

NORTHWESTnews

The Rev. Jim Dancing Trout says all he wanted to do that September evening was see a movie.

So he headed over to Cinema 21, nestled on Portland's funky Northwest 21st Avenue, to catch *Edge of Seventeen*, a gay coming-of-age flick. It was Sept. 23, the last night of the film's showing.

"When I approached the theater I...saw five or six demonstrators standing right along the curb facing Cinema 21 with large sandwich-board placards. I think one said 'Burn in hell' and had flames," recounts Dancing Trout, a gay man who describes himself as an ordained minister of the Universal Life Church.

The demonstrators, he tells *Just Out*, "were screaming and yelling at anybody entering the theater, calling them homosexuals and sinners."

He says he stopped to engage in "dialogue" with the protesters, asking them why, as Christians, they were passing judgment on people going into the movie.

"I did not get loud," says Dancing Trout, who explains he was, at one point, talking with a female demonstrator who was standing "about two feet a way." He says a man came over and stepped between them.

"He said, 'Don't fuck with my wife, this is my wife,'" says Dancing Trout, adding that the man "got within six inches" of his face and said, "If you move and something happens to you it's going to be your own fault."

The man, says Dancing Trout, was yelling loudly and spittle was spraying from his mouth.

"At that point I told him he was...harassing me and I felt in danger and I was going to have him arrested," says Dancing Trout, who went to a pay phone and dialed 9-1-1. Portland police soon arrived and asked Dancing Trout if he felt threatened.

"I said yes. They asked me if I wanted him arrested and I said, 'Yes I do.' So they had me point him out and they arrested him," says Dancing Trout. "That was the last I heard of it—until I was served a summons."

