

rainbow ball

friday, june 15 • crystal ballroom

1332 west burnside

doors open at 8:00 pm • 21 & over

tickets: \$10 advance
\$12 at the door

tickets available at all mcmenamins outlets,
crystal ballroom, from chorus members
or online at www.mcmenamins.com

hosted by

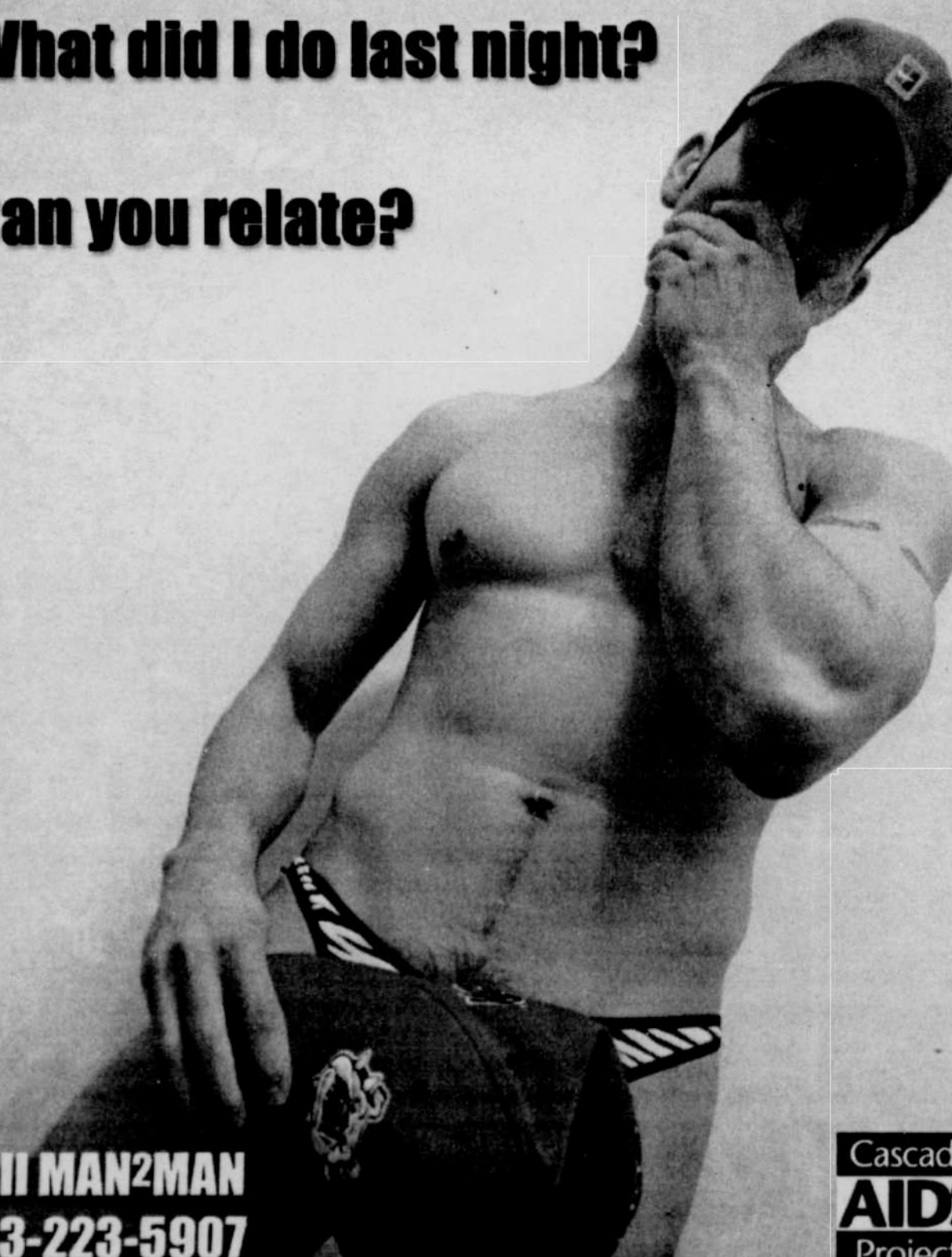


What did I do last night?

