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Gender offender

TO THE EDITOR:

We here at Basic Rights Oregon are still reeling from Byron Beck's "Queer Window" column in the Feb. 6 issue of *Willamette Week*.

This isn't the first time we've been shocked by him. Last year we were taken aback by his objection to the memorial service for Loni Kai Okaruru.

Now we get it. If Loni had been a white butch gay guy like Byron, she'd have been worth a memorial.

If Damon Woodcock was "strong, butch and born with a dick," then he'd be worth fighting for. Well, Byron, he is strong and butch, and lots of great cops never have dicks.

Let's be clear: Mr. Beck doesn't represent the views of the sexual minorities community, and his insensitivity is a total disgrace. Not only have trans people always been part of our movement, but people's bigotry about gender is at the root of much of the bias that queer people face.

It's Byron who's "gender-fucked." He sees gender not as identity and expression but as "plumbing," and he brags about his own bigotry and narrow-mindedness as though we'd all slap him on the back and hand him a beer.

Way to go after the most vulnerable group of people in our community, buddy. High-five!

While Byron's been at the gym, some of us have been building bridges within the sexual minorities community, trying to understand and show respect for each other. Apparently, he hasn't availed himself of any of this, which is his choice.

What's hard to understand is why *Willamette Week* chooses him to write a column called "Queer Window." Get a real journalist—or change the name to "Pane in the Ass."

ROEY THORPE
BRO Executive Director

Professional coverage

TO THE EDITOR:

Just wanted to thank you for the professional manner with which you reported the current Lesbian Community Project issue ["LCP Survives Attempted Coup," Feb. 1].

I have been a member for more than 16 years, since it began. I am proud to continue being a member and honored to now be a board member.

LCP, like any group, has positive and negative issues. One of the reasons I have remained a member is the fact that it is dedicated to the community in which we live, and the "heart" of this organization are the women who are its members.

For many years *Just Out* has provided a valuable service in keeping us apprised of differing issues. I also want to thank you for your ongoing support of artists, performers and other groups in our vastly diverse community.

DONNA LUCKETT
Portland

Exhuming McCarthy

TO THE EDITOR:

Seems the Oregon Citizens Alliance has now become the Gay Taliban. Of course, there are similarities. Both groups are militant right-wing fundamentalists. Both want women to be gagged and homebound. And both are being used as an excuse to silence opposition to the leaders of the populations they terrorize: "Let's skip the fighting among ourselves and get on with the business at hand" ["The Sidewalks of Portland," Feb. 1].

If we cannot call our people to account for what they are doing wrong, how can we expect to call to account our oppressors? Do we give ourselves free reign to break laws, ignore bylaws and forward personal agendas without accountability?

As citizens and activists, we cannot allow Homeland or Gayland Security to pressure us into silence when we object to what our leaders are doing. The McCarthyesque atmosphere permeating this country has just been brought very close to home.

It is no longer OK to oppose an illegal president's policies, be they foreign or domestic. Nor is it OK to oppose the director of a lesbian organization that has 20 years of history in Portland.

It doesn't seem to matter whether the president's policies are ethical, moral or constitutional. In the Lesbian Community Project's case, it doesn't seem to matter that the director has usurped the board's authority and ignored the bylaws of the organization.

What has been characterized by the editor of this newspaper as an attack that came and went was neither an attack nor a short-lived episode. Instead, it was the culmination of eight months of trying to return LCP to the board-driven organization it originally was intended to be.

Every effort was made to work with the director and her supporters on the Community Education Project board. Bylaws were examined, laws were learned and relayed, and compliance was asked for again and again.

The subject was put off board meeting after board meeting. The last excuse for delay was the New Year's Eve dance. In good faith the faction of the LCP board in opposition to a director-run organization complied with these wishes.

The first order of business in the new year was to remove one LCP board member insisting on compliance with the bylaws and state laws, Roma Virginia Hanvey. The other board member insisting on compliance was scheduled to be removed Feb. 11.

LCP was not created "to provide support and

understanding for struggling women" but to "assist the lesbian community as it organizes to meet today's challenges and as it plans for tomorrow's possibilities." One of its original bylaws stated that the board of directors shall "direct the activities of the organization and ensure that all activities are consistent with the purposes of the organization as well as all local, state and federal laws."

Not something blithely revised to suit the momentary needs of a few. The bylaws of LCP were written to ensure its longevity in an ever-changing world and to ensure fairness and equality.