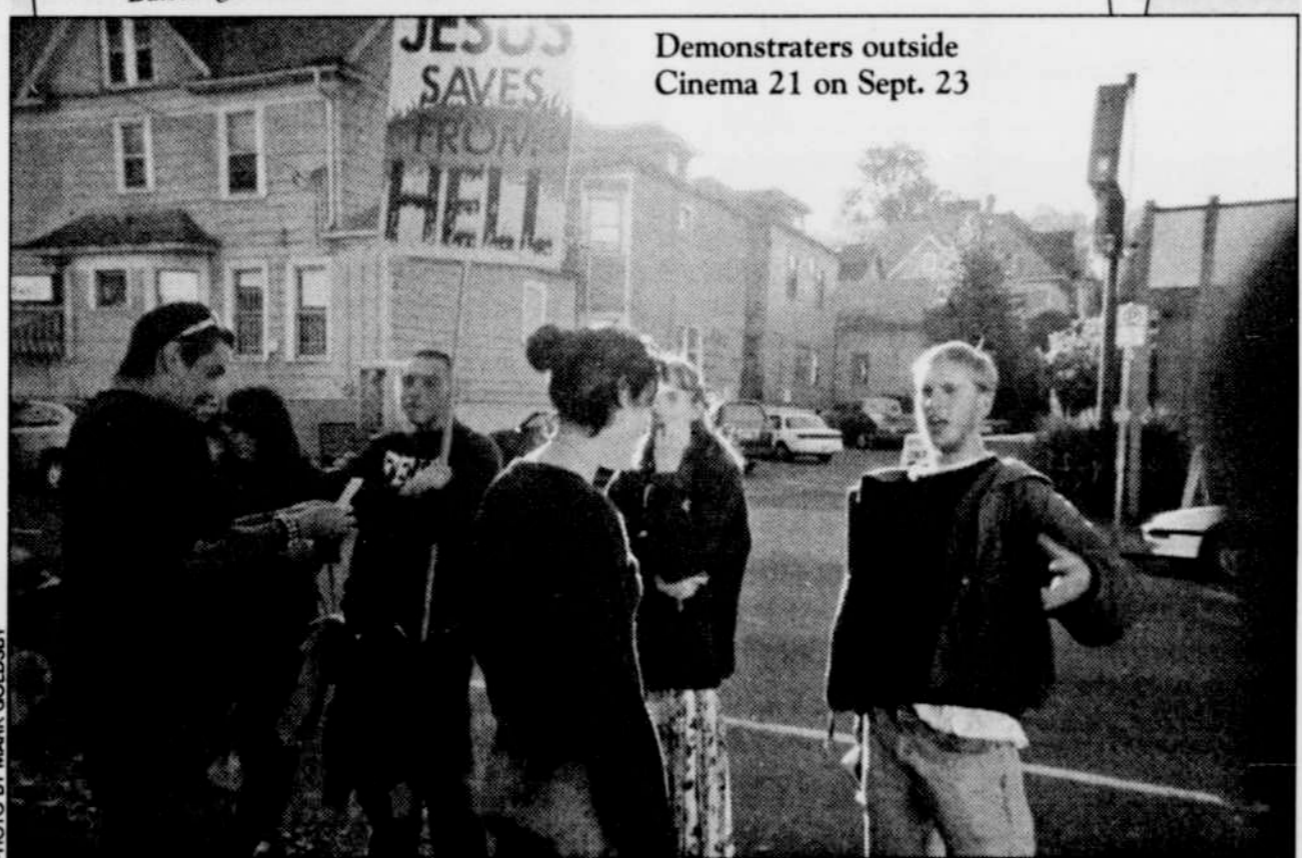
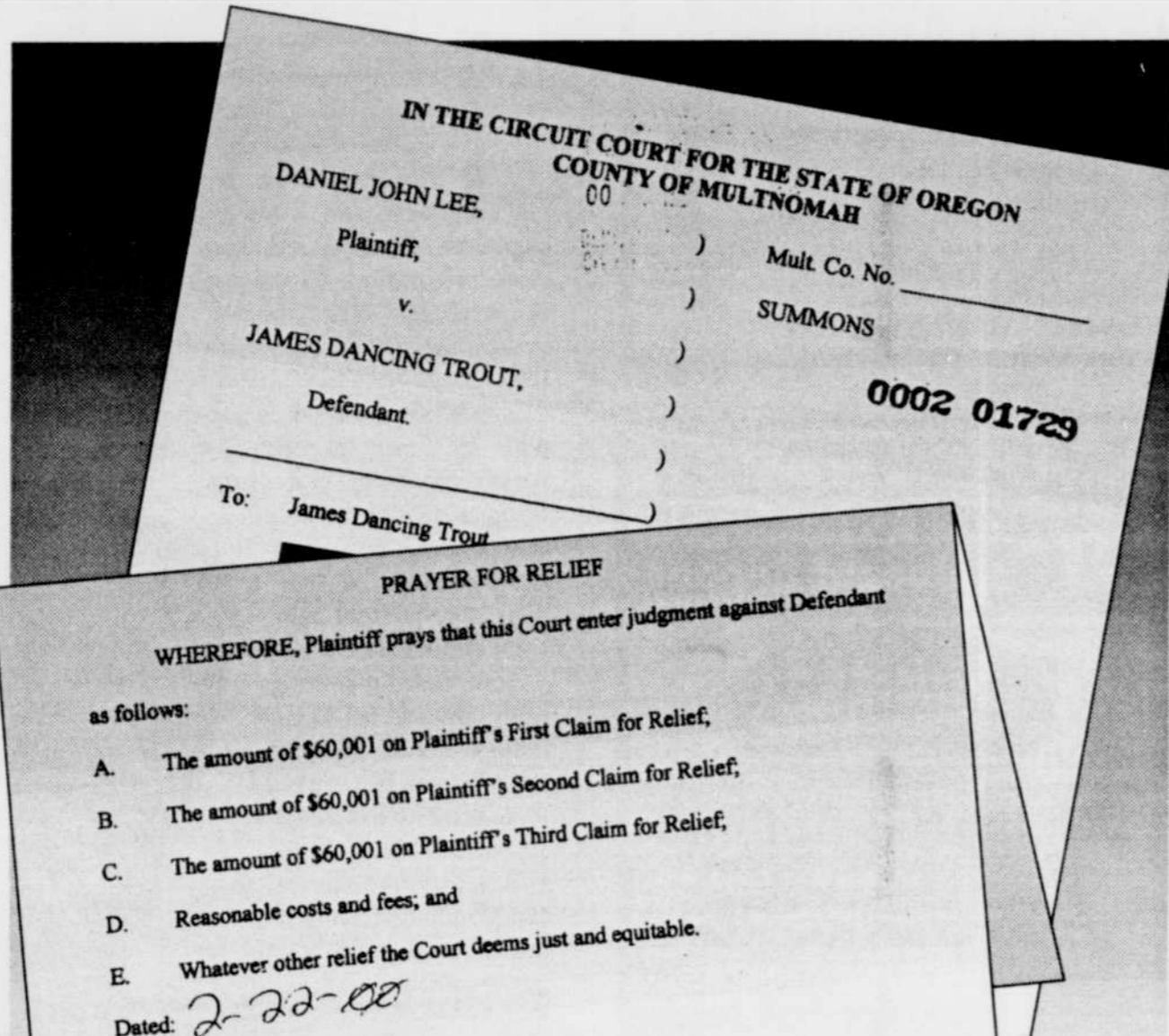
That was on March 22. The man, identified in court documents as Daniel John Lee of Portland, is suing Dancing Trout for false arrest, battery and malicious prosecution. Lee is seeking a total \$180,000 in compensatory and punitive damages.

