

Speak out

Kerry Bramwell, RN & Aesthetician

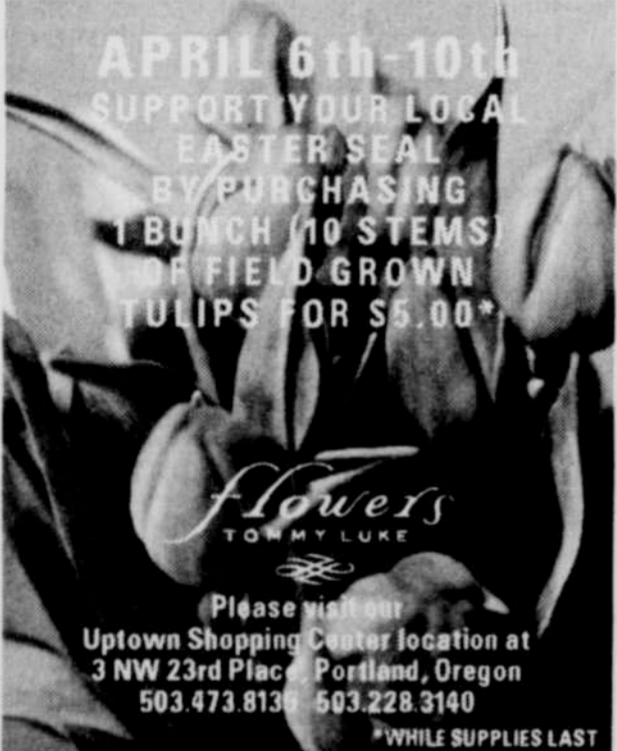


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The perfect storm

TO THE EDITOR:

It seems that Portland has been thrust into the firestorm, not by an angry angel seeking justice or even a malevolent devil, but by Christian right homophobes and their agendas. All of their uproar and indignation is very perplexing as I attempt to understand why anyone would be so opposed to the life partner another chooses—especially if you aren't a close friend or family member.

Complete strangers are upset at whom complete strangers choose to marry. Of course, their argument is that same-sex marriage somehow undermines opposite-sex marriage. That one just doesn't stick with me. How my marriage affects anyone other than whom I am married to (and perhaps our immediate families) leaves me scratching my head every time I hear it.

When that argument fails, out comes the Bible and the timeworn verses hateful people love to spew. They forgo the loving verses and choose (or reinterpret) the verses that "support" their argument that homosexuals are a scourge on society and cause perfectly normal straight people to divorce for no apparent reason!

I am finding that there is just no reasoning with those who have nothing but hate in their hearts—so I stopped going that route. But I will do this: On behalf of the board of Pride Northwest, I wish to shout out a rousing THANK YOU! to the four Multnomah County commissioners who have put everything on the line for me and everyone like me. We appreciate the courage it must have taken to follow the path of inclusion and equality. As this storm rages on, know that Pride Northwest, the people of Multnomah County and those watching in other cities, counties and states, even around the world, applaud you and are behind you. We will all ensure that it is not in vain.

The time had long passed that this fight was due, but you brave women stepped up to the plate, and now it is time to reconcile what true diversity and citizenship mean in this country. We can't continue to call ourselves the land of the free and the home of the brave otherwise.

TOBIN BRITTON
Pride Northwest President

The compassion of the Christians

TO THE EDITOR:

I am ashamed of the Christian Coalition of Oregon for being the primary organizers of the recall of the Multnomah County commissioners.

The coalition is upset because this change was done behind closed doors, and it feels morally against this issue. The actions of our county commissioners did nothing to affect the lives of these people in any way, shape or form. This is no reason to recall any of our commissioners.

If the coalition is unhappy with the performance of our commissioners, then it should find its own viable candidate to run against them in the next election. Not to mention spending \$300,000 or more on a special recall election—what a waste of my (our) tax dollars.

Coalition members should focus their collective efforts on trying to solve the really important issues facing our community—i.e., the growing number of people going hungry in Oregon, the homeless problem in Portland, our rising crime rate, the plight of our seniors and disabled people who are going without due to Oregon's budget crisis, people living with AIDS or HIV, to name a few. Where is their compassion and sensibility?

DAVID W. HARTSOOK
Portland

Just say no to *The O*

TO THE EDITOR:

This is a copy of a letter I sent to *The Oregonian*:

I receive the daily and Sunday papers. After reading your story asking for the recall of the Multnomah County commissioners because of the same-sex marriage issue, I have decided to end my subscription to your paper.

As a gay man who just received a marriage license, I will not spend my money on a newspaper that puts me in a category that is less than someone else. Please send my final bill to me and STOP sending the paper. Thank you.

