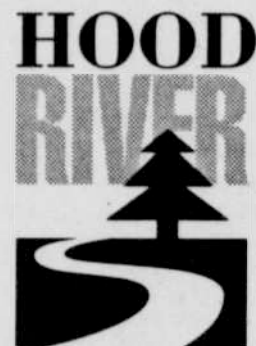


Take Me to the River

Continued from Page 23

When they have the time, Langston and Bernard socialize with friends in their Hood River home, which sits on two acres, and travel west to visit Portland, where they have a loft in the Pearl District. Spending time in both places means having it all, Langston says.

When he tires of small-town life, he jumps into his car and heads for Portland. When the crowds and congestion of the city are too much, he heads east.



Langston knows well the benefits of living in Hood River. Friends in the city usually don't understand, though. Langston says they always have one question: Why?

But as soon as they venture out to visit the Columbia Gorge, they start to understand the quality of life, he says. "It's not a sleepy little town," Langston says.

Usually, he says, friends just want to keep coming back. "Hood River has a lot to offer. People feel very comfortable here."

As a windsurfer, mountain biker, businessman or resident, Langston says he never has felt out of place in Hood River. It is a special town all the way around, he says.

GORGE GALS

Friends Nancy Howard and Annette St.-Pierre both left Portland to live in the Columbia

Gorge about five years ago. Howard lives with her partner, Kathy, in White Salmon, Wash. St.-Pierre is just down the road in Stevenson, where she shares her life with Alyson.

The friends agreed to meet with *Just Out* at a coffee shop in Hood River and talk about life in the Gorge.

The conversation started with the topic of potlucks. When you talk to lesbians living in the Gorge, you hear a lot about potlucks. Howard took St.-Pierre to her first one.

Jonathan Kipp: I heard the women up here get together for potlucks. Everyone seems to talk about it. Is there a name of that group? How many show up?

Annette St.-Pierre: Gorge Gals. I guess about...2 1/2 dozen.

JK: Do you get together every month?

Nancy Howard: No. Sporadically.

JK: Has the group met lately?

NH: No. Not since the holidays.

ASP: It's time to do more.

NH: Everyone hibernates in the winter, because of the ice.

JK: Do you work?

NH: I'm retired. [Grins]

ASP: Part-time. Temporary service. Either side of the river up to The Dalles.

JK: So, do you like it up here?

NH: You can't beat the quality of life. It's the best-kept secret in the Northwest.

ASP: Oh, I love it! There isn't a time I'm driving that stretch of the highway [State Highway 14 in Washington along the Columbia River] that I don't feel blessed.



Portlander Margaret Baker discovers the local homo hangout

JK: Describe your home.

ASP: No neighbors for two miles. Two acres. Wild animals.

NH: I live in the woods.

JK: Is there a downside to living in the Gorge?

ASP: It is very difficult to get people to work [on your house]. They watch the wind and are suddenly off to windsurf. I miss some of the cultural events.

JK: Do you go into Portland very often?

ASP: Tons. I go into Portland, and the traffic just drives me nuts.

NH: No. We're homebodies.

JK: Do your friends in Portland understand why you live out here? Do they visit?

ASP: People don't come out. To them it is a long way away. I'd love to share what I have with people.

NH: But once they come out, they want to keep coming out.

JK: Have you had any problems out here because you're lesbians?

ASP: I have not had any problem yet.

NH: I've really not had a bad experience. When I introduce Kathy as my partner, nobody gasps.

ASP: I'm not ready to walk down the street holding hands, though.

JK: Do the local men and women get together, or is it segregated?

NH: It is separate. I think it would be good to have a community of men and women.

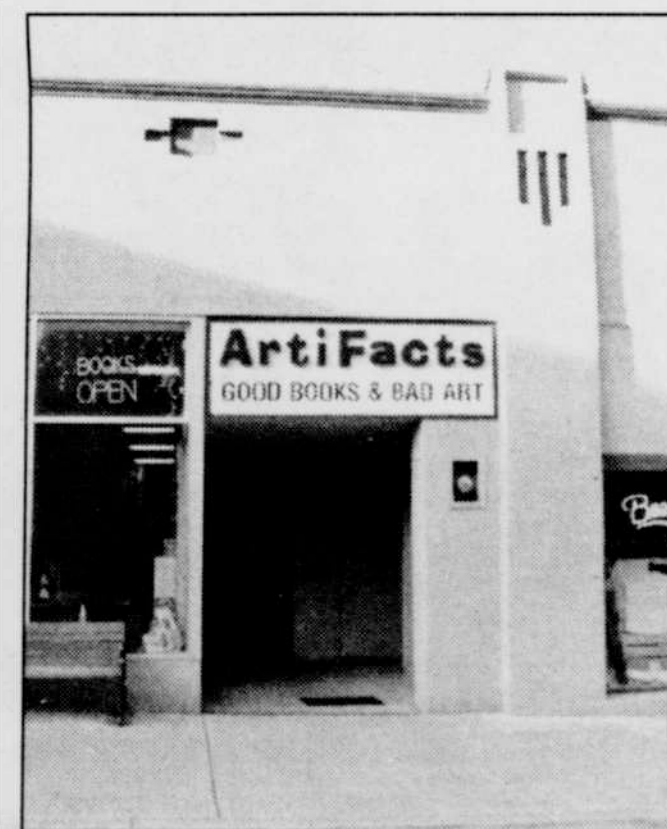
JK: Do you hope more gays and lesbians move out here, or are you hoping it stays small and relatively unknown?

NH: Come visit, don't stay. [Laughs]

ASP: If we had a larger community I think there would be more tolerance. I wouldn't be opposed to more people moving out here. We can have bigger potlucks. [Smiles] ☐



Uniqueness abounds in downtown Hood River; ArtiFacts (right) carries *Just Out*



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