

Continued from Page 9

But before Ball sent the letter off, his phone rang. It turned out to be Kroeker.

Ball shared his disappointment and concerns and gave the chief advice about how he might make things right. "I feel like I did the right thing," he said about standing up to his superior officer.

Days later, Ball received a second call from Kroeker. He said his boss was upset and concerned—and most importantly genuine.

Ball now thinks Kroeker has learned through the years and has changed. He doubts the chief's words of a decade ago are his current beliefs and thinks his challenge will not be to convince his officers but to convince the rest of the community.

SOME SUPPORT KROEKER

The *Oregonian* has come out swinging on Kroeker's behalf. The paper acknowledged that part of public life requires dealing with situations like this.

"But the chief's religious faith is his business," the *Oregonian* said in a Nov. 1 editorial. "We should not—and, as a practical matter, we cannot—judge him for what's in his heart."

Others agree.

Portland Lt. Michelle Lish, a member of the Sexual Minorities Roundtable, a sort of bridge between the sexual minorities community and the bureau, told the *Oregonian* she hasn't seen Kroeker do anything inappropriate to the gay community.

And Lish said Kroeker doesn't bring his religious beliefs to work. "I believe people have a right to the freedom of religion," she said.

Portlander Alan Batie admitted Kroeker's comments don't thrill him but acknowledged he is entitled to his opinions. "What counts is whether he's acting on those thoughts in his job as chief of the police," he wrote in an e-mail to *Just Out*. But Batie said if Kroeker lets his bias influence who the bureau serves, then he should be fired.

AN OFFER TO MEET

The Rev. Roy Cole, senior pastor of the Metropolitan Community Church of Portland, is asking for Katz to reconsider Kroeker's employment. He was one of the original signers of the 1994 partnership agreement between the sexual minorities community and the bureau. "It is imperative for the continued safety of all her citizens that Portland is afforded leaders who share the core values of her citizenry and elected officials," Cole said.

He has extended an invitation to Kroeker and the community to speak to each other at the church. The chief said he plans to continue to address the gay, lesbian, bi and trans community and would agree to a meeting in the near future.

GLOBAL ISSUES

"But what does he think now? What has he learned? How has he changed?" Balboa said about what he hopes to hear from Kroeker. "As a citizen, I think I have a right to know his views. It makes me suspect."

And the media are now curious as well. Mazza said the *Los Angeles Times* recently requested

the tapes from him. And others say they are busy digging into Kroeker's past.

In fact, his name appears all over the Internet because of his long tenure at the LAPD—as does the fellowship he has been in association with for more than a decade. And it turns out the group is not only anti-gay but is linked to conservative Christian groups with anti-gay beliefs across the globe.

The Internet site of former LAPD officer Bill Rhetts is filled with ultraconservative statements. He is well-known for his anti-gay views.

Rhetts sent a carbon copy to Kroeker this year of a letter he wrote criticizing affirmative action efforts in the LAPD. Kroeker told *Just Out* he doesn't know who Rhetts is.

But Rhetts knows Kroeker and told *Just Out* he worked for Kroeker for 10 years. Rhetts said Kroeker speaks at many functions and churches.

GETTING PAST THIS

Few are calling for drastic measures. Most want to see how Kroeker handles the community and are awaiting a retraction of his statements—even if just ceremonial.

Others are watching Kroeker with a hawk's eye. One misstep and they will be ready to demand aggressive action.

And still others aren't that concerned. Some chalk it up to internalized homophobia.

"Sometimes I think that we accept small steps towards inclusion rather than expect the full respect and human dignity that every person in the community deserves," said Matthew Nelson of Equity Foundation.

Some are blaming the election. People are distracted and only can handle one thing at a time, they say.

