

As the old buttons used to proclaim in the heady first days of gay liberation, "We are everywhere." And do everything. Gay men and lesbians write plays, train PALs, pass legislation, conduct choirs. We own shops and raise children. We dance and advocate, preach and practice, paint and counsel and lobby. That's always been true. The difference, in the last 20 years, is that more of us are willing to say so.

In the past year, 11 Portland gay men and lesbians have talked about their work and their lives in the pages of *Just Out*. In doing so, they challenge our stereotypes and express the diversity of this community.

In the march toward equality, each step is a celebration. Each voice counts. When a lesbian tells the truth about her life, or a gay man says what is really on his mind, they stretch the limits of what is possible. If silence equals death, then the words of lesbians and gay men do nothing less than affirm all of our lives.

Profile

R E V I E W

BY ANDEE HOCHMAN



PHOTO BY LINDA KLEWER

Larry Whitson, training people to support people with AIDS since 1985. "Even though I don't necessarily see AIDS as a gay disease, gay people responded to it first. While we as a community have been held at bay and discriminated against, we have managed to hold ourselves open to people who are different from us. And I think we should pat ourselves on the back for that."

"[Being a good PAL] takes an ability to face the world in a real vulnerable way. It takes a willingness to go into a situation that might be really fearful and scary and not be stopped by that. It takes people who really use their hearts a lot, and their minds, to look at someone else and try to understand how the world must be from his or her point of view. It takes that sort of empathy."

"... My life has been incredibly enriched by this work — by the PAL Program — and I have received a lot of love and done a lot of growing and had some peak experiences. And I think that's wonderful. And I would really willingly give all that up if AIDS never happened. It's important, I think, to carry that attitude: that we can grow with this, but we're not in it to do that. I mean, we're in it because some really terrible things are happening."

Robin Lane, choreographer and founder of Do Jump Movement Theater, blending dance and theater and mime, breaking the rules and loving it.

"In the early '70s, people that were doing dance, and saying they were dancers, were doing modern dance. And then there were people who were sort of out on the edge, people who were doing weird stuff. There were a lot of purist camps. In the beginning, some people consistently said it wasn't cool to put gymnastics with dance. Now, everyone is doing it."

"It's funny, because I feel like the cutting edge a lot. And my work is accessible. I mean, I feel pretty philosophic and poetic, but I really am interested in communicating. I feel like it's something I want to say to the world, but ... kids can get it. Old people can get it. A lot of it is about basic stuff of human nature, or just a feeling, like a piece about being really ... on fire! That makes it accessible. So some people who are looking for art are uncomfortable with it."

"It's hard to imagine not [continuing this work] and it's hard to imagine living on this



PHOTO BY ANDEE HOCHMAN

kind of emotional and financial edge. You know, I don't really feel part of a community, except for my own community. I feel part of a community of people that I work with and of people that support us. And it's really wonderful and big. But I feel like a little bit of an outlaw on about 50 fronts."



PHOTO BY LINDA KLEWER

Howie Baggadonutz, wearing the invented name and the hats of producer media organizer, Echo Theatre manager, post-card artist, stand-up split-second comedian.

"I don't feel unfocused because all the things I do are creative. The Echo job is paying bills, a little more management oriented, drier. There's also some creative aspects to it. So when I do the other things, it's all creative, whether it's making earrings or designing stuff or producing — which is more dry, too, a more

dollars-and-cents thing. But the end result is all creative. So my focus — if I had to focus — is to put stuff out there that wouldn't normally be out there if I didn't do it."

"Everything I try to do, I hope has some effect. But theater is seen once, and then it's a forgotten image. So print and radio are probably the most effective ways to communicate. Especially radio. What I liked about Queersville was that it went 50 miles. It went all over the place. It went to the coast; it was on cable TV on the channels that weren't broadcasting. So some closeted guy or girl — um, some closeted man or woman — who couldn't feel comfortable picking up a *Just Out* could go home, go in the bedroom, close the door, put on a headset and listen to Queersville. That was a really good thing to know."

"I don't know what compels me. Except that I always fear there won't be enough people helping out. I guess the sense that gay people have been shafted so much, that often when there's an opportunity to make a name for ourselves, like the Names Project, I don't want to let it slip by ... I don't want to let Portland miss it. I have a real sense of community, for better or for worse."

Jaime Schelz, owner of Healing Crystals in Sellwood, selling tourmalines and moonstones, rattles and drums, leading workshops, healing with a different perspective.

"I always tell people that trying to be a nurse was my way of trying to 'go straight' with healing, because I've had, all my life, a strong focus on healing and consciousness, and a lot of extraordinary experiences with healing and awareness. It wasn't until I was completely out of school and classes that I realized that Western medicine, to me, has very little to do with healing at all. It has a strong focus on disease and illness and death ... power, control over others' bodies and minds. And I thought, 'Well, this isn't it.'"

"Really, working in a healing way with people is a way of mutual empowerment — acknowledging the power in both of us. The patriarchal model of power [says] that power's somewhere else, anywhere else but in you ... But I've really found that, as much as people actively say it's true, deep inside people desperately hope it's not. It's what we all strive for — that just maybe there's power within me, and someday I might be able to experience it."

"I don't feel anymore that I have to dismantle Western medicine in order to validate for myself what I'm doing. I think that Western medicine is in great service to a large number of people. And I don't feel people should renounce practices of healthcare that are working for them. I believe we can work together. A lot of the kind of healing work that people like me are doing is educating people about our relationships to ourselves, to our bodies, to each other and the world."



PHOTO BY ANDEE HOCHMAN

Tom Norton, volunteering full-time where others dabble, living each second as if it matters.

"Back in 1977, I was a helicopter pilot, and I had an accident up in Alaska. I had a stroke as a result of the accident, and it paralyzed my left side, so I'm not able to fly anymore."

"So there I was, with a lot of free time on my hands. I was receiving workers' compensation. That left me a lot of time for volunteerism, which I was prone to do anyway. That was sort of back in the heyday of gay politics, the Anita Bryant days. ... There was a lot happening locally. Neil Goldschmidt was the mayor. It was the stage when Portland was just really coming alive — it was the birth of sexual freedom and gay freedom in Portland because it was a safe way to live and a fun place to live. It was also the birth of an active and open lesbian community here."

"It's my feeling that there are actually more lesbians in Portland than there are gay men. You just don't see them as much, they tend to be more underground than the gay men. Unfortunately, it's still a male-dominated society. It's a sad fact of life that will have to change over time. Social change comes ever so slow. It takes generations, I think."

"As I've grown older and become more settled, more established, however you say it, I'm more aware of a real silent underground, a

large group of gay men and lesbians who don't seem to be active, who just sort of take life as it is and don't really care much about social change. They're afraid to rock the boat. It would be very easy for me to fall into that category, too. I have a nice home, a nice income. So there's no call for me to be active and do what I do. I just do it because I have a real strong sense that I don't want young people to grow up with the same kind of fears that I had. And I guess the way to do that is to work toward social change."



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