

# just out

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**Deadline for submissions is the 15th of the month preceding publication.**

**Out About Town** is compiled as a courtesy to our readers. Performers, clubs, individuals or groups wishing to list events in the calendar should mail notices to *Just Out* by the 15th of the month preceding publication. **Listings will not be taken over the telephone.**

**Display Advertising** will be accepted up to the 17th of each month.

**Classified ads** must be received at the office of *Just Out* by the 17th of each month, along with payment. **Ads will not be taken over the telephone.**

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## Steppin' Out

PHOTO BY JAY BROWN



# P A G E T W O

## Lessons from Selma, Alabama

*A loud voice inside my head kept screaming, "Remember Rosa Parks. Do not ride in the back of the bus anymore."*

BY SETH SATURN

I stood at the membership counter of the Portland Costco store, shaking with both rage and fear. On two previous occasions, I had tried to get a spouse card for my lover. Spouse cards are advertised as one of the benefits of the premium membership I annually pay for at this popular warehouse-style store. Each time I had been denied, because we do not have a marriage license. On those occasions, I was sent away with the explanation that heterosexual, unmarried members are not permitted spouse cards either. This time, I was ready to fight.

My lover, Chip, and I have been involved in a process of formalizing our connections with each other. We have plotted out a series of legal, administrative, and personal steps to move our relationship closer to one appearing outwardly like marriage, and bringing with it as many benefits of the married as we could extract from groups offering such privileges.

We recently had our names changed, to share a common last name. Thus, I appeared in Costco to get my membership card updated to my new name. Having no trouble getting spouse benefits at Portland State, at the credit union, or with any vendor I can think of, I was ready to battle the membership services at Costco.

Once again I was refused a spouse card because I could not produce a marriage certificate.

"I would like to see your policy about marriage certificates being required for spouse cards, please," I said to the clerk. She referred me to the more experienced clerk. This person repeated the policy and offered to write it down on a piece of paper if I would like.

"I would like to see in writing, on any materials which you distribute to applicants, a



rule that requires presentation of a marriage certificate." I stood firm and watched the clerk twitch. He hemmed and hawed, and finally suggested in a resentful tone that we call the store manager.

The manager appeared fairly quickly and once again I explained my goal of obtaining a card for my spouse and demanded to see their policy in writing if I were to be refused a benefit for which I'd paid. The manager read over the membership application and all the signs posted in the membership area. Then he disappeared into the bowels of the store offices.

When he reappeared, he looked me in the eye and asked if Chip was my spouse. "Certainly, to me he is," I replied, uncertain of where this was leading. With that, he turned to the membership clerks and told them to

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issue me a spouse card for Chip, and to be aware of a new policy of issuing cards to persons identified as spouses without requiring legal documentation.

Out. I had just come out. For the umpteenth thousandth time, I had come out. This process just never seems to end. Each time I do something like this, I question, "Aren't I just a little old to be doing this kind of thing?" Perhaps I expect additional years' experience to wear away the sense of injustice I feel when someone denies me equal treatment. The many little coming out moments with family and others in controlled situations did little to prepare me for this public encounter. All over again, I knew the trembling of jellied knees, the breathlessness that comes from fear.

So, why go through these exercises; what possible gain motivates me through such visceral traumas? Certainly, in this case, it is more than the mere convenience that Chip will be able to shop at Costco without my presence. I think, oddly, it is an act of patriotism. I do believe in the ideals upon which the laws of our nation are built, starting with the right to pursuit of happiness.

Wherever the law allows me protection, I demand the right to live my life my way. While gay people do not yet have protected class status, we can sometimes take advantage of other protections (such as the illegality of discrimination on the basis of marital status) in our quest for fuller inclusion.

Rosa Parks. A black, southern woman known for her bravery in 1956, seemingly so different from me. Rosa, I draw courage and inspiration from your action. I often remind myself that we cannot foretell the wider significance of our every action. Rosa's refusal to give up her seat on the bus led to the birth of the black civil rights push. Who knows which one of our small acts of bravery will give birth to something bigger?