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She's coming out

Patty Bouvier finally makes it official

The Simpsons has been around for more than 15 years, but the Feb. 20 episode will reveal something significant about one of the show's veteran characters.

Last summer at a comic book convention in San Diego, producer Al Jean teased: "To raise money, Springfield legalizes gay marriage. Homer becomes a minister by going on the Internet and filling out a form. A longtime character comes out of the closet, but I'm not saying who."

This being the information age and all, the secret didn't last long. The closeted homo is...Marge's chain-smoking sister Patty Bouvier. (You can distinguish her from twin sis Selma by her earrings, which are appropriately shaped like triangles.)

This news may come as a surprise to casual viewers, but Patty actually came out back in the days when Lon Mabon was terrorizing queers with Ballot Measure 9. During the Halloween episode of 1992, after seeing a naked Homer run past her, Patty exclaimed, "There goes the last lingering thread of my heterosexuality."

In another episode she approached Marge with the gruff greeting, "How's it hangin'?" And when her little sister invited her to the ballet, Patty refused, referring to it as "girl stuff."

Regardless, it's about time that she starts living the out 'n' proud lifestyle. What's so surprising about this queer-positive turn of events is that it's airing on the evil Fox network—and yet it hasn't raised a peep from the wacko fringe.

This is testament to the groundwork laid by hometown hero Matt Groening, who began pushing the envelope long before it was trendy. His most famous queer creation is also television's only animated Log Cabin Republican: Waylon Smithers, a sycophant who harbors an unrequited crush on his boss, Montgomery

Burns, and once dated an antiques dealer voiced by John Waters.

Of course, Patty and Smithers aren't the first cartoon characters to go gay. These are just a few of my animated queeroes:

• **Peppermint Patty:** Uses Charlie Brown as a beard to hide the truth about her passionate petting sessions with Marcie.

• **Snagglepuss:** Heavens to Murgatroid—he's homo!!

• **Vanity Smurf:** Always admiring himself in the mirror, even though sexy Smurfette would love to rip off those white pants and play his blue piccolo.

Speaking of which: *The Smurfs and the Magic Flute* screens 10 p.m. Feb. 25 at Clinton Street Theater as part of the 2005 Winter

Prozac Film Series. Pizza, beer, vodka and Gargamel!

• **Velma:** When *Scooby-Doo* was released in 2002, the film's pot references and "hints at lesbianism" pissed off the Culture and Family Institute. Grand wizard Robert

Knight sniffed, "I'm disheartened to see just what the producers meant with the promotional line 'The New Doo.'" Ruh-oh!



Jim's Closet

by Jim Radosta

THE TOP SHELF

?

Q: What came first—the chicken or the egg?

A: Hell if I know. I'll let others field that one.

Tennessee Reid Norton reportedly provides "The Answer" in his 90-second segment of *Spike & Mike's Sick and Twisted Animation*, which screens through April 2 at Cinema 21.

The Portland Art Center is pondering the universal question to celebrate the hatching of Southeast Portland's newest gallery. The *Chicken Scratch* project is simple yet innovative: Four pet chickens model for amateur sketch artists, who then hang their creations for the world to see. You'll be surprised at the results. For details about the closing reception Feb. 19, turn to Page 28.

Kaosmosis raised money for the center at a bizarre "rubber chicken voodoo masquerade" Feb. 4. "Huevos Diablos: An Evening of White Sugar & Black Magic" memorialized victims of the tsunami in Southeast Asia with a Port Orleans-style jazz funeral procession in which an open casket of Voodoo Doughnuts was hoisted across the Burnside Bridge to the Bossanova Ballroom. These nuts know how to throw a festive party. Visit www.kaosmosis.org to join their mailing list.



• SpongeBob SquarePants:

While creator Stephen Hillen- burg insists the saltwater freak is just "asexual," we all know better. And now that Bible-bagin' boogeyman James Dobson is breathing down his neck, we may never know the truth.

"I believe the agenda is sinister," the Focus on the Family founder fumed this month after learning about a music video in which SpongeBob joins Barney, the Muppets and other beloved characters to teach elementary school students about multiculturalism. "Those childhood symbols are apparently being hijacked to promote an agenda that involves teaching homosexual propaganda to children."

Tom Kenny, the voice of SpongeBob, will be the master of ceremonies for "Animation Celebration: A Century of Hope and Laughter" May 14 at the Marriott Hotel, 1401 S.W. Naito Parkway. The gala will mark the 100th year of Neighborhood House and the art of animation by paying tribute to the Rose City's own Mel Blanc, a frequent supporter of the nonprofit organization serving families in Southwest Portland. (Tickets are \$100 a pop at www.nhweb.org.) As everyone knows, Blanc created the hottest queer cartoon icon: Bugs Bunny in drag. **JM**

Arts and Culture Editor JIM RADOSTA needs your feedback. Write to jim@justout.com.