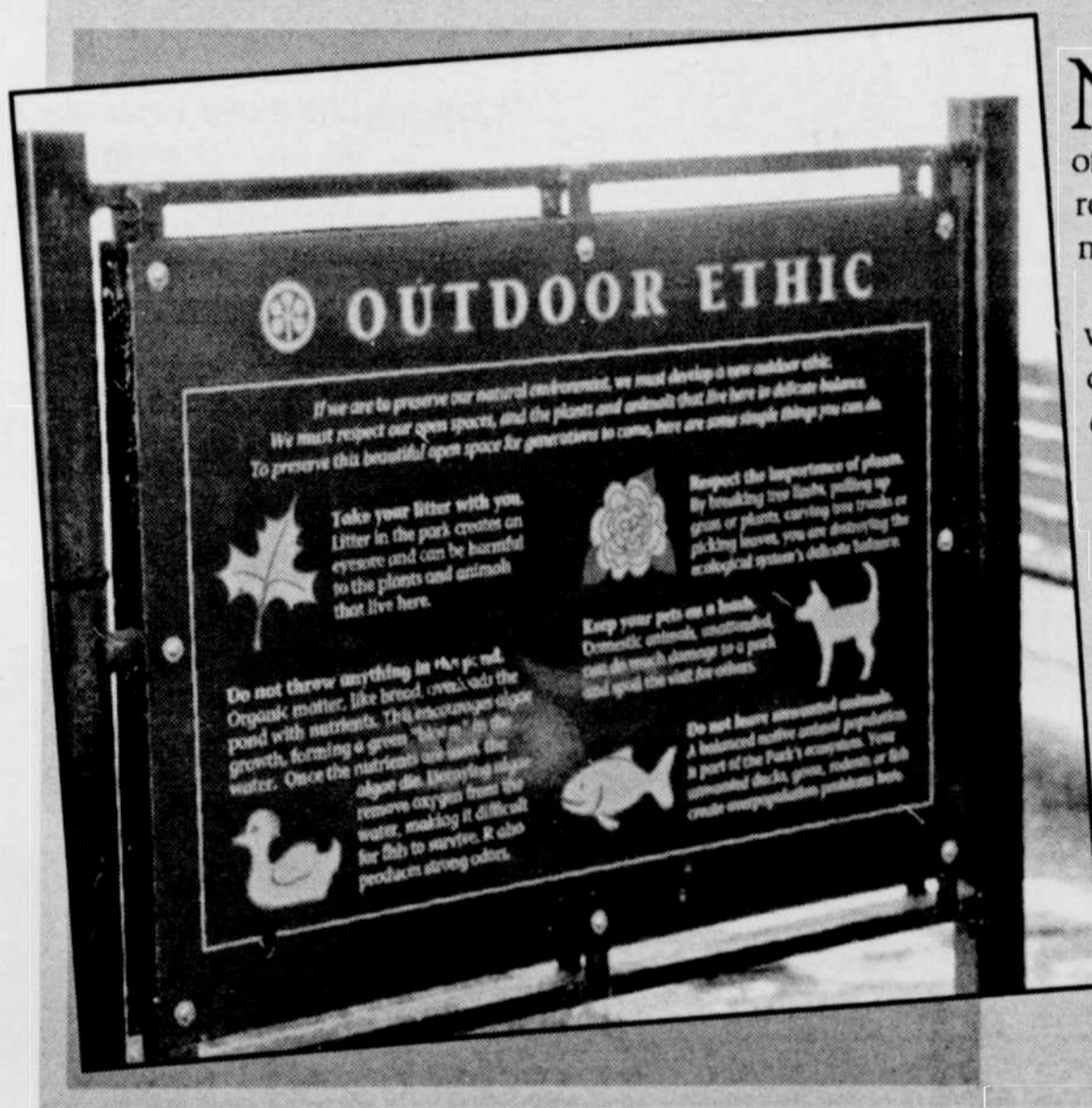


Strangers in the Night



THE INS AND OUTS OF PUBLIC SEX



Near the duck pond in Laurelhurst Park is a sign detailing the "Outdoor Ethic" of park use. Readers of the sign learn about litter, the environment and respect for the outdoors. Nowhere on the sign is there mention of the outdoor ethics of public sex.

The following article also is not intended to deal with the ethics or the legality or the appropriateness of public sex; rather, it was written to answer the question "Is public sex an accepted part of gay culture?"

It is my hope that this question and the answers provided will lead to response and reaction from readers—and then in turn lead to further questions, answers and plans.

The Portland Police Bureau is unhappy with the high rates of illegal sexual activity in Portland parks and may soon be taking aggressive action to control these activities.

As a community, as individuals, how do we balance the public and private aspects of our sexual beings? Who decides what is right and wrong? What is our "outdoor ethic"?

—Just Out Publisher Marty Davis

by Marc Acito • photos by Marty Davis

"Why do gay men have sex in the bushes?"

I love when people ask me questions like this, as if I am an expert on gay men simply by virtue of being one. However, the query comes from a lesbian friend of mine who is particularly fed up with hearing about police crackdowns in public parks.

My first thought is: "Do we? Do gay men have sex in the bushes—or in restrooms or on beaches or in adult video arcades?"

Having done the married-in-the-suburbs thing virtually my entire adult life (art imitates life in my comic, "The Boys Next Door"), I have no idea. So my partner, Floyd, and I took it upon ourselves to survey 240 men at Pride 2000 and Peacock in the Park.

A total of 54 percent of the men we surveyed told us they've had sex with a stranger in a public place (as defined above). And 41 percent have done so in the past two years.

Although the survey is hardly a scientific one, the results portray a community divided pretty evenly between the more conventional

"vanilla sex" types and those determined to lick every flavor they can.

BEATING AROUND THE BUSH

"This is my bar," says Corey, motioning to Laurelhurst Park, site of the infamous and allegedly brutal 1993 police sting operation.

Corey's a regular here, and he agrees to act as my "cruise director" for the evening. Together, we take in the honeysuckle-scented night air.

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