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for more details

## Sad Excuse

"Uh, the dog ate my spin control"

**B**y now I'm sure you've seen the infamous 48-second clip of Miss Teen South Carolina Caitlin Upton struggling to answer a simple question about why Americans suck at geography:

"Some people out there in our nation don't have maps, and I believe that our education, like such as in South Africa and the Iraq, everywhere like, such as...should help South Africa and should help the Iraq and the Asian countries so that we will be able to build up our future."

The president couldn't have said it better himself.

Even worse was Caitlin's lame-ass excuse when asked by *Today* anchor (and former Oregonian) Ann Curry to explain herself: "I seriously think I only heard about one or two words of the actual question itself."

Really.

That's about as pathetic as New Mexico Gov. Bill Richardson's backpedaling in the wake of a gay-focused Democratic presidential debate in which he told Melissa Etheridge that homosexuality is a choice. The morning after, he blamed the gaffe on jet lag.

But these two have nothing on the saddest excuse of them all, U.S. Sen. Larry Craig, R-Idaho. Here is a neocon—who supports the Federal Marriage Amendment and opposes bills to outlaw anti-gay hate crimes and job discrimination—caught cruising for sex in the men's restroom at the Minneapolis airport. Craig claims his shoe touched the undercover officer's foot in the next stall because he has "a wide stance when going to the bathroom."

Mmm-hmm. I suppose he also expects us to believe that the Iraq war is going well.

In fact, the only "poor decision" that Craig acknowledges is that he "plead guilty to a lesser charge in the hope of making it go away." For future reference, Senator, pleading guilty to a misdemeanor rarely makes anything go away, at least for hypocritical public figures.

Basic Rights Oregon's new executive director, John Hummel, is a Boise native who lobbied Craig directly as a gay rights activist in the Gem State. He gave me his personal take on the soon-to-resign closet case.

"When Sen. Craig says he's not gay, I believe him," Hummel says. "However, I don't believe him if he's saying that he doesn't have same-sex attractions, because the evidence has just been out there for too long."

Hummel recalled a congressional page scandal in 1982—long before U.S. Rep. Mark Foley, R-Fla., was caught with his pants down in 2006—involv-



Jim's Closet

BY JIM RADOSTA

ing a young man who allegedly had sex with three House members when he was 17. When reporters phoned Craig to inquire about the story, "he freaked out and called a press conference almost immediately...swore up one side and down the other that he was not involved in molesting any congressional pages. The only problem with this is no one had accused him," Hummel laughs. "So the reaction of the national press corps was, 'Methinks she doth protest too much.'"

Within six months, Craig married his chief of staff. He went on to adopt her three children. Despite his newfound status as a family man, he continued to be dogged by rumors.

*The Idaho Statesman*, where I worked as an intern for five months in 1994, recently revealed a string of suspicious behavior: a University of Idaho fraternity pledge who said Craig made a pass at him in 1967; an REI shopper who said Craig cruised him for sex in 1994; and a man who said he had oral sex with Craig at Washington's Union Station in 2004. Despite the mounting evidence, the senator continues to maintain his heterosexuality.

So, shouldn't we be celebrating the downfall of this self-hater?

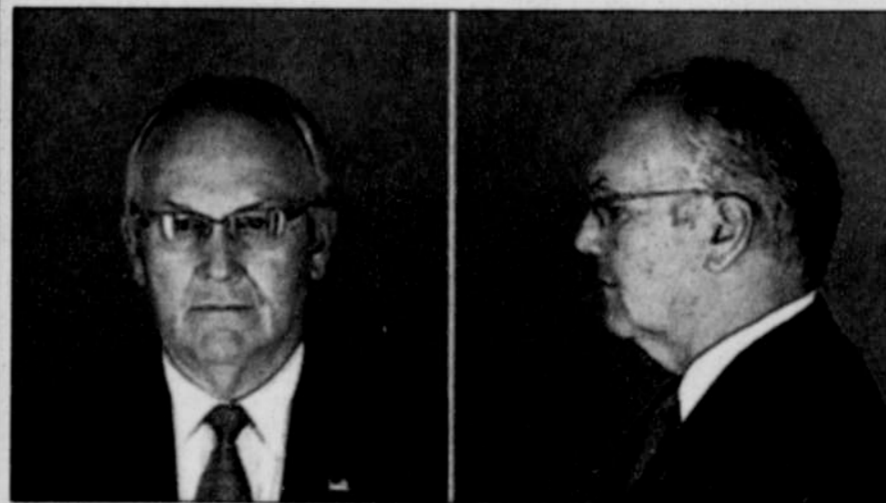
"At first I was thinking, 'Well, the chickens are comin' home to roost.' But I can't really feel good about this," Hummel admits. "I don't agree with Sen. Craig on anything politically...and I certainly don't appreciate his record on issues affecting equality for the GLBT community of Idaho. Nevertheless, I do feel sorry for him. I think it's a tragedy that his 30 years of public service is ending...at the doorstep of homophobia. Larry Craig is the victim, just like other people are, of the power of the oppression of gay people."

Hummel notes that Craig grew up amid a 1955 anti-gay witch hunt that was documented in John Gerassi's 1966 book *The Boys of Boise*. The ensuing hysteria, he speculates, must've had a formative effect on the future politician.

"That's why I say I believe him when he says

he's not gay, because in Larry Craig's mind, being gay is being powerless," Hummel says. "Being gay is someone who is weak, who has no political power, who is a despised minority.... That's why his friends in the Republican Party can't get away from him fast enough." ☐

Arts and Culture Editor JIM  
RADOSTA needs your feedback.  
Write to [jim@justout.com](mailto:jim@justout.com).



Hecklers in Boise greeted Larry Craig with a sign reading: "It's 12:15 p.m. Do you know which stall your senator is in?"