

PHOTO BY MARY DAVIS

ing some months to watch *Monday Night Football*. Often more than 20 people show up.

Women get together outside as well; regular groups meet up to golf, ski and play tennis. Ashenbrenner says the lesbian community is informal but has a strong infrastructure. Locals estimate their "phone tree" includes 200 to 300 women.

Dan O'Neil organizes most of the gatherings for gay men. His address book includes at least 150 listings.

Every month he mails out fliers about a dinner—Central Oregon Men's Night Out—at one of Bend's many eateries. About 16 to 20 couples show up.

The rest are single men. O'Neil says the age

range is broad: from 18 to 75 years old.

He says the group doesn't get hassled by non-gay patrons. "Actually, we kind of look like the Rotary." Most restaurants ask the group to come back.

Although the expense of going out is a non-issue for most men, no one is excluded. O'Neil personally guarantees anyone who wants to participate in the gathering can go; he will pay their way if they can't afford it.

Other activities in the area have included a Halloween costume party and a fund-raiser barbecue for people with HIV.

Gay and lesbian social activities tend to be separate. But that might be changing.

Lee says the area's lesbians just had their first

get-together with gay men in March. Ashenbrenner says she welcomes such interaction and misses hanging out with gay men, like she used to do in Portland.

Bend doesn't have any gay establishments, but Sweet Baby Jane's downtown is a gay-friendly spot, locals say. The establishment recently played host to a "Drag Night."

Bookstores are few, but at least one, Barnes & Noble, carries national gay magazines.


Local lesbians tend to be coupled. Lee says about 90 percent of the women are in relationships. "There's a shortage of single people."

Still, many of the area's singles do find love in Bend. Lee met her partner after moving to the east side of the Cascades.

Most local gay men, on the other hand, are

single." O'Neil says.

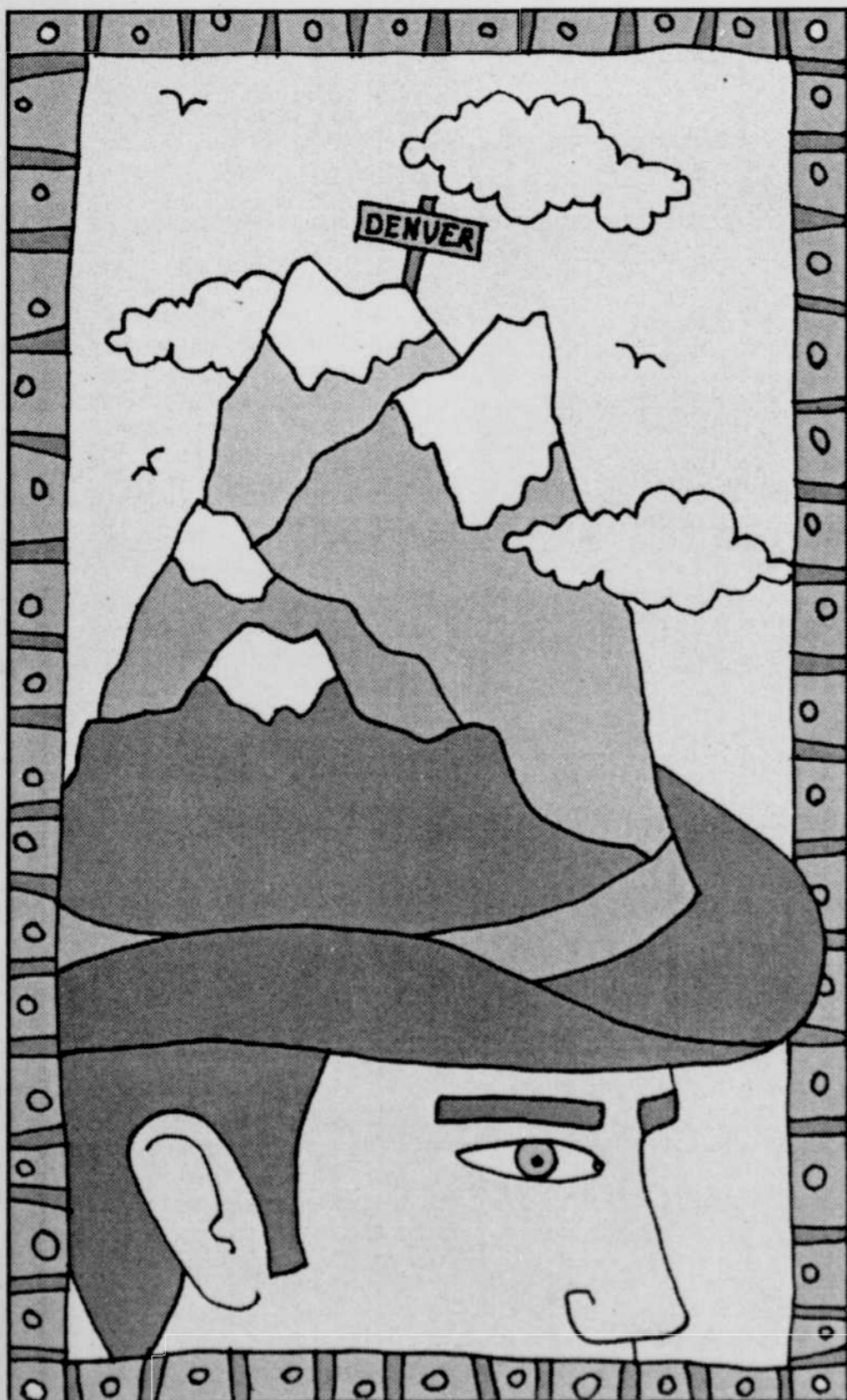
It might not be Stark Street on a Saturday night, but whatever your gender, there is a social life in Bend.

For more information about CENTRAL OREGON MEN'S NIGHT OUT call Dan O'Neil at 888-429-6368 or 541-312-8881. For more information about CENTRAL OREGON PARENTS, FAMILIES AND FRIENDS OF LESBIANS AND GAYS call 541-317-2334 or send e-mail to elec@aoi.com. For more information about DESCHUTES COUNTY COALITION FOR HUMAN DIGNITY call 541-385-3320. 

JONATHAN KIPP is a Just Out staff reporter who can be reached at jonathan@justout.com.



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