KELLY O'SHAUGHNESSY
Portland

Never tear us apart

TO THE EDITOR:

I am a volunteer with Love Makes a Family, and I had the honor of serving coffee, treats and flowers to many couples getting their marriage licenses on those first few exciting days in Portland. The weather wasn't the best, but everyone's spirits were so high, and the positive energy and sense of "community" was so strong.

On March 5 I spent almost four hours at the busy intersection of Southeast Hawthorne Boulevard and Grand Avenue with a large rainbow pride flag. Vehicles constantly slowed down to honk their horns, give us thumbs up and shout, "Ya-HOOOO!" Straight ally families stopped traffic because their children wanted to give us treats and friendship bracelets.

I just can't begin to express how incredibly uplifting and encouraging this experience has been. I have personally witnessed how both the gay and straight communities have come together to show support for the couples getting their licenses and for the marriages that happened right there in front of the Multnomah Building. I haven't cried that many tears of joy in my entire life, but then I always cry at weddings.

My message is to NOT let the negative messages against us bring you down or tear our community apart. We need to stick together as the "family" we are, and we must remember there really are a LOT of people out there supporting and rooting for us. Congratulations everyone, and best wishes to live "happily ever after"!

KURT KOESTER
Portland

Fantastic feast

TO THE EDITOR:

My partner and I got married last month, and laughed and cried and marveled as we felt the impact of the experience. I've been describing it to everyone I know. In this letter, however, I'd like to talk about Chameleon Restaurant and how its staff and customers generously and delightfully helped us mark the occasion.

To celebrate the day of our marriage, we wanted to go out to a special restaurant. We decided to try the Chameleon upon the recommendation of good friends. They had told us the food was excellent, but little did we expect that our dining experience would turn out to be magical.

The staff and customers at the Chameleon made our dinner into an event to remember. When we sat down we were greeted by our waiter asking, "How are you?" and we responded with, "We just got married!" For the next 2 1/2 hours we found ourselves surrounded by friendly people congratulating us and celebrating with us. One couple came up to us to offer their warm wishes, another bought us a round of drinks, and a third offered to buy us dessert.

Everything was perfect—the food was

absolutely fantastic, the service was excellent, and the ambiance was both elegant and homey. The experience was truly one that fit the occasion.

Our waiter, Lon, was especially wonderful. At one point during dinner he came by to chat for a minute, and we introduced ourselves. Little did we know that his goal was to find out our names. At the end of our meal, he brought us a beautiful (and delicious) candlelit dessert with "Congratulations, Anne and Tamara" written in chocolate syrup around the edge of the plate.

We had never been to the Chameleon before, but we will definitely go back. Our dining experience nourished us in both body and soul. Thank you, Chameleon staff and guests, for embracing us as though we were dear friends.

TAMARA OLCOTT
Portland

Flower power

TO THE EDITOR:

It's March 13, and we have scheduled a 1 p.m. wedding at Metropolitan Community Church of Portland. It's 12:15, we are in Beaverton and realize it would be nice to have some flowers for Cynthia to carry.

We stop into the Enchanted Florist at 6155 S.W. Murray Blvd. and start looking around. The owner approaches Dawn and says, "So, you're going to do it!?" Dawn tells her that we are and that Cynthia needs something to carry down the aisle.

The owner grabs a large packed rose bouquet from a vase, takes them into the back, wraps them with a ribbon and creates a beautiful bouquet of pink and red roses. She also creates a boutonniere for Dawn while we wait. When all is done, she announces that she doesn't want any reimbursement—she's just happy for us!

We wanted the community to know that the Enchanted Florist in Beaverton supports us and ask that you consider her business when you have floral needs. She was incredibly gracious and supportive, and we thank her for helping make our special day even more beautiful!

CYNTHIA KULOW
DAWN HUTT
Beaverton

Piece of cake

TO THE EDITOR:

As many of us rush out to get married while we can, let us remember to take our wedding-related business to individuals who have supported us over the years, regardless of our legal status. Case in point: I just learned of dear friends who are getting married and ordered a cake from one of Portland's well-known bakeries—one that has repeatedly denied requests for donations for "A Class Act," the annual springtime benefit for the Bill & Ann Shepherd Legal Scholarship Fund of Equity Foundation.

Three bakeries have donated thousands of dollars' worth of world-class pastries to us over the decade we have been producing this benefit. They are, in alphabetical order, Holiday Essence Quality Cake Shop, Joseph's Dessert Company and Piece of Cake. These businesses are either gay-owned or have strong ties to our community.

I can honestly say that I have made countless AND REPEATED phone calls to every other bakery in town to donate to us, and they have, just as repeatedly, turned us down. So, please, everyone—let us eat wedding cake, but let us eat one that has been made by hands that have been supporting us for years.

SUSIE SHEPHERD
Portland