

# The monster among us

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women get involved as well, but I don't think it's the same sexual hit."

Lawson knows. She's a recovering meth user herself.

"Speed was a real natural for me," Lawson says. "I hated sleeping. For me, it was about staying up and getting more done."

Lawson shakes her head, remembering. "I've been in recovery for over 25 years."

Though statistics for meth use among the Portland-area sexual minorities community do not exist, figures for our neighboring big cities are available. The San Francisco Chronicle, for example, reported recently that health officials estimate up to 40 percent of that city's queers have tried meth at least once. And Seattle health officials call meth use within the Emerald City's gay crowd "an epidemic."

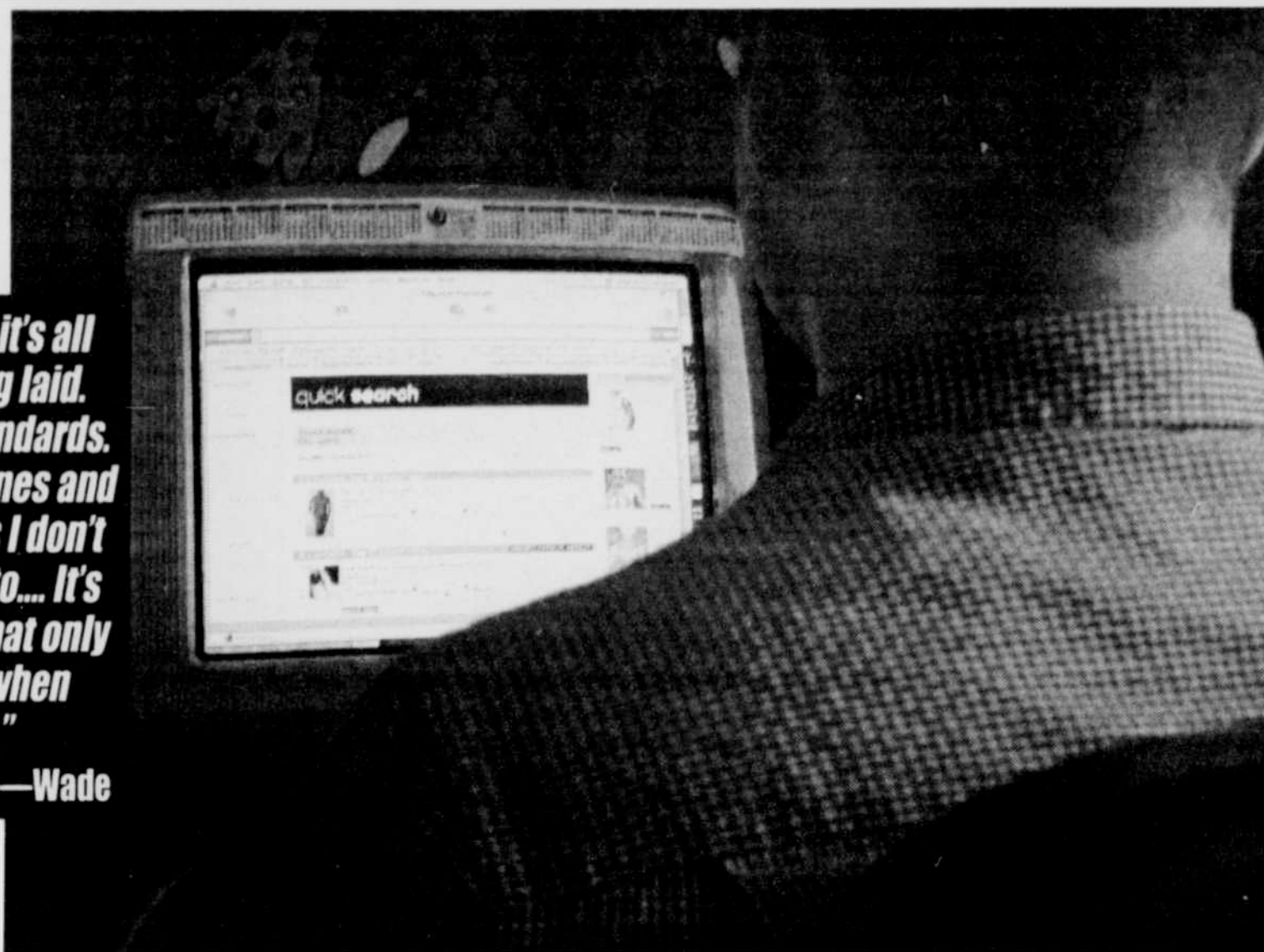
Among the general Portland population, meth is the city's biggest drug problem.

"We've definitely seen the crossover from cocaine to meth," says Schober. "It's not like it's a flood, but it's a steady rise."

Police bureau statistics from 2000 show 66 meth lab busts that year in Portland alone—an amazing statistic considering the majority of meth labs are found in more rural areas outside

**"When I use, it's all about getting laid. I lower my standards. I get on chat lines and beg for things I don't like to admit to.... It's a side of me that only comes out when I'm high."**

—Wade



Internet chat rooms are a common way gay men connect with others who want to "party and play," in which an extended high often leads to risky sex with multiple partners. Staff and volunteers from Cascade AIDS Project now hang out online to answer questions and provide information.

the city limits, such as Washington County. And in 2002, federal drug enforcement seized nearly 82 pounds of meth in Oregon alone.

"Methamphetamine is one of the most wide-

ly abused controlled substances in Oregon. Oregon is a source of a growing number of clandestine methamphetamine laboratories," states the U.S. Department of Drug Enforcement.

facture of meth is a Class B felony. As for sentencing, Schober says, "That's something the [district attorney] decides on a case-by-case basis." The general guideline is

"We started the local chapter of Crystal Meth Anon a year ago in July," says Ron Huxold, a gay hairdresser and founder of Portland's first 12-step program aimed at meth users. "After one month, it was too much for the apartment we were meeting in. Now there's a Monday meeting that draws 15 or 20 people a week and a Thursday meeting that draws 75 or 100."

Philip Knowlton, coordinator of the Men's Prevention and Wellness Program at Cascade AIDS Project, says: "There's always been a meth problem here. It's just that now it's the gay thing to do. I have the glorious job of clearing out the needle containers in [a local adult sex establishment] and they are full every week."

"Meth and heroin are neck and neck for No. 1 and No. 2," says Cathy Moonshine, director of Adult Services at De Paul Treatment Center. "It's definitely a shift. Five or eight years ago it was cocaine and alcohol."

PHOTO BY MARTY DAVIS

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