

Easy as ABC

"A" If you have to do," said my sweetie, in response to my monthly fretting about what to write in my next column, "is start each sentence with the next letter of the alphabet beginning with "A."

"But," I replied, "beginning with consecutive letters is a cakewalk, so much easier than, say, also ending each sentence with that same letter – that'd be a much tougher job."

"Challenges do tend to inspire you," said my darling companion of 21 years, exhibiting her trademark level-headedness and sound logic.

"Don't I know it," I said.

"Eventually, though, you'll have to home in on a topic and write about something," Wifey reminded me.

"For sure," I replied, somewhat absentmindedly, as I'd already begun concocting sentences in my head, having come to that conclusion myself.

"Great," she said in the encouraging tone that makes her my favorite muse, "now get going."

Here I go then, only slightly worried about what I'll do when I come to Q and X and Z, which will no doubt be pretty tough.

I shouldn't waste time worrying, I remind myself, although I'd be less uptight if I had a martini.

Just think, I digress, of how well that would go with some nice *baba ganouj*.

Kind of makes you wonder, doesn't it, if this column is going to be worth its ink.

Let me just mention, in that case, my hopeful feelings about the fate of Don't Ask, Don't Tell.

My gut tells me Congress will overturn the anachronistic and bigoted policy under Obama's leadership, but, unlike Bill Clinton, Barack should get the military brass on board (probably by emphasizing the cost of losing so many valuable service members), which Obama clearly understands, but again, there's more to it than just him.

Not to mention the Defense of Marriage Act, which Obama has also vowed to overturn, but there it still stands, in the way of marriage equality, as yet another reminder that LGBTQ Americans are less than full citizens, mostly because so many people hate us, which is the reason we so urgently need to pass – and enforce – comprehensive hate crimes legislation.

Oh, golly, you're probably thinking, just give this big-mouth dyke a few column inches and the freedom to vent about LGBTQ rights and off she'll go.

Please, as if we don't hear enough about Michael Jackson's autopsy and what's-his-name's "Appalachian hike" to make us all want to throw up.

Queer people, though, deserve more public awareness, as does, by the way, our illegal involvement in Iraq.

Reconsidering, must we dwell on the negative forever?

Surely we'd all appreciate, from time to time, some light, enjoyable reading in one of these columns.

That's a reasonable enough request.

Ultimately, the point, after all, is to entertain you.

Valuable skills like this, I realize, come from doing so much improv.

When you think about it, writing is a lot like putting on a show.

Xena, that great warrior princess, I recall, expertly eradicated evil with her power to transfix.

Yeah – I'll say.

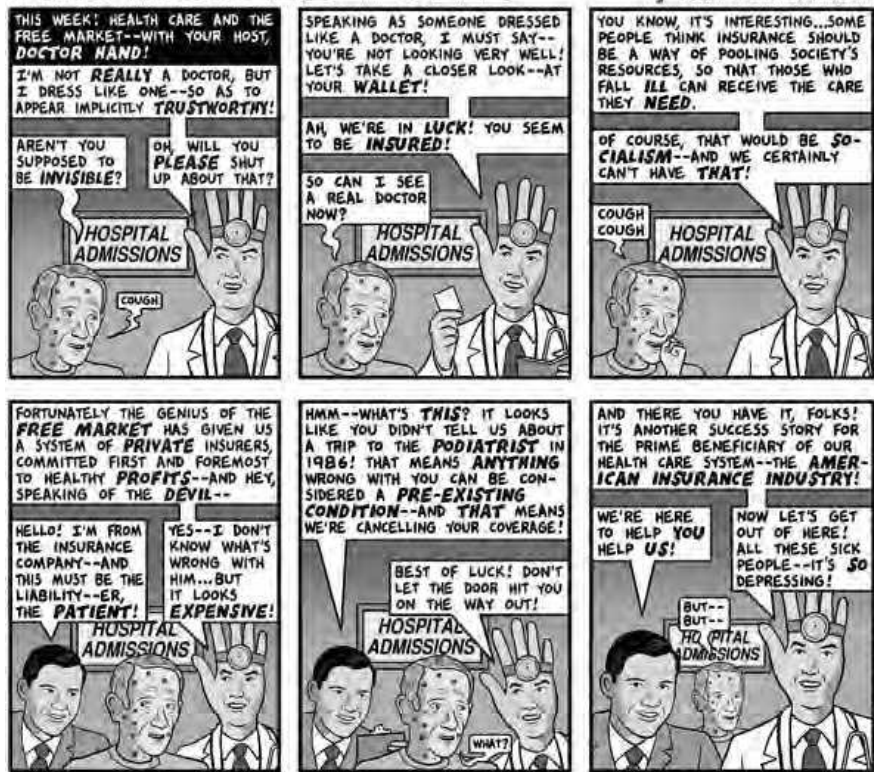
Zero tolerance and all that jazz.

