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**Letters to the editor** should be limited to 500 words. Announcements regarding life transitions (births, deaths, unions, etc.) should be limited to 200 words; photos are welcome. **Deadline for submissions** to the editorial department and for the **Calendar** is the Thursday 15 days before the next publication date. Views expressed in letters to the editor, columns and features are not necessarily those of the publisher.

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**COMMENTARY**

BY MARTY DAVIS

**Here's the story**

The publisher offers insights into why certain decisions come down the way they do

**W**hen I acquired *Just Out* last year, the paper was neither in the best of financial shape, nor was it in the worst. The previous publisher had skillfully managed to keep the paper viable for 15 years—an accomplishment of herculean proportion, considering the times and circumstances. It now falls upon me not only to continue to do the same, but also to manage and grow to the next levels of journalistic and financial success.

In the first year and a half of my ownership, thanks to an invaluable and dedicated staff, *Just Out* has achieved a much stronger financial footing than it had previously enjoyed.

While I'm not planning on purchasing a new SUV anytime soon, I am proud to be able to pay a full-time staff of nine, plus a cadre of delivery drivers, free-lance writers and contributors. My full-time employees have access to group health insurance, a 401(k) program and frequent inspiration-inducing chocolate cakes and pastries.

Interestingly enough, though, this new and improved financial strength and solidity of *Just Out* indicates to some readers that I have "sold out" and am now operating this publication solely on a "bottom-line" mentality, while at the same time ignoring the very principles upon which the paper was founded.

My initial response to this questioning was deemed unprintable, yet the concerns raised do merit serious consideration. The readership of *Just Out* is emotionally vested in the overall essence and well-being of the paper, and it is important that I take your concerns to heart—and respond and take appropriate action—while taking all factors into consideration.

These questions and comments have come in response to the recent decision to stop publishing "The Amazon Trail." The decision to stop using this column was based largely on statistics and comments from our readers' survey of last summer. Demographics of our current readership played somewhat of a role, as did occasional editorial and administrative needs.

On occasion, when "The Amazon Trail" did not run in its regular slot, we didn't hear an outcry from readers. We notice these things and act accordingly.

While still wedded to the concept of honoring the past, it is equally

important to acknowledge the present and plan for future growth and success. I am a definite believer in the notion that planning for the future is hands-down the best method of assuring that there actually will be one. So, while thanking Lee Lynch for the contributions that she has made to the history of *Just Out*, I also must act to ensure that the next publisher acquires a strong, healthy paper capable of continuing to serve the needs of the many, many, many diverse segments of the community.

Not all decisions are popular. Not all decisions are easy. Yet they all must be made.

One reader asked if it "was a cost issue" that precipitated pulling the column. The answer to that is yes and no. No, it wasn't because *Just Out* couldn't afford to pay the writer. Yes, it's a cost issue because *Just Out* can't afford to devote editorial space to copy that is seemingly not read by a great many of our readers.

I am certainly under no delusion that every page of every issue is avidly read and appreciated by each and every reader; but I cannot afford the luxury of columns dedicated to a very, very small percentage of the readership. And on a further economic note, neither can I justify to advertisers placing their ads on pages where we have reason to believe the editorial content receives little attention. So, is it a cost issue? Yes and no.

Another factor in decision making revolves around the demographics of our readership. While *Just Out* will not be jumping headfirst into the fracas involving the much-desired disposable income of the 18-to-25-year-old market, we also realize that this is an age group that has historically been underserved by our publication.

We don't view this so much as an opportunity to sell snowboard ads; instead, it's a realization that this younger generation of gay men and lesbians also needs to see itself reflected in the pages of *Just Out*. Ideally, this will not be done at the expense of one or more other segments of the readership. It becomes quite a balancing act, trying to serve the older, the middle, the younger, the men, the women, the urbans, suburbans, rurals and just-exactly-where-is-that readers.

So on we go. Change is constant. *Just Out* must continue to keep pace with the changing faces of our readership. It's kinda like the weather: If you don't like what you see today, stick around—tomorrow it will be something different...and you just might like it!

**REFLECTIONS**

15 years ago in ...

APRIL 1985 VOL. 2 No. 6



- Cascade AIDS Project and Phoenix Rising Foundation sponsored the second in a series of "Safesex Workshops for the Gay Men of Portland."

- Harrison Pierce, well-known theater person and producer of gay plays, left Portland to take a job with the San Francisco Opera.

- Genevieve Productions presented a very special evening with musician Ronnie Gilbert (of the Weavers), accompanied by John Bucchino. The show was opened by the group Motherlode.

- *Born in Flames* was presented at Portland State University. Set in the indeterminate future, the play addressed contemporary issues: Can women's oppression ever be eliminated? Can the bitter conflicts around race, class, sexual

preference and politics that divide the women's community ever be eliminated? Politically astute but never dogmatic, *Born in Flames* was both thought provoking and hilarious.

- Activists convened to determine what actions to take regarding the Multnomah County Commission's recent repeal of an ordinance protecting gay people's employment rights in county government positions. The meeting was held at the Embers Avenue.

- *The Times of Harvey Milk* was shown at Cinema 21 for two days only. The film earned the Academy Award for Best Feature Documentary.

- Portland Gay Men's Chorus presented *Zillions: Or How We Paid Off the National Debt*.

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