"I was stunned!" says Dancing Trout. In the suit, filed in Multnomah County Circuit Court, Lee describes himself as a "preacher of the gospel of Jesus Christ" who was "preaching the biblical message of salvation through Jesus Christ on a public sidewalk outside the Cinema 21."

The suit claims Lee was "preaching against the sexual sins of adultery, fornication and homosexuality" when Dancing Trout, "volun-

LAWSUITS FOR JESUS

Anti-homosexuality demonstrator takes legal action against moviegoer who questioned his 'biblical message of salvation' by Inga Sorensen



Demonstrators outside Cinema 21 on Sept. 23

PHOTO BY MARK GOLDBERY

tarily approached" Lee where he stood preaching.

It further alleges Dancing Trout "repeatedly shouted his objections within six inches of [Lee's] face."

In the suit, Lee says his "manner of preaching includes gesturing and movement," and that Dancing Trout's proximity prevented Lee "from expressing himself in this manner lest an accidental jostle be represented as a deliberate act."

The suit alleges Dancing Trout's proximity was a "deliberate attempt to create an 'offensive contact'" by Lee. It also says Dancing Trout "was heard to threaten plaintiff with the words 'How would you like your skull smashed to the ground? I'm going to kick your f—ken' a-s-s!'"

Dancing Trout denies making any threats or using foul language.

According to the suit, Portland police arrived, did not interview Lee or any witnesses, and arrested Lee on a "citizen's arrest." It says Lee was handcuffed and jailed for "about an hour."

According to the suit, Lee took time off from work to go the scheduled arraignment, at which time Multnomah County's district attorney dismissed the charges stemming from the incident.

Dancing Trout's actions, says the suit, deprived Lee of his liberty and freedom of movement. It alleges Lee "suffered loss of opportunity" to engage in free speech and exercise his freedom of religion, and also claims Dancing Trout, without probable cause, initiated criminal proceedings against Lee.

The Portland law firm Bennett Hartman & Reynolds has agreed to represent Dancing Trout pro bono.

Says attorney Greg Hartman: "[Lee] seems to be promoting a heavy agenda in court"—which is inappropriate, the lawyer adds.

Hartman and Dancing Trout say they'd like to hear from anyone who may have witnessed the incident or similar anti-gay protests at Cinema 21.

Just Out's Oct. 1 issue reported that demonstrators popped up at Cinema 21 during the Sept. 18 screening of *Edge of Seventeen*.

In the article, Ed Segel, a Reed College history professor, told us: "I got there about [8:50 p.m.] for the 9:05 showing. The police were already there. There was lots of shouting.... It caught me by surprise."

Portlander Ron Glanville, who was also on hand, noted: "When I drove up to Cinema 21, the folks with the placards were screaming."

Picketers again appeared at Cinema 21 in mid-October, during the third annual Portland Lesbian/Gay/Bi/Trans Film Festival.

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