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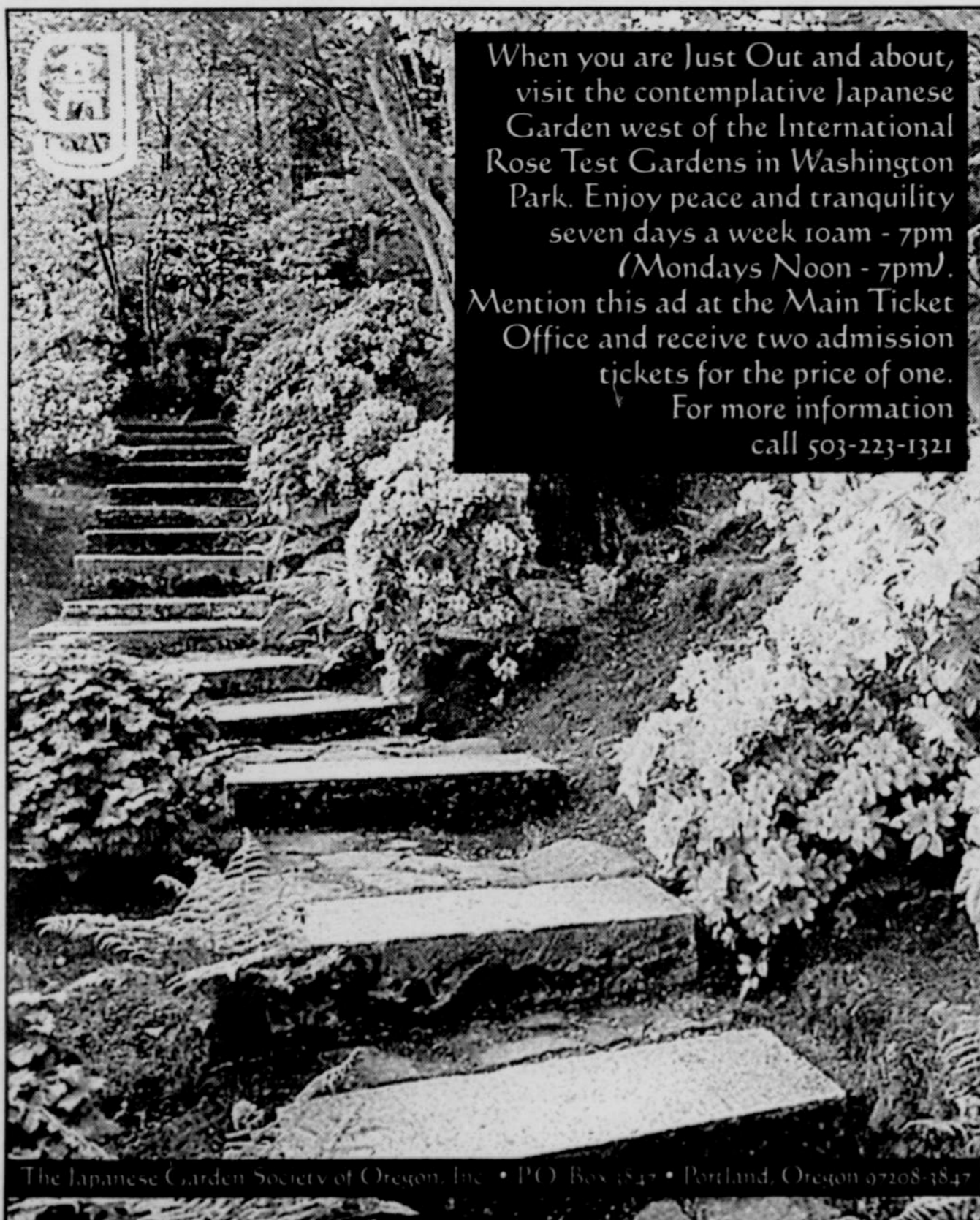
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Speak Out

Every rose has its thorn

TO THE EDITOR:

I attended the Rose Festival Grand Floral Parade this year for the first time since I've been living in Portland. Not that I had anything against it. It just worked out that way. My partner and I had a good time altogether with only one exception...and Misha was her name-o.

I had heard that for a gay old time we should stand near the gay corner and listen to her commentary. We did, and some of it was as we'd expected—i.e., playful and irreverent humor.

Before I come off as prude or, worse, unhip, let me say I love satire and dark humor. David Sedaris and Bruce Vilanch are two of my favorite gay practitioners of the art.

