

Discovering My Pride

by Tivo Salazar

In the summer of 1996, I visited Portland for the first time. I was 17 and had not yet come to terms with my sexuality, let alone my adolescence. It was just a coincidence that I was downtown on that Sunday. I had no idea what Pride was, or meant, for that matter.

My life until that day had been a whirlwind of confusion mixed with teen-age angst. No matter what I did, I always felt empty and alone. Growing up in eastern Washington, "gay" was a dirty word that always brought on the most negative of responses. I always knew I was different, but I also knew that I didn't want to be a dirty word.

It was really hot the day of Pride. It was hard to miss what was going on; the streets downtown were packed. I was amazed by how many people were out. Every facet of the gay community was there, from

PFLAG to Dykes on Bikes. As I sat and watched in awe, I realized that I was not alone. Amid all the smiles and warmth, I could not help but feel like I was part of something great. I knew I belonged. I wasn't a dirty word, and I wasn't going to live my life alone anymore.

A few weeks later I returned home. Within weeks, I came out to almost all of my immediate family and friends. It was the most pivotal point in my life and I can't imagine the alternative.

Being gay isn't always easy, and life is still life. But every year in June, I think back to that hot summer day and embrace my city, my community and my meaning of Pride. ■

TIVO SALAZAR is a 25-year-old district manager for a national retailer. He lives in Portland.

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hydrotherapy. But you don't have to be a lesbian to get an appointment. And if you just want basic health care, you can have that, too.

For more than 15 years, Circle Health co-founder Suzanne Scopes has been providing naturopathic basic care to Portland families and individuals—queer and straight.

"I love what I do," says Scopes, a lithe 45-year-old who veritably glows with health. "I plan on doing this forever."

Naturopathic medicine differs from the more traditional allopathic medicine in several key ways. "We spend more time with people," says Scopes, "and we work with them holistically." She says that naturopathic medicine, which focuses on nutrition and lifestyle, builds patients' health over the long term and has fewer side effects.

Scopes says she likes working with herbal and natural medicines because "it's a way of recognizing our connection to the earth." But she knows some people are dubious of naturopathy because of myths about bad-tasting herbs and crazy diets. Many people don't know that naturopaths can prescribe standard medications and order lab tests, just like allopathic doctors can.

Originally a biology major, Scopes got her start in natural medicine after her mother died of stomach cancer at the age of 49. The natural health movement of the 1970s was in full swing, and for Scopes, "it really fit." She left the East Coast and came to Portland to attend the National College of Naturopathic Medicine.

Now she's a mom herself. Scopes and her partner of 21 years (and spouse of three

months) are parents to a 22-year-old, a 6-year-old and a 2-year-old—all boys. "It's chaotic and great," she says. "I love it."

She says it would be hard for her and her partner to have "femmy" girls. She likes her boys' energy and "the way they are in the world."

Scopes and her family will be out at Pride this year, just like every year. "We never miss it," she says. She enjoys the diversity and celebration and adds, "The more outrageous the better!"

—MD

Alisa Simmons

Although Alisa Simmons went to Southampton College in New York to study neurophysiology, it was the campus custodians who helped her find her true calling.

She befriended one of the custodians in her dormitory, and he told her about the labor struggles they were having with administrators. She attended a few of the custodians' organizing meetings, got involved with the cause and had her eyes opened to a new world of possibilities. Within three weeks she changed her major to sociology.

"I started to organize," Simmons says. "It's one of the best things that's ever happened to me. That was my first campaign, and it was my first win."

She grew up in Brooklyn and was raised by a single mom. But she says she was pretty ignorant about a lot of social issues. "I wasn't class conscious. I was barely race conscious," she says. Getting involved with the custodians' struggle was the beginning of her education about many of the injustices in the world.

Now Simmons is a professional organizer for Oregon Action, registering people of color,

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