

I Know What You Want

At the risk of sounding like a phone sex line... I know what you want. You're hungry for it. You're hot for it. You've gotten tantalizing glimpses of what you lust for, but it's been frustratingly out of reach.

What I'm talking about is a stranger Salem. Meaning, a city with sights, sounds, people, places, and other delights that make us go *ooh, ah, and give me more* rather than *ho-hum, so lame*.

Through this Salem Weekly column and other ways, I'm out to Strange Up Salem. In the very best sense of "strange." Our city can be out of the ordinary -- creative, passionate, energetic, artistic, forward looking, individualistic, vibrant, soul-satisfying.

We no longer need to accept Salem being the blandburger stuck between the spicy buns of Portland and Eugene. This town can be excitingly meaty (or tofu'y; I'm a vegetarian) in its own sensuously special ways.

How will this happen? What will speed up the evolution of Salem into the place we long for it to be?

Us. You and me. Everybody.

If our marvelously unique President were to offer his advice, I imagine him saying, "You are the strange that you've been waiting for." We are the people who are going to Strange Up Salem.

Not outside businesses, developers, politicians, artists, or creative class immigrants. *Us*. To adapt another well-known self-improvement phrase, we need a city-wide mantra: "Every day, in every way, I'm getting stranger and stranger."

At one point in my life I worried about being considered strange. Now, I consider it a compliment. The most interesting people I've known, the most fascinating places I've been to, the most unforgettable experiences I've had -- they've all been compellingly *strange*.

So I've got a single qualification for writing this column: I'm strange, and I adore strange. I already feel at home in these pages because Salem Weekly also

is strange. With the support of our city's alternative publication, I'm looking forward to exploring the twists and turns, boundaries, and qualities of strangeness.

Along with you.

Strange Up Salem has to be a communal happening, a venture into uncharted territory where we all stand on the border between who each of us is now, and what our city is now, and say *Onward, into strangeness*, as we boldly take creative steps into the unknown.

Which is another way of saying, I have no idea. Of exactly where this column is going. Of precisely how Salem should change for it to be the city we long for. Of what I'm going to write after I type these words.

And that's a good thing. Strangeness blossoms in the fertile soil of openness. When we're absolutely certain, the strangling Boring Weed doesn't allow *ooh* and *ah* fruit to ripen.

Help fertilize Strange Up Salem. Head to www.strangeupsalem.com. Click on the Facebook Like icon. Follow the Twitter feed. And pick up a copy of Salem Weekly whenever a new issue hits the streets.

Most importantly: be strange.

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