

# just out

The IN publication for the OUT population

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## COMMENTARY

# The art of the possible

Let the political games begin

This week's damnable summer heat was slightly softened by the waves of energy and breezes of excitement generated by announcements and posturing for the 2004 election. The "who's gonna do what" buzz is on par with the fun of a "who's doing who" lesbian dating flowchart. So many names, so many possibilities.

For Portland citizens, the starting gun that sent potential candidates jockeying for position was the announcement that Vera Katz will not be seeking a fourth term as mayor. Now the poker tournament begins as the players look at their hands and decide to bluff, play or fold. And, lucky for all of us, some very good potential candidates are waiting to enter the game.

What will Earl Blumenauer decide? Return to Congress or run for mayor? That's a big decision for a career politician—give up a shot at a relatively easy re-election for a run at a probable yet not guaranteed head seat at the big kids' table.

Where does Nick Fish play into this, and what about Maria Rojo de Steffey? Is the commissioner ready to move on up from her tasks at Multnomah County?

As gays and lesbians in Portland and the tri-county area, we're blessed with a wealth of supportive and progressive candidates who have worked hard to secure equal rights and standing for all our community. For their efforts they gain our support and we get their assurances that they'll continue in the same mode. If the mayoral and City Council races draw the usual multitudes of wannabes, we need to take a strong leadership role in the selection process. Having a wealth of gay-positive candidates doesn't mean we get to lie back and take it easy—it means we must work harder to get them all in the right places.

The July 29 issue of *USA Today* stated in its daily poll that U.S. citizens have become significantly less accepting of homosexuality since a Supreme Court decision that was hailed as clearing the way for new gay civil rights. Our work, and that of our elected officials, is far from done.

Of course, the candidate-to-be that we're really waiting to hear from is Sam Adams. Sam, what's it gonna be? Where can you best serve and put your years of hard work and experience to productive use?

Meanwhile across town, David Wu might draw all the heat in his congressional race. He's being targeted strongly and early on by Republican challengers while drawing the ire and frustration of constituents and peers. Maybe Wu's not going to run again?

Even with the westside race taking prominence, is running for Congress a risky level jump for Adams? Is aiming for Congress the equivalent of a U-Haul second date? Maybe moving a tad too fast? I trust Adams to make the right decision.

Looking at the bigger picture I'm guessing that supporters of Howard Dean, and any of the other 54 Democratic presidential hopefuls, are

going to be disappointed come primary election time. I betcha right now that Al Gore will be the 2004 Democratic Party presidential nominee. Come on, isn't that what we'd really like to see—Al Gore beat Bush's butt? All of us sinners need to get out and volunteer and support and vote and get Dubya back to his ranch in Texas. "Gore in '04." Let the games begin.

Aside from elections, the other news of the week was the death of Bob Hope. Considering he was 100 years old, the news was hardly unexpected but sad and thought-provoking nonetheless.

For all of my life there has been Bob Hope. Though he was ailing and frail the past few years, it wasn't that long ago that his presence was dominant in the entertainment and political arenas. He was constant and strong and everywhere. He was funny without being mean. He was kind without appearing insincere, and he simply always has been. To many Americans he was a true hero.

Hearing Hope described on all the newscasts as a hero made me pause to ponder who are the heroes specific to the gay and lesbian community. Who are our personal heroes? Who has touched your life or given you hope or direction? Who have you known who made it easier for you to be who you are today?

Was it a teacher, perhaps? Can gay and lesbian teachers today be role models? Should they be, is it their job or responsibility to mentor gay and/or questioning youth? Is this a risk or a reward for the teachers of today? Do gays and lesbians raising children merit the accolade of hero?

How about professional athletes? One need only look as far as the Portland Trail Blazers to see that "role model" no longer appears to be part of that job description. Gay professional athletes appear to be few and far between, but how about those women golfers and tennis players? I've been to more than a few WNBA games; tell me there's not lesbians in that league. Should these young, visible women be out and proud—should they be setting examples of achievement and accomplishment for young and old lesbians—or is it their greater right to keep their personal lives private?

I know my life would surely have been enriched and enhanced by the presence of positive gay and lesbian role models. While feeling sadness about the death of the Bob Hopes and the "heroes" of our land, I also mourn the absence of those who never were there—the gay and lesbian heroes of my childhood.

Who is your hero? To whom are you the one? Which gay or lesbian leader—locally, nationally, globally or someone of personal prominence to you has had an impact on your life?

Who can you turn to and say: "I am a better person for having known you. You are my hero. Thank you." ☐

## REFLECTIONS

10 years ago in **Just Out**... Vol. 10 No. 18, Aug. 1, 1993



• Scholarships for this year's Creating Change conference, to be held in Durham, N.C., are now available to assist limited-income activists, activists of color and activists with disabilities.

• With the rallying cry of "No Medical Excuse for Genital Abuse," more than 40 men and supporters gathered July 12 in San Francisco to protest the California Medical Association policy of endorsing routine infant circumcision as "an effective public health measure," the only such policy in the United States among state medical associations.

• Kristine Gebbie, a former top health official in Oregon and Washington as well as a professor of nursing and public health, is now the nation's first federal AIDS czar. She was appointed to the post by President Clinton after the job was turned down by other candidates.

• *The Oregonian* reported that House Speaker Larry Campbell, R-Eugene, would not be seeking re-election to another term of office. He has been the main block to gay and lesbian legislation for the past two sessions.

• The American Association of Physicians for Human Rights, based in San Francisco, will be holding its annual conference in Portland. The selection of Portland is in part a "thank you" to Oregon voters for rejecting Ballot Measure 9. The conference was originally to be held in Denver, but the association board voted against the location after Coloradans passed Amendment 2.

• Lesbian Avengers have formed a new Portland chapter. The group's first event is a Full Moon Debutante Dyke March on Aug. 2.

• Women with Women with Infants and Toddlers meet for a potluck brunch Aug. 8.

• The Northwest Women's Music Celebration features the women of Motherlode in a weekend of music in the woods Sept. 10 to 12.

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