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since 1983

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Ad policy. No sexually exploitative advertising will be accepted. Compensation for errors in, or cancellation of, advertising will be made with credit toward future advertising.

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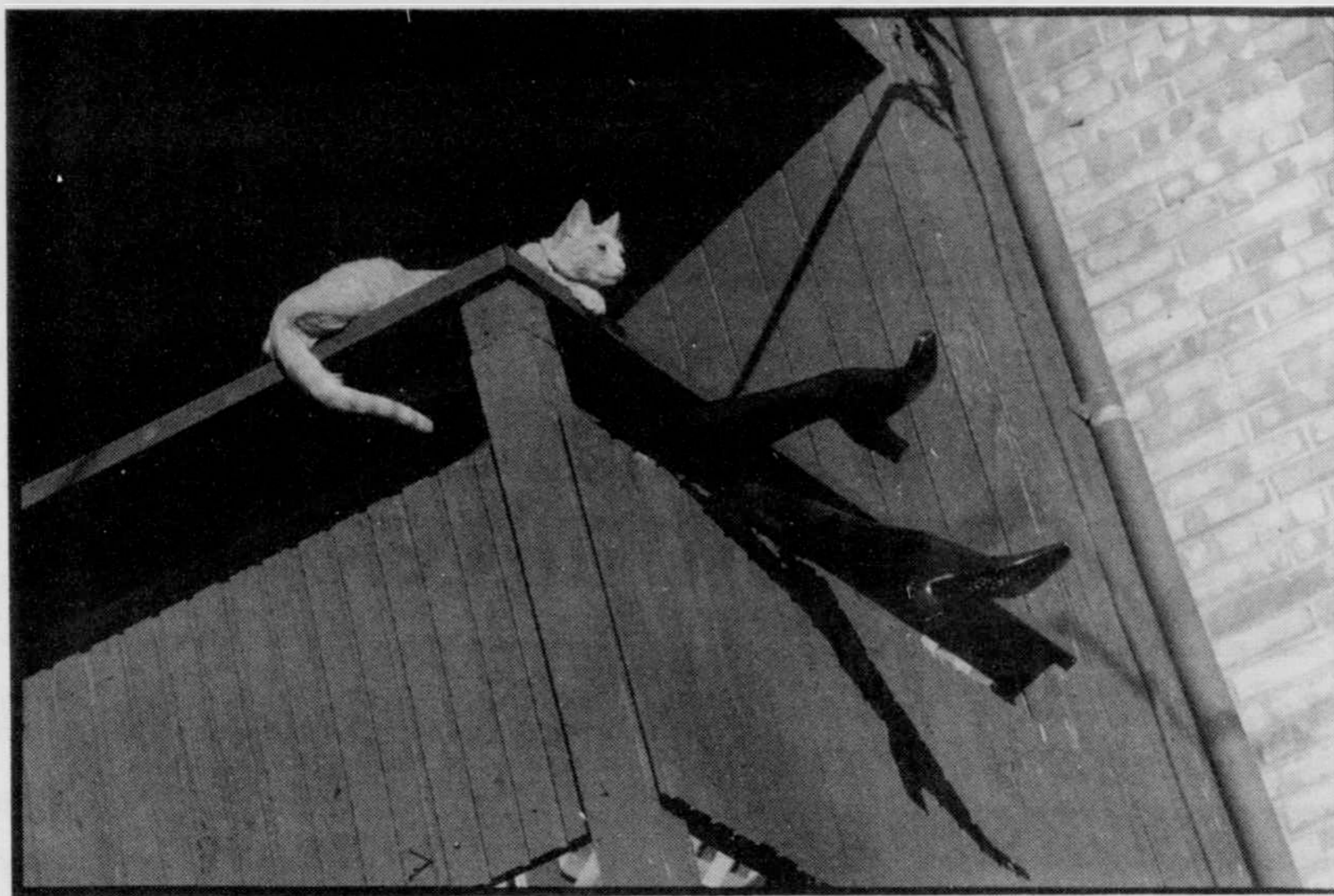


PHOTO BY LINDA KLEWER

editorial

Freedom of choice

Dodging the blows of a stinging backlash, Just Out stands by its endorsement of Laurie Wimmer

by Renée LaChance

There have been fewer than a handful of occasions—in the 12-plus years of our existence—when a *Just Out* endorsement has received as vehement and rapid a response as did our endorsement of Laurie Wimmer for Oregon House District 12.

The District 12 race pits four Democrats against each other: For us, it came down to choosing between Laurie Wimmer, a nongay ally, and Bob Duehmig, a gay man. During the endorsement process it became clear that Duehmig and Wimmer were equal on the issues important to us. If we did dual endorsements, this would have been an ideal time to do one. We don't. We had to look further.

During the process I considered the ramifications of supporting a nongay female candidate when a gay man was in the race. I knew we would be accused of being exclusively a lesbian paper and not representing men.

Andy Summers of Southwest Portland wrote: "*Just Out* doesn't appear to represent gay men. I've always considered your publication the voice of lesbian and gay residents of Portland. But despite a recent glowing *Just Out* review of Duehmig, who came across as a terrific gay candidate on issues of concern to our community, you chose to endorse the straight woman.... Straight male candidates [Chris] Beck and [David] Bragdon are also written up as strong on our issues, yet you didn't endorse them."

I also pondered whether people would assume that because we are a newsmagazine representing the lesbian and gay community we will always endorse the lesbian or gay candidate. *Just Out* strives to endorse the best candidate—sexual orientation gets high points but it is not always the deciding factor.

Elizabeth H. Shuler of Southeast Portland wrote: "I applaud your District 12 endorsement of a straight woman, Laurie Wimmer, over the progressive, openly gay Bob Duehmig.... I guess you're a bit like Wimmer yourselves—there's a pink triangle on your cover, but really, you're not gay. Is *Just Out* in the closet?"

That was something we hadn't thought about—Wimmer's

choice of logo. All the letters we got called Wimmer to task for the lavender triangle on her lawn signs.

April Martinez of Salem wrote: "As a Salem resident, it would be nice to see more diversity in the Legislature. I work in Portland, and for the longest time I thought Laurie Wimmer was a lesbian because of the pink triangles on all her signs!"

Andy Summers took issue with Wimmer's logo design as well: "[T]o learn that she cynically manipulated my sympathies by co-opting a recognized gay and lesbian symbol is a real turn-off."

Wimmer has more to lose by having a lavender or pink triangle as part of her logo than to gain. We asked Wimmer about the decision, and she responded, "My ideas for the logo were developed before [Duehmig] was even a candidate and were based on graphic appeal primarily and an expression of solidarity secondarily."

Let's string her up. When will straight people learn that only lesbians and gay men can use the color purple and the triangle as a design element?

Sorry, for a moment there, I thought sarcasm would get my point across.

The fact is, both Duehmig and Wimmer would serve our community well in the Legislature. The deciding factor for us was that Wimmer has been in the trenches for queer communities since the Oregon Citizens Alliance first began its campaign to deny basic civil rights to lesbians and gay men back in 1988. Wimmer actively canvassed against Ballot Measure 8 in 1988, Ballot Measure 9 in 1992 and Ballot Measure 13 in 1994. Duehmig canvassed and campaigned in 1992 for the Clinton-Gore presidential ticket and in 1994, for John Kitzhaber's gubernatorial race.

Just Out believes that it is important to reward nongay allies for fighting for our issues. Wimmer earned our endorsement—not because we're "only a lesbian paper," not because we're "in the closet," not because we were "deceived by her lawn signs"—but because she was there when the lesbian and gay community needed her, without us even having to ask for her help.

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