Can you relate?

Call **MAN2MAN**
503-223-5907

Cascade
AIDS
Project

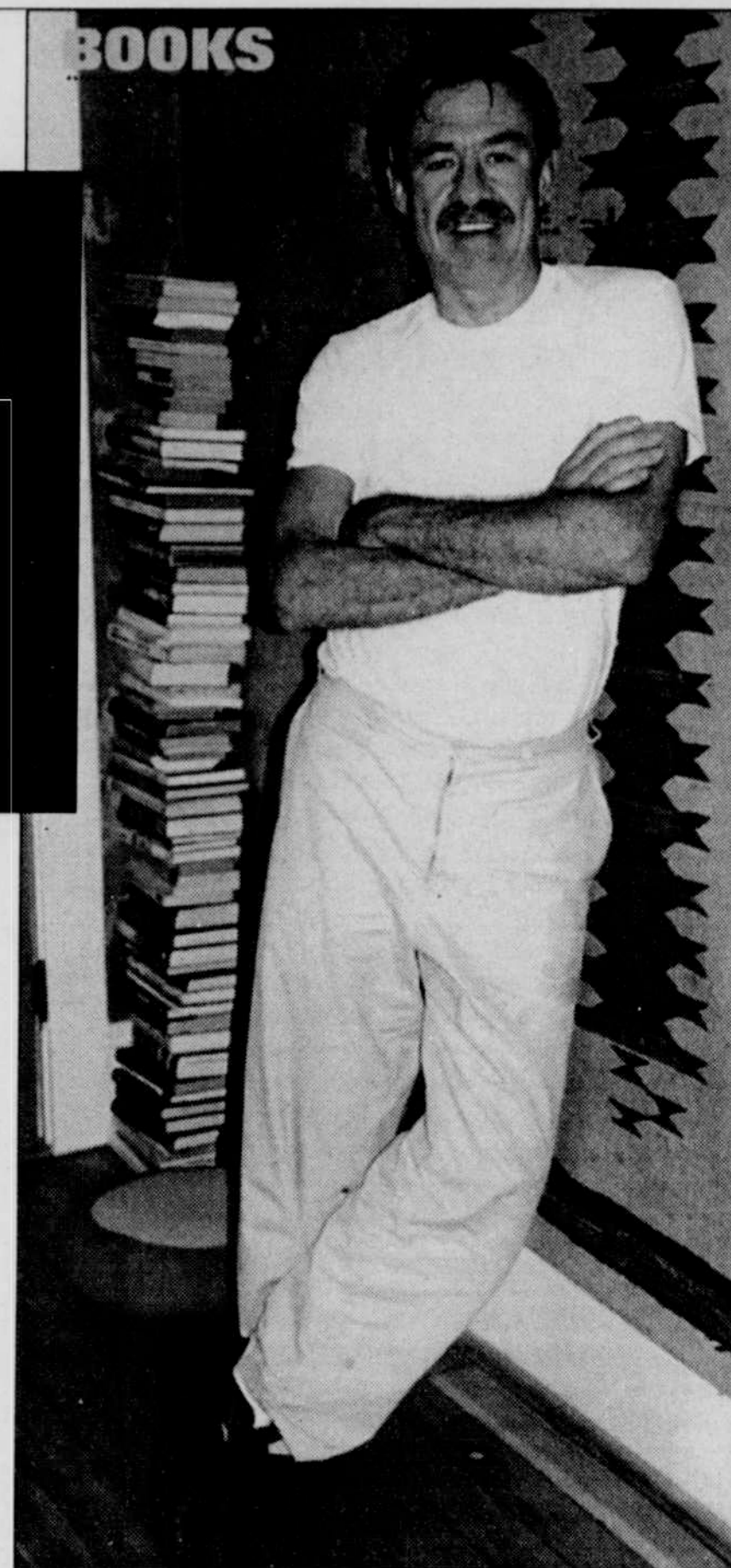


BOOKS

Tom Spanbauer in hell

The dark side
of the man
who fell in love
with the moon

BY MARC ACTO



PHOTOS BY MURRY DAVIS

Fucked dry." That's how Tom Spanbauer describes the experience of writing his latest book, *In the City of Shy Hunters*. Ten years after publishing the highly regarded *The Man Who Fell in Love with the Moon*, five years after almost dying of AIDS, two years after ending a long-term relationship, the Portland author has channeled his grief, his rage and his longing into an epic of Wagnerian proportions. "It's the responsibility of the survivor to tell the story," Spanbauer writes, but he almost didn't live to tell this tale of a band of eccentric New Yorkers on the front lines of the battle against AIDS in the 1980s. His own brush with death interrupted the writing of the novel, but it also steeled his courage to complete it.

The phrase "The only way out is in" repeats throughout the book as a leitmotif and, like Dante descending into the inferno in order to ascend, Spanbauer felt compelled to return to his past in order to move on.

"I always feel that your writing is strong by going to your own scary places," he says. "I think of this book like a journey into the underworld to retrieve something very, very important."

Reflecting back on the injustices of the 1980s, Spanbauer says: "I still hate the Reagans. I still want to see them publicly humiliated."

Raised in a German Catholic enclave in Idaho surrounded by Mormons, Spanbauer first found his voice as a writer while still living at home and going to college. "It was the early 1960s and everything was so clean and so cute and none of it made any sense to me," he says, "so I started a journal and on the first page I wrote the word 'TRUTHS' in big, swirly letters."

Revelations like "I jerked off three times today" might hardly raise a titter nowadays, but they sent shock waves coursing through Spanbauer's house when his mother found the journal taped to the top of his underwear drawer. "My father said to me, 'You take that thing you call a journal and get out of this house, but first you go in there and apologize to your mother...then the three of us knelt down and prayed for my soul not to go to hell,'" he says.