But to attack people in the parade as Misha did for being too hefty is nothing but mean-spirited intolerance. You know...that despicable thing gay people always are fighting against?

That's not my only complaint nor, in my opinion, the worst of this self-dubbed "Dragon Queen's" bitter patter.

When I was a teen—too many years ago to admit to—I would've been crushed to have been singled out as "family" the way Misha did the young and indeed nellie boy who marched and twirled with the high school band. Now maybe there's more to this story than I saw, but it looked to my partner and I like this poor kid was being outed in front of his fellow students and the hundreds of other spectators on that corner.

I was embarrassed for the boy and for myself for being a part of the jeering section. I work in a crisis center for mental health, and I've seen my share of confused, suicidal youths coming to terms with their sexuality and hope to God this kid is not so adversely affected by this inconsiderate and feeble attempt to get a laugh.

For what it's worth, my vote is against representation of our community by anyone so nonexemplary of the values that make for an accepting and accepted community. I'm not advocating censorship. Misha is entitled to her opinion—and so am I.

Doesn't Portland's gay community deserve to be more graciously represented? We pride ourselves on being a progressive city, and this type of representation is anything but!

PAUL GREGORY
Portland

Dog gone!

TO THE EDITOR:

I wanted to take a few moments from my day to thank you for your commentary regarding greyhound racing and your decision not to support the industry through advertisements in your paper ["Lord, Help Me Be the Person My Dog Thinks I Am," June 1].

As an animal lover with two dogs of my own at home, I fully understand the ability of our canine friends to give love and experience a number of thoughts, feelings and emotions. As much time and money as I have spent on the well-being of my two, nothing comes close to what I have gotten from them in return. So for me to see a dog bred, raised and kept at a facility where its only value is placed on its last performance in the quarter-mile is, to say the least, heartwrenching.

As a cruelty caseworker for the Animal Legal Defense Fund, I am exposed to the pain and suffering our canine friends are capable of feeling as well. It never ceases to amaze me how inventive and resourceful people can be when it comes to exploiting animals or even cruelly treating them.

It is, without a doubt, the poorest of traits a human being can have. Included in man's mistreatment and injustice toward animals is the industry of professional greyhound racing.

As a gay man who reads *Just Out* on a regular basis, I am proud you and your publication have drawn this one small line in the sand and taken a stand against animal mistreatment and cruelty. As a token of my support, I have enclosed a check for \$30 for a subscription to be sent to our workplace.

I hope we will continue to see your publication address the issues important to animals and those of us humans who love them. Thanks again for taking this stand and for bringing it to your readers for them to think about.

BRADLEY H. WOODALL
Animal Legal Defense Fund Anti-Cruelty Division

Don't ask, don't testify

TO THE EDITOR:

I am concerned that the Portland Public Schools policy on military recruitment, as modified at the May 21 board meeting, will exacerbate the usual sense of second-class status of gay and lesbian students and add to confusion about the discriminatory "don't ask, don't tell" policy.

The new policy—or "clarification," as the resolution refers to itself—requires teachers and counselors who inform students of military "opportunities" (whether requested by the student or initiated by the staffer) to "advise the student about the military's policy regarding sexual minorities." Thus, school staff now are mandated to initiate the discussion of homosexuality when speaking to students about military enlistment.

Amazingly, however, the policy provides no guidelines on how to approach the topic. It does not even suggest informing the student that the district officially objects to such discrimination.

Regardless of my opinion about the policy as now written, I have to admire the board's ability to take a divisive issue and put together a compromise position that each of its members could vote for! But its relationship to the public at the meeting was dismal.

Before the board voted on the new policy, it took testimony from the public. But the limited time allotted was filled by phone sign-ups several days before the meeting.

So those who spoke addressed the established policy or the original proposal (by Derry Jackson and Ron Saxton) to modify it; none even mentioned the compromise that had been developed by Sue Hagmeier since the previous meeting. Then, the board discussion and vote that followed the public comments made no formal acknowledgment of the original proposal for change (not even to table or withdraw it).

The board's process resulted in the time spent on testimony essentially being wasted. And the public has had no public input on the modification.

Observing the public testimony and subsequent adoption of the compromise proposal was rather like being in a station as two trains simultaneously stop at two different platforms only a few feet apart, with no interaction—nor acknowledgment—between the passengers of each.

Under this policy, I fear a student will be able to walk away from an advisory session thinking, "I'm not good enough for the military," without so much as hearing an acknowledgment from school personnel that the "don't ask, don't tell" policy is discriminatory. And there's certainly no assurance that