

## These labors of love

*There was a time when I believed that politics and art should not be mixed.*

BY MICHAEL S. REED

**D**ear Christopher:  
Hoping all is well with you in Tokyo; I must admit that paramount in my mind right now is the fact that as of this date, it has been fourteen days and three hours since I last smoked a cigarette.



Needless to say, I am a bit twitchy.

I have never tried to write without smoking cigarettes. A lot of cigarettes. Ashtrays and ashtrays full. Usually, one hanging from my lip as I hammer at the typewriter, these labors of love.

News: *Seven Sundays* is raking in awards down in Los Angeles as a result of the production last year. Everyone seems to be a twitter about it. Movie producers are asking to see the script, actors are carrying the script to their

friends in New York in hopes of inspiring a production there. All this in spite of my general apathy about the whole thing. You see, I really had no idea when I wrote this play that it would entail such a long term involvement. If only my personal relationships had such duration and tenacity.

By the way, thanks for the suggestion of a huge white Packard limousine for my opening. I will be sure to ask.

As for your questions about my return to Vaseline Flats, there is little I can say except that I am a creature of habit. The Northwest section of Portland affords easy access to the rest of the city — as well as the ability to live without a car. Plus, I like running into friends when I go shopping. The neighborhood also appeals to my aesthetics. From my window I can see Temple Beth Israel and an expanse of grey and cloudy sky. It rained this morning and little beads of water bejewel the bare limbs of the tree outside my window.

More and more I'm introduced to people I've never met who know me, either through "The Tribal Drum" or my plays. At times, I hear things from people about my work that give me pause.

Sandra, a friend and fellow writer, wishes in her most recent letter to me, that there were "no AIDS, no abuse of human rights" for which to put my words in service. Sometimes I hear from acquaintances that my thoughts are too negative, too gloomy.

There was a time when I believed that politics and art should not be mixed. That was before some of the distinct outlines of my ideals were



blurred by this daily opera we live. I have chosen a vocation of opening up my heart and mind to any number of strangers; committing my thoughts and opinions to the written, published word. Some days I just feel bad for the world. To deny that dissatisfaction, to gloss over the problems would be a disservice to this community. After all, I am not Neil Simon.

But today, I like my job as a legal assistant. My career as a playwright seems to be humming along. I feel healthier now that I have stopped smoking. I'm working out, drinking less, and have become one of those wholesome types by whom I'd always been threatened before.

I have also discovered that even when one romance fades or crumbles there are at least 150 more just itching to bloom. All it takes is some flirtation, an interest in other people, and properly timed gestures of affection.

I have noticed, however, that one of the prob-

lems with modern gay romance is the veritable plethora of ex-husbands.

As for the necessity of style, you are correct that I should do something special if I am to be (as you so generously stated) the "gay literary hope of the future." My next question is how should a literary hope dress? How about military clothes, spiked black leather belts, army boots, and a tiara? Could be splashy. Or should I go tastefully exotic in an outfit done entirely of silk?

On and on. I recently received a letter responding to last month's column from someone who proposed starting a course for self-defense against gay-bashing. The course would be designed to address situations involving multiple attackers and weapons, along with other basic self-defense techniques. That someone cares enough about what I've written to respond is always a pleasure. The next step is to let people know that we're trying to get this course together and to contact me through *Just Out* if they are interested in participating.

You remember my friends, Holly and Patty? Well, they're going to do a handfasting ceremony in May. They've asked me to be king of their Fairy Court. I was touched. We had quite the giggle over my bawdy suggestions for the sceptres. Of course. I've already started wondering what to wear. Life truly is little more than a costume parade.

It was suggested to me that I do a column on the more positive aspects of gay living. Perhaps you could offer some suggestions as to happy exploits of the lavender elite.

Well, I must go now. I am pleased that Japan seems to agree with you, although the discos and the rainforest are dimmer without your presence. Write soon. Your letters are always a delight to receive.

Happy Valentine's Day.

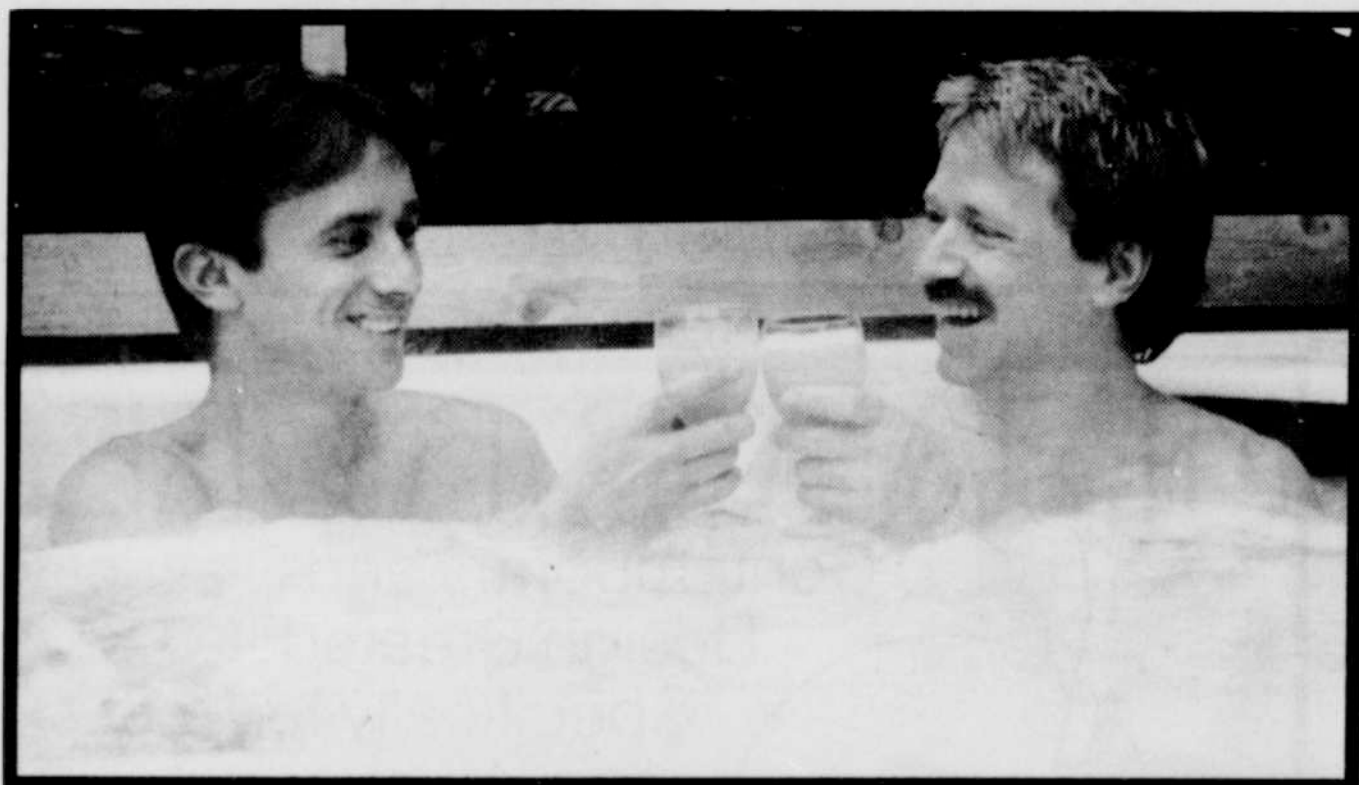
Love,  
Michael

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