

number). They seem obsessed with strange and ineffective privacy concerns at the customer service desk — yet the meter inspector in the field freely gossiped to my barn help about my account! I finally got my question answered when I demanded to speak to a supervisor. Then and only then was customer service willing, hurriedly so, to disclose my actual billing dates. I've dealt with public utilities for the last 40 of my 60 years — IMO, their "customer service" is at best clueless — and abusive at worst. I do plan to file a complaint with the Oregon Public Utility Commission.

Jan B. Baldwin
Coburg

RECKLESS WORDS

A philosopher at the UO has alerted me to the fact that you have falsely reported (Slant, 8/11) that I "posted rumors as facts in this case, mistaking confidentiality for cover-up." This mischaracterizes the post in question, which did not report "rumors as facts" but reported allegations from a graduate student at Oregon, and reported that two faculty members confirmed those allegations. The posts in question are at <http://wkly.ws/13h> and <http://wkly.ws/13i>

I can only assume you got the reckless language from Bonnie Mann, who has used similarly reckless language.

As a lawyer, I choose my words carefully in matters like this. I trust you will print a prompt correction.

Brian Leiter
Professor of Jurisprudence
University of Chicago

EDITOR'S NOTE: Leiter blogged that two faculty members confirmed the allegations of sexual harassment and also confirmed a "member of the faculty urged quiet about this incident," but the UO says the harassment has not been substantiated, and Bonnie Mann says the implied cover-up was nothing more than respecting confidentiality. But there may be more to the story.

NOT ALL MASOCHISTS

The writer ("Intelligent Provocation," 8/4) who suggested that nonviolent protesters should do more to encourage violence against them, made plenty of good

points about the way violence has swayed public opinion — in the past. While you may not see it every day on the news, nonviolent protesters in this country are met with considerable violence on a regular basis, it just doesn't mean the same thing to the general public any longer. The tree-sitters in the in the Elliott State Forest were fully attacked by a piece of heavy machinery, and then had their lives threatened by armed officers who come equipped with Tasers, guns and chemical weapons that they use against people on a regular basis.

I invite the previous writer to consider the difference between a water cannon or baton at ground level, and an untrained hand and knife at 130 feet or higher. The reason this type of activity isn't heavily covered or considered in mainstream media is clear, it just isn't very exciting to people any more, no one is getting blown up, guns aren't used when the media is there, and thankfully, there usually isn't a resulting death.

To this modern society, a lack of these components means a lack of violence, and to them, also a lack of excitement. If people want to see the violence committed against peaceful activists in this country every day, they should contact their favorite media outlets and demand coverage of it, not make the ludicrous suggestion that peaceful activists aren't experiencing enough of it. After all, we are activists, not (all) masochists.

Jason Gonzales
Cascadia Forest Defender
Walton

WHAT ABOUT WINK?

I have just finished reading the Aug. 4 edition. A comparison of the "People for Sale" and the Wink personal ad section in the back of the paper leads me to wonder: Do you do anything to screen the Wink ads before publishing them? Sure looks to me like a great way for trapping unsuspecting innocents by sex traffickers.

Gil Campbell
Eugene

EDITOR'S NOTE: As an alternative newspaper we tend to do minimal censoring of our content, but we never knowingly advertise illegal activities.

Sumpin's Not Right

No time to question spousal duties

Wifey was convalescing from surgery, and I was busy loving, honoring and cherishing her pretty much around the clock. On one of my trips to the kitchen to fetch a fresh ice pack, I noticed an odd quiet from our basement where backlogged laundry had been cheerfully chugging along. This could mean only one thing: Our sump pump wasn't working.

When the system's functioning, the washing machine overflow raises the pump's float which trips a switch that starts the motor that draws the sump water up a drain hose, out the basement window and into the rhododendron bed. Dry basement, happy shrubs

This day, however, silence.

Already on post-op home-care overload, I needed another project like a funeral needs Fred Phelps. Please. As it was, we hadn't opened mail since our five days in the hospital, kitchen compost needed dumping and the answering machine flashed **FULL**, also descriptive of the cats' litter box.

I consulted Wifey, our resident basement butch, who'd have zipped downstairs had she not been lying in bed, leg elevated and under ice.

"Could you please go look?" she slurred through her medicated fog.

How could I deny her? I had to rise — or in this case descend — to the occasion.

The wooden stairs creaked. I ducked the cobwebbed beams, traversed the dingy expanse of concrete and beheld the sump. Dim basement light cast an eerie glow on the stagnant water in the sump, an oval-shaped catchment pit the size of a chamber pot.

The sump pump, a thin pedestal model with a motor on top and water-sucking intake at the bottom, lay tilted against the sump wall, lifeless. This is really Wifey's territory, but no way could she even get down here on that newly replaced knee, let alone squat sumpside. It was up to me.

I mustered my resolve, held my breath and plunged my hands into the murky pool. These are the things one does for a spouse, I thought as I groped around in the thick, tepid water, whether or not they file taxes jointly, enjoy Social Security rights of survivorship or any of legal marriage's myriad other federal benefits.

I fished out the old sump bricks that were supposed to keep the pump upright. They were slimy and coated in black shmutz. Elbow deep now, I wrangled the pump creature from its black lagoon. No matter the thousand-some rights I'm denied because the U.S. still discriminates against couples like us, this was no time to question my responsibility to spouse, home or humble sump pump.

I cleaned that sucker, found the irreparable problem, dashed to the hardware store, assembled the new pump and anchored it in place. With schmutz-blackened hands (nice contrast to my gold wedding band, by the way) I flipped the switch. The fetid water slurped into the hose and out the window to the appreciative rhody.

I scrubbed up and returned to Wifey who lay in a drugged stupor, knee aloft on a pile of pillows. I applied fresh ice, re-wrapped her leg and prepped her next dose of meds. The sump pump whirred softly in the basement.

How is it again that our marriage isn't real?

Award-winning writer Sally Sheklow lives in Eugene where she does what needs to be done.



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