



PHOTO BY MARTY DAVIS

Darcelle gives Mark Kroeker a hand for coming out to the party

CROWNING ACHIEVEMENT

Drag queen invites police chief to birthday bash by Jonathan Kipp

Portland Police Chief Mark Kroeker has yet to apologize to the gay and lesbian community for the disparaging comments he made years ago, but he says an apology is coming. "Sooner rather than later," he told the *Willamette Week*.

Kroeker's failure to apologize has angered many people. However, some expect an apology might come during a forum Dec. 11, when he will meet face to face with the sexual minorities community.

The meeting will be the first in a public setting since the taped comments were discovered and released to the media. The forum was arranged in a joint effort between *Just Out* publisher Marty Davis and the Sexual Minorities Roundtable.

The roundtable held an emergency meeting Nov. 21 to discuss what role it would play in repairing the relationship between Kroeker and the gay community. The group serves as a conduit for communication between sexual minorities and the police bureau.

Organizers hope community members will come to share their feelings and have a chance for something positive to come out of the meeting. Capt. Bob Ball, a gay reserve officer and a roundtable member, and Dan Cadigan of the Oregon Gay and Lesbian Lawyers Association will help facilitate the meeting.

Although Kroeker has not said he has changed his mind about any of the comments made on the tapes, he has tried his best to assure his officers, gay and straight, that he is committed to fairness and respect for the entire police force. He has said the same about the citizens of Portland he was hired to protect.

While Kroeker has been asked to resign by numbers of people, he is enjoying significant support from locals—including those in the sexual minorities community. Some even want to help him rebuild the trust and popularity he was enjoying until the scandal broke.

In an effort to do that, Kroeker was invited to Portland legend and drag queen Darcelle's 70th birthday party. Some thought the chief needed to get up close with Portland's gay community.

Video cameras and multiple reporters followed, and Kroeker's night out turned the private party at Darcelle's nightclub into a media event. Television viewers got to see the chief, smiling from ear to ear with his wife by his side, face to face with gays and lesbians.

Even *Oregonian* columnist Steve Duin attended and devoted an entire column to the party. Despite the fun Kroeker might have enjoyed, some called the ploy a joke and a public relations nightmare.

Mayor Vera Katz came out in strong support of the chief after meeting with scores of citizens and consulting with her staff. She said he is committed to repairing his relationship with the gay and lesbian community.

The upcoming forum just might be the first step. **jn**

KROEKER TO ATTEND FORUM

Portland Police Chief Mark Kroeker will attend a forum 7 p.m. Dec. 11 at Metropolitan Community Church of Portland, 2400 N.E. Broadway. Call 503-236-1252 for more information.

WOOD PANEL

Forum focuses on the boat oar by Jim Radosta

The Police Chief Concerns Group held a forum to discuss Mark Kroeker's controversial audiotaped speeches Nov. 21 at Lutheran Inner City Ministries.

Bonnie Tinker, Love Makes a Family executive director, moderated a panel of 10 keynote speakers including Alan Graf of the National Lawyers' Guild, Susan Laarman of Bradley-Angle House and Derry Jackson of the Portland Public Schools board. Most of them focused on Kroeker's advocacy of corporal punishment and the ongoing debate concerning police brutality.

"This is not about past homophobic statements," Tinker said in a statement released prior to the forum. "A major concern is his recommendation of violence within the family and his use of this type of family 'discipline' as a model for community justice."

According to one speech Kroeker gave during the early to mid-1990s, he and his wife, Dianne, oversaw a Christian camp for 500 to 700 high school students at Hume Lake in Sequoia National Park for about 10 years. When

one of the kids would violate the rules, they would be hit with a 3-foot segment of a boat oar.

Kroeker has admitted speaking about the issue of paddling teens but insists that he must have misspoken during the speech and that he personally never has used that form of discipline on any child. However, transcripts indicate he described the punishment in graphic detail, including where the oar struck the buttocks to avoid injury.

Kroeker said the campers would return five to seven years later to thank him for swatting them. "They didn't get it at home; they were dying for it—that form of attention."

Rick Fernandez was one of the few speakers who touched on Kroeker's anti-gay remarks. He represented the American Friends Service Committee's Grupo Arco Iris, a support group for gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgendered Latinos.

To illustrate his stance, Fernandez offered a scenario in which a police chief had slammed on Jews or African Americans. "I doubt that we'd still be having this discussion, and that's what bothers us the most." **jn**



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