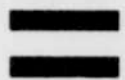


HIV Testing in Washington County

**Needle-free
HIV testing
for gay & bi men**



**Every Monday
7-9 PM**

Community Action Bldg.
1001 SW Baseline
Hillsboro, OR
223-5907 ext. 170

Speak to Your Brothers is a
program of Cascade AIDS Project

**TRAVEL AGENTS
INTERNATIONAL
America's Vacation Store**

**Commitment
Cruise**

"Memories of a Lifetime"

November 29 - December 6

Publicly Affirm Your Commitment
Aboard the *Monarch of the Seas!*

Cruise includes:

Commitment Ceremony
Reception with music, flowers & cake
Discounted air add-ons available

Ports of Call:

San Juan	St. Thomas
Martinique	Barbados
Antigua	St. Maarten

Encourage Your
Friends & Family
to Share In
This Memorable Event

**As low as
\$699/ppdo**

**Space is Limited
Call Today!!**



Call 503•223•1100 or 800•357•3194
917 SW Washington
Portland, Oregon • OR REG. #221

Speak Out

Music and the night air

TO THE EDITOR:

It was at a New Year's Eve dance that I first noticed Barb and Octavia. They stood out like the quintessential butch and femme on the dance floor: Barb a stoic stone figure, Octavia a clinging cellophane wrap, both in possession of the dance floor and oblivious to the people around them. Their murders last week left me gasping and blank, unable to align my thoughts to just what had happened.

My partner and I attended Octavia's funeral. Afterwards we rushed off to the Portland Lesbian Choir concert, where Sylvan sang, and I sat in the audience energetically supporting each song. I bathed in the beauty of sweet-woman-lightness at the concert, while inwardly I grappled with the contrast of flying rage and pain that murder carries with it.

I have sometimes sneered that the choir was trying to be goody-two-shoes, when I knew it had its share of problems. But the impact of the murders has raised a new awareness for me. I focus with a deepened sense of how the choir serves as a beacon for expressions of love and unity within our community. My thoughts do not deny the dark side of lesbians lives, so often filled with unresolved issues of acceptability, but acknowledge the effort within the lesbian community to lift ourselves beyond the pain of exclusion.

Last night I looked at the clock and wondered how many of us were aware that a one-week anniversary was rapidly approaching. I was sure Octavia's mother was aware. Perhaps Barb's sister. I felt a pang at this waste of lives because obscured, reactive rage cut like the sharp edge of broken glass through night air.

It is music that realigns my thoughts, music created by artists who use our community voices like the sharp edge of broken glass to cut through the night air, thick with hellish tendencies:

*Although the guns do loudly sound
It is for peace we're yearning
And to each other firmly bound
By ties of love and learning.
Through all the tumult and the strife
I hear that music ringing
It sounds an echo in my soul
How can I keep from singing?*

PAMELA HIEBERT
Via e-mail

**Where everybody knows
your name...**

TO THE EDITOR:

In his editorial ["Let there be light," *Just Out*, March 6, 1998], Christopher Cuttone wonders "what motivates a person to compete for parking downtown and pay \$4 to enter a dark, dirty, crowded bar (which shall remain nameless) that overcharges for weak drinks?"

I have an answer for him: It's gay! Lots of bars in Portland are packed every night, but precious few of them are gay. A bar, to a gay male, is way more than just a place to have a drink. You could equate it to a church in a black community. It's a social institution that has implications

for the average gay male way beyond the fact that it sells alcohol. For roughly the past 10 years I didn't drink at all, and I frequented that nameless bar regularly; I still do.

In the early to mid-'90s two things converged that diluted the gay energy in gay bars on Stark Street: the politically correct practice of inclusivity and the growing trendiness of straight people slumming at gay bars. Gay and straight people being together may be a nifty ideal, but there's nothing rare about it. I work with straight people; the building I live in—with me being the only exception—is inhabited by straight people; I'm around straight people when I get on a bus, go shopping, do my laundry, go the bank, etc. I value a place where I can go and just be with folks like me.

It isn't because I have a desire to discriminate against anyone, it's because sometimes I just need to be somewhere where I can feel at home, where I feel culturally secure, where I'm fully accepted as part of a larger whole. I live in a world that is dominated by a powerfully manipulative cultural energy that is not my own. A guy could get lost, for crying out loud.

It amuses me that straight people never seem to realize that when they get together and slum at gay bars those bars are no longer gay, and they end up right where they started—at another straight bar. That nameless bar does not apologize for being gay, rather it actively protects its gayness and revels in the joy of it.

The gay community has seen the two most prominent gay dance bars in Portland effectively defect, in favor of a beefier bottom line. The end result has been the dilution of the cultural energy that once made those bars different, the energy that made them a safe and supportive environment for gay people.

I like the atmosphere of a dance bar, it's energetic, exciting and usually a lot of fun. Lots of noise, lots of people (men, in my case), lots of activity. I like a gay energy too, it's flashy, exotic, unusual, sometimes trashy, very active and very creative. I feel right at home there. I think of it as a sort of fuel stop, culturally speaking.

There are other bars in Portland that serve important subgroups of our community, female impersonators, leather folks, bears, Spanish-speaking folks, lesbians, etc. I'm very happy about that. I'm sure those establishments are as critically important to the people they serve as mine is to me. I'm not any of those things, so there's little for me there along the lines of feeling culturally included. And let's face it, that's an important reason why we go out in the first place.

I hope this answers Christopher's question, and I hope he finds a "home" here in Portland. There are certainly enough choices, and Christopher deserves an establishment that looks and feels just right to him. Maybe what he wants isn't a bar at all; that would make his choices here in Portland almost endless. As an aside, \$4 is the prevailing cover charge to get into any dance bar in Portland, gay or straight, and \$3 is the going rate for well drinks (and everybody knows that if you want stronger drinks, tip the person who makes them!).

GREGORY FRANKLYN
Portland

SEE WHAT YOU'VE BEEN MISSING
EXAMINATIONS • CONTACT LENSES • FRAMES

EYES!
ON BROADWAY
2300 NE BROADWAY PORTLAND, OR 97232
THOMAS M. BARRETO, D.D. 284-2300
DOCTOR OF OPTOMETRY

See us for your auto repair needs
"Mechanics you can trust"

SPARKS
Computerized Car Care

284-5970

3204 NE Broadway