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letters

Latest betrayal no surprise

To the Editor:

Bravo to Bob Roehr for his condemnation of the Human Rights Campaign for its cowardly acceptance of prejudice against HIV-positive people. Of what use to the larger queer community will military acceptance of gays and lesbians be if it comes at the expense of dividing us?

Sadly, this latest betrayal by HRC comes as no surprise to trans people—this past summer saw this same organization lobby Congress to exclude us from the Employment Non-Discrimination Act on the grounds that our inclusion would weaken the bill's chances for passage.

HRC's willingness to write off the most vulnerable in favor of the strongest will ultimately end in failure: as Benjamin Franklin said upon signing the Declaration of Independence, "We must hang together or, most assuredly, we shall all hang separately."

The tactic of offering up sacrificial lambs to prejudice and bigotry exemplified by the Human Rights Campaign is replicated here in Portland by those people objecting to inclusion of trans people in the city human rights ordinance, from the misguided belief that to demand equal rights for all is to demand too much. The cause of freedom is not served by half measures—and human rights are not defended by restricting access to equal protection under law.

People with AIDS and transsexuals, with their respective health issues, offer the larger queer community the means to link with and make common cause with the disability rights movement. It is through building coalitions, not further division, that we stand the best chance of fending off the piecemeal decimation of hard-won rights.

When Moses went to Pharaoh to demand an end to his people's servitude, Pharaoh sought to bargain freedom for some at the expense of others. Moses would have none of it. The question facing all of us is whether we will choose to bargain with Pharaoh.

What price are we willing to accept for our self-respect and the trust of our brothers and sisters? Is there ever an end to extortion after the demands have begun?

The greatest threat is not that we risk defeat but that we will choose defeat by settling for freedom for some rather than freedom for all.

Shall we follow Pharaoh, or Moses?

Margaret Deirdre O'Hartigan
Portland

Hyperbolic ranting

To the Editor:

Darcey Spears' review of my book *Untold Millions: Positioning Your Business for the Gay and Lesbian Consumer Revolution* [Just Out, Dec. 15, 1995] reads more like a character indictment than a reasoned analysis of a book. Her caustic and petty approach to the material also prevented her from getting the facts straight.

For instance, her suggestion that I "blatantly display [my] inexperience" by not providing single, dual and household income data, broken down separately, shows either her inability to read thoroughly or her own level of inexperience in understanding statistical data. Page 96, in fact, shows income broken down for singles, partners and households—for both heterosexual men and women and for gay men and lesbians separately. Not only that, I also cite mean personal, mean household and

mean size—not to mention breakdowns by race, religion, geographic dispersion and parental status.

Her assertion that I don't provide any ideas, strategies or recommendations for companies targeting gay and lesbian consumers is patently false: The index contains a specific entry entitled "marketing strategies," under which three complete chapters are dedicated to understanding and developing strategy. There are also over 25 photographic examples of gay and lesbian magazine advertisements.

Spears could have written a more accurate review of what I actually wrote if she had been willing to do more comprehensive reading and less hyperbolic ranting about what kind of experience she imagines me not to have.

Grant Lukenbill
Washington, D.C.

Darcey Spears responds:

Market research and statistical analysis require rigorous adherence to absolute accuracy, or the marketer leaves himself open to charges of manipulation. If Lukenbill believes that word errors, typos and phrasing mistakes are petty, I'm afraid he has chosen the wrong career.

On page 96 readers will indeed find a chart comparing certain income levels. What even the most determined reader will not find, however, is any meaningful acknowledgment of the nature of the data.

Lukenbill claims throughout his press material and in several places in the book that he "contradicts a popular myth about the relative affluence of American lesbians and gays," a claim both annoying and offensive. There is no myth of the wealthy lesbian—the image of affluence centers around a stereotypical gay male household of two white men and no children. And even Lukenbill admits that his stereotypical household does make more money. But, he says, if you take all gays together, clearly gays are less affluent than everyone thinks. As I said in my review, it is statistically incoherent to make such claims without accounting for a segment of data (income for lesbians) that is so divergent as to skew the result.

While his index may list chapters devoted to marketing suggestions, the chapters themselves do not contain any.

I am sorry Lukenbill was personally affronted by my review. I did not mean to say that he was a bad person—only that he wrote a bad book.

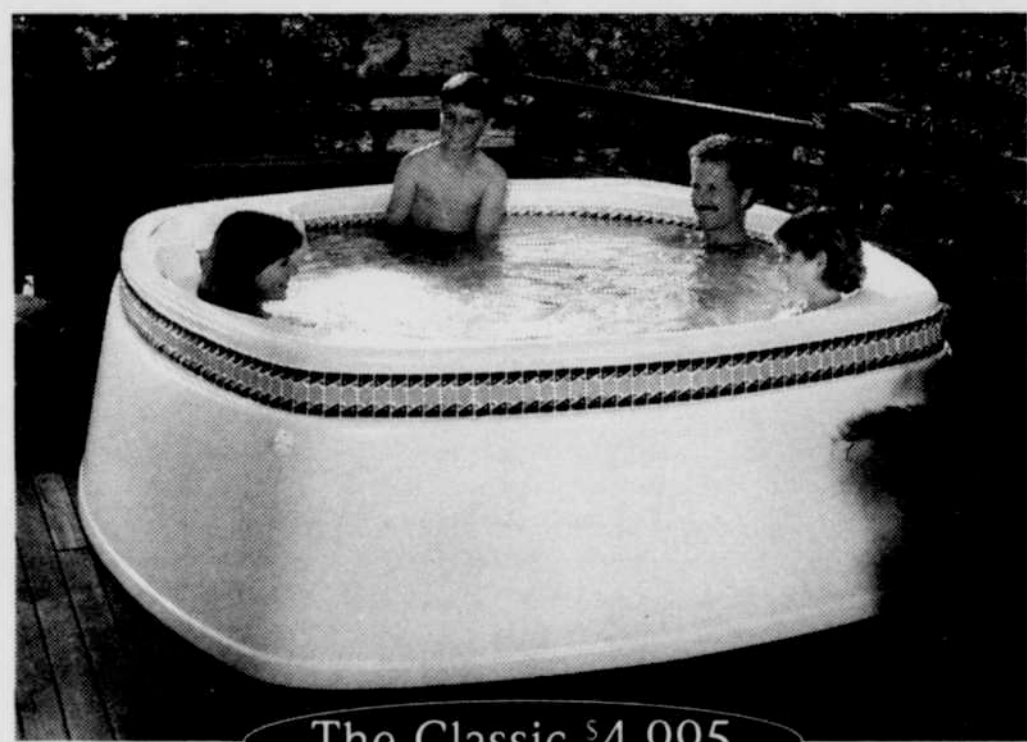
Ménage à trois

To the Editor:

Does Barbie secretly yearn for a date with G.I. Joe? Is that the subtext to Mattel's recent offer to buy Hasbro? Is Wall Street messing around with the very core of American culture? Or is it just a liberal, femi-Nazi plot to subvert strong, adventurous, macho G.I. Joe so that he can be overshadowed and done away with by weak, effete Ken, who is in turn completely cowed by dominatrix Barbie? Or is it a plot by religious-right ultra-conservatives to unite all three—with Barbie finally marrying Ken, with G.I. Joe as best man—all under the banner of Traditional Family Values? Or has everyone missed the ultimate sub rosa subtext: Now Ken will finally get his one, true, secret wish—a date with G.I. Joe!

Ron Rasmussen Jr.
Vancouver, Wash.

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