

# Time will tell

The community must elect progressive candidates in the November general election

If I were a bit more of a Dickensian sort, I might start this column with "It was the best of times, it was the worst of times." I can't quite go that route, however, as I'm still struggling to find what is that would constitute "the best of times."

The May 17 issue of *Time* magazine manages to spin both the best and worst of the week. A cover that resounds with a sordid image from Abu Ghraib is accompanied by a story that tells the story of cultural differences and how our military uses institutionalized homophobia as a tool of torture. This is a story that's only beginning to be told. Images of prisoner abuse are being viewed worldwide, while at home our nation perches precariously on the edge of a morality-based civil war with a fundamentalist Christian commander in chief standing poised with his finger above the red button of self-righteousness destruction.

Turning to the good news section of this issue of *Time*, readers will find a lengthy article on how our Multnomah County commissioners worked behind the scenes to bring same-sex marriage to Oregonians. This is one of only a few national stories highlighting the Multnomah County and Basic Rights Oregon process, and its appearance is timely and deserved. To me, never previously a student of conspiracy theories, I've begun to think that Massachusetts was selected, groomed and preordained, so to speak, to be the first state to offer fully legal and sanctioned same-sex marriages and that efforts elsewhere were destined for less-than-high regard. But before Oregon and Multnomah County are totally overshadowed by Massachusetts and dispatched to the portapotties of obscurity, one magazine does tell our story. It's worth your time and effort to track down a copy.

All same-sex marriages, all celebrations, all victories, all defeats had to take a step backward this month in saddened observation of the tragic torture death of American Nick Berg. And in Portland the horror of this event was compounded further by the unimaginable stupidity of the radio "personalities" who mocked and replayed the execution on their pathetic radio shows. While I am keenly aware of the mighty sanctity of First Amendment rights, I nonetheless believe these cretins should be rounded up and shipped off to Iraq to perform community service projects.

On a calmer note now, there was indeed some good news to be found this month. To my surprise and that of many others—most notably, I suspect, City Commissioner Jim Francesconi—former Portland Police Chief Tom Potter pulled a coup in the primary election, forcing a may-

oral runoff race in the November general election. Mr. Potter, I acknowledge and respect your tenure and experience, your leadership skills, your longtime support of gay rights and your dedication to all the citizens and the city of Portland. In the next few months I look forward to seeing more of your humor, your wit and the energetic vitality and vision that will be needed in the next mayor of Portland. We look forward to your presence in the Pride parade next month. Dazzle us!

Good news and not-so-good news for our friends on the Multnomah County Board of Commissioners. The good news is that Maria Rojo de Steffey soared to victory and can now concentrate on solving the budget problems at the county. Meanwhile, Lisa Naito was forced into a runoff and will need our combined dollars and votes to guarantee her the re-election that she deserves in November.

Favorite son Sam Adams probably won't be taking any long vacations this summer, either. His goals for the summer are to raise money, broaden his voter base and garner the support needed to catapult him to victory over rival Nick Fish in November. I share Adams' confidence that the anticipated higher number of voters in the general election will give him the winning boost that he needs.

**We must register and unite as a single-minded voting bloc. You have two choices: You can be part of the solution, or you can be part of the problem.**

The real losers in any election are those who don't even bother to vote. By failing to participate, you voluntarily give up one of your most coveted privileges—a privilege that people in other

countries often fight and die for. A privilege that more than 50 percent of Oregon voters couldn't bother to get off their fat couches and mail in their ballots for.

For the November general election it is imperative that the "queer" community unite behind supportive and reliable candidates and that we maximize the potential of our combined voting power. Together we can bring victory to deserving candidates. To lead the process *Just Out* will be actively promoting voter registration at our Waterfront Park booth during Pride weekend. We'll have registration cards, we'll have pens, we'll have clipboards, and we'll have people grabbing you by the collar as you walk by. Step one to victory: We must register and unite as a single-minded voting bloc. You have two choices: You can be part of the solution, or you can be part of the problem.

