

Off the Rag

The flow of life

I'm deep into post-menopause. I enjoy the relative stability of my hormones and life's more even keel. Back when I was going through puberty, I had no idea my volcanic emotions had anything to do with endocrine glands. How could I? The discovery of estrogen and progesterone had yet to enter the 1963 junior high world of knowledge.

In those clueless days before *Our Bodies, Our Selves*, I got my information about my changing biology from the black-and-white hygiene film our gym teacher showed us in PE that one day. We had to sit there while Miss Nokes deftly threaded the film in the projector by herself because the kid who normally assisted with AV equipment was a boy, and no boys were allowed. This was serious business.

The movie's glamorous coed in her strapped bathing cap and dark lipstick sat poolside and told us not to worry. She assured us pubescent girls we could swim when we were on our periods. And ride horses, too, according to the same confidence-inspiring narrator who just a few years previous had taught us to duck and cover in case of an atomic bomb. We were one well-informed bunch of kids.

But now we were becoming women. Here I was entering menarche and, if the film was right, the muss and fuss of managing menstrual periods would be a small price to pay for the freedom to swim and ride horses. I remember being disappointed every 28 days because my parents were holding out on me. Once a month like clockwork – no pool and no palomino. Who wouldn't be depressed?



During our moon time we shared our insights about how the patriarchal paradigm was designed to keep us powerless, ignorant and deodorized.

That year my whole family became insufferable cretins. They irked me to no end, and I perfected a particular head-pivot-eye-roll movement that let them know it. My parents were utter squares. My siblings were worse. My brother snorted when he chewed. My sister splattered toothpaste on the mirror. Even the family dog left cocker spaniel hair on my black pedal pushers. All this coupled with sore breasts and low back pain. I idolized Lizzie Borden.

Hormones were never mentioned. My peer group didn't start talking about hormones until well into adulthood when, shortly after the Cenozoic era, modern science finally identified PMS. I still have the clipping from an old *Good Housekeeping*, "Sally's blue with periodic pain. Sally's gay with Midol." How true that turned out to be.

Ten years after junior high I learned the truth. Thanks to the kindly dyke who taught my college health class, I discovered certain aspects of the female anatomy that had been completely obfuscated by the common era's boys-have-a-penis-and-girls-don't type of sex ed. I learned lots of things about my body that those lipstick babes in the hygiene film never mentioned. That led me quite naturally into the world of woman-loving-women. In no time I came out and was living with, working with and processing every aspect of life with lesbians. Needless to say, our cycles coincided.

What the dominant culture considered irrational and irritable, we came to think of as heightened sensitivity. During our moon time we shared our insights about how the patriarchal paradigm was designed to keep us powerless, ignorant and deodorized. Above all, we were supposed to be discreet. To hell with that. We celebrated our connection to nature's cycles and smudged menstrual blood on the door posts of our homes. And on our gates.

I switched from dioxin-bleached "sanitary" products to natural sea sponges. I concocted valerian and raspberry-leaf tea to ease cramps, and my friends supported each other through the emotionally raw times.

PMS became elevated to a rarefied consciousness. I rode my hormonal surges into heightened states of creativity and vision (not to mention a super-evolved appreciation of good chocolate).

I don't mind having moved on past those fertile times. Even without my period, I can enjoy swimming and horseback riding.

Award-winning writer Sally Sheklow has been exercising her freedom in Eugene since 1972.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

with the landowner, Lane County, which manages the park. FBP's mission is to "protect and enhance native ecosystems and compatible recreation in the Mount Pisgah area." Our area of concern includes the Coast Fork-Middle Fork Willamette confluence area outside the park, and we also are working to add the 1,200-acre Wildish lands to the park.

Many people do not realize that two non-profit organizations help care for this Buford Park: Friends of Buford Park & Mt. Pisgah and the Mt. Pisgah Arboretum, which is a separate organization that manages a 209-acre leased area within the 2,300-acre Buford Park. Though separate nonprofits, together we help care for Buford Park's natural and recreational values in partnership with Lane County.

In an era of declining county funding, community-supported efforts to maintain and enhance Buford Park are essential to conserving what we love about Mount Pisgah. We appreciate all who support these efforts.

Chris Orsinger

Executive Director

Friends of Buford Park & Mt. Pisgah

SCARED GOVERNMENT

I have neither the energy nor patience to go in depth into the government's violation of constitutional ethics in this or in any of their many political acts during my tenure in Eugene. I will not bemoan the bloated federal budget for hunting down "terrorists." I will not go on and on about how Eugene cops may be the most violent, reactionary cops in the entire country.

I would like to talk a bit about human nature. I want to talk about the fact that the government is scared of kids. I want to talk about how they are willing to ruin what will most likely be fruitful and totally law-abiding lives because of the actions of people who are not even believed by our government to be mature enough to decide when to drink.

This ties into the whole Jake Ferguson fiasco. The other defendants in that case had moved on with their lives. They had jobs. They had families. They were probably really avid recyclers, but let's face it, as we get older and more settled, we get more complacent. Jake was the only one who was still reliving the "glory days" because he was too busy being a junkie to move on. Now they are threatening another kid with felony jaywalking? Ian [Van Ornum] probably would have fared a bit better had he been more obsequious, but it is appalling to think that going to a protest is going to affect him for the rest of his life. Pesticides can be really gnarly. I've seen chemical burns on the people who apply them and have to say I am not too keen on being exposed to them. I am even less keen on the idea of *not knowing* I am being exposed to them. Sounds like a good reason to have a protest.

The *R-G* said that the federal agent was there because they were "worried that the demonstrators might march the five blocks to the federal courthouse." March to the courthouse. Not blow up the courthouse. Not vandalize the courthouse. Just walk over there, wave some signs and go home with a small sense of accomplishment. I am not sure how to get it through the

government's thick skull that these are not the kids that kill people. These are the kids who grow up to be avid recyclers.

Gen Schaack

Eugene

DIRTY LAUNDRY

I could not believe how tacky and selfish your "unofficial guide to the real Eugene" was (6/26). I am embarrassed and ashamed to live in a city that publishes a newspaper with such negativity such as yours. I used to think that I was one of your targeted audiences: someone who leans to the left of center, who appreciates the arts, music and activities that abound in our area, and also is staring down the second half of a century. No more.

You had an opportunity to help the community, to invite the thousands that came to Eugene for the Olympic Trials to enjoy our many venues for entertainment, our fine restaurants, art galleries and beautiful outdoors. Instead you hung out the dirty laundry — for what purpose? Eugene has issues, as does every city. Is the time to work those out when the community pulls together with civic pride to have the world's spotlight shining on us? Did this article do anything to help right all of those wrongs? I think other letter writers were spot on to include your *faux pas* as number 33 on your own list.

When I visit another city, I am excited when I find a paper dedicated to the events, music and art that exist in the city. It gives me a place to start to get to know the city from

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(OR WHO DO YOU WANT TO BLAME?)

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