

# History Standing Alongside My Personal Life: Spring Equinox & Health Care Reform



Monday, March 22, 2010

Last night the House passed the 1<sup>st</sup> major health care change in over 50 years. That would be Medicaid<sup>1</sup>. They say going back 100 years. I know starting with FDR.

We're a hellava lot closer to Health Care being a Right, not a Privilege for the privileged few<sup>2</sup>. Health Care - just like Police, Fire, Streets & Sanitation. Hey a-hole Tea-Baggers, if you don't want the government to run stuff, find your own damn place to go to the bathroom and safely dispose of your bodily waste.

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My earliest memory of health insurance / medical costs as an issue goes back to mid-January, 1992. I was driving north on Route 1, just out of Santa Monica<sup>3</sup>. Listening to Public Radio. The Ray-gun – Bush administrations had done nothing to fix health insurance. It was an ugly problem, seeming to me one of those intractable problems with no easy solutions. Like the Middle East. Of course Republicans wouldn't fix it. Like education and the Cold War, they need it to be broken, so they can use it as a club to beat Democrats over the head with it.

Sometime around those days I'd read an awesome article in the Atlantic about Generations. These two authors came up with the idea of 4 generation types in America<sup>4</sup>. It was just one of a string of really good articles in there back then: great thinking that helped me get my arms around the big issues of the day<sup>5</sup>. According to the generation article, the Boomers were of the Idealist generation type. And like past Idealist generations, in the later part of their life they would finally address a long standing problem that they'd been avoiding.

In the last 10 or so, I've figured that health insurance would that issue for us Boomers. As old people, we'd bite the bullet on and make the tough, difficult decisions. Because we have to. There were too many of us.

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It was about midnight when Nancy Pelosi dropped the gavel. “Health Care bill is passed.” She flashed a smile and a brief twinkle in her eyes. As if now, only now, could she allow it. Reminds me of the line from Harry Chapin’s song Taxi, “... a smile seemed to come to her slowly, it was a sad smile just the same.”

It was so nice to watch Obama speak. I still miss Clinton tho. But then again, I haven’t heard Obama speak as much as I did Clinton. Yet. Ed Schultz said he saw Joe Biden getting chocked up. I didn’t notice. But it didn’t surprise me.

I felt subdued, much more subdued than I had on election night 2008. It had been a long road. For once, “Stupid” had not won.

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Yesterday afternoon, before all this, I finished doing stuff that needed to be done. Organizing the clutter of paper into To-Do’s and garbage. Paying bills. Health care bills from my 2 bouts with diverticulitis and colon stuff last October and December. Spent a week in the hospital. I hadn’t looked at the damages yet. Turns out, it didn’t wack me that hard, maybe a grand or so. I’d expected to get hit with more like 10K. Not that it would matter much – I can’t pay it anyway. It would just put me more in debt. Mom used to sing the punch line to a joke “I owe, I owe, it’s off to work I go.” Except that I’ve been out of work for over a year.

I wrote out checks for like 30 dollars to each of them, because paying even just a little is better for your credit report

The best news I got last week was getting a credit card that gave me 9K. “How much interest?” a friend asked. “I didn’t check,” I told him, “It doesn’t matter anyway. It’s better than liquidating more of my 401K.”

I’m in the final cut for perhaps the best job ever. They finished interviewing a week ago, and no word yet. In expectation of landing it, I went against being Smart and took the week off from job searching. Went back to the grind last weekend.

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The Spirits gave me My Song last week<sup>6</sup>. It came to me in a dream. It was very cool. I was in a Ceremony, for me. Native American, which is the spiritual path I walk. We were singing a song. I was leading it. I didn’t know the words. Everything moved slowly, with incredible Clarity. Each word came to me. Like follow the bouncing ball, with Mitch Miller. I could see each word in space above me<sup>7</sup>.

Even while in the dream, I knew it was important. I know Songs are Given to people in various ways. But it took my friend Joseph to really put the exclamation point

on it the next day: “Songs are Medicine<sup>8</sup>. The Spirits give you a song for a reason. It is something you can use whenever you need to. Like when you need Your Power.”  
“You really think so?” I asked.  
“I know so.”

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So yesterday, as the sun was setting, I smoked my Pipe<sup>9</sup>. I thanked the Spirits for giving me My Song. Interestingly enough, I could not recall part of The Thank You Song, which I’ve sung for years. I prayed for Joseph and his partner Danielle. They too are fighting Power struggles with people who are acting like self centered adolescents. Like Health Care, if they loose this struggle, then it will be The People that get hurt.

