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Speak Out

SpongeBob SquarePants is popular with gay men

TO THE EDITOR:

A Nov. 19 *Just Out* movie review relegated SpongeBob SquarePants to first-graders. However, many adult gay men have been watching SpongeBob in "Nielsen-popping numbers," according to the very academic journal *The Gay & Lesbian Review*. Adults who enjoy the classic Warner Brothers cartoons will probably also love SpongeBob.

SpongeBob is so gay, in fact, that the Christian-Republican moral majority recently labeled him a gay terrorist like the Teletubby Tinky-Winky. The conservative Bill O'Reilly even felt it was necessary to brag that his Fox News television show had finally surpassed SpongeBob in number of viewers at 8 p.m. Even reruns were beating O'Reilly's numbers.

SpongeBob was first brought out of the closet by an Oct. 8, 2002, *Wall Street Journal* article. The former *Just Out* humorist Marc Acito tried to deny that SpongeBob was homosexual because "he's a sponge" but conceded that "the little guy makes Christopher Lowell look positively butch" ["A Sad Day in the Neighborhood," March 21, 2003].

SpongeBob skillfully carries on the "celluloid closet" Hollywood tradition of slipping in subversive gay references under the noses of clueless straight people. For example, in the episode "No Weenies Allowed," SpongeBob comically deals with homophobia-like concerns after being rejected and banished to a "weenie bar." The other weenies counsel him that "you can't hide what is inside." But a weenie-phobic and closeted SpongeBob repeatedly pleads, "I'm not a weenie!"

Likewise, the voice of SpongeBob's neighbor Squidward mimics the style of gay comedian Paul Lynde and is reminiscent of a stereotypical gay male music teacher. SpongeBob's close buddy Patrick the starfish talks like Bert Lahr, who played the sissy lion in *The Wizard of Oz*. Another close friend with a gender-neutral name is the very butch female squirrel named Sandy.

In the cartoon "SUDS," SpongeBob humorously dealt with the serious medical and political issues of AIDS. As a person living with SUDS, SpongeBob would make a perfect celebrity spokesman for the next safe-sex campaign. How soon can I get a yellow and absorbent SpongeBob condom? After all, it seems like SpongeBob is already appearing on every other product.

I do not blame Measure 36 or gay marriage for President Bush's election. I blame SpongeBob for making voters think he is recruiting children into the gay lifestyle by flaunting his

homosexuality. SpongeBob makes a much better scapegoat.

THOMAS KRAEMER
Corvallis

Thanks for community support

TO THE EDITOR:

During the No on Constitutional Amendment 36 campaign, Portland Parents, Families and Friends of Lesbians and Gays was invited to provide food for all the fabulous, dedicated canvassers who knocked on thousands upon thousands of doors in Multnomah and Washington counties, educating people about marriage equality.

It was my privilege to work on this project with Hillary ("Leigh") Howitt, a straight-but-not-narrow recent San Francisco transplant. Plowing through the ads in *Just Out* and Portland's Gay and Lesbian Community Yellow Pages, we found many restaurants and caterers who threw their doors open to help us—some of them time and time again. We want to publicly thank those businesses—most of them small businesses, working hard in this difficult economy—and individuals who cooked up a storm to feed OUR troops!

Those with asterisks gave more than once, and sometimes on very short notice, for which we thank them all the more. In order of appearance on our calendar, they are: *Old Wives' Tales, *Holiday Essence Quality Cake Shop, Piece of Cake, Wild Oats, Joseph's Dessert Company, John's Catering, Cup and Saucer, Iron Horse, Hot Lips Pizza, Oasis Café, Flying Pie Pizzeria, It's a Beautiful Pizza, Laurelwood Public House & Brewery, Divine Café, Rose & Raindrop, Russell Street Barbecue, Holocene, *Vista Spring Café, Chameleon Restaurant, Pastini Pastaria, A Place to Talk—Ruth Parvin, Augustana Lutheran Church, Forest Grove United Church of Christ, Southminster Presbyterian Church, *Bau Nguyen, Frank Vanek, Sir Robin R. Hixson and Ginny Laferriere, her mother, Donna Harrison, and her son, Elliott Laferriere.

