

DIVERSIONS



by Lisa Bradshaw

Belgium or bust

My subject this issue forces me to come out. So, here goes: I'm leaving *Just Out*.

I know, I'm all broken up about it, too!

When I announced my departure to my boss, she said, "But you love your job!" And I said, "But I love my partner more."

My partner is a native of Belgium, and we have decided to move to her country. I could go on about the lack of rights for binational queer couples in the United States, making it impossible for me to sponsor her for a green card as I'm not a "family member," but I won't. Let's just suffice it to say that in Belgium, one of the two countries in the world that has legalized gay marriage, I have a better shot at life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness than she does here.

In planning this big trip over the pond, I've had to get some papers in order, of course. Can't just show up with a duffel bag and say "let me in" (like we do in Iraq).

We decided to get married in Belgium since we weren't sure their government would recognize our recent Oregon marriage. But, oops, in order to marry a Belgian citizen you have to have a statement from your county authorities that there is no record of you being married there.

Unfortunately, my county authorities couldn't comply. Fortunately, a few days later Oregon was forced to record all the gay marriages! Whew. Now I could get a certified copy of my marriage certificate to prove to Belgium that my wife and I are indeed married. Then we don't have to get married there; we'll just be recognized as married, and I can legally immigrate.

Great, said Belgium. Now we also need a statement from the U.S. consulate in Belgium that they recognize your marriage, and you're good to go.

Unfortunately, the consulate couldn't comply. Fortunately, it doesn't issue recognitions to married hetero couples, either. "Marriage is a state issue, not a federal issue," the consulate noted to me via e-mail. It will, however, issue a statement that says our documents are in accordance with the laws of the state of Oregon.

"That's not what we asked for," wrote the Belgian government to my wife.

"You're asking for something that doesn't exist," she politely responded.

Finally, Belgium decided that after we send them all our official documents they'll decide whether it's OK if we sell off most of what we own, quit our jobs, say goodbye to all our friends and my family and move halfway around the world together. Whether or not they make this decision before our plane touches down seems to not concern them.

I remember when my partner and I got married March 3. After the rainy, cold ceremony on the steps of the Multnomah Building, I asked, "Are we married?" Yes, said the officiant. And all my co-workers were like, "Wow, you're married." Half of them went out and got married, too.

But, still, I wondered. If we got the license and we got hitched by an officiant but the state has not recorded them, are we married? Is anyone who has a ceremony legally married until their marriage is recorded?

And even now that Oregon has recorded that marriage, when you are turned down for benefits, as friends of mine recently were, with a note that says, "At this time, the state of Oregon does not recognize same-sex marriages," you've got to ask yourself, am I married? Am I really married?

And if the Belgian government says they won't recognize our marriage because George W. Bush doesn't, what then? Am I married or not? Here? There? Anywhere?

I've been asking myself for months now if I'm really married and, although many people and agencies are quick to answer, I still don't really know.

I only know that, oftentimes, marriage is in the eye of the beholder. **J**

New CD imminent

Pink Martini will release its new CD titled *Hang on Little Tomato* on Oct. 19, according to the world-renowned Portland band's manager, John Brodie. The Latin- and French-inspired band, led by queer pianist Thomas Lauderdale, will play a concert celebrating the release the same night.

Fans have been long awaiting the album, which has been pushed back more than a year from its original 2003 release date.

Author sings selections from first novel

Portland author Jennie Shortridge reads (and sings!) from her first novel, *Riding with the Queen*, 7 p.m. Aug. 27 at In Other Words, 3734 S.E. Hawthorne Blvd.

Queen's main character, a down-and-out musician, finds herself forced to head back home to Denver, also Shortridge's hometown, where she must deal with her bipolar lesbian mom and an entire host of other eccentric characters.

A former musician herself, Shortridge decided to "further develop the snippets of songs I'd written for the characters throughout the story and record them." She also uses them in her readings. "I've been to readings, and I don't think they're necessarily always that much fun.... The songs further the story, provide a soundtrack almost."

The full-time writer includes several queer characters in *Queen*, although she identifies as straight. "I want to write books...that have the same variety of people that exist in life. Queer is just part of that."

That's Mr. & Ms. Leather to you

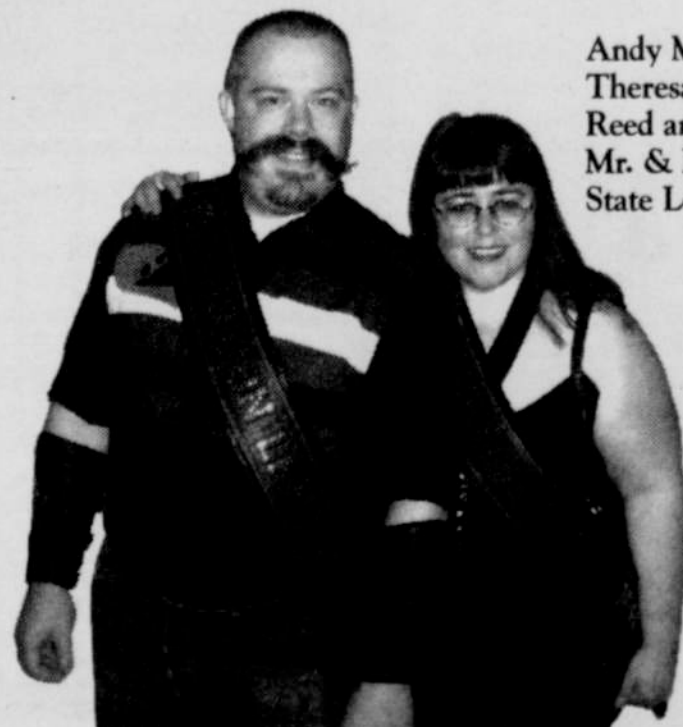
Blackout Leather Productions has announced its new Mr. & Ms. Oregon State Leather 2004 are Portlanders Andy Mangels and Theresa "Darklady" Reed.

