

An open letter to Balloons on Broadway

TO THE EDITOR:

Last week I was looking for a birthday card at Balloons on Broadway and was astonished by a particular card I found in your store. On the front of the card is a black woman outfitted as Aunt Jemima, and the text of the card is a play on the supposed dialect of a slave. When I objected to the card as racist and offensive, the clerk told me that the card was "funny."

A few days later, I returned to Balloons on Broadway because I was frustrated by the dismissive attitude of the clerk. My co-worker Angie, who is African American, came with me, and together we raised objection to such racist schlock being sold in a gay-owned store.

A very arrogant clerk justified selling the card on the basis that your store sells cards that reinforce gay stereotypes that don't reflect real gay men. Not only were we told that this card with the racist depiction of black slaves was amusing, but we were not assured that our protest would be passed on to the manager.

Needless to say, my co-worker and I are outraged by this response. How is it that in 2003, this gay-owned shop condones and promotes such a backward and discriminatory attitude about African Americans? We are urging everyone to stop shopping at Balloons on Broadway until this card is pulled from your shelves and your inventory reflects real humor instead of reinforcing bigotry.

JENNIFER LAVERDURE
ANGIE GRIGSBY
Portland

just asking U.S. Rep. Earl Blumenauer, D-Ore., admits he was wrong to vote for 1996's Defense of Marriage Act: Are you satisfied with his re-evaluation, or is this a case of too little, too late?

Blumenauer's, guest commentary conspicuously failed to state whether he would support civil unions, if not gay marriage. Is he being silent for political reasons, or does he secretly oppose gay unions? Either way, it makes his position on "equal rights" look cowardly and insincere.



Employment Nondiscrimination Act is appreciated, but this makes him no better than Republicans such as U.S. Sen. Gordon Smith.

THOMAS KRAEMER
Corvallis

next issue As Sensory Perceptions wraps up another memorable queer film festival, what do you feel were the best and worst of this year's selections? Why? Respond at www.justout.com. (Don't forget to include your name, city and daytime telephone number.)

transitions

Don Strausbaugh, 1929-2003

Donald Wayne Strausbaugh, a leader in developing Metropolitan Community Church of Portland, died of brain cancer Oct. 5. He was 74.

He was born May 24, 1929, in Salem. He worked for Northwest Natural Gas in Salem before retiring to Tigard in 1992.

Strausbaugh joined the predominantly gay MCC Portland in the mid-1980s. He served as a member of the board of directors, strategic planning team and pastoral search committees; deacon; second tenor in the choir; and frequent lay delegate, representing the church at regional and international conferences.

"He was always willing to help where needed, especially with flowers," MCC's Dave Dishman says. "Don was an expert gardener and flower arranger. The church was blessed for many years by his arrangements.... He will be missed."

Christmas was an important time of year for Strausbaugh, who always decorated his house like a winter wonderland, with eight to 10 trees as well as his famous collection of Santa Clauses. Because his friends and family didn't know whether he would make it to Dec. 25 this year, they decided to surprise him with an early holiday party. Stealthily borrowing some of his own decorations, they made the 18th Avenue Peace House look like a window from Macy's. His family rented a white stretch limousine for the ride in from the suburbs to the party, which even included a visit from Santa Claus.

Strausbaugh traveled to Puerto Vallarta for several weeks every spring for about 15 years. He



enjoyed playing cards and dice with the many friends who joined him on these vacations.

He also served as president of the Prime-Timers Portland chapter for many years. "He was one of the most gregarious people you'd ever meet—always willing to help out or being a good Samaritan whenever called upon," MCC's Chuck Harvey says.

Strausbaugh is survived by his sons, Greg and Wayne; sister, Berthalene Cooper; and six grandchildren.

A memorial service will be held 3 p.m. Oct. 19 at the church, 2400 N.E. Broadway. Autumn Funerals & Cremations is handling the arrangements.

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