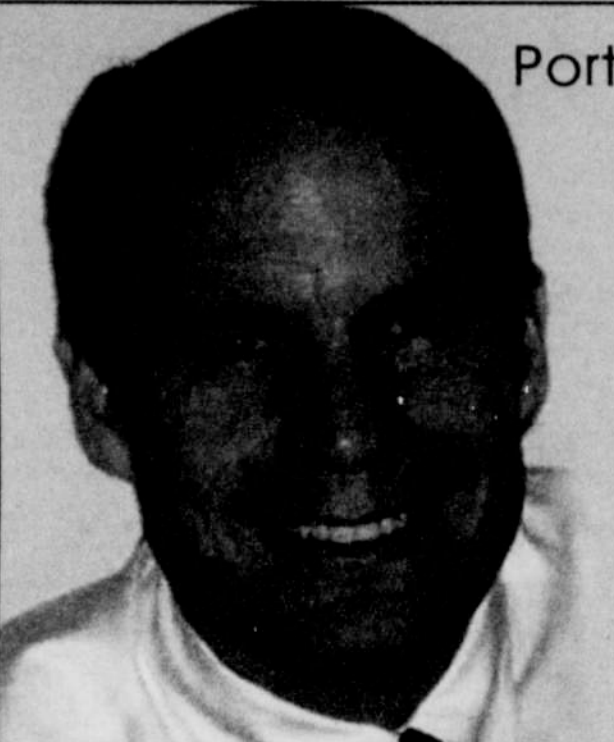




Portland Metro Real Estate
Steve Buchert
Residential Broker

503.970.3801
Buchert@Hasson.com

THE HASSON
REALTORS



ANNIVERSARY SALE

Celebrating 12 years of being
local & independently owned.
Thanks, Portland!
Sale Going On Now.

JOHNNY S O L E

A WORLD OF FINE SHOES FOR MEN AND WOMEN.
815 SW ALDER STREET • PORTLAND OR 97205 • 503-225-1241
MON-SAT 11 AM TO 6 PM • SUN 12 PM TO 5 PM • ALL SALES FINAL

LOOKING FOR LOYAL CUSTOMERS?

For information on
how to establish your
business identity with
Just Out readers,
contact ad director
Larry Lewis at
503-236-1253 #14.



**Special June Pride rates
are available now!**

Live Long. Live Strong.
Get Tested

Free Walk-In HIV Testing
• Anonymous • Needle Free • Results in one week

Monday Nights 5:30 to 7:30
Washington County Health Clinic - Beaverton
12550 SW 2nd (between Hall & Watson)

Thursday Nights 5:30 to 7:30
Washington County Health Clinic - Tigard
15296 SW Royalty Pkwy (behind Les Schwab across from King City)

For more information, please call 503.846.4965.


NORTHWEST news**THE RIGHT TO WORK****Discrimination lawsuit filed against Home Depot**

by Jaymee R. Cuti

Oskkar Walker was carving out a career for himself at a local Home Depot. He had invested more than four years at the 82nd Avenue location, was familiar with every department and had full health benefits, a retirement plan and stock options. He also previously worked for Home Depot in California for approximately two years.

"I had working knowledge in all the departments and good customer rapport. I was moving up in the company. My next step would have been managerial," he said.

Despite a stack of positive performance reports, 16 merit badges and cash bonuses for his helpful and motivated attitude, as documented in evaluations, Walker was fired March 15, 2004.

Walker is a transgendered man. He says his trouble began when he changed his name and began dressing in masculine clothes and taking male hormones, which deepened his voice and caused facial hair.

Suddenly, Walker received several negative evaluations stating that he was rude to customers and employees and on one occasion was disciplined for not calling in sick himself. Instead, Walker's roommate, also a Home Depot employee, called in for him before taking Walker to the hospital for an asthma attack.

Walker was terminated, officially, because of too many write-ups.

"You don't go from being helpful and having no problems for six years and then in a matter of a few months, you start taking hormones and then you can't do anything right," said attorney Mitra Shahri, who is representing Walker in a lawsuit.

had ever taken on.

In March 1997, the commission intervened in a lawsuit covering 310 Home Depot stores east of the Mississippi. That same month, the U.S. Supreme Court refused to stop a class-action lawsuit encompassing 217,000 current and former Home Depot employees and job applicants in the store's Western Division, alleging that employees were subject to a hostile work environment on the basis of gender and race and were retaliated against when they complained. Home Depot settled that case for \$5.5 million and agreed to provide anti-discrimination training to workers, managers and human resource employees; to appoint an equal employment opportunity coordinator; and to be monitored by the commission for 30 months.

"I have a right to work whether I represent myself as the gender that I am or the gender that I'm not. In my opinion, there's no reason I still shouldn't be there," said Walker, who financially supports his 5-year-old daughter. Since his termination, Walker has lost his house and has yet to find another job.

According to Shahri, who specializes in retaliation and discrimination suits, many employees quit their jobs when they feel they are being discriminated against. She advises that they stand up for themselves.

"Every company has a way of dealing with complaints. Don't just quit without proper documentation," said Shahri.

She recommends filing written complaints with the business's human relations department and using the words "I feel I am being discriminated against because of my gender" or "sexual orientation" and following up until an independent investigation is conducted.



Transgender man Oskkar Walker says he was wrongfully terminated from Home Depot.

Walker's case may shed light on the need for Senate Bill 1000, which protects sexual minorities from discrimination in terms of housing, employment and public accommodation. No such protection is on Oregon's law books.

Walker chose to sue Home Depot for the sum of \$700,000 and reinstatement of his job at another Home Depot store.

Home Depot has been the subject of several sex and race discrimination lawsuits in the 1990s, including the largest case the federal Equal Employment Opportunity Commission

investigation is conducted.

"We should look at people like Oskkar, who stand up for their rights at the expense of themselves and their families, as heroes who pave the road for the rest of the people who only wish to work in peace and with no less than their natural human quality," said Shahri. "If somebody likes their job, there's no reason they should have to walk away from it. The employer should change, or the system of abuse will continue. If enough lawsuits are filed, companies will learn it's not cost effective to discriminate." ■