

Folks in nursing home? You might have to pay

OUR OPINION: After we failed to help defray Medicaid costs, a new law just might make us pay up

Good 'ol Mom and Dad.

For the first 18 years of your life, they fed, counseled and clothed you. They changed your diapers and mended your skinned knees when you hit the ground. They taught you the wisdom of the work ethic, but gave you an allowance anyway. They showed you how to ride a bicycle and dried your tears after your first crash without the training wheels. They survived the stress of teaching you how to navigate the highways in the family sedan and forgave you when you backed into the mailbox.

Someday, you'd like to be able to pay them back for all their love, devotion and financial support.

That day may come sooner than you think.

After the years have taken their toll and Mom or Dad is in a nursing home, you might just get an official request from the state asking you to help pay for your parents' health care.

A provision within the Republican seven-year balanced budget plan that overhauls Medicaid would give states the power to require adult children of nursing home patients on Medicaid to help cover the cost of their parents' care.

The pay-for-care proposal is aimed specifically at middle income and wealthier Americans or any adult child earning more than the state median household income.

It shouldn't require a law to force us to subsidize our parents' lives. It should be a

moral obligation to take care of our parents after they've passed through their healthy, independent years.

After all, for many of us, Mom and Dad paid for the first 18 years of our lives — why shouldn't we pay for the last 18 years of theirs?

It used to be that one or more of the aging parents would move into their children's homes for togetherness, health or safety reasons.

Norman Rockwell paintings and *The Waltons* aside, extended or immediate-family living arrangements like this often contributed to a "sense of belonging" for the parent, and brought in an additional income source (parent's Social Security check) for the adult child.

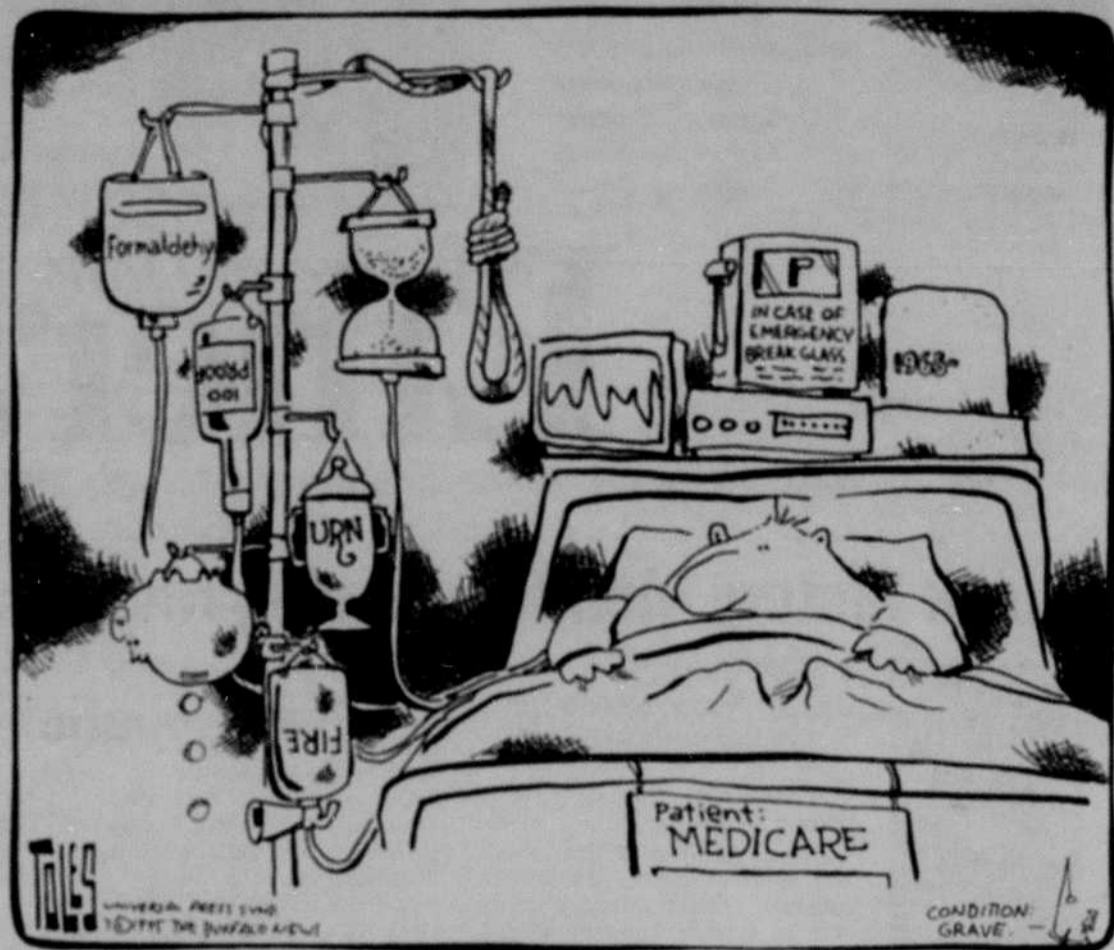
But that was then and this is now.