Today, Spanbauer routinely goes to hell looking for material. "I'm still working out all of this abuse and all this darkness and all this sin that I got from Catholicism," he says. "I'm not surprised, after all I've been through, I'm not

into sadomasochism or even leather. I'd like to express that, but then I get there and I always feel so silly."

The leather world's loss is literature's gain, however, and fans of *The Man Who Fell in Love with the Moon's* sexual frankness will not be disappointed by his newest novel. But *In the City of Shy Hunters* is not a book meant to be read with one hand—its explicitness is meant to provoke some honest examination of our sexuality.

Despite the image that gay men are obsessed with sex, and genitalia in particular, Spanbauer finds most of them reluctant to engage in a meaningful conversation about it.

"Who really talks about big cocks and little cocks in literature?" he says. "These are things we all wonder about—you wonder about me, I wonder about you—but we don't talk about it. We're like women in the '50s; we get together and what do we do? We talk about flower arrangements."

Spanbauer relates that the surest way to clear a room at a dull gay party is to turn to someone and say: "Gee, what's your relationship to your penis? 'Cause, y'know, I've always been kind of troubled by mine."

He continues, "Statistics are that the average male's penis is 5 inches long, but we pick up *Honcho* and there's not a 5 inch penis in there, and there's not a skinny penis either."

Spanbauer's candor dealing with issues of size and potency in *Shy Hunters* does much to dispel the notion that if men don't live up to the *Honcho* standard they are somehow deficient. He describes the time period as being all about "rage and genitalia."



"I'm still working out all of this abuse and all this darkness and all this sin that I got from Catholicism."

—Tom Spanbauer