

eligible. There are literally thousands of Oregon public employees who cannot afford to retire until they are 65, because of extreme health insurance payments.

We all remember fighting to maintain decent health insurance coverage for our families during our days of employment. However, each contract bargaining would bring higher costs, an erosion of benefits and less coverage.

This trend will only continue until we change it. The unnecessary cost for those who can pay it and the unnecessary suffering for those who cannot afford to have health insurance must stop.

It is time for unions to use their organizational skills and abilities to change from a health insurance system to a health care system. It is time for all of us to have direct health care.

Insurance companies do not heal or care for the sick. Health care providers do. We do not need corporations profiting off our illnesses. We need direct care.

We, AFSCME retirees, have taken the first small step to change the system. Please join with us to make health care a human right for all of Oregon. For more information, see <http://wkly.ws/17v> and www.hcao.org

Lou Sinniger

AFSCME Executive Board member

Elmira

JOE'S THEORY

I have a friend, Joe who's into conspiracy theories. I've never been into them myself, I'm from Missouri, the Show Me State, but lately, after watching the

GOP attempt to pick their next leader I began to realize that they never wanted to win the last election.

After the Bush administration dug us a very, very deep pit (two wars) one that would take four to eight years to climb from, the GOP not wanting to deal with the problem they had created, chose the scapegoat. We'll run someone who can't win. Enter John McCain and the clown Sara Palin.

We lose but it buys us time to work on the next election and prevent any legislative programs that would help the present situation. Just say no to everything.

After attempting to prevent the Obama administration from achieving any of their goals, the GOP sees an opening. They know that in two to three more years everything will turn around.

They'll be in power just in time to start another war in Iran or Pakistan, take your pick. We will have full employment in the military and the military-industrial complex we were warned about.

So I guess I've gone over to my friend Joe's conspiracy side and have to agree things aren't always what they seem.

*Philip Dietz
Springfield*

NO LOVE, JUST SEX

You have to hand it to that future bloated corpse and noted autocoprophiliac, Rush Limbaugh — and just in time for International Woman's Day.

Imagine, a guy who never once in his entire life had sex without having to pay for it calling all women who use the pill "sluts."

I know, all you ditto-heads out there are saying "But wait a minute now, he was a married man!" What? Do you think that any of his four wives (three of whom he met in internet "chat rooms") married him for his suave good looks and pleasing personality? And can you even imagine the alimony he is paying? You think that is "free" sex?

And also notice, Rush never uses the word "Love" and sex in the same sentence. In his bitter little world, the idea that mutual attraction and tender feelings could engender an intense and rewarding emotional response that manifests itself physically is an alien concept. Rush has never made love, Rush has just had sex.

And, in case you didn't notice, he also opened up a public door to his private sex life by all but demanding that his (imagined) enemy record a video sex-tape for him (no doubt to hone those fine master debating skills of his). At least we now know where he gets his jollies.

He's like those guys in singles bars who can't even score at closing time, and who say that all the women who rebuff him must perforce be lesbians. Like them, he hates women because women don't like him.

We are left with only two conclusions: either he is, despite his enormous wealth, incredibly repulsive, or he just keeps hitting on lesbians.

*Jamie Selko
Eugene*

SHARING INFORMATION

I strongly feel that members of a community have a responsibility to give back or to contribute to that community in some way. I am writing to try and bring attention to the ways that online social media forums can be used to support causes and/or organizations on a local or even a global level.

I currently have over 1,200 contacts or "friends" on my social networking forum of choice and I actively share community awareness posts and use the application "Causes" in order to raise awareness and sometimes even money for programs and issues that I believe in. However, you do not have to have so many personal contacts in order to have a positive affect or in order to spread awareness.

I am currently a low-income resident of Lane County and I have never donated financial assistance to an organization, but I often donate some of my time and that's all I am asking other online social media sites to do.

It is as easy as taking a minute to add your signature to a petition or even looking for a fundraising event or a clothing drive in your local newspaper and then posting about it online and asking your friends to re-post or "share" the information.

Some online social networking sites have earned themselves a reputation for being used for the sole purposes of meeting the opposite sex or for gossiping. Let's all take a minute to use them as an opportunity to do something a little more positive.

*Gretchen Davis
Eugene*

Living OUT BY SALLY SHEKLOW

Southern Discomfort

Trouble where the sun don't shine

I've been avoiding telling this story. First off, I'm not sure I can even say "butt hole" in print.

With vocabulary options so limited, there's no acceptable way to even mention, as we all learned in grade school astronomy, "Uranus" (even though, and I think I'm safe generalizing here, pretty much all of us have one).

Mine was troubling me something awful, but until I could talk about it I suffered in private. For months I endured sporadic crises in my orifice that dare not speak its name. As you can imagine, this put a serious damper on social interactions which customarily include the dreaded question, *How are you?* Awkward.

I was embarrassed to tell the truth, but I felt hypocritical holding back.

How could I, number one advocate of coming out, remain closeted about anything? Coming out about

sexual orientation and gender identity is our ticket to acceptance in families, workplaces, religion, the media, and the law. Proven fact. In terms of social justice for people who are GLBT or Q, OUT is better than IN.

Unfortunately, inhibition was keeping me from disclosing the saga of my undisclosed location. But those days are, ahem, behind me now. If others can benefit from my experience, then telling will have been worth it, even if it is way TMI.

For those who prefer everyone stay in the closet about everything, stop here.

Stand back. I'm comin' out!

My story started with a stabbing sensation, as if I were having my temperature taken with a bayonet.

What was going on?

As a feminist from the flashlight-mirror-speculum generation, I was confident I could find out. My attempt at self-exam, however, revealed only that my eyesight isn't what it used to be, nor is my spinal flexibility. I had to ask my Domestic Partner to have a look-see. Wifey, never keen on self-exam, is even less keen on examining anyone else. But I was hurting and she's devoted and there you have yet another reason our marriage should be legal. But I digress.



I assumed the position. Wifey shined the flashlight and I awaited her assessment.

"Oh, wow." Aside from that less-than-illuminating commentary, she was speechless.

"Take a picture" I suggested.

She reached for the camera. "Smile." The flash went off.

That photo led to the WebMD's conclusion that I had a malady — one fairly common in women of my age and body type — called *fissure* (no relation to Carrie.)

Like the isolated adolescent first discovering gay community, I felt profound relief. There was a name for it!

Knowing what to call my condition allowed me to talk about it and talking about it helped me discover that I wasn't alone. Some of my best friends had experienced the same thing. Like them, I was eventually cured by a colo-rectal surgeon — something I can now say without blushing. Much.

Those online testimonials from others like me were right. Having what I had is nothing to be ashamed of. There's hope. *It Gets Better.*

Award-winning writer Sally Sheklow has been sharing her pain in EW since 1999.

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