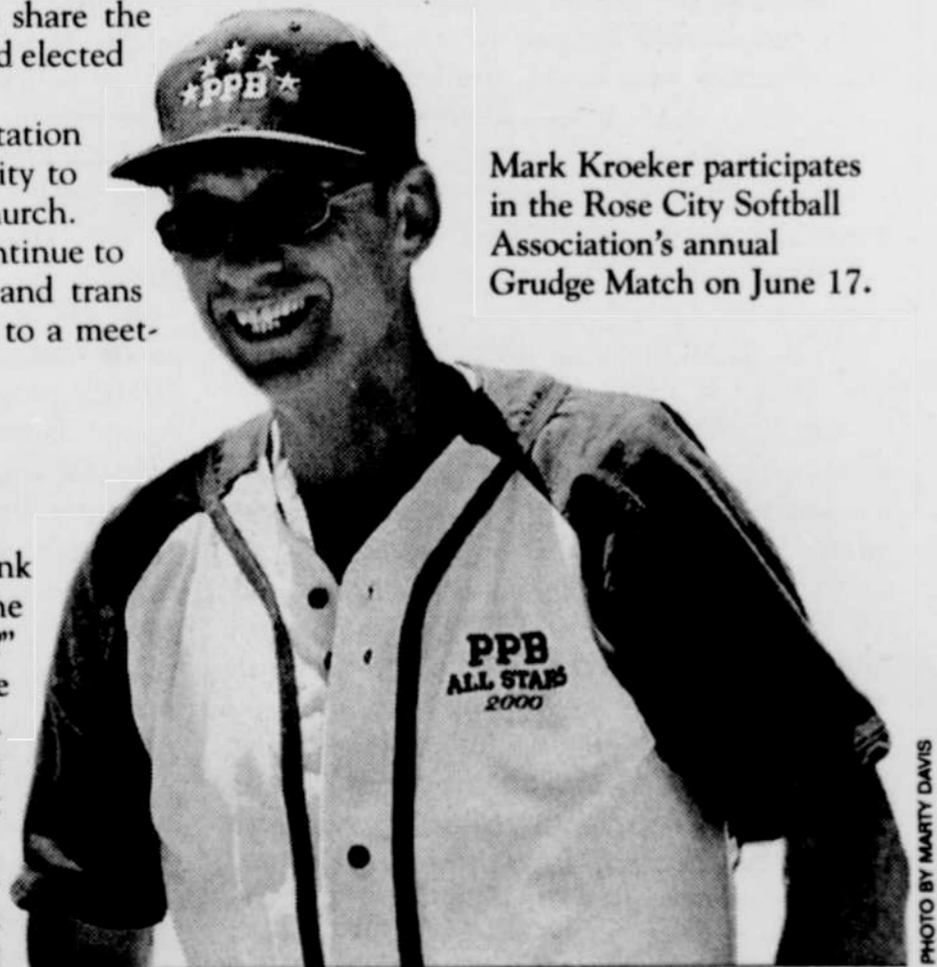
In any case, Kroeker still is showing up to work at his downtown 15th floor office with a smile on his face. He generally comes across as a happy, good-hearted guy. He talks softly and seems like he wants to make things right—even while refusing to do so.

He said he is troubled. He said he hasn't slept much in recent days.

Evidently, it is difficult for someone trying to compartmentalize his life and do the right thing and feeling so misunderstood. Sound familiar? **JN**

To contact MAYOR VERA KATZ, call 503-823-4120 or visit the Internet site www.ci.portland.or.us/mayor.

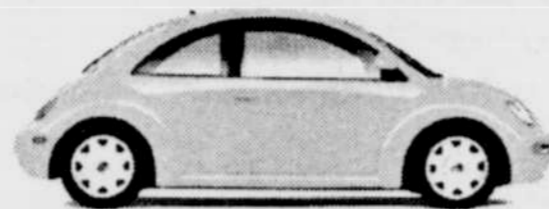
JONATHAN KIPP is a *Just Out* staff reporter who can be reached at jkipp@teleport.com.



Mark Kroeker participates in the Rose City Softball Association's annual Grudge Match on June 17.

PHOTO BY MARY DAVIS

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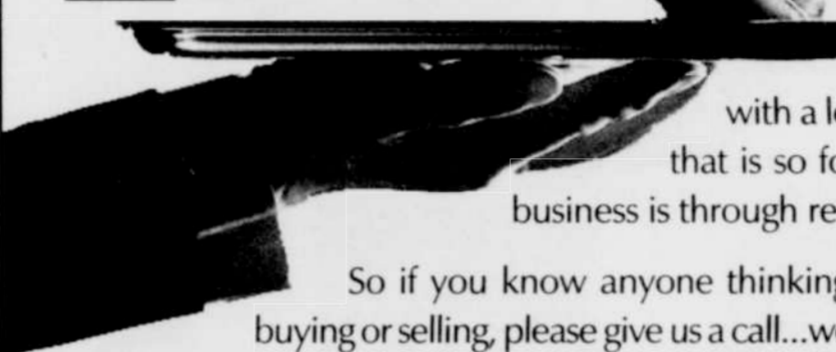
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