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Monday, February 14, 6:30 - 8:00pm, Jamison Thomas Gallery, 1313 NW Glisan. Beverages and hors d'oeuvres will be served. tickets are \$25 a person, \$50 a couple. Seating is limited, so reservations are strongly urged. For reservations please call the Fred Neal Campaign at 284-6384. \$50 of your contribution may be eligible for the 1994 Oregon Political Tax Credit.

Presented by



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# Perverts

Watching a friend make the transition into the far right's camp

by Lee Lynch

**L**over came home to me last night after a long business drive with two women co-workers. In the way women are wont during times of such involuntary intimacy, they had a great giddy time. Apparently "The Subject" came up and one of the co-workers, both of whom are non-gay, shared that her initials gave rise in her youth to the nickname Pervert. As the other co-worker is nicknamed Bert, the three cheerily dubbed themselves Bert, Pervert and Invert.

Lover had to explain the meaning of invert, an old psychiatric term for queerfolk popularized in the days of British sexologist Havelock Ellis and novelist Radclyffe Hall. There she was, teaching queer culture to heterosexuals in the middle of right-wing heaven. Three people managed to respect one another's choices and even have some fun with their diversity.

That touched me. It helped me climb a bit higher out of the pesky melancholy with which I've been wrestling for a couple of months. The doldrums began to lift, I believe, when I canceled my subscription to the local rabble-rousing newspaper. I wrote to the editor and explained, among other things, that ours was the only paper I knew

of to make a front page story out of the Girl Scouts' vote to allow non-Christian members to pray to their owl deities. Big fat hairy deal, right? Where I live that's sacrilege.

Colorado's Amendment 2 was a big part of my gloom. It was inconceivable to me that some man in a gown could hold the fates of so many of us in his probably heterosexist hands. I try not to dwell on Judge Bayless' rejection of the argument that we are a "suspect class" which does need protection. The very fact that Amendment 2 exists is proof of that unfortunate status.

Can you blame me and the rest of the queers in Oregon for a little despondency? There is another Ballot Measure 9 coming this year. Maybe if we win this time, too, we can do it again in 1996! Some of us are toying with the idea of refusing to participate in this rape of Queer energy. What if we use all that campaign money, all that time, to elect humane politicians, or, for example, to bring Habitat For Humanity to our communities with enough hoopla to make the homo-haters hang their heads in shame? What, after all, would happen if the right wing gave a campaign and nobody came?

I know that I will survive all the political and legal wrangling, whatever the men in gowns and the uneducated, scapegoating voters decide. Heck,

these relatively civilized battles, win or lose, are kid stuff next to what gay men and lesbians went through before Stonewall. It is the age-old heartaches that are the abiding losses.

We had another friend I'll call Subvert. For seven years Subvert, Lover and I saw one another about twice a week. When I went through a painful breakup, Subvert was there to help haul me and my stuff out. I once went on an all-woman giddy long-distance trip with Subvert. When Lover and I got together, Subvert and her kids came over to visit. When Subvert had a near-fatal accident, we did what we could to help her and her family.

During the measure 9 campaign, Lover and I both had bad, bad feelings about a group we attended with Subvert. Subtle "we're-fed-up-with-queers" messages. It's-not-okay-to-be-different messages. It's-criminal-not-to-be-Christian messages. I felt as if I were lost in a blizzard, my sense of direction useless. I didn't know who to trust. Although we knew that Subvert and a few others supported us, first Lover, then I left. Where once we'd been open and accepted, I felt like an out-cast.

After the election we learned from Jan, another non-gay group member, that Subvert had voted for the anti-gay measure. Voted to strip us of our civil rights.

Jan, who had worked on a campaign with us kept asking, "How could Subvert do that? How can I stay friends with her?" The months went on and Jan gave us reports of Subvert, who was becoming more and more involved in her fundamentalist church. Jan and another woman tried to reason with Subvert, reminding her of her old friendship with us, and getting in response a look that is becoming all too familiar as the right-wing virus multiplies.

It is the look of someone in a "Star Trek" episode whose body has been inhabited by an alien being. A shutter in the eyes closes. The gaze is frozen. The face takes on a rigidity. The lips purse tight as a squeezed trigger.

Jan told me the other day that another lesbian from the group ran into Subvert in a grocery store. The lesbian, who had felt rebuffed by Subvert during a previous contact, wanted to know where she stood. She walked up to Subvert and said hello. Subvert turned and, without a word, walked in the other direction.

"But what happened to Subvert? My Subvert?" Jan asks, mourning the loss of her friend. The new creed Subvert has adopted seems like a drug, an addiction that can only satisfy when it becomes stronger than reason, compassion and friendship. The latest news is that Subvert has become active politically, another soldier in the right-wing army.

Losing friends is not kid stuff. Nor is it a new heartache—ask any old queer. Yet if the pain of losing friends has always been one consequence of being lesbian or gay, so has the joy of finding new ones. Thank the Goddess for the Berts and the Perverts.

## AMAZON TRAIL

