

10TH ANNIVERSARY SPECIAL

When I was a little boy in school in ultra-rural Indiana, and history books and timelines were shoved in front of me, something didn't feel quite right. It all just seemed too neat and tidy in the most appallingly unimaginative and sterile ways, and I instinctively thought, "They're lying." How could the chaotic past and present possibly be catalogued?

And then one day early last summer, under a Boston sun with a "frappuccino" from Coffee Connection in one hand and a lit fag in the other, the words of a British literary goddess floated down:

Every journey conceals another journey within its lines: the path not taken and the forgotten angle . . . My experience of time is mostly like my

experience with maps. Flat, moving in a more or less straight line from one point to another. Being in time, in a continuous present, is to look at a map and not see the hills, shapes and undulations, but only the flat form. There is no sense of dimension, only a feeling for the surface . . . Thinking about time is like turning the globe round and round, recognizing that all journeys exist simultaneously, that to be in one place is not to deny the existence

of another, even though that other place cannot be felt or seen, our usual criteria for belief.

The words of Jeanette Winterson in *Sexing the Cherry* express so completely my long-held suspicions of history articulated and presented as strictly linear. For a historian, Winterson's words may seem exasperatingly impossible. And yet, her inherent embrace and acceptance of a multiplicity of simultaneous stories and existences are

a valuable commentary on the presentation of any history.

Like little red flags on a map, the timeline that follows is a series of markers. It is possible to follow this seemingly linear history with your finger, and believe that somehow the last ten fabulous years of lesbian and gay history have been documented, but each entry easily elicits a number of conflicting versions and observations and conclusions.

At best, each entry is a fragment of the past. The thousands of people, the millions of hours of work, the bitter blow-out fights and the daily celebrations cannot possibly be captured in this timeline or anywhere else.

With these thoughts in mind, what follows is a series of points of departure for discussing and remembering yesterday and the days before that.

A decade of just out

by Thomas M. Lauderdale and Tom Cook

1983

October

Just Out premieres. In its first year, *Just Out* runs features on lesbian and gay rural life, religion, marriage, parenting, alcoholism, unlearning racism, aging, and even a serial soap opera—*The Life of Ryan*, or *Gays of Our Lives*. Also during its first year, the Gay Press Association recognizes *Just Out* as the nation's best-designed lesbian and gay publication.

November

Six votes short of the two-thirds majority necessary for passage of a constitutional amendment, the U.S. House of Representatives fails to pass the Equal Rights Amendment. Women's groups angrily denounce the vote, and Kathy Wilson of the National Women's Political Caucus says, "Those who voted against us will soon learn the consequences of the gender gap." Ten years later, 55 women are in Congress. "This is such an extraordinary life experience," says Rep. Marjorie Margolies-Mezvinsky (D-Pa.). "These are extraordinary women who did battle hard to get here."

President Ronald Reagan signs a bill designating the third Monday in January a national holiday commemorating the birth of Martin Luther King, Jr., despite right-wing opposition, notably from Sen. Jesse Helms (R-N.C.). Coretta Scott King, widow of the slain civil rights leader, proclaims, "America is a more democratic nation, a more just nation, a more peaceful nation because Martin Luther King, Jr. became her pre-eminent non-violent commander."



Martin Luther King Jr.

Francisco Board of Supervisors. When White changed his mind, and asked for his position back, Milk discouraged Moscone from reappointing him. A despondent White entered City Hall through a window and shot and killed both Moscone and Milk. During his trial, his lawyers argued that White was adversely affected by consuming too much junk food (the Twinkie defense). White's sentence of 7 1/2 years outraged members of the lesbian and gay community, and foreshadowed years of struggle for basic equality for America's lesbians and gays.



The National Organization for Women sponsors the nation's first lesbian conference in Milwaukee, Wis. Among the issues facing the conference: homophobia, racism, semantics and NOW's endorsement of presidential candidate Walter Mondale.

April

Roseburg gay activist Billy Russo's first column appears in *Just Out*. Russo, one of the founders of the Gay and Lesbian Alliance in Douglas County in 1980, and one of the most visible gay leaders in rural America, offers commentary about rural lesbian and gay life in Oregon. Also in 1980, Russo founded Ruby House, an AIDS hospice, in Roseburg.



Members of the Gay and Lesbian Alliance of Douglas County, including Billy Russo

May

Chester Brinker dies. Also known as "Esther," Brinker is one of the first Oregonians to die from AIDS. Esther's Pantry, a food bank for those

disabled by HIV and AIDS named in his honor, is founded. Community activist Steve Fulmer later reflected, "[Chester's death is] what brought it home to me, that people were dying without any support from the gay community. Not only were they not getting any support from the government, but they weren't even getting support from their friends." *Just Out* staff member Harold Moore writes in a tribute five years later, "Let the life of one working class drag queen inspire us."

Just Out reports on the continued output of women's music, noting recent work of Meg Christian and Holly Near. Over the next decade, *Just Out* regularly documents the increasing presence of women in the music industry—from Portland's own Musica Femina to k.d. lang, from the annual Michigan Womyn's Music Festival, which in 1993 expands to 40 entertainers and 300 workshops, to the benefits for No on 9 and Artists for a Hate Free America by Melissa Etheridge.



Melissa Etheridge

Just Out reports that there are 12 AIDS cases in Oregon, and at least six deaths resulting from complications from AIDS. *Just Out* goes on to note the one-year anniversary of the Cascade AIDS Project. Formed in February, 1983, less than a month after the first death attributed to AIDS in Oregon, CAP was the result of efforts of a group of concerned citizens, physicians and people with AIDS. By 1993 CAP grows to a staff of 30, over 600 active volunteers and a multi-million dollar budget.

June

The lesbian and gay pride celebrations of the early '80s are dominated by heated discussions surrounding issues of race and gender. Continuous disputes over including "lesbian" in the title "gay pride" leads to accusations and alienation. One man writes, "Real Women are non-sexist gays, not hell-bent-for-disruption lesbian womyn . . . Perhaps we've been too diplomatic in our handling of these irresponsible, selfish feminists . . . to the womyn and their yesboys—thanks for raining on our celebration." In 1981, a group called TKO (technical knock-out) formed to build bridges between men and women. During celebrations in 1983, a white man in blackface and Aunt Jemima costume is confronted by a black woman at the rally, and is asked to leave. Sides are drawn as people debate whether the costume is "fun" or racist. In 1985 there are two separate steering committees for the parade. The emo-