

PEOPLE

Survivor alum John Carroll will speak Oct. 26 at the Human Rights Campaign Portland Gala Dinner

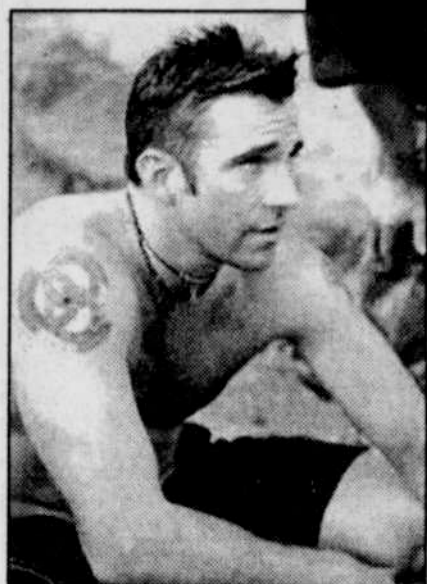
Anyone who has ever watched *Survivor* knows how important alliances can be. John Carroll, the former nurse, current law student and contestant from the fourth installment set on the Marquesas Islands, will talk about allies and alliances Oct. 26 at the Human Rights Campaign Portland Gala Dinner.

The 37-year-old is warm, open and engaging (even over a bad cell phone connection) and is eager to talk about his experiences as a "survivor." After eight years of living in West Hollywood, Calif., he has returned to his native Nebraska, where he is keen to use his celebrity to promote equality for gay, lesbian, bi and trans people and (he is very clear to add) intersex folk because they have had no allies.

"Allies" is an important word for Carroll. At Omaha's Creighton University School of Law—a Jesuit college in one of the nation's most conservative states—he recently founded the first gay/straight alliance on campus. He is also setting up a scholarship called the Alliance of Allies and Advocates, an apt name considering "advocate" also means attorney.

Among the first things he learned from the *Survivor* experience is "that I can only do so much as an individual. I can only be outed on national TV once, and then I need allies."

Those allies include his mother, Michele, a lifelong Republican who left the Grand Old Party this year because of the gay issue. He says he explained politics to her this way: "The economy doesn't give a rat's ass who controls the House because [Democrats and Republicans] both screw it up, and they both



He will survive

For John Carroll, fame is fleeting but advocacy is permanent

BY FLOYD SKLAVER

spend too much money. But what matters are the civil and social issues, and it has been the Democratic Party that has been the conscience of the country."

OK, OK, I know what you're thinking: What about *Survivor*? Carroll is very candid about his 24 days on the island and promises to give "the nitty-gritty and the details that don't get shown on TV" when he speaks in Portland.

For instance, he tells me that since the program premiered, "three of us have come out, and well over twice that many are in the closet," although he steadfastly refuses to divulge who they are.

While he has been out since he was 21, Carroll kept a low profile on the island until he was outed by another contestant. Then he was

surprised to discover that some of the other castaways hadn't figured it out.

"Hel-lo!" he says. "I have two earrings, a pierced belly button, all the tattoos, I'm a male nurse working with AIDS patients, and I'm as single as the day is long."

Carroll was a huge *Survivor* fan and says he applied to be a contestant on all four shows. After viewing the previous openly gay contestants, Richard Hatch and Brandon Quinton, he was a bit wary of how he would be perceived.

"Richard was a schemer, and poor Brandon was somewhat vilified because he was the epitome of the stereotype—the bitchy queen," he says. "He is a bitchy queen, but he's also very funny."

Carroll takes the responsibility of being in 25 million living rooms very seriously: "I had to get the pendulum to swing the other way. I

want to represent the people who are like me—not overly dramatic, without Brandon's flair. I'm just trying to be John out there."

John being constantly followed around by a camera, that is. Is the camera ever not on the *Survivor* contestants?

"Only when you're taking a dump," Carroll laughs. "Believe me, a coconut is a laxative.... If you ever want to lose weight, eat a coconut. One afternoon I had eaten a lot of coconut, and suddenly I had to go really badly."

Carroll dove into the bushes but was followed by a camera crew who thought he was sneaking off to strategize. They "had obviously never taken ballet," he says, "because they are thudding through the jungle with cameras and lights, and I'm trying to get my pants up before they arrive."

Survivor has given Carroll "the platform to push me forward" toward a career in politics. Although he freely admits the show portrayed him accurately, what TV audiences didn't see was his commitment and passion for equality. Those attending the HRC dinner will hear from an emerging civil rights advocate who gave up gay life in Southern California to further our cause in the conservative heartland. **J**

The HUMAN RIGHTS CAMPAIGN PORTLAND GALA DINNER will feature a silent auction, comedian Vickie Shaw and "America's Favorite Dragapella Beautyshop Quartet" the Kinsey Sicks 6 p.m. Oct. 26 at the Portland Hilton Hotel, 921 S.W. Sixth Ave. Dress is festive or black-tie optional. Tickets are \$150 a person from 800-494-TIXS or www.boxofficetickets.com.

FLOYD SKLAVER is a free-lance writer in Portland. Don't try reaching him Thursdays between 8 and 9 p.m.

eating out

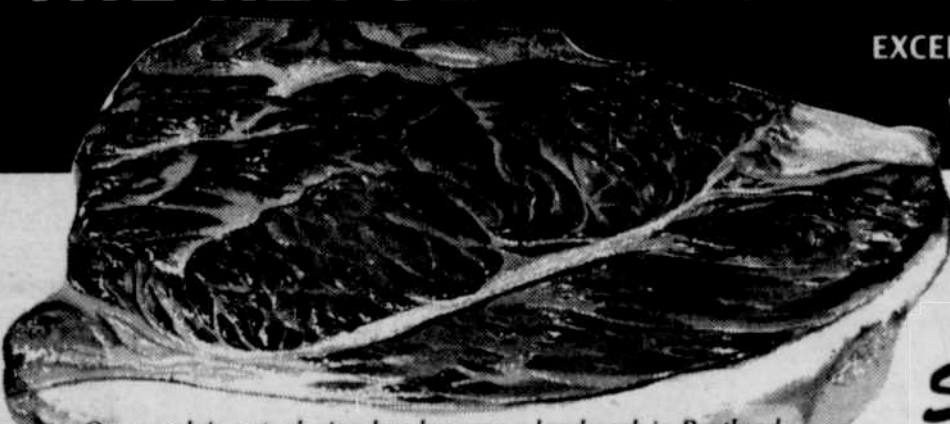


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