We hope that as you plan your meals out, you will support the businesses who went out of their way to help us bring the truth to doorsteps in the greater Portland metropolitan area. There are likely other wonderful donors among our readers whose support of our troops slipped under our radar. Please stand up and let all of us know who you are, so we can celebrate and thank you, too!

Especially in light of our defeat Nov. 2, Portland PFLAG heartily invites all members of our GLBTQ community, and your parents, siblings and friends, to join us the second Tuesday of each month from 7 to 9 p.m. in the Fireside Room at First United Methodist Church,

1838 S.W. Jefferson St. Our Dec. 14 meeting will be our annual holiday potluck. We'd love to have you join us for great holiday cheer and live music. We will be meeting in Collins Hall that night. Please RSVP by calling 503-232-7676 so PFLAG board members will know how much ham and turkey to provide.

SUSIE SHEPHERD
Portland

You can't legislate love

TO THE EDITOR:

As the dust settles, some last thoughts on the passage of Measure 36: As citizens, we should be alarmed with this outcome. One group of Americans finds itself disenfranchised from equality under the laws that others take for granted—this being the rights and privileges of marriage and all the benefits derived therefrom.

What right is more inalienable than to love whom you choose? What truth is more self-evident than that all people, no matter what their sexual orientation, are created EQUAL? What commandment, no matter your religion, is more important than "love one another"? How does denigrating one group of people support that most important of commandments? How does promoting fidelity and commitment between two people weaken the institution of marriage? Why should a law legislate whom we love or whom we choose to marry?

Gays and lesbians are very real human beings. They fall in love and want to celebrate their love with family and friends in a religious ceremony, if they choose. Why should their marriage not be recognized legally the same as heterosexual marriage?

No law can legislate whom we love. As a society, we need to promote and support committed, loving relationships that build a stable, caring family and community. At the very least, society's laws should not interfere with anything this deeply personal.

I sincerely hope that this period of time will be looked back on as we now look back on segregation—as a period of deep IGNORANCE from which we evolved. We need to stand shoulder to shoulder to protect the rights of all citizens for equality under the law, no matter the sexual orientation.

DESIREE HUBER
Portland

correction

The Nov. 19 newsbrief "PFLAG Cleans Up" misidentified the Portland chapter president as Ann Blair. Her name is actually Anne Bliss.

Just Out regrets the error.



transitions

Willie M. Tucker, 1937-2004

Willie M. Tucker died Nov. 20. He was 66.

He was born on Christmas Eve 1937 to Rachel Tucker Glasper, who survives him in death.

He was a licensed cosmetologist, trained at the Phagan School of Hair Design. He worked at and managed various salons in the Portland area, spending the past 20 years of his career with Gary Lucky Hair Salon on Broadway and Fremont.

Tucker was active in many community organizations including the Peoples Fund, Ebony Kingdom and Imperial Sovereign Rose Court. Tucker loved the theater and held season tickets to many local companies.

In a 1999 Pride feature in *Just Out*, Tucker

described himself as "cantankerous, grouchy, grumpy, irascible." Tucker came out as a gay man when he was 19, long before Stonewall. He moved to Portland in 1968, where he became a fixture in the early court system and drag show circuit. He served as a board member for Peacock in the Park; every year, the day of performance would find him working behind the scenes as "troubleshooter" and backstage coordinator.

In addition to his family, Tucker is survived by many community members who loved and admired him, especially his best and dearest friend, Irving Lambert. Tucker was a true family patrician who took pride and joy in his responsibilities for rearing his many nieces and nephews.

Well-attended services were held Nov. 24 at Skyline Memorial Gardens Chapel. Tucker's ashes will be scattered at the Oregon coast.