

Eugenics and Sexual Mutilation in the State of Oregon - When an Unpaid Grocery Bill was an Occasion for an Atrocity:

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"He did not really commit a crime although he would purchase groceries, etc. and never pay for same."

WILLIAM, V. W. S.
Date

RECORD OF AN INDIVIDUAL CASE OF STERILIZATION OF ANY TYPE
(Record ANY case of ANY type for ANY cause. Facts are wanted.)

Fred Burr

1. Full Name..... (No Names will be published in the report. In case of a married woman record both maiden and married name.)

2. Birthplace..... **Oregon**

3. Residences..... **Coquille**
R 6 Box 1 Salem, Ore.

4. Present address.....

5. Sex..... **Male**

6. Age when operated upon..... **32**

7. Date of operation..... **Mar 31 1920**

8. Surgeon (Name)..... **W. Carlton Smith**

Address..... **Salem, Ore.**

9. Reason for operation..... **degenerate practices**

10. Attitude of individual toward the operation..... **consented to operation**

11. Type of operation..... **Emasculation**

12. EFFECTS OF THE OPERATION. (Record general and specific morphological, pathological, physiological, psychological, emotional expression and control, mental, criminal, social, sex, masturbation, desire for sexual relations, and economic effects of the operation. Immediate and remote effects.)

was paroled shortly after operation. He is an exceedingly low type of individual and it was necessary to return for violation of parole. He did not really commit a crime, although he would purchase groceries, etc. and never pay for same. His wife still stays by him and is trying at present to secure his release. There is no question but that he is greatly benefitted by the operation.

Above: the castration of Fred Burr for an unpaid grocery bill: "He is an exceedingly low type of individual and it was necessary to return for violation of parole. He did not really commit a crime although he would purchase groceries, etc. and never pay for same. His wife still stays by him and is trying to secure his release".

This week the Oregonian discovered that an as yet unknown Oregon official ordered the shredding of all papers related to the forced sterilization of 3000 Oregonians, in a eugenics program lasting until the nineteen-eighties. Sterilization was not a minor surgery, involving for men, as it did, castration, and for women, hysterectomies. At least one woman, Elonda Murchison, 29, died as a result of a hysterectomy, in 1975.

The private shredding firm, the Oregonian found, remembers the documents and the order clearly, because there was some concern that 'an atrocity' was involved.

‘We destroyed them’ said John Murphy, president of the nonprofit Portland Habitation Center, which held the

state contract to shred the records. "I remember them very clearly. We had to decide ethically because we had an obligation to destroy them, but we were thinking, Some day these could be the evidence of an atrocity."

Oregonian July 30, 2002

The definitions of atrocity which have emerged since WWII (click [here](#)) would almost certainly embrace the practice in Oregon, and those responsible could face trial if he or she travels abroad (the Bush Administration does not recognize human rights crimes, or war crimes, or the courts set up to try these crimes, when the perpetrators are white Americans). The irony is that eugenics was discredited as a vicious pseudo-science in the wake of those same WWII trials.

Hence, no doubt, the shredding. Those involved seem to have no qualms about what was done.



