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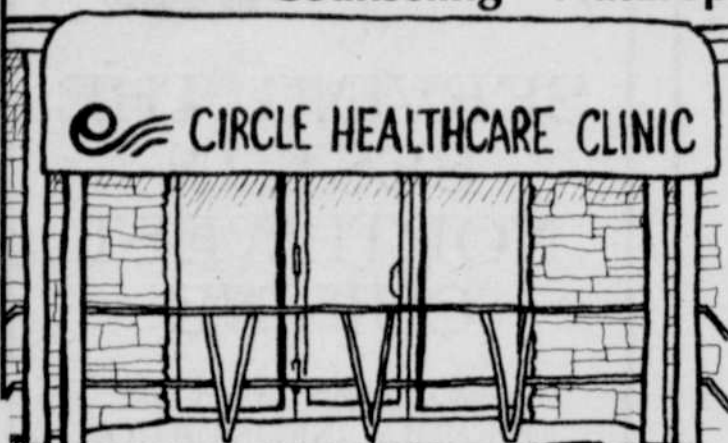


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ARIES

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The Adventure Group

*Seeking adventure, fresh air or other like-minded people?
Look no further.*



by Howard N. Dana

If hiking in pristine wilderness, fording creeks or cross-country skiing through remote hills and valleys is what you like, the Adventure Group of Portland is where you will find it. The Adventure Group, which bills itself as a social group for nature enthusiasts, was founded in 1986 by a group of gay men who shared an interest in cross-country skiing. Since then the group has evolved into a year-round enterprise for outdoor enjoyment.

The six men who originally formed the group with their shared interest in hiking and skiing did not envision that six years later the group would be 50 people strong. From 15 to 20 people turn out each week for a nature trip. The group itself is very informal. There is no membership into the group nor any fees or dues to pay. Expenses are kept minimal by carpooling to the trailhead with everyone chipping in \$1 to \$3 for gas, depending upon the distance traveled. Each person is responsible for his or her own lunch and water. Simply "showing up" is a hallmark of the Adventure Group.

"The Adventure Group is a great social outlet for people," regular hiker Bob Vinatieri says. The hikes offer an alternative type of recreation and socialization. Group member Erin Morgan believes people feel freer to talk when they are surrounded by nature. "There is constant conversation. People talk about politics, relationships and lots of other things," Morgan says. He is also confident that gay and lesbian people feel much freer about sharing their thoughts and feelings with other gay and lesbian hikers.

This unique outdoors group attracts a wide range of people, from professionals to students and everything in between. Members say there is a real sense of camaraderie among the hikers. Many of the group's members know different things pertaining to the hike. People who are knowledgeable about botany, geology, ornithology or zoology share this knowledge with others on the hike. Each outing is an opportunity to learn more about nature.

The Adventure Group is predominantly male. The Forest Group, a similar nature group whose membership is exclusively women, may be drawing lesbians and bisexual women away, but they

are always welcome on Adventure Group hikes. While the hikes themselves are usually quite strenuous, accommodations are made for new or less-seasoned hikers. An experienced hiker always takes up the rear of the group so that no one is left behind. A number of the group's members use the hikes as therapy. The group includes people living with HIV and has been a great help to them. The hikes are a source of enjoyment and inspiration. They are an opportunity to get out of the city and away from the stresses of everyday life. People experience scenic beauty, fresh air, (and rain), as well as getting some good exercise.

The Adventure Group has no set itinerary of hikes from month to month. The destination is usually determined by the weather report. The group hikes rain or shine nine months out of the year, with the other three months being devoted to cross-country skiing. All of the hikes are within the immediate Portland vicinity with a few each year to more distant places. The Adventure Group goes mainly to the Pacific Coast, the Columbia River Gorge and areas around Mount Hood. Each year there are a few overnight trips.

The Adventure Group meets each Sunday morning at 8 a.m. in front of the Lloyd Center Cinema. For most day trips the group is back by 5 p.m. Hikers can call 234-2941 each Friday after 5 p.m. through Sunday morning to receive recorded information regarding the week's hike. Information is given as to the length and difficulty of the hike as well as the elevation and location. The recording also advises people of things they will need to bring with them. Hikers need not have fancy or expensive equipment; good walking shoes are sufficient. A car is not necessary to participate in any outings since all hikers carpool to the trailhead and back. Be adventurous; call 234-2941 to get more information on a hike, and then just "show up."

What I do everyday to help defeat the OCA:

I proclaim my queerness by wearing outrageously fashionable Queer Nation stickers to the airport, the grocery store, restaurants and to movies—it's great for shocking docile suburbanites and raising the blood pressure of religious fundamentalists.

Howard N. Dana.