

## Speak out

critical of BRO and the way it handled the No on 36 campaign.

I was a volunteer for the No on 36 campaign myself, and I had some definite concerns, as did many other people in our community. BRO had raised twice the money that the Yes on 36 campaign had, and yet it didn't start running television ads until the last month of the campaign, after many people had already submitted their ballots. Meanwhile, the "Yes" folks had been running a successful ad campaign for months prior to the election.

I kept track of how many times I saw a "Yes" ad and how many times I saw a "No" ad. There were three times as many "Yes" commercials in any given evening.

Where was BRO when the "Yes" folks started telling their lies about how a "No" vote would force schools to teach homosexual sex? Where was BRO when the "Yes" folks were showing respected members of the community like teachers, politicians and even a gay couple? The "No" ads never once mentioned the phrase "No on 36" but were ambiguous, unknown heterosexual talking heads going on about what marriage meant to them.

BRO continues to drop the ball time and again when it comes to same-sex marriage. I have to ask: Just how effective is BRO?

If it wasn't for the hard work and dedication of Tinker and Love Makes a Family, we wouldn't have been successful in fighting the anti-gay initiatives introduced by Lon Mabon and the Oregon Citizens Alliance. Tinker was fighting

for lesbian/gay/transgender Oregonians years before BRO existed and Roey Thorpe came to Portland. Tinker is a knowledgeable, seasoned voice in the community, one of many that needs to be heard.

Instead of tearing down respected activists in our community, we should be seeking input from everyone, even when we don't fully agree. The "my way or the highway" attitude doesn't work for the Bush administration, and it doesn't work in our community, either.

While civil unions are a step in the right direction, I wonder what Rosa Parks' reaction would have been if she had been told by leaders in her community, "Well, you have to sit at the back of the bus, but at least you get to ride the bus." Let's not forget, civil unions are second-class citizenship, and everybody knows it. We should be picketing straight weddings, blocking access to marriage license offices and protesting at the churches that participated in the Defense of Marriage Coalition. Passive civil disobedience is not a contest about who gets along better with whom.

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Portland

## correction

Because of an editorial error in the May 6 issue, the Web site for Senior Housing and Retirement Enterprises was deleted from the article "Queers Prepare for the Golden Years." SHARE's Web site is [www.share-pdx.org](http://www.share-pdx.org).

## transitions

### Jack Nichols, 1938-2005

Although Jack Nichols was not from Oregon, he touched all gay Oregonians with his five decades of gay activism. He died May 2 in Florida at the age of 67.

I was first touched by Nichols' 1972 book, *I Have More Fun with You Than Anybody*, which he co-authored with his lover, Lige Clarke. For many years prior to the publication of this book, Nichols and Clarke had touched many other gay people with their column, "The Homosexual Citizen," published in Al Goldstein's very heterosexual *Screw* newspaper. This column was one of the only sources of gay news available to Oregonians. *Screw* was only sold in adult bookstores.

Nichols and Clarke's column led them to become the editors of *Gay*, the first weekly gay newspaper. (*The Advocate* was a biweekly newspaper.) It was often sold in hippie-style bookstores and cigar store newsstands alongside the other radical political publications of the period.

Nichols' activism started years before the 1969 Stonewall rebellion. In 1961 he and Frank Kameny started the Washington, D.C., chapter of the Mattachine homophile rights organization. Inspired by Martin Luther King's famous 1963 march on Washington for black civil rights, Nichols and Kameny led a protest July 4, 1965, at Independence Hall calling for homosexual civil rights. Bayard Rustin, the man who was the driving force behind King's march, was also gay.

Nichols was the first activist to challenge the medical dogma that homosexuality is a sickness. He worked with George Weinberg and other activists to get homosexuality removed from the official list of mental disorders. Weinberg coined the term "homophobia" in the 1960s and initiated psychological research on the subject.



From left, Frank Kameny, Jack Nichols and George Weinberg were honored as grand marshals of New York City's 2004 Heritage of Pride Parade.

Nichols was interviewed by Mike Wallace of CBS News for the first nationally televised documentary on homosexuality March 7, 1967. He was one of the first homosexual Americans to come out publicly.

Nichols never retired. His gay activism continued into the Internet age. From 1997 until 2004 he edited the Web site *Gay Today*, which was read by more than 50,000 people worldwide.

In 2002 I sent Nichols an e-mail thanking him for his 1972 book. As he seemed to do with everyone who came close, we became friends. Even though he lived on a beach in Florida, the Internet enabled our frequent long-distance communications.

Professor J. Louis Campbell of Penn State University has spent the past several years working on a biography of Nichols. A contract with a distinguished book publisher is under negotiation. An early draft of the book promises to preserve this important part of gay history.

More about Nichols can be found at his personal site, [www.jack-nichols.com](http://www.jack-nichols.com), and [www.gaytoday.com](http://www.gaytoday.com).

—Thomas Kraemer

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