

The Night before Christmas

When stereotypical myths hide the good

'Twas the night before Christmas, and all through the house
Not a creature was stirring, not even my spouse.
Our feet were all snug in their warm woolen socks
While we dreamed about blintzes and bagels and lox.

Yes, Wifey and I are a couple of Jews,
(I hope you're not shocked or appalled at this news)
Because Navidad can be tough on a Jew
I'd like to take time to explain it to you.

The Jewish High Holy Days aren't in December
Which folks who aren't Jewish find hard to remember.
We welcomed the New Year, observed Yom Kippur
Way back in the fall, look it up to be sure.

So Hanukkah's merely a minor occasion
About Jews resisting Hellenic invasion.
It really and truly has nothing to do
With the birthday of, well, I'll just say, *You Know Who*.

While the gentiles are having their holiday fun
Jews tend to lie low and tune out till it's done.
It's not that we're Grinches, it's just not our thing
Those aren't our carols, he wasn't our king.

The TV commercials for products galore
The holiday music inside every store
Can get overwhelming but protest is futile
Like going to Dixie to sing Yankee Doodle.

So we and our friends who are Jewish like us
Simply try to steer clear of the holiday fuss.
Our Jewish traditions are simple and sweet
And often are focused on stuff that we eat.

We sit and reflect upon Hanukkah's theme
Of freedom from tyrants – a well-cherished dream.
Where no one controls what you think or believe
Or who you can love (even Adam and Steve).

And there on the mantel the candles burn bright
In our dear menorah, each Hanukkah night.
Of the eight wondrous days that are usually through
Before 12/25, but this year that's not true.

While Hanukkah's usually over much sooner
As Hebrews mark time by a method that's lunar
The secular calendars most folks are using
Are solar, so that's why it's sometimes confusing.

Now back to the night I was talking about
After all of the Hanukkah candles burned out.
The two of us, out of our clothes and our shoes
Had just snuggled in for a long winter's snooze.

We had climbed into bed in a very good mood
Enhanced by traditional Hanukkah food.
We'd fried up some latkes and drained off the grease
And ate them with gusto, at least nine apiece.

We ate chicken soup, which we served with a ladle
And later we played with a fast-spinning dreidel.
Then after our dinner, how happy we felt
As we peeled the foil wrap off our Hanukkah gelt.

I savored the chocolate and savored the light
And savored the fact this was not the last night.
Tomorrow we'll light our menorah again
And reflect on our ancestors from way back when.

Sometimes being Jewish is like being queer
Especially now at this time of the year.
When something about you is not understood
When stereotypical myths hide the good.

While most of the people who fit in the norm
Might not even notice that we don't conform
And othes object when we don't play along
They resent who we are and make who we are wrong.

But when you're connected with allies and friends
The stereotyping and prejudice ends.
The people who know and respect who you are
Appreciate you and don't think you're bizarre.

That's all the more reason to reach out and say
Not everyone's waiting for Santa today.
Remember that everywhere all the world round
Many more types of people and customs are found.

Diversity strengthens our cultural quilt
That shows being different is just how we're built.
So do what you do with your dear ones nearby
And just be yourself, go ahead, don't be shy.

I thing about that with each candle we light
And stand in the glow of them all burning bright.
Thank goodness for Maccabees who made it through
'Cause that is exactly what I plan to do.

So the night before Christmas I cuddled my wife
Who agreed we are living a wonderful life.
Let me put out the word as we snuggle in tight
Happy Hanukkah friends, and to all a good night.

Sally Sheklow has been a part of the Eugene community since 1972 and is a member of the WYMPROV! comedy troupe. Her column began at EW in 1999.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

The Occupy camp is like no other homeless camp that was briefly allowed in the past. The camp is a community that teaches communication, shared responsibility and nonviolence. It is more than tents and spaces. In any case who with any goodness or faith thinks that homeless people should be denied tents and legal safe places to be. The plan had been to keep the Occupy camp until better services could be developed.

Dumping the homeless back into hiding throughout Eugene is a plague on Eugene. Dumping sheltered homeless people back outside in a hard winter is an act of official terrorism. It seems to me that it is also a hate crime, aimed at people with no money and no options.

*Jerry Smith
Eugene*

A HUMAN RIGHT

What a great cover and Camilla Mortensen's well done story (12/8) on the "Health Care is a Human Right" campaign, which brought out the crowds last Thursday (12/15)! They came all the way from Vermont to visit 11 communities in Oregon.

"Whether or not we save money with a single-payer system, our focus must be on providing health care as a human right." This comment by Mark Roberts summed up Thursday's well attended Health Care for All Oregon gathering at Harris Hall. The guests from the winning campaign in Vermont told us step by step how they did it. The speakers brought their enthusiastic effort to a welcoming crowd who have often experienced the present uncontrollable health care costs.

With 30 cents of every medical dollar going to administration, either at medical offices or insurance company offices, this must change. We were reminded that Medicare administration is less than 3 percent and Veterans Administration approximately 2 percent. We were also reminded that 50 percent of bankruptcies are related to medical expenses.

With all this expense shouldn't we have the best health care? Far from it. We rank 39th for infant mortality, 43rd for female adult mortality, 42nd for male mortality, 36th for life expectancy and 37th for overall health care in the world. Over 50 million are uninsured in America with 72 million having coverage too flimsy to provide protection from major expenses. About 50 percent have health care paid by taxpayers. What are we doing? Our statewide campaign with Jobs with Justice will visit every community in Oregon to educate and become the second state to have health care as a human right.

*Ruth Duemler
Eugene*

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