Award-winning writer Sally Sheklow has been using her syllables freely in Eugene Weekly since 1999.



THIS MODERN WORLD

by TOM TOMORROW



LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

IMMERSION INACCURACIES

I would like to correct some of the misstatements published in the Viewpoint "An Issue of Equity" concerning immersion programs (6/25). All scholarship recipients of federally funded academic programs must be U.S. citizens or in the process of completing citizenship. Some UO Chinese Flagship students immigrated to the U.S. with families or as adoptees; the majority were born here and studied Chinese in school and in after-school programs.

Way's article makes dangerous claims that immersion programs are elitist and will exacerbate middle-class unemployment. A high percentage of Flagship students are the first in their families to attend college. The students in the K-12 Chinese immersion program in Portland come from similarly diverse backgrounds. Many professors who have taught for Flagship are foreign born. For the record, I was born in Canada. This internationalism is true of the entire UO faculty and is a positive indication of our ability to attract talented instructors from all over the world. Will immersion programs displace American teachers? Sadly, Americans are more likely to be monolingual than their peers abroad; it is exactly this deficiency immersion programs seek to redress. But to claim that immersion programs will be forced to hire foreign nationals is to overlook the diversity already in our local communities.

Maram Epstein
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Chinese Flagship at the UO
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WAY WRONG

I question Edwin Way's Viewpoint (6/25) that asserts only upper-class citizens would benefit from a Chinese immersion program.

He erroneously assumes that all students in the UO's Chinese Flagship Program are citizens of China, Taiwan or

Singapore because they are non-Caucasian students with traditional Chinese last names. This is ignorant. Not everyone with the last name of Chen was born in China. All but one Flagship student is a U.S. citizen or permanent resident, and that one is in the process of applying for residency. Sixty percent of the students were born in the U.S. All graduated from U.S. high schools. All met the university's admission requirements.

Way also wrote that the program pays Chinese nationals to teach Mandarin to other Chinese nationals. Yet the program's directors are not Chinese. Perhaps he meant that the language instructors were Chinese citizens. That's not surprising in a job where native or near-native language ability is required to help students achieve high levels of Mandarin proficiency. How else could they help students learn a language if they themselves do not completely know it? And again, how can he be sure that an instructor is not a U.S. citizen simply because her last name is Chen or Mao?

If Way cannot correctly gather the facts of a program he graduated from, I doubt his assertions that immersion education privileges upper-class citizens, causes American teachers to lose their jobs and employs only Chinese citizens as educators.

Mandy Lindgren
Springfield

SUMMER IS LAGER SEASON

I'm constantly reminded that Oregon is "ale country," and there are a lot of great local ales. When summer comes, however, my thirst craves a real, craft-brewed pilsner-style lager. I'm hoping that some of our area hand-crafters are now taking on its more laborious production. At the moment, though, the only Oregon pilsner I know of is a superb one by Jerry Miller's Wild River Brewery in Cave Junction and Grants Pass.

Douglas Leedy
Corvallis



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