

letters

Weary owners respond

To the Editor:

We have just finished reading Karen Denman's letter to the editor [Just Out, March 3, 1995]. This will be the first time that we have ever made a response, in editorial form, to a letter or article in your paper. We answer now only because we are reluctant to pass up the opportunity to respond to the concerns expressed in this letter.

Over our 10 years in business at this establishment, we have endeavored to maintain a high level of service and quality, which is increasingly overshadowed by community politics ("subculture"). We grow weary of dealing with people who insist on being addressed with a politically correct form, as it seems to change frequently. We grow weary of telling the clientele of the tavern next door that our parking lot is for our customers. We grow weary of the customer who thinks we are a coffee shop where you can linger for hours over two cups of coffee, drink endless glasses of water, and leave a 50-cent tip. We grow weary of the people who eternally try to beat the pricing system by splitting dinners or just an extra plate and we'll share, but don't forget the silverware, bread, butter and linen. We grow weary of the people who reserve a table for six and it turns out only a few are eating. We grow weary of keeping silent and not "whining" about the fact that the majority of the people who fit into this category are of the female gender. We are not women-haters, merely business persons who welcome the opportunity to rebut.

Is this a sexual-preference problem or just a simple business problem, which should not be put into the minorities arena? We try to run a quality establishment, however, if our business is not profitable, we will not be here for anyone.

In response:

- Our prices are posted.
- We have many women, females, girls, etc., whom we count as valuable customers.
- We sold out once, we got it back.
- The picket truck for the OCA is outside with regularity.
- Religion is not applicable to this situation.
- As business persons, we deal with "constructive criticism" on an ongoing basis.

We acknowledge that we are here to fit a particular market need and welcome the opportunity to do so, but sexual orientation is not the sole criteria for business decisions.

Perhaps you should tell your college students that they will only be treated as well as they are able to adapt to their environment. We have obviously pleased more people than we have offended, and you cannot please all of the people all of the time.

If you are not a whiner, we would question why you did not try to communicate this problem with us, rather than airing your objections in the public arena. Well, Karen Denman, co-owner and operator of the Whispering Pines Bed and Breakfast/Retreat and college instructor, you just flunked Communications 101.

Telesforo "Archie" Archuleta, President
Carl L. Smith, Vice-President
Stark's Inc.

Treat people as friends

To the Editor:

This is in regard to the letter from Karen Denman, co-owner and operator of Whispering Pines Bed and Breakfast/Retreat, Rogue River, Ore.

You say that you chose to dine out on a Saturday evening when you selected Stark's Restaurant. When you arrived, you stated that you were "greeted by a person, male of the species, who referred to us as 'girls' (and it was not used as a term of endearment)." The two owners (Archie and Carl)—by whom I have had the pleasure to be served many times in the past—both have a tendency to greet patrons in this matter (females as

"girls," males as "boys"), and I have never heard anyone voice a complaint in reference to the practice, because anyone with a sense of community realizes that this is just a social greeting and not a statement of a person's stature or age.

You say you spoke right up "as usual" to bash him for having the audacity to refer to a superhuman of your stature as a girl. Why, may I ask, do you consider it condescending for him to ask you what you would like to be called?

If your friend had done a little more homework along with her research, she probably would have found that this is not only a pattern of this particular restaurant but of the gay and lesbian community in general. Boys are boys and girls are girls, regardless the number of wrinkles or rolls. Portland is Portland; it is not New York, and, thank god, it's not L.A. We treat people (newcomers as well as our old acquaintances) as friends and use familiar terms of "endearment" toward one another, not as statements of disrespect. If the "boys" at Stark's practiced blatant disrespect toward any of their customers, their restaurant would be empty on Saturday evenings, however, this is simply not the case. People go to Stark's because it has a friendly, cozy atmosphere with good food and good service, with hosts and employees who like the people who dine there.

The following is my list of solutions:

- Stick to the private homes and traditional potlucks. You can prune and nurture your friends into the perfect people you want them to be.
- Wear a badge that states that you are woman, and give others the chance to inflict terms of endearment upon those who are far more deserving.
- Call ahead and instruct owners and operators of establishments that you plan to patronize in the way you see proper for them to address you and your party before you arrive so there will be no misunderstandings.

• Pray that the Portland community who would have been likely to visit Whispering Pines didn't read your letter and reconsider their vacation locations in the future based on not wanting to offend your eminence.

I have already called the restaurant to let them know that I realize this encounter was a situation of misinterpretation and not an expression of disdain toward women, girls, lesbians and drag queens. I have also called nearly every lesbian I know to query them on their individual experiences at Stark's. The consensus: You need to get out more often!

Gary Foster Smyth
Portland

In defense of Susan Stoltenberg

To the Editor:

As the volunteer HIV educator for the Yamhill County Public Health Department, Cascade AIDS Project has been a valuable resource.

Last fall I was scheduled to take political action committee training in Salem, but the dates conflicted with the State HIV Conference so CAP made an exception; I took PAC training in Portland. CAP wrote culturally correct letters to the Hispanic community in Yamhill County inviting them to become involved in HIV education. CAP came out to Linfield College to teach peer education to Linfield students. CAP's speakers bureau is furnishing an HIV youth speaker on a continuing basis for a class I teach at MidValley Regional Youth Detention Center in Salem.

I have also had problems in reaching Hispanics, as CAP has. We are doing the best we can.

I thank all the staff at CAP under the helm of Susan Stoltenberg, they have been a great asset to me.

Norm Costa
McMinnville

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