JUDITH K. APPEGATE
Former LCP Board Chair

Conflict of interest

TO THE EDITOR:

I should think if *Just Out* is going to use such a highly charged, pejorative term as "attempted coup" in a headline about an organization with as much name recognition as the Lesbian Community Project that the accompanying story would warrant more than 5 column inches plus a couple of paragraphs in an editorial primarily concerned with the homeless. I mean, by what tortured logic do you conclude that a duly elected board member—publicly expressing concern about "leadership" possibly violating bylaws—is thereby guilty of "attempting" a "coup"?

This is clearly an instance in which *Just Out* has failed the most rudimentary of journalistic responsibilities. You should provide the necessary information—including interviews with individuals on all sides of the issue as well as a look at the bylaws under contention—to allow readers to reach their own conclusions; instead, you come off as patently biased and utterly unprofessional.

This lamentable situation is exacerbated by the obvious conflict of interest and appearance of collusion on the part of *Just Out* with respect

transitions

Lee Swantek, 1923-2002

McMinnville resident H. Lee Swantek died of lung cancer Feb. 6. He was 79.

He was born Jan. 19, 1923, in Yonkers, N.Y., where he attended school and worked as a bus driver. He moved to Portland in September 1958.

The next year he met his life partner, Donald J. Hutchinson, at a theater in the Portland area that no longer exists. The couple moved to Newberg in 1962 and McMinnville in 1990.

About 40 years ago they opened the Hobby Hut Ceramic Studio together, teaching classes and offering products at both a wholesale and retail level. The two retired in the early 1990s, having turned the \$250 operation into a successful half-million-dollar enterprise.

Swantek was a master in his wood shop. His handiwork was displayed in the couple's garden, which was named "Yard of the Month" in June 2001 by the *News-Register*.

He and Hutchinson joined First Baptist Church in McMinnville and helped create Together Works, a Christ-centered support group open to all gay men and lesbians in Yamhill County. Its semimonthly meetings attract up to 40 people ranging in age from 19 to 78.

The couple would've celebrated their 43rd anniversary in March.

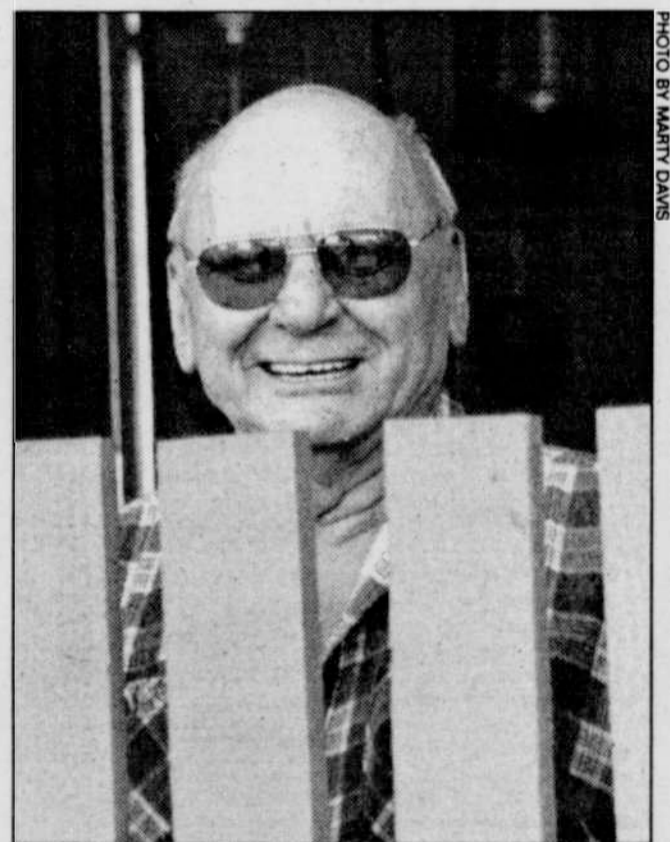


PHOTO BY MARTY DAVIS

"We work well together," Swantek told *Just Out* in a July 20, 2001, profile. "It has never occurred to us that we wouldn't be together. We are together...we help each other...we love each other."

A memorial will be held 3 p.m. Feb. 23 at the church, 125 S.E. Cows St. Young's Funeral Home is handling the arrangements.

Remembrances may be made to the American Cancer Society, Habitat for Humanity, McMinnville Hospice or the church.