

In the Pits

The muddle ages



I'm losing my mind. I've found myself doing those stereotypically menopausal things like putting library books in the freezer next to the Mocha Almond Swirl. I sometimes find my keys there, but only because that's where my menopausal craving for Mocha Almond Swirl leads me.

I first noticed the trend on a cold, sunny morning on my way to get a package to the post office. I pulled on my new loose-weave wool jacket and slipped the keys off their special hook – which is nowhere near the ice cream. I stepped outside, locked the front door, walked to the driveway, and unlocked the car. I hefted my bigger-than-a-breadbox parcel onto the passenger seat, pulled the door closed, and buckled my seat belt. When I went to stick the key into the ignition my hand came up empty. No keys. What the ...?

Had I left my keys in the car door? Slipped them into my jacket pocket? Dropped them on the floor? Had they slid into the seat crack? Nope, nope, nope and nope.

They must've fallen onto the driveway while I was hoisting the package into the passenger seat. I undid my seat belt, climbed out, and squatted down and searched the ground. Nothing.

How could this be? I can't unlock the car door without the keys. They had to be nearby. I checked behind the front tire, in the flower bed next to the driveway, and underneath the car from every angle.

Gone. A loaded key ring cannot vanish into thin air. Mine holds work, house, and bike keys, a couple of mystery keys whose purpose I hope will come to me when the need arises, a photon flashlight, and the miniature notebook I won playing Skee Ball in Seaside with Wifey on our 17th anniversary.

I'm prepared for such lapses. I stash an extra set of keys with our neighbor around the corner. If Barbara was home, I'd be OK until the keys turned up. To my relief, Barbara answered the door.

"I need my keys."

"When did you last have them?" She barely suppressed a chuckle. Barbara gets a kick out of watching Wifey and me go through all the mood swings, hot flashes, and memory loss of The Change while she's still ovulating away.

"I definitely had them when I left the house," I blabbered to Barbara all the way around the corner and up the driveway. "I've retraced my steps a million times. They're definitely not in the house."

"I'll find them." My neighbor's stride was long and strong as we marched back to my house. She teaches college Spanish and is renowned for not excusing absences, accepting late papers, or taking any bull from her students. I wasn't about to challenge her.

"Show me exactly what you did."

I lifted the box out of the car and walked back to the front door. I mimed locking the dead bolt. I mimed unlocking the car, re-enacted every detail. I opened the door, climbed in, and hoisted the package over to the passenger seat.

"Stop right there," Barbara commanded, as if she'd busted a Spanish student passing notes. "Do that again." (She may have actually said, "*Repita*.")

I lifted the box over toward the passenger seat one more time.

"*Alto!*"

I froze with the box in midair – nobody defies *Profesora Bárbara*.

"There they are."

I looked at the seat where the box had sat. *Nada*.

"Check under your left arm." She was so smug. Arrogant. Fertile.

But at the moment she was in charge and I needed my keys. I did as Barbara instructed and looked under my arm. There hung my fully loaded key ring, snagged in the loose-woven fabric of my jacket armpit.

From now on when my keys go missing, I'm checking under my arm first. Or at least right after I check next to the Mocha Almond Swirl.

Writer Sally Sheklow offers playshops in courage and creativity at Tamarack Wellness Center www.tamarackwellness.com.

wishes of one of its largest constituencies, and now content to create even more traffic problems. Is this a portent sounding the death knell for citizen-proposed projects in other city neighborhoods?

*Marian Spath
Harlow Neighborhood resident*

WOLF AT THE DOOR

In response to the gray wolf discussion, I can see why a Eugene resident would be agreeable to releasing wolves back into Oregon — it makes no real difference to you.

If you were to step into the boots of a rancher you would see that wolves represent a real economic concern. As a rancher, you realize that reintroduction of wolves could cost you thousands of dollars and you are already struggling financially. Imagine that your "job" requires you to wake up at dawn and sometimes work till midnight. You make nighttime rounds during calving season, and you rarely vacation. You know a lot about the land and you toil on it daily. You know that wolves may mean decimation for the baby calves you painstakingly birthed, fed, vaccinated, housed, etc. Wolves are not stupid. After one kill they will remember that calves are easy prey.

