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**FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 16TH**

**8:30 pm - 1:00 am**

**MILLER HALL at the  
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ALL AGES WELCOME!**

BLACK TIE NOT REQUIRED

TICKETS \$25 EACH IN ADVANCE, \$27 AT DOOR

Available at CAP, Ticketmaster, A Woman's Place Bookstore and  
the Phoenix Rising Office. Also, there are sliding scale tickets  
available.

All Proceeds to Benefit Phoenix Rising Programs

## just news

### Sex and violence: bashings at Laurelhurst Park

*Love in the shadows. Brick restroom set amidst the  
rhododendron bushes and trees melted into amorphous shapes  
in the darkness. Sex-hungry eyes blind to danger shot through  
with pain as crack of skull against porcelain and concrete  
sounds in the empty night. Footsteps muted in the darkness.  
Another bashing.*

BY ALAN SCALLY

Assaults against gay men cruising  
Laurelhurst Park and Lents Park repre-  
sent an ongoing problem, and an overworked  
police department does not have the resources  
to serve and protect everybody. The advice  
from the police for gay men is, simply,  
discretion.

For calendar year 1989 there were 31  
incidents of assault or robbery in Laurelhurst  
Park. The Portland Police Bureau regards  
nine of those incidents as probably gay-  
bashing incidents. So, over one-third of the  
reported crimes of violence against persons  
represent violence specifically directed at gay  
men.

There was a problem in previous years at  
Lents Park with such assaults, but a sort of  
neighborhood watch involvement by citizens  
in the area has kept violence out of the park's  
men's room, which was the source of the  
problem.

"If we could advise potential victims that  
there is a problem," said Captain Wayne  
Inman of East Precinct. "These assaults are  
occurring; the intelligent thing to do would be  
to avoid these parks, especially after dark."

"We rarely have assaults on two people,"  
Inman said. "We would encourage people to  
go with someone. Two people are much more  
difficult to assault than one. If one observes  
unusual or suspicious activity, then one  
should leave the area and go to a well-lit area  
or to where people are present."

The lack of personnel hampers the ability  
of the police department to focus on assaults  
based on sexual orientation. The trial  
surveillance of the men's room at Laurelhurst  
Park last year that ran for a week prevented  
assaults for that week.

One can only conjecture on the editorial  
outrage and citizen comments that would  
accompany the announcement that police  
officers were being stationed in public  
restrooms to protect gay men cruising for  
sexual partners.

It's difficult to determine what, if any,  
impact additional officers would have on the  
police force's protection of gay men in  
Laurelhurst Park. The striking aspect of the  
interview with Inman was his assumption that  
assault was almost always associated with  
sexual solicitation. That may be the case, but  
the problem of gay men or men perceived to  
be gay being assaulted while engaged in  
activity was left unaddressed.

Also unanswered was the question of  
whether or not assaults in the men's room  
occurred because of solicitation for sex by the  
victim in that location, or because the victim  
had to use the facilities and was followed by  
or came upon the assailant.

The issue of a lack of officers meant a  
cancellation of sensitivity training for police  
officers in dealing with gay people. The

police claim to have addressed the area of  
sensitivity, especially in the area of cultural  
sensitivity which the Portland Police Bureau  
feels covers all minorities.

"When you're having difficulties in  
responding to emergency calls," Inman said,  
"your training time is reduced to a bare  
minimum. We first have to train for skills that  
ensure our officers' survival."

Inman said that there is no difference in  
response time or procedure when an officer  
answers a gay bashing call. The incident is  
treated as an assault. He stated that officers  
are sensitive to the gay issues involved, and  
that he has received no complaints about  
police-gay interactions.

The passage of the hate-crimes bill last  
year has caused some changes in the way  
police report gay-bashing assaults.

"We're sensitive to state reporting  
requirements," Inman said, "gay bashing  
requires a different reporting mechanism.  
We're sensitive that the cases don't go  
unreported."

Captain Inman is a real likeable guy,  
sandy-haired and open-faced, but for a cop he  
uses the word "sensitive" to a de-sensitizing  
level of numbness.

The hate crimes bill, then, changes police  
relations to the gay community only in the  
reporting process. A guy assaulting you  
doesn't give a damn what statute he's  
violating or that your civil rights are being  
violated.

Inman commented on the defense used by  
people using violence against gay men  
soliciting for sex, that they were afraid of  
contracting AIDS.

"Can an offended person respond with  
physical force based on a comment or  
solicitation, the answer is no," Inman said.  
"One can respond with physical force to  
protect or defend. Violence directed at a  
solicitation might be a mitigating  
circumstance in court, but it does not justify  
the assault."

Inman was the Portland Police Bureau's  
liaison to the gay community when he was  
commander at Central Precinct, and thus  
probably has more awareness of gay issues  
than the average cop on the beat.

So what does it all mean? If you want to  
cruise Laurelhurst after dark, use the buddy  
system. If you're simply walking or using the  
park, be wary. Don't expect the response time  
to vary because it's a gay bashing. It's easy to  
confuse professional detachment and  
callousness on the part of the police officer  
responding to such a call.

"The officers see so much of this type of  
human behavior," Inman said.

It's easy to be very emotionally upset  
when you're a victim, but you can add to your  
own trauma by having false expectations of  
what the police can and cannot do.

**just out**

Oregon's complete lesbian and gay connection.