

**DISTURBED SLEEP**

I had a dream that the new McKenzie Willamette Hospital was open at the former Eugene Water and Electric Board site and I was being rushed there by ambulance down Coburg Road. The ride was fast as we approached the Ferry Street Bridge when suddenly we came to a screeching stop.

I was groggy, but overheard one of the paramedics exclaim in a frustrated tone, "Geez, another traffic jam at the bridge and there's no way around." His partner shook his head and replied, "We probably should have taken the freeway through Glenwood again and come in the back way."

We were so close I could clearly see the hospital's main entrance sign, but it took us another 20 minutes to finally reach the front door. By then, the pain in my throbbing big toe was intense and I was in and out of consciousness. I vaguely remember being wheeled into a room.

When I awoke, I was pleasantly surprised by my surroundings. It was a nice room with several beautiful wall hangings. I had a roommate whose bed was next to a big picture window and I introduced myself and asked about the view. He excitedly replied, "I look right into the window of the changing room for the judges at the federal courthouse next door."

My toe was starting to feel much better and I began to drift off to sleep when an echoing whistle pierced my ears and the room began to

shake violently. The wall hangings began jiggling and the binoculars on my roommate's night stand crashed to the floor. I grabbed my bed railings and held on for dear life.

"What was that?" I shouted at my roommate. "Oh, it's only the 4:45," he replied nonchalantly while flipping through a magazine. "The 4:45?" I asked with a puzzled expression. He explained, "Yes, the train. We get 'em coming by the hospital every couple hours. No worries, you can ask the nurse for special ear plugs." He added, "Insurance pays for 'em."

After a bumpy, sleepless night I was released and said goodbye to my roommate who was busy setting up a camera tripod in front of his window. My wife helped me out to the car and we loaded up. After waiting in traffic to get back over the bridge, we finally made it home. My toe felt much better, but I had a funny ringing in my ears. I went out and got the mail and opened our monthly EWEB bill. I grabbed my chest and yelled to my wife, "Another rate increase — call 911 and tell them to take me to Springfield!"

*Ned Peabody  
Eugene*

**HILARIOUS COLUMN**

Randy Kolb isn't fooling anyone with his attempted advice. In a smugly generous tone (12/30) he pretended to give liberals "tips on how to regain the White House." What followed was a comical tirade against liberals

**TOO MUCH COFFEE MAN** BY SHANNON WHEELER



post-election behavior with very little real political advice. The result was near what a nagged spouse must feel when told, "You know, the problem with you is..."

First, he advises lefties to stop "whining about the election." My guess is they would've "whined" all they way to the

Supreme Court had they not seen what comes of that four years earlier. Next he chides liberal "arrogance." How about the arrogance that brought on Kolb's parental swat on the booty? Or the arrogance of a president who, during wartime, proudly claims to not read newspapers and fires or chases away any cabinet

**KUMBAYA DAMMIT** BY DAN CAROL

**In Search of a Message**

Words of validation, caution and hope for a new year

**A**s we suffer through the post-mortems and ad nauseum autopsies of the Democratic Party and what it stands for — a scene played out so many times after Mondale (1984), Dukakis (1989), Gore (2000) and now Kerry (2004) — a few words of validation, caution, and perhaps hope.

**Validation: Yup, you are right, they all suck.** No question about it, we perennially offer up lame national candidates with tepid, poll-driven, policy prescriptions rather than inspiring ideas that animate Americans around the future. Kerry was no different — he couldn't break out of Senate-speak but we almost got him over the top with good mechanics. So we can despair about it — or we can find someone better. I'm pro-that.

**Caution:** The best way to look ahead to 2008 is to do nothing right now. In fact, you'll feel better if you assume that things will get worse first. There's an ongoing fight over who will be the next Democratic Party chair, and even once that is settled, the party won't really have a single voice until the 2008 nominee is chosen. We will be a cacophony of conflicting voices and messages. So save your anger and energy to apply to 2006 electoral payback — while you keep your eyes open for the presidential campaign that best blends passion and practical politics. In the meantime, try and get in touch with your inner (Nelson) Mandela, because real social change takes time. Heck, as I look at the next 20 years of American politics, I think we'll all need to be open to sometimes supporting moderate Republicans who are pro-public education, environment and privacy. These folks are like an endangered species that need to be saved.

**Hope:** That all said, we shouldn't settle for a moderate Democrat. There is no reason — no reason — that a liberal candidate can't win anytime and anywhere. How could Paul Wellstone do so well in Minnesota by voting against welfare reform, the Iraq War and so much more? The same reason that a right winger named Ronald Reagan could win the presidency in 1980, bankrupt the country, trade arms for hostages and still end up beloved by a grieving nation. These guys spoke with passion, from their heart. People get that. People LOVE that.

**Validation II: You're not crazy at all; this moral values stuff is hogwash.** Studies from *Ad Age* and other non-political sources that the mainstream press has missed are showing that red staters watch just as much "Desperate Housewives" and



read just as much *Playboy* as the evil blue staters. But let's also be realistic. A nation settled by puritans isn't quite ready for gay marriage. We can despair — or recall what the world looked like for gays, blacks and women 40 years ago and remember that's a lot of social change. In the meantime, look at 2004 electoral results in red states like

Montana (new governor), Florida (living wage passed by 72 percent), and Colorado (renewable energy initiative) for living proof for what poll after poll shows: We have a healthy working majority for all of our progressive values.

**Caution II: So where do we screw up?** It's by infighting every two years over whether we should be more conservative or less conservative — and by the locus of that fight being over a perfect *national* message for the party. The fact is that we can't develop a united national message overnight and we'd be stupid to try. States are where we can all play — and get along. The average New Democrat DLCer and the most rampant Nader-policy-loving progressive all support living wage increases, worker training programs, public education and new investments in green technology. So let's work together to demand joint candidate pledges on those issues.

**Hope II:** If you haven't yet read Thomas Frank's *What's the Matter with Kansas?*, crack it open. The analysis shows how the Republicans have been running cultural class warfare for 20 years on social hot-button issues while Democrats have stayed silent on economic "class" issues for fear of upsetting their business fund-raising base. Just what do we have to show for it? Loss of the Congress, a weak candidate bench, and Social Security hanging by a thread. So you say, where is the hope here? Well, it is now illegal for the Democratic Party to take big business checks. Plus, progressives have now clearly shown how little people can raise big money online (thanks to Howard Dean, MoveOn and, yes, John Kerry, who raised \$82 million online). So the money excuse for Democrats to sell out is now OVER. That's a hopeful little tidbit.

But still we need a message. Oft-cited thinkers like George Lakoff of the Rockridge Institute are saying that we need more "strategic message initiatives" like the Apollo Alliance ([www.apolloalliance.org](http://www.apolloalliance.org)), a project I am proud to say I co-founded, and was the subject of my very first *EW* column in 2003.

I agree.

So I going to try and use this column moving forward as a diary to develop more strategic message initiatives on a range of issues — from education to electoral reform.

If that adds up to a message — great. If it helps us win more campaigns and build a movement, even better. I'll see you out there.

*Dan Carol is a Democratic political strategist and a founding partner of CTSG ([www.ctsg.com](http://www.ctsg.com)), a progressive consulting firm based in Eugene and Washington, D.C.*