Today, for example, people live longer. Thanks to modern medicine, the elderly can live on despite lingering or debilitating illnesses. This arguably can put a financial burden on a family that could otherwise survive its monetary pressures. In addition, many adult children of nursing-home-bound parents do not have the necessary living space, let alone medical expertise, to accommodate a health-care-needy parent within the home.

But warm-fuzzies and monetary realities will always fall victim to the human trend of bending the rules.

Proponents say the Medicaid plan would allow states to curtail the practice of wealthy individuals transferring their assets to their children in order to qualify for Medicaid.

Didn't we learn to play fair when we were children?



LETTERS

Wasting resources

I would like to encourage all students to become aware of the amount of paper products we waste each day.

Specifically, I've observed many times that after people wash their hands in the bathrooms, they tend to automatically — that is, without thinking — pull the paper towel lever three or more times. Absentmindedly cranking out two feet of paper to dry one pair of hands is incredibly wasteful.

We live in a society of wealth and abundance, but that does not mean that we should remain oblivious when we are consuming more than we need.

In addition to minimizing the amount of paper towels (and napkins) we use, we can also bring our own paper, plastic, or cloth grocery bags to the store, again practicing awareness of our consumption.

In my experience, once a person gets used to reusing and recycling materials, it becomes a natural and easy way of life.

Students, let's please be aware of our consumption!

Dorothy Oppenheimer
English

Art?

After exiting the University's Museum of Fine Art as rapidly and as pissed off as I could get, I sat down with several friends and tried to discuss the exhibit I trustingly stumbled across.

Somewhere on the upper levels of the museum are several glass-encased displays of over-used tampons ever-so-neatly laid out on white pillows with a typed letter in a font so small you have to put your face next to the "art" to read it.

Pardon me if I felt the message was not worth reading.

Why is this kind of display considered art, and what kind of message is being sent? Why on earth did the artist wanna-be just not crap on a pillow and name it "injustice of humanity"?

It may have related to a larger audience. Obviously, anal abundance is one of her more distinct

traits. If I were her acquaintance, I would avoid sharing any secrets.

Why does the artist think that exposing a visual image that turns off more than it turns on will send a positive or supporting message about the tribulations women deal with?

My family was coming to visit, and one of our stops was going to be the museum. Not anymore. I am embarrassed for my culture.

Valerie Stilwell
Journalism

Feeling puckish

When I left my home in Canada, I assumed that the transition to American culture would be smooth, and for the most part it was.

During my first American autumn, I experienced only mild palpitations caused by cultural anxiety. After all, I had to adjust to watered-down beer and life without Hockey Night — a Saturday night Canadian institution.

Not until mid-January did I experience my first real shocker of cultural differences. Lo and behold, it happened on a Saturday night, watching hockey on Fox television.

I became teary-eyed with nostalgia, as Fox was showing the NHL all-star game.

The event is popular and entertaining in spite of its goofy celebrity context (i.e. hockey players do not respond well to questions by awkward sportscasters who attempt to be funny while displaying an obvious lack of knowledge about the game).

My rapture was quickly ruptured though, when I saw that there was a large purple glowing disc in the place where the puck used to be.

If someone fired a shot or made a pass, the disc transformed into a long, red comet. I blinked hard, but it didn't go away. Fox was using new technology — a computer chip inside the puck — to enhance viewer pleasure of the world's fastest game.

Well, I watched the game; I watched a native of Quebec, Raymond Bourque, score the game winner in his "home town" of Boston.

Soon I will go home and sit around with my friends on a Saturday night, clutching strong beer and watching Hockey Night.

During intermission (we don't talk while the game is underway), one of them might ask me what it's like to live in the States, and I will tell them about the mysterious purple disc and enchanting red comet that Fox Television is using to attract new fans to hockey in America.

They will say: "If it takes stupid tricks like that to promote the game, then maybe it's time to send it back to where it is appreciated, eh!"

Kristian Olsen
Graduate Journalism

Questionable politics

The Oregon Supreme Court should be applauded for its unanimous decision Jan. 19, which derailed the Legislature's \$750-million funding bill that included Portland's latest light-rail bid.

By doing so, the court upheld the integrity of the Oregon Constitution and allowed us time to review less costly transportation options for our state.

The bill was unconstitutional because it violated the "single subject" rule.

That rule protects us from the kind of horse trading for votes that apparently went on in Salem last summer. Pesticide laws, shooting-range noise, cormorant protection and other related subjects were "log-rolled" into one bill with transportation funding.

What came to be known as the "Christmas tree bill" was, in reality, politics at its most crass. The court, to its credit, put a stop to it. The rule will make for cleaner politics in a state that prides itself on such things.

Steve Buckstein
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