, the kind of vehicle that is used in a movie before gracing the regular market of non-stars. While it certainly wasn't cool to look at on the outside, the interior left nothing to be desired. The Van eased its passengers across the harsh pavement with its smooth handling and Triton V-8, beast of an engine. Its thirty-five gallon tank could swallow over fifty dollars worth of gasoline at once and scraping the interstate bugs from the windshield nearly required the hiring of window cleaners.

Before we could leave Maine for Montreal however, the van needed a final cleaning. Win and I rose early in Freeport and headed north to Wiscasset, our anxiousness keeping us from sleeping in. The sun was barely overhead and the temperature had already soared into the seventies. Armed with Windex, Armor All and a plethora of towels, sponges and brushes, we advanced on the van and prepared to attack. Knowing well that it would be the last time the van would be fully cleaned for many weeks, Win stated his intentions, "We need reflections. I want to see myself in the bumper." That said the all-out cleansing began as the van's stereo belted out the contents of the six-disc changer, nestled snugly between the front seats.

Within two hours the van sparkled in the mid-morning sun. Though we'd worked hard to scrub, wash and vacuum the entire van, one final test remained before the job was complete. Win leaned towards the front bumper, hoping to see a mirror image of his sweaty and slightly sun burned face. As he leaned, I stood near with camera in hand and quickly snapped what we saw in the bumper, a reflective, yet oddly distorted view of Win. Two months later my developed photograph would show Win looking eerily similar to the movie posters for Hunter S. Thompson's Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas.

Having raided the grocery store the previous day, the only thing standing between us and our imminent departure was merely packing the van. Packing a giant van, however, is no small feat. With our excitement about the trip rising to new highs, we hoped to pack everything as quickly and efficiently as possible. Quickly and efficiently together, though, is like asking a group to stand in line alphabetically by height. We did our best to fill the van with the provisions necessary to support several weeks on the road. One of the second-row captains chairs was removed to better accommodate a cooler filled with food and drinks enough to last a few days. In addition to the suitcases filled largely with shorts and t-shirts, we packed sleeping bags, tents and other camping accessories, dozens of maps and guidebooks, video cassettes, Win's Sega Dreamcast and games, and as many music CD's as we could find. With hundreds of hours on the road ahead, a lack of musical variety could be devastating to the morale and enthusiasm of our triumvirate.

With the van packed as full as possible, save for space left for Wesley's contributions, Win and I climbed aboard our new home and said goodbye



Win's Reflection in Wiscasset, Maine on June 16, 2001

to Wiscasset. Driving south down the Maine coast, we gazed upon the Atlantic Ocean and wondered how much time would pass before we'd see the immaculate shores of the Pacific. A half-dozen stops had already been planned across the northern width of the country, but as for exact timing, we really had no idea. The effect of reaching such a body as the Pacific after an extended period inland is a feeling that can hardly be described. One need only briefly study the writings of Lewis and Clark's expedition to realize the overwhelming exhilaration of reaching those distant shores. We obviously knew the trip would not be the dangerous journey of the nineteenth century explorers, but the same notion applied to the idea of heading west with the Pacific as an initial goal. We'd both visited California before, but had done so through the air. Air travel is certainly the easiest and fastest way to the west coast, but a great deal of change is missed when flying over the country. Only on the ground can one fully appreciate the vastness and variety of the American landscape. Being from the east coast, we were very familiar with what we passed on US-1, driving south to Freeport, Maine. It was this familiarity and our desire to get as far away from familiarity as possible that led us to drive quickly to pick up Wesley and begin the trip towards the great Pacific. ♪

Michael has plenty more where this came from. If you're interested in the full story he can be reached at mikeaorr@gmail.com

Bonfire of Inanities: Jake Delhomme Martyrs Panthers for Jesus

Trey Smith



Delhomme taking it on the chin for a Higher purpose.

Everyone knows that Kurt Warner is a devout Christian who, as the Great Commission commands, uses his position as a sports celebrity to spread the Gospel. But prior to the playoff game that matched Warner's Cardinals against Jake Delhomme's Panthers, Delhomme argued that he, not Warner, was the NFL quarterback most effectively bringing Christianity to sports fans.

