

THE RICHES OF RAGSDALE

New suede shoes, a Dalmatian and a girlfriend with a house in Portland: How could one comic get so lucky?

by Will O'Bryan

New residents who've come to Portland via L.A. sometimes give themselves away with their sunglasses. On a gloomy, overcast Portland morning, Georgia Ragsdale is no exception. Looking just a bit too chic for a Monday morning on Hawthorne, she joined *Just Out* for a quick chat and a bowl of oatmeal at Bread and Ink.

As the sunglasses hinted of Hollywood,

Comedy

Ragsdale's fondness for sugar, both white and brown, hinted of Houston and Ragsdale's Southern roots.

Ragsdale has made a name for herself as a comic and found a comic niche as a gay woman. Among her favorite audiences are the captive revelers she's entertained repeatedly on RSVP cruises. Another favorite audience for Ragsdale was, presumably, the millions of television viewers who caught her cameo on *Ellen* in October.

Audiences who've seen Ragsdale appreciate her re-enactment of a lesbian's first trip to a gay bar (and successive evolution to old pro), her impersonation of Jackie Onassis, and her tale of an irritable cat on a road trip. And for those who've seen Ragsdale's take on club music, Chaka Khan's "I'm Every Woman" will never sound the same again.

Why are you in Portland now?

I am now in Portland because my wonderful girlfriend owns a house here and I could not resist.

Her, or the house?

The house, the girl. And I have a dog...

What kind of dog?

A Dalmatian.

I'd asked you before about television and ABC. Could you just recap?

I got to L.A. and had the most wonderful Cinderella story. I had been working as a comic for about five years, getting only slightly up the ladder... I got to L.A., I had a show—which was the middle of the week—and by Monday I had a six-figure deal at ABC. It was amazing.

I don't see you on the Friday night lineup...

The thing about deals... that deal was good for a year. That expired. Then I had another deal with Norman Lear. That deal expired. Basically I'm a free agent.

You're interested in television, you're interested in film... where do your priorities lie?

Well, I did a little independent film called *Never Met Picasso*, which is opening in Boston, L.A., New York and a couple of other places over Thanksgiving weekend. While working on the film I really fell in love with inde-

pendent film-making. Just the idea of what you can pull together with a script and superhuman effort... I hope that my future lies in that arena.

I'm much better when I have my own point of view and I don't have to fit it into... I don't want to say "sterile commercial product," because that would imply that there's nothing good on TV. TV very much is what will appeal to the common denominator of humankind. At least [with] independent film... you still want a universal appeal, but there's room for the unusual, the different. It's more direct marketing.

Are there any Portland idiosyncrasies you think you'll be able to start working into your material? What's your impression of us?

I definitely like the mix—and I find it really comical—the mix of like, you see people here who are literally 10 or 15 years behind the times

"I think it's going to be really fun. For me it's going to be like a 'Welcome to Portland' show. This is going to be my home team, and I'm really excited about it."

just living their daily lives in, like, 1980. And a mix of sophisticated urbanites.

What's more endearing?

I just think the two cultures clashing together like that is very Shakespearean in a way. It's the edge of tomorrow in some ways and people still driving little Toyota trucks and wearing Birkenstocks and old teal raincoats.

I'm guessing you haven't lived through a Portland winter, but you've lived through a Seattle winter. Does that affect your comedy at all?

I love the Northwest.

You're not left crying by February with a bottle of wine in your hand?

Probably I will be, but I really love the cool. I'm from Texas, so every day it's cool is like a day with free air conditioning. I can't get over the fact that you don't have to pay hundreds of dollars for air conditioning. I love it. Every day I wake up and it's cool, I'm so thankful. I hate the heat.

Lots of comics are the brooding type. Does that apply to you?

I think probably. Not necessarily brooding, but I'm definitely more quiet and more—what's the opposite of revealed?



Georgia Ragsdale

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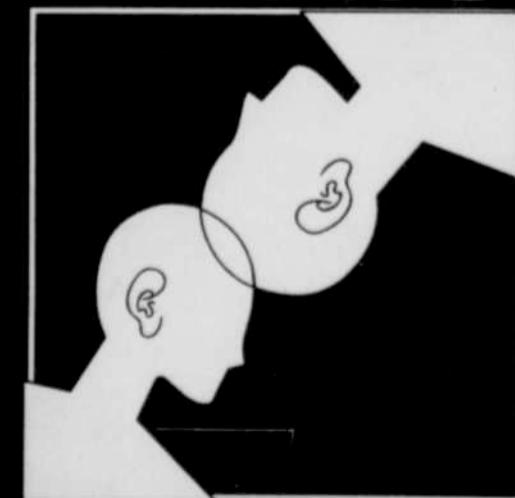


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