

Found in Translation

Visiting the bio-fam requires patience.

Ah, the family visit. What a bizarre custom. We leave the comfort of our homes, travel to places we escaped ages ago, and spend time with people from whom we've moved thousands of miles away – for a reason.

This year Wifey and I visited her mother in Cleveland – summer vacation destination of, well, nobody. I brave the muggy season in my gal's homeland out of spousal loyalty, proving that same-sex marriages threaten nobody but the people in them.

It's part of the bargain. After 18 years of unsanctioned matrimony, visiting in-laws – or, in our case, out-laws – ranks right up there with love, honor, and accompany to colonoscopy.

We buzzed apartment 206 of the senior housing unit. "Who is it?" Mom's voice crackled through the intercom.

Didn't we just call from the airport to announce our arrival?

Maybe she was joking. I've learned to translate Momsppeak and assume the best intentions.

A couple of years ago, when Wifey and I last took on the Midwest – the only out queers at a cousin's opposite-sex wedding – Mom said, "You should visit again before I drop dead." Who could resist such an alluring invitation? Not us.

"Hi, Mom," we said into the wall.

"Oy, I'm not even dressed." She clicked off the intercom.

If this was her *Guess What I Really Mean* secret code, Wifey wasn't amused.

My lifemate tends to go catatonic around her biological family anyhow, and the cross-country redeye didn't exactly bolster her spirits. Standing in the humid heat wasn't helping.

Mom greeted us at her apartment door. "What took you so long?"

Translated, she was saying *Welcome, Sweethearts, I'm so glad to see you.*

My mother-out-law is a perfectly nice woman – if you consider complaining perfectly nice – but she does push her daughter's buttons. Poor Wifey. She glazed over, leaving me to engage Mom in conversation.

I commented on how nicely she'd arranged her apartment.

"These candlesticks are yours when I'm gone," she said. "Then you'll see me every day." Rough translation: *You two are important to me.*

Wifey sighed and curled up on the couch.

"My one chance to see you and you're going to sleep?" Meaning: *I appreciate your making the long trip.*

Ya gotta feel for this woman. She's old, raised three kids who rarely visit, outlived her husband and all her sibs, survived breast cancer – isn't she entitled to complain a little?

Wifey hugged a throw pillow.

Mom gave me a tour of her kitchen. I realized that our last meal had been several time zones ago. Despite the airline's generous serving of nearly one dozen miniature pretzel sticks I was hungry. Wifey came to and offered to take us out for lunch.

Mom said "What? My food isn't good enough?" Translation: *Great idea! I haven't been out to eat in a long time.*

I suggested she might enjoy a drive in our rented convertible. She responded with "I'm not sitting in the back!" Translation: *How fun, I haven't ridden in one of these for years.*

We ate at Cleveland's best Jewish deli. "Oy, I'll gain 10 pounds and have a heart attack." *I love the food here.*

Took her shopping. "My feet are killing me." *How nice to get out and about.*

Toured the sights. "With what you're paying for gas you could afford to call me once in a while." *Such a luxury, I'm having a terrific time!*

And so it went for the next few days, me translating in my head, Wifey zoning out, and her mom kvetching about, well, pretty much everything.

On our last evening, Mom said, "Next time you come it'll be for my funeral." Translated, that meant *It's been wonderful.*

I thanked Mom for her hospitality and we all hugged goodbye.

Ten hours and another pretzel feast later Wifey and I arrived to a message on the answering machine. "It's Mom. Just wanted to make sure you got home OK. I really enjoyed our visit."