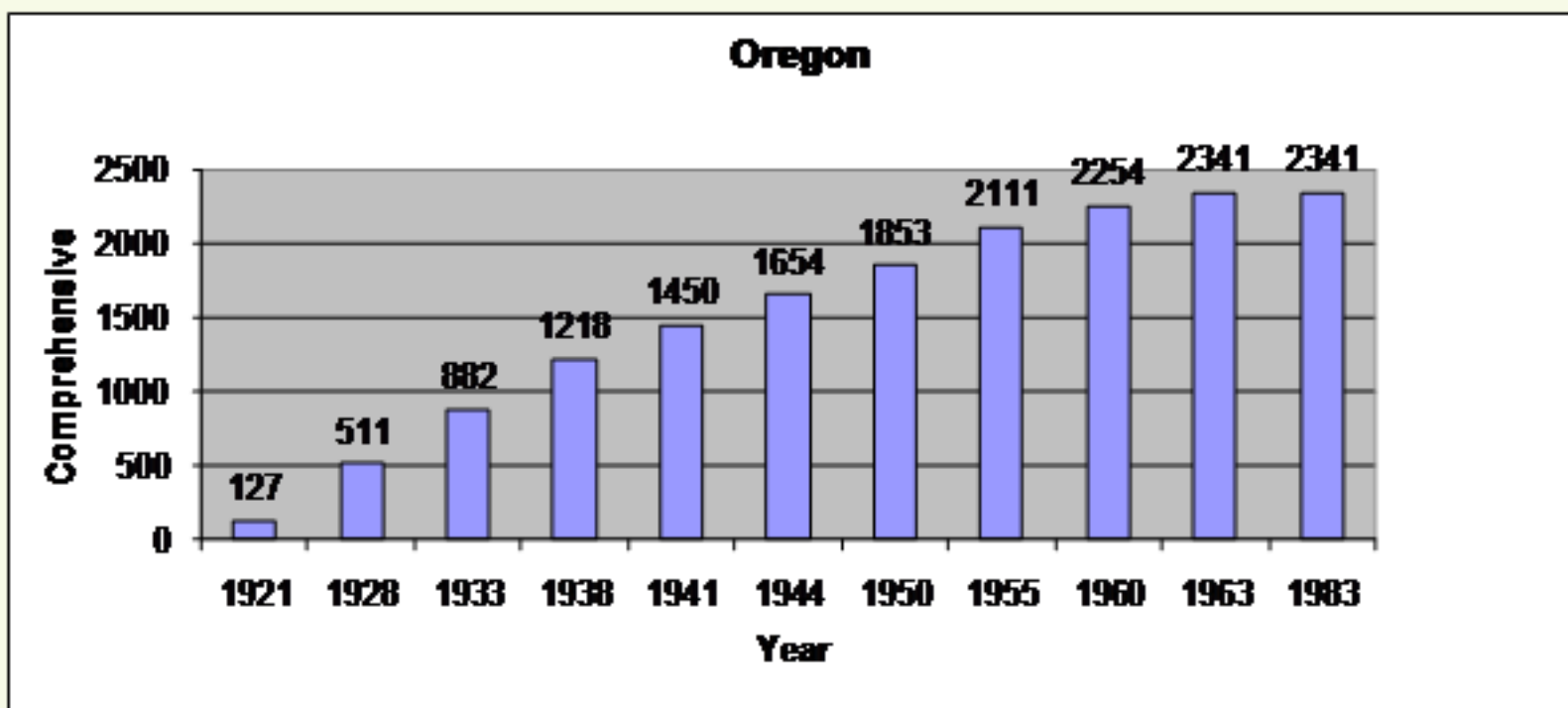
"We did the best job we could for both the individual as well as society"

- E.W. Lovrien, a retired geneticist who lives in Fairview. Oregonian July 29, 2002. Photo above: the Eugenics Board.

The victims and their families feel otherwise:

One young woman, poor, pregnant and unwed at 15 in a small Oregon town, was sterilized on the recommendation of state social workers shortly after the birth. The baby was put in foster care, and later adopted by parents who call her the delight of their lives. Katie Lewis grew up, attended college and found her birth mother. She also married and has four children of her own. "I think the state of Oregon owes people like my birth mother a apology Lewis said. 'Eugenics was a scientific experiment. They were trying to prevent someone like me.'"

- Oregonian July 29, 2002



Above: Forced sterilizations in Oregon. The totals are cumulative, not annual sums. The law to force sterilization of "confirmed criminals, insane persons, idiots, imbeciles and rapists" was repealed by a public referendum in 1983. Since then, no child under 15 can be sterilized, an event which was formerly not infrequent.

Children, poor people, people whose I.Q. was suspected as being below average (see right), gay people, couples engaging in non-marital sex, especially oral sex, unmarried mothers, individuals found masturbating or characterized as "nymphomaniacs" were all subject to forced sterilization. The University of Oregon [was closely involved](#), with 10,000 volunteers fanning out across the state to identify an astonishing 45,000 as "feeble-minded" and thus candidates for forced sterilization. This was the hey-day of Republicans in Oregon, with their Judaeo-Christian ideas of sex as married, missionary style and designed only to produce heirs for the rich and powerful. It's no coincidence that it was also the hey-day of the Ku Klux Klan in Oregon.

Jon Cooper, who oversaw the closure of Fairview State Hospital, has an explanation for the disappearance of records and instruments pertaining to forced surgeries, physical restraints, etc.:

"When it became politically incorrect to have them there, they just disappeared."

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The law came under attack along with other state laws claiming to reduce crime and criminals when Supreme Court Justice William O. Douglass noted that a chicken thief could be castrated as "feeble minded" but a white collar criminal could not be. Justice Douglas avowed that he could not see how Nature "follows the neat legal distinctions" of "feeble-mindedness".



