

just out

The IN publication for the OUT population

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COMMENTARY

Tickled pink

Portland Pride 2002 was a smashing success—but there's always room for improvement

Framed by a Thursday topping out at a ghastly 97 degrees and a Monday of uncommonly hard rain, the weekend of Portland Pride 2002 shined brightly and splendidly with good weather, good nature and good times.

Estimated attendance numbers at the festival and the parade vary from source to source. The *Oregonian* reported that 500 people marched in the parade; I'm pretty sure, however, that 500 people were in the welcoming congregations contingent alone. A lot of churches sure are interested in our collective souls.

The *Oregonian* favors downplaying the possibility that large colonies of homosexuals actually might be dwelling and breeding in the midst of their fair city. Their minimalist coverage of our weekend consisted of a few paragraphs before the fact, acknowledging Katie Potter as Grand Marshal, and a briefer few paragraphs afterward. Nary a picture was shown. Upward of 20,000 people in one place, and we still didn't qualify as a photo op.

I couldn't begin to tell you what television coverage we received. I was dead to the world by the time the 11 o'clock news came along—and the 10 o'clock, too.

The *Portland Tribune*, on the other hand, showed a yin-and-yang approach to their Pride presence. Prior to the event they advertised that they would be publishing a special "Pride" section and that potential advertisers should hasten to this opportunity to capitalize on the rising economic influence of queer money.

Sure enough, their June 14 issue included an eight-page "special publication of the advertising department" insert. The front page features an odd, never-before-seen logo of some sort along with the fairly large words "Portland Pride."

In the bottom right are images of what appears to be a "family"—cartoonish images of two adults, two children and, of course, a dog. It's clearly not a gay family, however, as no Subaru is present.

But check this out: The little family figures are totally genderless. No faces. No identity. No nothing. OK, one child has braids; maybe it's a girl. The parental units, however, are simply molded plastic caricatures. How safe, how neutral.

And get this: Nowhere does the words "gay" or "lesbian" appear on the cover. Could it be Polish Pride? Perhaps Pickle Pride or—my guess, as evidenced by the artificial figures—it's "Plastic Pride."

The *Portland Tribune* is struggling to find a market share. This paper needs advertiser dollars as well as the goodwill of our community, but they won't say "gay" or "lesbian." This faux acceptance of our community by a mainstream paper is nothing more than greed. There's no goodwill here—and there's no celebration of our Pride. Just an accounting of dollars.

Don't buy into this crap. This is not a message of diversity. It's a message of marketing.

Before I go further with my Pride review, let me tell you how we did with the fund raising for Georgena's Journey: A Community Confronts Multiple Sclerosis. First, math never has been my strong point. I overestimated the attendance numbers, I overestimated how many people would make it to our booth, and I greatly underestimated the chaos, confusion and clatter of so many people crowding into the festival area all at once. It can be really darn difficult to stand out and draw attention to your booth, your cause, your need, no matter how important, no matter how dire, no matter how hard you try.

The bottom line is that throughout the weekend we raised \$4,222.13 for Georgena Moran. That's a lot less than I was hoping for, but you know, it's also \$4,222.13 more than we had when we started.

Many, many thanks to all of you who stopped by, many thanks to all who contributed. A special thank-you goes to Marc Acito, who really worked that crowd for us and repeatedly passed over handfuls of dollars from his admiring hordes. Thank you, also, to his admiring hordes.

It's always easier to review an event than it is to plan it. And I'll admit that when the concept of fencing in the festival area first was proposed, I wasn't too enthusiastic about it.

But as it turned out, once you were inside, the fence wasn't even that noticeable. The gates were broad and accessible, and I saw no logjams of incoming festivalgoers.

My remaining concern about the fence is simply that it not only keeps queers in but that it keeps others—i.e., nonqueers—out. In past years it's always been apparent when "the others" strolling through Saturday Market or along the river would wander in. I still want those people to be there.

This is, after all, our "Pride." This is where we showcase our groups, our organizations, our best. We need to be able to present ourselves, proudly, to all who might come by. This is my concern about the future of the fence.

The entertainment was great this year. Margo Tufo brought down the house Saturday night and brought "headliner" quality to the schedule.

But the most positive thing I observed about the entertainment was the fact that there were audiences. People sat and listened and appreciated and responded to the music and the acts. The canopy, table and chairs for the Triangle Stage area were a great improvement and invited people to linger and enjoy. Surely the performers appreciated this.

This was my first year to experience the parade route, and my sore and tired feet see definite need for change.

The current route is way too long, and large sections have no spectators—a scene decidedly disheartening to the revved-up parade participant. I understand the reason for the Old Town loop, but with insufficient volunteers and monitors to control speed, pace and timing, it's gotta go.

Old Town gay-owned merchants should not feel slighted. It's not personal. It's simply not practical to make the route that long.

And again, next year we need more spectators. While it's great that everyone and their dog is in the parade, it's no fun with no one watching. Spectators wanted. Let that be a prevailing theme of promotions for next year.

And while I'm making suggestions, could someone please take responsibility for setting up pet-comfort stations along the route? Our furry friends need water—and lots of it. This could be a great marketing opportunity for someone in the pet business.

Lastly, let's give credit where credit is due. Congratulations to the Pride Northwest board for managing to pull it off another year.

My office was the recipient of many an angry phone call from people frustrated about their interactions, or lack thereof, with the organizers. But when all is said and done, a rather amazing feat was accomplished—once again.

While praise and thanks are in order, I also ask the board to listen to the community and respond to their needs and wishes. Pride 2002 went off well; now let's think about how much better 2003 could be if we all just could learn to work together. ☐

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