

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.

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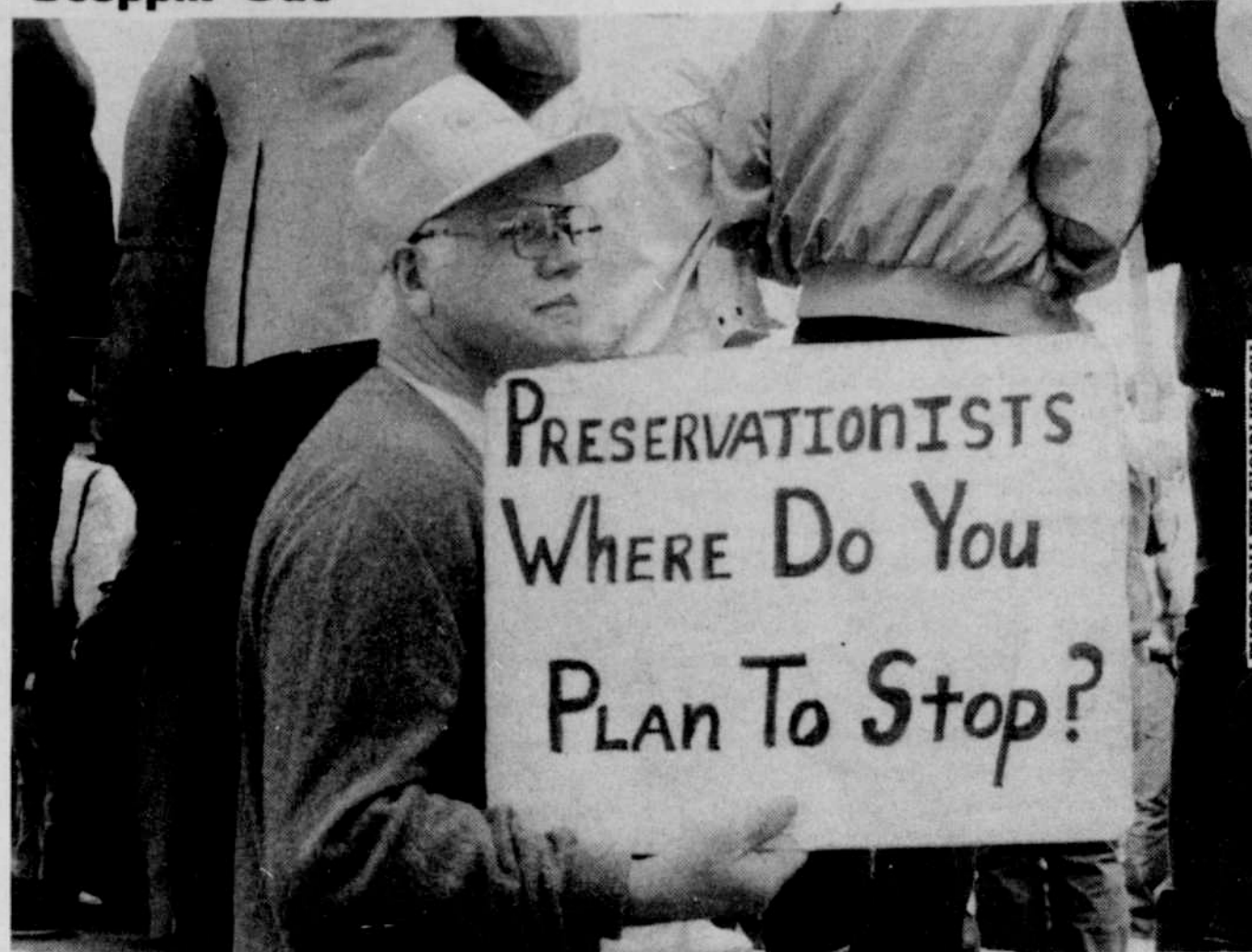
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Steppin' Out



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C O M M E N T A R Y

What qualities make a good role model?