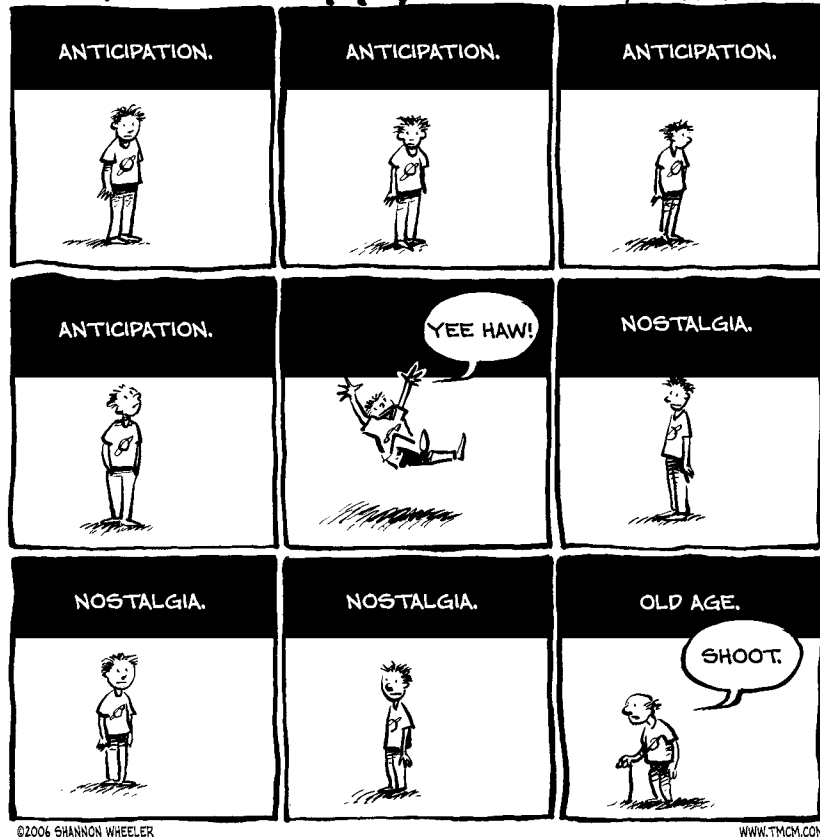
No translation necessary.

Award-winning columnist Sally Sheklow enjoys her chosen family in Eugene.



How to Be Happy

by Shannon Wheeler



LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

JUST ENOUGH CHANGE

I am a bit confused by Geno Shane's remarks on the Oregon Country Fair (8/3). Although I have not been attending as long as Mr. Shane, I have an idea what the fair is all about. It's different for everyone. The energy is different from moment to moment, that's the charm. He says "It's more difficult to figure out where things are," then goes on to say "the sameness year after year gets boring." So is he lost or not?

I for one am in disagreement on much of his opinions. There was wonderful dance music, Radioactive was there representing hip hop, Eleven Eyes had upbeat dance jazz, the list goes on.

I'm all for gradual, natural growth of the fair. I think every year it morphs just enough.

Tina Ellison
Lane County

LACK OF RESPONSE

First off, my utmost support to my friend and former classmate Maisie Davis for continuing to struggle for her right to an oppression-free education and against the UO's institutional racism. The administration's lack of response, and continued inaction to create policies addressing racist violence on campus, really shows who they are and where their priorities are at.

Would this be the response if Maisie Davis was UO President Dave Frohnmayer's daughter? Would this be the response if Maisie was a non-disabled white woman? In any case, she's not, and neither are the many others students of color who deal with racism at the UO on a daily basis, in and out of the classroom. The university promotes itself as caring about diversity, but when it comes down to addressing violence directed at those on campus who create the diverse environment that benefits ALL students and faculty, nothing changes.

The UO administration should look at the examples being set by COE grad student Johnny Lake, COE professor Surrendra Subramani and FHS Program Director Dan Close. These are individuals who have

stepped up and delivered when they were called upon. Until the same is done by the UO administration, "honoring diversity" will continue to be a watered-down feel good term while racist violence continues to go unchecked. Change and action need to happen today. To quote revolutionary Assata Shakur, "Yesterday was not too soon."

D Cohen
UO Family and Human
Services Program alumnus
Eugene

MAKE YOUR SLIME SHINE

All this war — why I've never! I do declare war is nothing but a big chore. It's rotten to the core, 'cause it's full of gore. I find it to be quite a bore, so I don't want to talk about it anymore. Instead, I'm pleased as punch to announce the upcoming SLUG Queen Coronation. Follow the slime trail of our reigning swingin' Queen Frank Slug-Snotra as it followed mine and many old queens before. Become a "philanthropod."

That's right, you too can do good service for our community while being adored and receiving plenty of perks during your reign. There are no "official" rules; just slip into an alter-persona — with a catchy name, a talent to perform for 3 minutes or less (I tried longer, but literally was carried off the stage), and bribes are not only beneficial, but definitely required.

Applications are available at the Saturday Market office (686-8885). Here's your chance to rule and to shine your slime in the Eugene Celebration Parade, and oh so many other community events. So come on down for an uplifting and unifying extravaganza at 6:30 pm Friday, Aug. 25, at the Park Blocks at 8th and Oak (Saturday Market stage). It's good to be queen!

Blessings to all y'all, for peace and love,
Old Queen Scarlett O'Slimera
Eugene

VALUE OF MEMORY

In response to Jerry Ritter's ridiculous letter in last week's issue, "Ignoring Atrocities":

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