The Fish and Wildlife employees perform the "hate crime," not the rancher. The rancher is well aware of huge penalties and possible jail time for killing a wolf.

I can tell you that a lot of western Oregon politics (such as this issue) are sending ranchers to the welfare lines. Some say good riddance. Others will respond with the evils of eating meat. The fact is, folks in the U.S. eat a lot of beef. If beef is not raised in this country then it will be imported from somewhere and it will probably result in the clearcutting of more rainforests. Shutting down agriculture in this country is a big mistake. Let's worry about ranches, farms and American jobs becoming extinct, not the wolf.

*Pamela Kersgaard
Springfield*

SOY IS NOT THE ANSWER

In reply to "Simple Solutions" letter of Edward Newland (1/6), I agree with most of your thoughts that in spite of election results, each of us can do a great deal on the domestic front battles of health, the environment, and soul. However, eating supermarket soy burgers and dogs or ready-to-eat frozen dinners of soy products is not the way to achieve this.

Funny how the well-intentioned are so easily hoodwinked by the soy industry to promote a very dangerous food as healthy. Honest research not funded by the soy industry shows a host of dangers from isolated soy protein, and there is a strong, grassroots movement to ban infant soy formula as it carries the same health risks as an infant taking 10 birth control pills a day. Early formation of breasts and starting of young girls' periods at 8 years old, not to mention higher adult cancers, is linked to this high-estrogen food. For truth in science, check out: WestonAPrice.org. See the truth.

A great dis-service to health is how many vegetarians equate factory farms and slaughterhouse atrocities with all meat products. We buy all our protein from local Willamette Valley farmers who grow their free-range animals on grass and sunshine. They slaughter

it humanely, and I can ride my bike to any of their farms. They support local commerce, and I haven't been to a supermarket in five years. And I work 50 hours a week at my job.

We believe in the health benefits of bone broth soup full of our backyard garden vegetables. We support the Farmers' Market whenever we can't grow what we need. Processed food transported far from its source is the cause of most obesity, not whether you choose to allow another animal to give their body so you can sustain yours.

*Tom Schneider
Eugene*

PATHETIC TALE

I wanted to comment to the article (1/13) written by Steven Sawada. What a wrong and pathetic message this article was! Don't you have any creativity? I can't believe the number of cheap excuses you came up with to justify the presence of one or multiple strippers at a bachelor party. Just part of the equation. Hey, we don't even have to be original, guys! A strip club is a business after all. Yeah, and, conveniently, they happen to have naked women too! Well, darn! I just wanted to have a beer with my friends!

The hair stylist David Wilson brings some fresh air and hits right on the nail by saying that having a female stripper at a bachelor party is one of the few ways heterosexual men know how to bond. He pushes even further saying they need a stripper because they're fantasizing about each other. It also masks conversation issues. He's so right! Believe me, they definitively have something else to talk about than personal issues in a strip club, and its not pretty!

One thing is sure, if you really feel like it's your last shot at freedom and you think it's hard to get out when you're married and this is the *only* way you can bond with your friends before you get married, here's some advice: stay single. You are more likely to make your wife miserable by being so immature. You treat marriage like it's a prison; that alone is starting on the wrong foot. If you have to be surrounded by strippers to mask the conversation issues, how are you going to be able to stand a conversation with your wife should a problem arise?

Show her early commitment and maturity by refusing to act in such a farce to the risk of disappointing your friends.

*Alby Thoumsin
Springfield*

METH HYSTERIA

Like the little boy who cried "Wolf!" our federal and state legislators now claim there is a "methamphetamine epidemic." After years and years of crying wolf about marijuana why should we believe these little boys? The moral of the story holds true: If you falsely cry wolf, when there is a real crisis no one believes you.

*Chris Pender
Eugene*

CURSE OF CONCRETE

I'm glad R. Sparks Scott (1/20) has done such a great job excusing automobile usage by simply claiming that it's inevitable. Yes, industry and commercial businesses depend on automobiles, but that doesn't give license to individuals to depend on a wasteful form

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