The pair were selected during the Aug. 15 contest at Embers, one of the highlights of Oregon Leather Pride Week. The rather grueling competition includes a prejudging interview with political, social and personal questions; a formal look and speech; a street look and onstage pop question; and a fantasy category, in which contestants have to do an onstage performance.

Judges also watch the interpersonal interactions of all contestants during the week leading up to the event.

"My pop question," shares Mangels, who beat out one other contestant, "was an involved query about things to ask and avoid when doing an S/M scene.... I said to avoid 'bottoms who voted for George Bush.'"

Reed, better known as writer and sex educator Darklady, ran unopposed but still had to garner a minimum number of points to win the title. Her onstage performance found Darklady Liberty being "harassed by a man in a suit waving a political bill around,"



Andy Mangels and Theresa "Darklady" Reed are your new Mr. & Ms. Oregon State Leather



Splendora performs for the queer punk masses at Sissyboy

she describes. After securing said man in wooden stocks, she "pulled his pants down to reveal red, white and blue boxer shorts...and I paddled him while his bill was in his mouth."

Reed is a founding member of Portland Leather Alliance, a board member of the Portland Area Business Association and vice chairwoman for the Libertarian Party of Multnomah County. She is running for a state Senate seat on the Lib ticket.

Mangels has written articles on queer life and culture for countless publications, founded and publishes the online *In Uniform* magazine, edited the award-winning *Gay Comics* anthology for eight years and is curator of the Oregon Leather History Project.

No room for sissies

A drag queen gorges on a box of Twinkies, pukes them into a toilet and kicks the ceramic throne over onstage. Code name: Bulimia Rhapsody.

Are we ready for this?

Absolutely, says Mark Thomas, or Zebra, as the Sissyboy host is known. His punk drag party has certainly revved up last Monday at International Club Mummy, 332 N.E. San Rafael St.

Sissyboy, Thomas says, caters to younger queers "who do not identify with traditional drag." The shows often "get a bit messy," he adds, "with performers pushing away from the limits of pretty, bitchy drag queens and creating dark and often raunchy characters designed to make the crowd laugh and often cringe."

And cheer. Spectators love the show and party hardy afterward to DJ Stormy.

Thomas moved to Portland early this year from San Francisco and wasted no time filling what he saw to be a void. "I found Stark Street to be uncreative...though everyone seemed to be ready for something new."

The next Sissyboy starts at 9 p.m. Aug. 30. The show is usually at 11 p.m. Cover is a mere \$3.

Queer August art redux

Yes, it's time for another walk around the queer Portland art scene, as three more artists emerge to give your second half of August as much culture as your first.

Bi filmmaker Vanessa Renwick's *Lovejoy Lost 2004* is visible through Sept. 4 at PDX Window Project, 612 N.W. 12th Ave. The view-from-the-sidewalk exhibit honors the Lovejoy columns that were torn down a few years ago to make room for the new trolley track.

Covered in murals painted by Greek immigrant and train nightwatchman Tom Stefopoulos in the 1940s, the columns were thankfully preserved but are "sleeping in a lonely storage lot for four years now," notes Renwick, "waiting for the day they might stand again and display their mythical visions."

Across Burnside over at Scandal's Other Side Café, 1038 S.W. Stark St., stands equally mythical figures in sculpture, paint and woodblock prints: beautiful naked men. Portland gay artist Gary Smith, who used to work solely in sculpture, has expanded his repertoire for this new show, which runs through Aug. 31.

"I still love sculpture, but in that medium it takes a very long time from conception to realization," he explains. "I began to yearn for more immediate gratification in my art."

Scout over to Interstate Firehouse Cultural Center, 5340 N. Interstate Ave., for queer artist Meg Rowe's unique exhibit *The Shape of Green*, inspired by the artist's walks in the Interstate Corridor Renewal Area.

"The walks were actions of meditation, awareness and connection," says Rowe, who will speak at the gallery 6 p.m. Sept. 2. "My path linked each park to its neighborhood and made a physical, if temporal, connection between the diverse communities within the corridor."

Rowe stitches with thread on digital photo prints of natural objects, creating an interesting multimedia display that parallels, she explains, "the action, rhythm and pacing of a walk.... Repeating each step in the mark of a stitch, I remember the walk and re-create its path in the tangible form of stitched maps." **J**

Compiled by LISA BRADSHAW and GRAHAM TURNER