Now I am neither naive nor stupid. The notion of our community being single-minded on any matter borders on the absurd. But, absurd or not, we've got to make this happen. We must elect progressive candidates. This is our moment, this is our time to make an impact. We're far past the old Pride chant of "We're here, we're queer, get used to it." From now on it's "We're here, we're queer, we vote, WE WIN!" [J]

**THE RING THING:** As Massachusetts legalizes same-sex marriage, Portland queer couples grapple with saying "I do"

p 26

**NEWS**

**NORTHWEST** • Pride of the Rose Scholarship celebrates 25th anniversary; the story behind a gay septuagenarian's picture reveals a life filled with love, loss and legacy; County Chair Diane Linn apologizes, but not for same-sex marriage

pp 6-17

**NATIONAL** • Massachusetts finally issues marriage licenses to same-sex couples; Utah high school punishes students for wearing "Queers Kick Ash" T-shirts

pp 18-21

**WORLD** • U.S. soldiers use same-sex acts to humiliate Iraqi prisoners

pp 22-23

**ARTS AND CULTURE**

**BOOKS** • Portland's hippest queer parent turns 10

pp 34-35

**FILM** • A trio of filmmakers will put Portland couples on the big screen; Showtime produces trans documentaries

p 37

**WHAT'S POPPIN'?** • But even fast food tastes better than *Troy*

p 39

**DIVERSIONS** • A Weekend at Home away from home; gay men and their plants; keeping on the Down Low

p 41

**ART** • Gay Portland photographer brings his Moroccan journey home

p 43

**COLUMNS**

**MS. BEHAVIOR** • Friends don't disinvite friends from *The L Word*

p 33

**EPIQUEERAN** • Let's do lunch, redux

p 40

**OUT WITH IT!** • Not so extreme makeovers

p 41

**THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO MARC** • Love and marriage

p 45

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**Letters to the editor** should be limited to 500 words. Announcements regarding life transitions (births, deaths, unions, etc.) should be limited to 200 words; photos are welcome. **Deadline for submissions** to the editorial department and for the **Calendar** is the Thursday 15 days before the next publication date. Views expressed in letters to the editor, columns and features are not necessarily those of the publisher.

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**Subscriptions** are \$22.50 for 12 issues. First Class (in an envelope) is \$40 for 12 issues.

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**REFLECTIONS**

5 years ago in *just out*... VOL. 16 NO. 14, MAY 21, 1999



• It's been nearly two months since Sven Gomez was found dead in his Northwest Portland apartment, in what police have described as a "highly suspicious death." In June 1997, the Colombian shared his story in *Just Out*. He described himself as one of the many gay men and lesbians who come to the United States seeking asylum for fear of persecution in their homelands due to sexual orientation.

• Deke Law, the Lesbian Community Project's politically passionate staff organizer, readily acknowledges that not all members are happy about the wider focus of the rebuilt group, as evidenced by spirited debate at its last annual meeting, when some expressed grave concern that the *lesbian* in Lesbian Community Project was being shunted to the side.

• Ron Carter, Randy Rapaport and Dean

Sidwell have opened 3 Friends Coffeehouse. Located at 201 S.E. 12th Ave. in Portland, this newest addition to the caffeine scene is meant to function as a social hangout for men who are seeking an alternative to the bars.

• An estimated 800 people, including a handful of Oregonians, recently gathered in Washington, D.C., for the Lesbian Rights Summit sponsored by the National Organization for Women.

• Members of the Portland Bisexual Alliance, the Bisexual Community Forum and Portland Bisexual Women discuss how to make Pride '99 bi-positive May 28 with representatives from Pride Northwest.

• Judy Brodkey leads a workshop for men and women titled "Understanding the Importance of Men's Liberation" June 8. Learn about society's narrow definitions of masculinity and how to become an ally for the boys and men in your life.

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