"Kurt's a great guy and really gets the Word out there, but he takes a more modest and cerebral route to proselytizing," said Delhomme. "While Kurt talks about God in postgame interviews, I make the game itself a religious experience. When I drop back to pass, close my eyes and heave the ball toward heaven, the entire stadium and any Panther fan watching on TV says, 'Oh dear God?!?!' Then if Steve Smith miraculously catches the wobbling duck of a pass I've just thrown in his general direction, the stadium and TV audience enthusiastically exhale in relief while saying, 'Thank you Jesus!!' Thanks to me, no one knows the intensity

faith requires better than Panthers fans."

Once the game got underway, Delhomme, intent on proving his religious prowess, proceeded to systematically destroy his team's chances by fumbling and throwing five interceptions.

After the game a victorious Kurt Warner thanked his Lord and Savior and then remarked, "I really envy Panthers fans. Jake went out there and really put together quite a sermon. With every turnover he showed Panthers fans that one's faith isn't always rewarded. Sometimes even good Christians take their faith for granted the same way Panthers fans took their 8-0 home record for granted. Jake made sure that we all remember that sometimes having faith is hard work. By losing that game, Jake won a lot of souls." ♪

Trey never bets on the Panthers and now you know why. He can be reached at dantzlersmith@gmail.com

The Ways of the World: The Price of American Exceptionalism

Brad Wright

Author's Note: As was sardonically mentioned in the previous issue, the impetus for this essay was an intoxicated viewing of the movie "Beerfest," so take any conclusions contained herein with a considerable grain of salt.

Here in America, there is a strong sense that we are inherently different from the rest of the Western, industrialized world. This is not to say that America is superior - although that claim is often made - just different. This idea is called American Exceptionalism, and I think it's hard to argue that America differs remarkably from her European brethren.

While every European nation has its own unique cultural traditions, those traditions are compatible with each other, for the most part. Most of the European world is able to enjoy a very rich and colorful cross-cultural conversation, a conversation in which America, sadly, is unable to participate fully.

Of course, the most important part of any cultural exchange is language. It is in this arena that America's uniqueness is most painfully visible. In my travels across Europe, it seemed that almost everyone I met spoke at least two languages and, in some cases, as many as five or six. The ability to communicate effectively is the crux of understanding a different culture, and learning how to speak another's language shows a certain amount of respect for that culture's traditions.



Sadly, most Americans seem to think that being bilingual means slowing down and raising the volume of their English. To be fair, this attitude is not totally the fault of American citizens, as our geographic situation doesn't necessitate knowing any language other than English. However, this situation does not excuse American's arrogance and expectation of accommodation, which serves to further alienate us from our Western kin. While this example is not meant to place blame on Americans, it does show that our linguistic barrier hinders us from participating in the cultural exchange.

For me, the biggest downside to American Exceptionalism is not this self-imposed language barrier, our utter lack of any distinguishable drinking culture. The Puritanical founding of this country has led to a misguided opinion of alcohol. The success of the Temperance and Prohibition movements in America stands as a testament to this country's unwillingness to fully embrace alcohol. Such prudish conservatism stands in stark contrast to every other Western country, where alcohol serves an important social utility. To the rest of the Western world, alcohol plays a vital role to culture and is seen as something to be embraced and shared, rather than feared and not discussed.

In America, the jovial and celebratory nature of drinking has been more or less sterilized, and intoxication is seen as the result of a lack of self-control. In Europe, intoxication is merely the by-product of the camaraderie experienced when drinking, rather than the goal, as it most often seems to be here in the States. America's rocky relationship with alcohol has caused laws to be passed forbidding intoxicating beverages to anyone under 21. This has actually enhanced the problem it was hoped to eradicate. The children of Europe are exposed early to alcohol, and this exposure leads to a heightened respect for its effects. American, children, on the other hand, are typically guarded from the supposed evils of drink, and out of ignorance tend to overindulge when they get the opportunity.

More than the simple joy of a good beer, however, alcohol serves as an important element of national identity: Italy, France and Spain are renowned for their wine; Germany and Belgium pride themselves on their beer; England has its ales; Scotland its whisky; and Ireland is literally Guinness. Not to deride America - which does produce some fantastic beverages - but is anyone really proud of Bud Light?