*Bob Padecky responds to born-again
Christian, former tennis pro*

B Y B O B P A D E C K Y
New York Times News Service

Margaret Court Smith
3213 Prehistoric Lane Perth
Australia

Dear Mrs. Court:
It was with great interest this week that I read your social commentary on Martina Navratilova.

You caused quite a stir when you said Martina is a poor role model for children aspiring to play tennis because she is a homosexual. I was immediately intrigued with that opinion because I have a 4-year-old daughter, Allison. Soon we'll be searching for role models. I have high hopes for Allison as a professional athlete, although at this stage I am a little discouraged because she is still learning how to work the pedals on her tricycle. But a role model is a role model, no matter what walk of life. There are so precious few of them that if someone can help me in my search, all the better. And because I take your comments to mean that Martina would be acceptable if she wasn't a homosexual, I began to look at heterosexuals for the proper inspiration.

As a sportswriter, it has been my good fortune to have met many of them. Pete Rose, Brian Bosworth, Denny McLain, George Steinbrenner, Steve Howe, Illis Nastase, Ben Johnson, The University of Oklahoma football team. I'm not sure whether these were the role models you had in mind.

In fact, one avowed heterosexual particularly stood out. You may have heard of him. He played your sport—John McEnroe. Yes, that flaming heterosexual. The one that wasn't housebroken. That one.

Naturally, this confused me. It didn't appear that sexual preference had anything to do with decency. I tried to think of it another way.

I wracked my brain thinking if there were ever a sentence of a Super Bowl story that read, "Joe Montana, who has a love of women, routed the Broncos this Sunday afternoon." I couldn't recall one reference in any sports story about who is kissing whom, unless, of course, we're talking about Joe Namath. Naturally, this confused me more. No one seemed to care who Montana hugged. I wonder why it would be any different with Martina? So I tried to think of it still another way.

Maybe Martina threw rackets and tantrums and a right cross at a linesman. Maybe Martina went into detox or gambled her life away or cried like a baby if she lost or dealt enough drugs to float Columbia. Maybe Martina wasn't well-liked by her peers and didn't contribute to charities and was a general pain-in-the-butt to all who met her.

Certainly, all these behaviors would qualify Martina as a poor role model. But you know, once again, try as I may, I couldn't find one newspaper story that mentions any such actions. In fact, I found the contrary. This is what really puzzled me. I'm sure it will puzzle you, too. As you know, tennis fans turned to women's tennis in the '80s as a welcome relief

from the men's tour. While Jimmy Connors and Nasty and McBrat and countless other men of similar whine polluted the air with their mouths, the women were welcome relief. They were dignified and classy and at their worst, they looked sad, not petty.

And you may remember, Maggie, how all eyes were riveted on Martina. She was No. 1 in the world, but she had to win people over. It wasn't easy for her, if you remember. Oh, the fight she waged, the fight against stereotype. She looked like a man, so she would act like a man. Juvenile and boorish. Just like the men.

But Martina wasn't like that, was she, Maggie? She poked fun at herself. She didn't pout at a bad call. Once tennis crowds began to trust her personality, to scratch past her surface, they played with her as much as she played with them. They traded quips with each other, each reminding the other this was still a game and not a threat to world peace. In fact, to many tennis fans, Martina was the first athlete they had watched who they knew was a homosexual. Martina made a lot of people relax their fears, if not discard them altogether.

Lordy, the pressure she was under. She didn't buckle, did she, Maggie? She became the best female player ever under the most trying of circumstances. Leaving her homeland. Living in a foreign country with no friends. Deposing America's Sweetheart, Chris Evert. And not once, through any of this, did she disgrace herself.

So I can't help but come to a fairly obvious conclusion. If one day Allison asks me whom I admire in women's tennis, Marina Navratilova is my champion, and you Margaret Court Smith, certainly are not.

Sincerely,
Bob



Renee Augrain, M.ed., N.C.C.

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