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I’ve talked with many friends over the years about health care. We all know if it doesn’t get fixed, we are totally screwed as we get older.

I’m anxious about a lot of stuff, but I’ve always trusted the prediction suggested by the Generations book. It’ll get fixed before I get too old. Well, this *is at least one good thing* about being at the tail end of the Boomers.

Through out this entire ordeal of this Health Care Reform this year, I have consciously not paid attention to the details. Nope, didn’t have the energy for it. Sometimes I just gotta take a break from being an Activist.

I knew whatever came out would be better than what we have, and it will get improved upon in the future.

As you can see from my other writings this past year, I’ve come to trust that Obama knows what he’s doing. “Laws and sausage,” as the old adage goes, “are the 2 things the public should not see being made.” Too many Progressives are clueless about political Strategy. Obama can’t use his Power openly. And he has to keep trying to be bring in the Righties, even tho he knows it’s futile. And you keep your powder dry until the crucial time.

As a half-black, half-white guy, he wouldn’t have gotten where he is if he didn’t know how to fight. And Fight Effectively. Fight against the nigger-hating SOB’s. Fight against the Power Mongers behind the Righties and Tea-baggers - the few guys who are committed to one thing, and one thing only: get Power so they can get more Money<sup>10</sup>.

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I'm doing things differently than last Spring. The hell with a nice Native Prairie garden out in front. I planted my garden inside. Using the kitty plastic buckets I built last summer as planters. Instead of making stuff nice for others to share, I'll keep most of 'em right where they are – in my beautiful sunroom facing West. I like living on the 3<sup>rd</sup> floor. Nobody above me, no building blocking my view.

A week ago I celebrated my 2<sup>nd</sup> anniversary totally vice free. Treated myself to dinner at Chief O'Neil's Pub. Live Irish music. And some of my Ireland photos on near permanent display.

Just yesterday I realized I can practice climbing moves on bricks out in front. It's been a long time since I've climbed much. Devils Lake, I'm looking forward to spending many weekends with you.

And who knows, maybe my boxing challenge to Righties will get some traction. After all, everybody knows bullies need to be stood up to.

With this huge wing over these adolescent, bully Tea-baggers and Righties, we can now focus on jobs.

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More and more and more I'm appreciating History.

45 years ago today Martin Luther King Jr. gave his famous speech, "...the arch of the universe bends towards justice. But it bends very slowly."

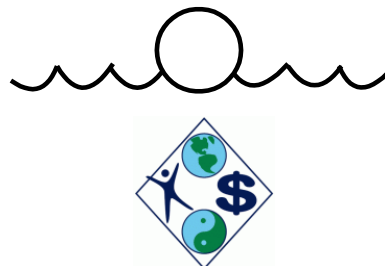
History that is Being Made Every Day, as the History Channel tagline goes.

History Standing Alongside One's Personal Life. It's a funny place for it to hang out. But when you think about it, it doesn't have anyplace else to go.

Think I'll take today off day off from job searching. Savor the victory over Stupid. Enjoy this fine sunny, cool Chicago day.

Aho!<sup>11</sup>

- Bob Oehmen,                      Monday, March 22, 2010



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<sup>1</sup> I still sometimes am uncertain about which is what – Medicare, Medicaid. Ah, as I type, it comes to me, but it’s not important here.

<sup>2</sup> I stole that line from last night.

<sup>3</sup> I was visiting my Aunt Rita. Dad died in 1981. I never was at a place to ask him, as an adult, how life was for him and Aunt Rita, growing up in vaudeville. I wanted to listen to her stories.

<sup>4</sup> Just since the Europeans got here

<sup>5</sup> Like Robert Reich’s article on the economy. And another one on Democrats as the Mommy Party and Republicans as the Daddy Party

<sup>6</sup> In the Native American tradition, songs are Sacred. They are Prayers. Used in a variety of ways in one’s life.

<sup>7</sup> The guys around assured me I would know.

<sup>8</sup> The term Medicine has a different meaning. It’s not something you use just when you are sick.

<sup>9</sup> The Pipe Ceremony. I am not a Piper Carrier. I was not gifted my Pipe, I bought it. So I can only use to pray with by myself.

<sup>10</sup> reminds me of the line from City Slickers with Billy Crystal, City Slickers - the 3 city slickers on the dude ranch. Jack Palance: “...you’ve got to find the One Thing”

<sup>11</sup> Aho! Is kinda like Amen in Christianity. In addition to “I agree,” it’s also used to identify that you’re done saying what you have to say. So that the next person knows it’s ok for them to speak. Like in a Sweat Lodge or Talking Circle.