Lastly, the world of sport is perhaps the largest arena in which American Exceptionalism is plainly visible. In sports, America simply does not participate globally. We are far too concerned with the major sports leagues within our borders to care about any worldwide competition. You will not find a bigger fan and defender of baseball than me, but the national pride and fervor with which Europeans support their national teams is truly overwhelming and awe-inspiring.

America has no love for the two biggest internationally played team sports, soccer (from here on out I will call it by its proper name: football) and rugby. Despite football's growing popularity in America, our passion for the game will never even approach the intensity shared by the rest of the world. I had the pleasure of watching several Scottish national team matches in pubs full of Scotsmen, and those experiences were unlike anything I had encountered as a fan of American sports. You can walk into any pub anywhere in the world, and if the national football team is on you can feel the national pride, but you would be hard pressed to find that passion for country in an American bar.

America is known as a melting pot, where different cultures and traditions come together to create something entirely new and unique. To be sure, this makes America unlike any other country on the planet and should be a source of pride for its citizens. The downside of this uniqueness is that America, as an amalgamation of other cultures, is unable to interact with the cultures that went into its formation.

America is a wonderful place. It is wonderful in large part because it has so many distinct features. This uniqueness

does not come without a price, however. That price is our inability to engage fully in the cultural tapestry that exists in the Western world. Our linguistic shortcomings make it a serious challenge for us to engage other cultures to their full extent. And though drinking and sports go together no matter where you are, America's tenuous relationship with alcohol and our refusal to give non-American sports their due further distance us from our Western relatives. While what makes America different is also what makes it great, it is this very same distinctiveness that creates a gap in the cultural exchange. *P*

Brad understands that the topics covered in this essay have very little to do with the academic understanding of American Exceptionalism, but thought it was fun to write anyway. So raise a glass and say "Slainte, Probst, Salud or Cheers" at bwright08@gmail.com

Cities: Portland the Unpretentious

Michael Orr



Portland is a town for the locals. Sure there are tourists, like myself, but the city is designed for those who live there. But that isn't to say that it's a confusing city at all. It's very simple actually, a very straightforward grid design with just a few spokes cutting through. There are clearly defined neighborhoods and sections of town, each with their own identity. So if you want yuppie, it's easy to find. If you want alternative, it's just as easy. Same goes for outdoorsy, expensive or business.

So what does it mean to be a locals' town? I suppose I mean that it's relatively unpretentious. There are certainly tourist traps but for the most part the restaurants, bars and stores are for the people who live nearby. There are plenty of chains around but the number of local establishments or Portland/Oregon-only chains is astounding. From donuts, beer, noodles, outdoors gear, skiwear and books, the city is filled with provisions for those who live there full-time. People are out walking their dogs, running, grabbing a cup of coffee and just living all throughout town.

Coffee and beer are local sources of pride in Portland. The Rose City has the greatest concentration of independent, local breweries on the face of the earth. There are well known brews like Rogue and Widmer and Oregon-only crafts like Deschutes. And coffee is regarded as something worth enjoying beyond its caffeine advantages. Fair trade coffee is everywhere and is a legitimate point of concern, not just a trendy tagline meant to allow for higher prices. Even bookstores are plentiful in Portland, including the largest independent new and used bookstore in America, Powell's Books (where this is being written right now). Powell's takes up several interconnected buildings and encompasses an entire city block in the Pearl District.

It's clear that Portlanders consider their consumption of all kinds of products and foods as an important statement of self-expression and self-determination. Urban Portland runs itself, if that makes any sense. The people are kind, liberal and confident in themselves. I don't know if folks consider themselves trendsetters or if they just live how they like and others see that confidence and copy the expression of it. Either way, the city is an exciting and interesting change of pace from the South and really from the East in general. *P*

Michael had never been to Portland before but now can't imagine not going back. If you've got a plane ticket for him, let him know at mikeaorr@gmail.com

Darsey Culpepper has put off her move to Portland for almost three years now. But it'll happen. Soon. Keep up with her meandering goals, as well as her design work, at darseyculpepper.com