

just out

The IN publication for the OUT population

FOUNDED 1983 • JAY BROWN AND RENÉE LACHANCE
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COMMENTARY

BY MARTY DAVIS

Duct tape for the soul

With apologies to Homeland Security, the Red Cross, Mayor Katz and the guy who wrote the real books

During the late 1960s and early 1970s I was a hippie wannabe. Hippie as in the flower power, free love, sex and rock 'n' roll generation. I never made it past wannabe status because my desires to be free and fanciful kept crashing into conflict with my previous, far-too-many years of good old Christian Sunday school instruction.

To my unending consternation, this dichotomy of values can still, to this very day, pop up unexpectedly and create chaos in the inner battlefields of my mind. I'll be going about my normal daily life, happily filled with lustful and lascivious thoughts, when—crash, bang, boom—I'm hearing "thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's wife." Worse yet, said unwelcome message will always be accompanied by something like all four verses, and chorus, of "Blessed Assurance, Jesus Is Mine."

This can be very offsetting. First of all, I've never even so much as looked at my neighbor's wife (honest!), and secondly, do you know how damn hard it is to get rid of the chorus of a hymn once it's weaseled its way into your head?

A popular wall poster from the '60s, cherished by hippies and wannabes alike, set forth the notion that "Today is the first day of the rest of your life." This poster was almost always hung, crookedly and lovingly, next to the one displaying a soaking wet, scraggly, howling little kitten perched on the edge of a toilet seat. This kitten's fury would no doubt be heightened by the knowledge that these many years later I can't begin to remember the message to be gleaned from his pathetic misery. What is there to be learned from falling into a toilet? Don't do that again?

Now it's no longer the '60s, but once again there are protesters in the streets. Vietnam is a history lesson, a lesson unlearned perhaps—and what once was, now is again. The bombs and missiles are starting to fall upon Iraq. As uncertainties of the future hang heavily upon us all, perhaps now is the time to look back at lessons of the '60s and re-embrace the notion that, indeed, "Today is the first day of the rest of our lives." And while I can't bring myself to believe that a missile laden with smallpox is headed for Portland, I do see value in acknowledging that lean and hard times could lie ahead.

Homeland Security, the Red Cross and our very own Mayor

Vera Katz would have us think that our future comfort and safety lies in stocking up on supplies of duct tape, flashlights and peanut butter. While these items no doubt are valuable and tangible "solutions" to unsolvable scenarios, I'd like to suggest a more spiritual, if you will, application for these emergency supplies that we are advised to keep available in our homes.

The days and times upon us, and those that lie ahead, speak to

me less of plastic sheeting and lidded buckets and more of the need for a duct tape for the soul, so to speak. But not ordinary tape—no, we need an empowered duct tape, a mystical, magical tool to mend and heal the rifts and pains and wounds that we all bear and, more sadly, inflict upon each other, intentionally and unintentionally, on an all-too-frequent basis. Idealistic? Sure. But isn't that better than the cynicism of war and bombs and the threats of terrorist attacks that slam us from all directions on a daily, if not hourly, basis? Forget the peanut butter—how do we really comfort ourselves, how do we care for others in these stressful times? How do we make some good out of all this? How do we use our magic tape to create a better world?

We've got to patch things up. Instead of bombing and burning our world to bits and pieces, we've got to work to heal old and new wounds. Beyond soulful first aid, we've got to learn new ways to avoid making the same mistakes over and over.

And instead of today being the first day of the rest of your life, what if today was the last day of your life? What would you do differently? What would become your priority? Would your behavior be different if it were the last day? How would you live it? Is there a difference between the first day of the rest of your life and the last day? Should there be? What if the bombs were falling here instead of there? What tears would you rush to mend? What wounds would you hurry to heal?

It will be two weeks before I write again in this space. In these ensuing two weeks our world could become a different place. Our world could become a better place. Our lives could become changed forever by the wounds of war. Or they could become changed forever by powerful healing actions. So, for now, grab hold of your tape, and take care of yourself. Take care of each other.

And use that tape. J

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REFLECTIONS

5 years ago in just out... VOL. 15 No. 10, MARCH 20, 1998



• On April 2, Susan Stoltenberg steps down as executive director of Cascade AIDS Project, which provides myriad services related to HIV/AIDS.

• State Rep. George Eighmey and political newcomer Barbara Willer, both openly gay candidates, face runoffs in the May 19 primary. Eighmey will go against Diane Linn for the Multnomah County Board of Commissioners seat for District 1, while Willer will square off against Lisa Naito for the District 3 seat.

• Researchers say they have found the first strong evidence of a physical difference between lesbians and heterosexual women—a finding that the inner ears of lesbians work more like those of men.

• A financial crisis has led the Promise Keepers, a Christian men's movement, to lay off all 345 staff members effective March 31, Reuters reports.

• Fire recently struck one of the queerest spots in one of the queerest cities, Provincetown, Mass. According to the *Washington Blade*, several buildings, including one that housed a number of popular gay bars, burned down Feb. 10. The five-alarm fire caused several million dollars in damage and involved more than 200 firefighters.

• Gay pop star Elton John, 50, was knighted Feb. 24 by Queen Elizabeth II at Buckingham Palace in honor of his contributions to pop music and AIDS charities.

• Hey, White Boy! Join Speak to Your Brothers for a discussion about racism in the queer community.

• Later this year *Star Trek: Voyager* will be exploring previously unmapped territory, reports the March issue of *Girlfriends* magazine. Jeri Ryan, the newest cast member in the *Star Trek* franchise galaxy, will take her character, Seven of Nine, to new heights as the first openly gay character in the series of series.

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