

# Sister Act

Cotton candy can be a drag.

In 1982 Eugene, lesbians were feeling our feminist oats, surging toward equality, and coming out in droves. Back home, my family avoided my queerness as much as I asserted it.

That was the year my blatantly heterosexual sister was getting married. My kid sib Judi – that’s Judi with an i, topped with a smiley face for a dot – inherited Mom and Dad’s lack of appreciation for my *lifestyle*.

“You’d better not show up in some damned tuxedo,” my sister snapped.

“Why do you always have to make a statement?”

Well, duh! My gene-pool cohort was about to have her socially approved gender-normative relationship regaled with a big family wedding, opulent gifts, and a Hawaiian honeymoon. I couldn’t even get my sexual orientation acknowledged, let alone celebrated. Wasn’t a statement in order?

Judi wouldn’t have any of it. “This is my wedding. If you can’t dress like a girl, don’t come.”

I had half a mind to argue that girls can be firefighters, and come to her wedding in bright yellow Kevlar. But no way she’d let her dykey gender-bender big sister ruin her nuptials. And no way I’d let her keep my lesbian face out of her wedding album. I wouldn’t miss my sister’s wedding no matter what. Even if I had to go in total drag.

Which I did.

Luckily a flaming queen friend of mine had just the thing. He brought over a flouncy, pink, voile-on-chiffon number with matching pink pumps – a leftover from his early Diana Ross phase. I’d never learned to walk in heels. Under the queen’s professional instruction, I minced across the room, concentrating to keep my balance. One look at big beefy me teetering around in this get-up would make my sister wish I had shown up in a tux.

I arrived early on Judi’s wedding day and wobbled down the hotel hallway to join my family. Their suite door was propped open, hair spray fumes escaping in gusts.

“Oh, Sal!” My mom hugged me. Not a word about my out-of-character wardrobe choice. I guess I looked normal in her eyes, or else she was too distraught to really see me. “Your sister needs help,” Mom nodded toward the bathroom.

Dad paced and checked his watch. “She won’t let us near her.”

Judi flung open the door and stomped out in a cloud of big hair and yards of white satin. The fitted bodice flopped forward from the waistline of her bridal dress. “I can’t get this friggin’ zipper up!”

Mom turned toward me and rolled her eyes.

“I’ll do it.” I followed Judi into the bathroom, my silly shoes clicking on the polished terra cotta.

My sister gathered up her skirts and flopped onto the toilet seat. “Everything’s wrong!” Mascara tears streaked her carefully tanned cheeks. “My dress is wrecked. I look hideous.”

True, but my god, what about me? In my over-the-top pink chiffon and teetering high heels I looked like cotton candy on toe shoes.

“It’s OK.” I wrung out a washcloth and set to work. I daubed the mascara drips from her dress, tidied her make-up and fixed the zipper. “See? All better.” I helped her up for a look in the mirror, our faces close. “You’re beautiful.”

Our eyes met for minute – the two sisters. What difference did it make what anyone was wearing?

“Come on girls.” Our dad tried to sound chipper, but Judi’s hissy fit had done him in. “The limo’s waiting.”

I escorted my sister out of the bathroom. “Ta-dah!”

Judi, confident in her feminine perfection, hiked up her gown to show her wedding garter. Dad snapped a picture of us standing there like that – me in that comical dress with a big plastered-on smile, Judi trying to look like she hadn’t been crying her eyes out.

I still have a copy of that photo, in case the original didn’t make it into her wedding album.



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

party, binding arbitration? That these competitive salaries are routinely, regularly, and collectively negotiated with your employees? Am I to assume that issues such as workload and assignments are hashed out between management and labor co-operatively and productively?

Unions are first and foremost the worker’s voice in the workplace. Salaries and health care benefits cannot make up for that lost voice, no matter how competitive or comprehensive they may be. Unions are the worker’s tool for ensuring dignity, respect and fairness. Without this tool, only management determines what is fair, when workers are treated with respect, and who is allowed to retain their dignity. A workplace without a union is a workplace where the few make decisions for the many. A workplace without a union is a workplace where capriciousness, absolutism and injustice rule the day.

It is typical of many lefty businesses and organizations in Eugene to believe that their workers don’t need a union, or that a union would interfere with the good work that they are trying to do. A union is simply a way for management and workers to discuss, on an equal footing, issues that impact the workplace. Any organization, such as *EW*, that claims to be progressive, green, feminist, liberal or radical should have a union for its employees. Any workplace that does not should abandon those claims immediately.

David Cecil  
Eugene

EDITOR’S NOTE: For the record, we never said *EW* workers don’t need a union, only that we are not unionized. We are managed by committee, and all employees are invited to participate in decision-making.

## EUGENE’S SALON

I appreciated your coverage of the Salon des Refuses (“Not Your Mayor’s Art Show”) in the Eugene Celebration Program (9/7). Writer Adrienne van der Valk did a nice job of tying the history of the Eugene’s Salon to the 19th-century Paris original. Also, it was great that the *Weekly* was able to reproduce five of the outstanding works hanging in the show in full color, although

I was disappointed not to see the names of the paintings and the artists who painted them.

The dramatic oil painting of the Iraqi women brandishing guns titled “Should We Be Silent?” is one of a series of 15 paintings of Iraqi women touched by the current war by artist Marjorie Tracy. (Full disclosure: Marjorie is my wife. We visited Iraq together in 1988.) Could you also fill your readers in on the names of the other four paintings printed with the article, and the names of their artists?

William Tracy  
Eugene

EDITOR’S NOTE: Title cards with artist names were not available when the photos were taken. The show continues through Oct. 13 at 164 W. Broadway.

## YES, IT IS TRILLIONS

A letter in *EW* Sept. 14 claims the Bush regime’s fiscal deficits are merely in the billions, not the trillions. Unfortunately, the true financial crimes are in the trillions.

Several trillion dollars has been added to the federal debt over the past five years. Even more astounding, an estimated \$4 trillion is “unaccounted for” and has gone missing, allegedly.

U.S. Secretary of War Donald Rumsfeld held a press conference on Sept. 10, 2001 (the day before the “new Pearl Harbor”) to admit that the Pentagon could not track \$2.3 trillion. This information is still on CBS’s website, yet the media, the Democratic Party and even the peace movement do not call attention to this reality. It is well documented that government spinmeisters are fond of releasing damaging news just before other events that distract from the airing of inconvenient truths.

The day after this admission, the staff of Resource Services Washington, an Army accounting division, were reportedly among the victims when Flight 77 flew into the recently reconstructed and strengthened sector of the Pentagon.

The only 2004 Presidential candidate to discuss any of this was Dennis Kucinich, who raised the issue of the missing trillions in his campaign speeches.

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