

# Be all that you can be

Are we prepared to enlist as frontline troops in the culture war?

First, let me state clearly that I am delighted with the prospect of same-sex marriage in my own county and my own state. This achievement is the culmination of years of work for many lifelong gay rights activists. The list of names of those to be recognized, celebrated and thanked for their efforts is long.

There is no doubt that many worked long and hard to get us to where we are today. It has taken years of building trust and relationships and years of tirelessly forging and inching ahead. For many the wait has grown too long. Where once we settled impatiently for slow movement forward we now demand immediate change. Radical action now is the call. It's a new century, a new millennium, and a progressive new activism calls for radical acts and civil disobedience. Is this the return of the '60s? Will we have to wear those funny pants again and put up with that horrid patchouli smell?

While delighted with the outcome of the Multnomah County Commission's action, I do admit to concerns about the manner in which the process was handled. Yes, many will say the end justifies the means. I say a tarnished process does not retain its luster simply because the outcome, this time, was favorable to our cause. Would you hold to your belief if the situation were reversed? What if the commission consisted of four Lonnie Roberts and one Diane Linn—what if the four worked together, within the letter of the law, and enacted a Defense of Marriage Act in Multnomah County?

Imagine the outcry, the indignation, the cries of discrimination and unfairness. Where are the protests when the outcome is favorable? Does anyone see that as a conflict in values?

While absolutely well-intended and with at least short-term positive results, the actions of the commissioners have also ignited the wrath of the governor, given fuel to renewed opposition from religious groups, provided catalysts for unity among previously splintered factions of anti-gay groups and pushed the highly charged and emotional causes of religious and family values onto the forefront of the Oregon voter. Are we ready for this? Were we given the opportunity to prepare an offensive strategy, or do we once again find ourselves in a defensive position and now subject to interminable fund raising so that we can defeat yet another initiative brought forth against us, this time by a very newly formed group, the Defense of Marriage Coalition? Our original cover for

this issue showed a picture of President Bush, in reference to the proposed constitutional amendment banning same-sex marriage, and contained the headline "This Means War." My concern now is that the front line of this war has moved directly into Oregon. Are you, are we, the frontline troops, prepared for this war? Are we trained and ready to fight a foe who could very well have been won over with more time and just a little more patience?

The commissioners took a big gamble. Clearly they have gambled with their own careers. There is no way that their actions could be seen as self-serving, and for their intent they are to be saluted. Let's just hope they didn't gamble with more than the rest of us are prepared to lose.

*The commissioners took a big gamble.... Let's just hope they didn't gamble with more than the rest of us are prepared to lose.*

Regardless of thoughts regarding the process, there can be no doubt as to the deep emotions felt by those gay and lesbian couples who jumped at the opportunity to receive legal validation of their unions. We share pictures and words with you in our feature, but I'd like to close with thoughts received from Portlanders Jim Morris and Richard Colombo:

"During the six years that Richard Colombo and I have lived together in a loving, committed relationship, we have shared the pain of his mother's struggle with cancer and her passing. We supported each other as we helped family members with illness and had a few of our own. I managed a successful business, and Richard released a compact disc of his original music. We

painstakingly restored our 1904 home and created a glorious garden. We enjoyed a wonderful neighborhood where Richard was named 'Mayor of Salmon Street.' We gave back to our community through our volunteer work with the Oregon Food Bank, Children's Cancer Program and Parents, Families and Friends of Lesbian and Gays. We voted and were actively involved in numerous local political issues, including the last anti-gay initiative. We paid taxes.

"Yesterday, Richard and I stood in line for over six hours, much of it in the cold and pouring rain. At the end of the day, we had a four-minute ceremony honoring our life together and our commitment to one another. We were given the honor of acting on one of our country's most basic civil rights. We were married."

Just Out sends best wishes and hopes for love and life together go to all of you who were or will be legally married. ☐

## just out

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