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have enough courage to say "forever" in these crazy times, whether they are gay or straight. For families defined by love, not sexual orientation. Forget *Married by America*—I'll be happy when any loving couple can be married IN America.

ROEY THORPE
Basic Rights Oregon Executive Director

This is not your father's polyamory

TO THE EDITOR:

I truly loved your article on Portland polyamorous relationships and groups in the Feb. 21 issue ["Three's Company"].

Had your writer attended a meeting other than the January one, she would have gotten an even better picture of how diverse our local groups really are. In addition to the expected straight males and bisexual females, she would have seen my partner, AenneA, and I there. We are both M2F transsexuals. And soon we will become an M2F threesome when we welcome Rachel into our home.

I have to admit I was apprehensive about attending a group not specifically for transsexuals. But we were welcomed with open arms and have never had any reason to feel like outsiders. And that's saying a lot, since I've felt like an outsider my entire life.

The people we've met in the poly community are thoughtful, warm, loving people. Above all, they are accepting of those whose lifestyle differs from their own.

Long ago, back when I was trying to be some sort of John Wayne clone and prove to society I was really a total he-man and all these feminine feelings inside me were just the result of a bad pizza I ate when I was 11, I traveled a bit in the "swinger" or "wife-swapping" circles. It was a world with very rigid rules and little tolerance for anyone who didn't fit exactly into the usual mold of "straight male, bi female" sexuality.

Personal opinions and honest feelings were frowned upon, as they might get in the way of the sex. It was a world more straight-laced and less tolerant of diversity than the nonswinging world.

I suspect many people out there have "been there, done that" and won't be joining any more poly groups because they expect them to be that same straitjacketing, sterile experience that I went through with swinging in the '70s. I want to say to those people that the Portland poly community is nothing like that.

A Portland poly meeting is more likely to focus on the dynamics of relationships than on

the sex itself. Straights, bisexuals, gay men, lesbians and even aging transsexuals like me are valued not for their usefulness as sexual objects but for the unique point of view they bring to a discussion of the lifestyle they've chosen.

If you've ever desired to be part of the poly community, or just been curious about it, this is the time and place to put a toe (or whatever) in the water.

JESSICA CAINE
Portland

Just the facts, ma'am

TO THE EDITOR:

Lisa Bradshaw did an outstanding job in describing polyamory. No innuendoes, no judgments, just giving us the facts as she sees them.

It is obvious that traditional relationships don't work. We need writers like Bradshaw who can write so intelligently and rationally to help us find the answers.

Sex is such a powerful and ubiquitous drive that it takes all the intelligence we can muster just to have a sensible view of it.

NESTOR PERALA
Portland

Volunteers wanted

TO THE EDITOR:

Like all of us at the Hambleton Project—a support, educational and advocacy group for lesbians with cancer and other life-threatening situations—I have a life outside this organization. On that particularly frosty February morning, I soaked up my other life as a children's book author. I tidied my bookshelves and began writing a grant application. I reviewed my hard work from the previous day and amended my "to do" list. I understood my life and felt grateful and well tended.

I called the Hambleton office from my home phone and groaned when I heard that seven messages were waiting for me. Too many to attend to from home, so I pedaled to the office. I was a bit high from the cozy morning at home, coupled with the excitement about the \$39,000 Susan G. Komen Breast Cancer Foundation grant that Hambleton had received the day before. I predicted the phone calls and the day's e-mails would be congratulations.

Instead, the majority of calls were about mundane frustrations about a volunteer-run nonprofit office. "Where are those mailing labels?" "My name is spelled wrong on my newsletter." "Sign me up for the workshop."

The bright morning bliss was beginning to fade, but the last message added some luster. "I

just got a friendly e-mail from our client who tells us her treatment is over. I consider her to now be a survivor, and I hope she won't need HP again. I'll call her volunteer team and spread the good news." I smiled and shed a tear of gratitude, having met this independent, funny, determined, frightened woman six months ago. She made it!

Hopping onto e-mail, I expected those Komen grant congratulations and found a few, but the last e-mail was titled "sad news." What I read was a friendly, gentle story of the death of a client the previous day. There were far too many details for my tender heart, but the news was important, and I felt honored to be included "in the loop." I made the necessary phone calls and e-mails and rummaged through our card collection. Another good day at the Hambleton Project.

Some days are so full. We offer a support group for women and their families; we celebrate the good news and we mourn the sad. The lesbian community of the Portland area is lucky to have such a group of generous, brave volunteers.

Spring volunteer training takes place from 5 to 9 p.m. April 11 and from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. April 12. Call me at 503-335-6591 for details.

NICKI EYBEL
Hambleton Project Volunteer Coordinator

If the shoe fits...

TO THE EDITOR:

I am in the seventh grade at da Vinci Arts Middle School. I wrote this for my zine:

If the question "Are you gay or straight?" arises and you answer "I don't have a label" or "Labels are for food!" the average American will flip out because America relies on labels. Punk, goth, lesbian, prep, "Jane is trying to be

like this famous person, you can sooooo tell," says a Britney Spears look-alike and idolizer. This is all a part of our everyday lives.

Here at Esidarap castle, we have created a solution. We refer to ourselves as "lovers"—people who love whomever their heart desires, disregarding gender or sexuality.

Times have changed since, say, the '50s, when homosexuality was a mental illness and the topic of (shhhhh) "sex" was strictly taboo. America has experienced what you might call a sexual revolution, with rainbow stickers on cars and *The Rocky Horror Picture Show* playing every Saturday at midnight at Clinton Street Theater.

If you choose to label yourself, that's great! It makes things easier for America to process, and you can rely on that being solid, and not be floating in nothingness.

If you accept a label other people give you, before doing so, decide whether that label is true to you. If the shoe fits, wear it!

If the shoe doesn't fit, either go barefoot, keep on trying them until you find the right one, or get one custom made! Using this whole shoe analogy, I'll say I admire other people's gaudy, sexy, high-heeled shoes, and occasionally try one on for a day or so, but I like my comfy shoes! That's what's great about being an actress—you can be whomever you want to be without the reputation of yourself hanging around!

If the no-label path is the right one for you, know that you will be misunderstood and that people will label you in their own little black book, so you aren't just a piece of loose-leaf binder paper wafting around. No matter what label you do or don't have, always know that you are you; stay true to that and be proud!!

IZZAKATE MCGOWAN
Portland

transition

John Fryer, 1937-2003

John E. Fryer, a psychiatrist considered a trailblazer in the gay rights movement for appearing before his colleagues at a 1972 convention in a mask to announce his homosexuality, died of aspiration pneumonia Feb. 28. He was 65.

Fryer appeared as Dr. H. Anonymous, clad in a full mask and wig and using a voice-distorting microphone, before the American Psychiatric Association meeting in Dallas at a time when homosexuality was designated a mental illness. "I am a homosexual. I am a psychiatrist," he said.

He then told the group that he had suffered discrimination and had to remain anonymous

because being gay would cost him his job. At the time, he was an untenured professor at Temple University.

The following year, the American Psychiatric Association's board of trustees removed homosexuality from the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, the profession's bible. In a 1985 bulletin of the Association of Gay and Lesbian Psychiatrists, Fryer wrote that the appearance was "something that had to be done."

"I had been thrown out of a residency because I was gay. I lost a job because I was gay.... It had to be said, but I couldn't do it as me."

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