Here is an excerpt from the tract used by Oregon's first woman university-trained doctor, [Bethenia Owens Adair](#) in her campaign for forced sterilization:

In submitting this little publication to the public, it is with the desire, the hope and belief, that the ever watchful eye of our great commonwealth, will appreciate the immense [sic.] value of this process for preventing disease and crime through propagation. Since 1883 when I said to the physician who was in charge of the Oregon Insane Asylum, that if the time ever came, that I might be permitted, I would then use my pen and my brain along these lines. Since then I have used my tongue many, many times, in season and out of season, and I have received in return many rebukes and much good advice, as to modesty, being a priceless gem which every woman should wear. But not until 1904 did the first opportunity come, when I could use my pen and I assure you I lost no time in sending off the following communication to the Oregonian, and my delight at seeing it in print was beyond expression, to say that this publication shocked my family and many of my friends would be putting it mildly, I am older now and my tears do not lie so shallow (as mother said) as in my childhood days, and there is something in getting used to unpleasant things and yet, I am not innured, but I can go right on smiling just the same. To illustrate the trend of thought, only 7 years ago when I wrote my first communication to the Oregonian I received four letters all eulogizing and congratulating me on my bravery, etc., but the interesting part was, that those letters were all nameless, who would think of addressing me to-day on this subject without signing his or her name; not one, no not one. The world is being educated along these lines and is seeking for the purification and betterment of humanity, which in time will be found and verified [sic.] in the yet unborn children whose parents blood shall be free from disease and crime. Through this publication I shall try to prove what I have been preaching for 30 years, that the power of transmission from parent to child, is a law which holds good through all life and dates back from the beginning of time, "Like begets like" from which there is no escaping. I shall produce statistics and quote from some of the great thinkers of the age especially from Judge Warren Foster, the Superior Judge and the highest and greatest criminal court in America. I advise all who can read "Hereditary criminality and its certain cure" by Judge Foster in Pearsons November 1909. He advocetes [sic.] sterilization as the "certain," and only cure.

My first article on this subject published in the Oregonian was as follows: This is a deep and serious subject, and one far too great to cope with in its entirety, yet I repeat, much can and should be taken. Some of the worst ills to which humanity is heir, such as insanity, epilepsy, and cancer, are almost certainly transmitted by the immediate progenitors. The greatest curse of the race comes through our vicious criminal and insane classes, and to my mind this is the liment that should be dealt with, not by chloroform or strangulation, but by the science of surgery, for if their power to reproduce themselves were rendered null a tremendous important step in advance would have been taken, not only without injury to life, but often with positive benefit to the victims themselves.

Over 20 years ago I visited our State Insane Asylum at Salem. My friend Dr. H., then in charge, received me graciously, and conducted me through the various wards. On our way from the wards back to luncheon I said: "Doctor, this is a horrible phase of life; and when is it to end?" "I do not know. It is hard to tell," he replied. "If I had the power," I continued, "I would curtail it, for I would see it it that not one of this class should ever be permitted to curse the world with offspring," He stared at me and finally said: "Would you advocate that method?" "I certainly would, if I were not a woman, and a woman M.D., to whom, I know too well that at this day and age it would simply mean ostracism," I answered. "Well," he rejoined, "I beg you not to mention this subject to my wife, for she would be shocked and horrified." "I shall not mention it to your wife, but I want to tell you right here that if I were in control of this institution, as you are, I would at least give many of these pitiable unfortunates the one chance of recovery, which might restore their reason. You know, doctor, as well as I do that hysteria and insanity are often due to diseased reproductive organs. Think of those loathsome victims of an unnameable vice under your charge. It would be nothing less than common humanity to relive them of the source of their curse and destruction by a simple surgical method that might give them a chance to recover their reason."

Eight or ten years since, in a conversation with an eminent attorney concerning a mutual friend and near neighbor, whose wife had recently called upon this attorney at dead of night to protect her and her children from her husband, who had for the second time become suddenly insane, he said to me. "This is terrible. But who would have thought of this level-headed business man going insane?" I responded, "Remember, we know it is in his blood by family inheritance. And now I am going to say what will shock you, which is that every person admitted into an insane asylum should be so dealt with as to preclude reproduction." Instantly and warmly he exclaimed, "I sanction that, and I will go farther by including every criminal that goes through the penitentiary doors." Thereupon we shook hands on it then and there, feeling sure that the time would come when the commonwealth forced to grapple with this vital subject, would be able to adopt these measure with the full assent of a majority of its citizens."

