

**NORTHWEST**news

# OCTOBER IS GAY HISTORY MONTH

## Independent historians form a lively community

by Sarah Dougher

**A**lthough you might not know it by looking around, October was declared by Oregon Gov. John Kitzhaber in 1995 to be "Gay and Lesbian History Month."

Originally developed to showcase the historical contributions of the sexual minorities community, the event has not had much momentum since the Gay and Lesbian Archive of the Pacific Northwest transferred its collection to the Oregon Historical Society. That library collection includes materials from the early gay and lesbian rights movement in Portland, and other materials have been added through the years. It's a collection that is open to anyone for research purposes, according to communications director Ken DuBois.

Just because the Oregon Historical Society is not up to speed does not mean there is not a lot of important queer history being written and documented around the state.

Dave Kohl, who sometimes free-lances for *Just Out*, is working on a history of Metropolitan Community Church of Portland, which is due out Dec. 15; trans televangelist Sister Paula Nielsen is working on her autobiography; Kohl and historian Pat Young are committed to the joint authorship of a book on Portland gay history; and Andy Mangels has extensive material for a proposed book on the history of the Rose City's leather community.

Mangels founded the Oregon Leather History Project a little more than two years ago. Working largely solo, he gathered together

newspaper articles and newsletters to create a timeline of events, clubs and important people.

"I approached everyone I could who had been in the community for a substantial period of time, asking questions, having them go over my timeline details to spark memories and to see if they had photos, ephemera or other materials that would be of interest," he notes, echoing the importance of personal contact and oral history in the lives of the sexual minorities community.

The first public exhibit of the Oregon Leather History Project display was during Oregon Leather Pride Week in August 2004. The display has 10 panels, each focusing on a theme such as "Titleholders" and "Bears."

Another historian who seems to be working hard despite the fact that Gay and Lesbian History Month is going unobserved is Young, a frequent *Just Out* contributor who is working on a biography of beloved drag queen Darcelle XV. "Darcelle has placed a lot of trust in me. I couldn't begin to tell you what is the most interesting part about this project. After all, this is Darcelle's life, and everything I've learned has been interesting," she notes.

George Painter also has taken up Portland gay history. "I'm well into a book on the 1912-1913 Portland vice clique scandal," he reports, "and have a good deal of a historically accurate gay romance/time travel novel set in Portland written. I'm not sure when the latter will be finished; I've been working on it for quite some time."

Christa Orth took over leadership of the Gay and Lesbian Archive of the Pacific Northwest

and remarks that the group is growing. "We're taking on a couple big projects this year, processing stuff in our collection," she reports. "There's a lot of work to be done, and we need to get it to a place where researchers can actually use it."

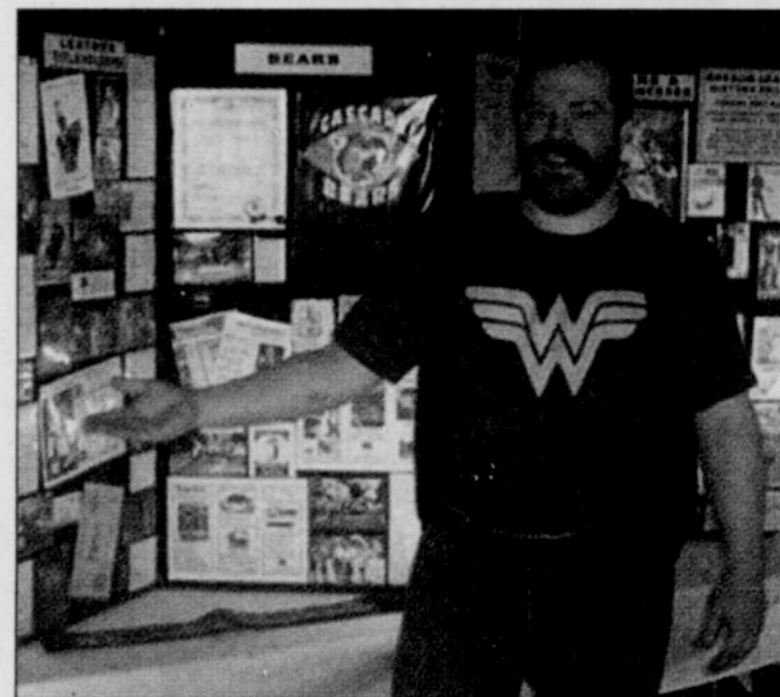
The group is also co-sponsoring a storytelling event with Q Center in December to engage generational differences in the queer community.

For those in the southern reaches of the state, there is also good news from University of Oregon, which houses an extensive queer archive.

The collection will be expanded in the coming year to include microfilm resources on the history of gay liberation.

The Center for Research Libraries, of which the university is a member, is a consortium of North American universities, colleges and independent research libraries that acquires and preserves traditional and digital resources for research and teaching. The center makes its holdings available to individuals at member institutions through interlibrary loan and electronic delivery.

One of the many benefits the university community receives by virtue of the library's membership in the center is access to hard-to-find resources that the consortium, rather than any individual library, owns. Many items in the collection are cataloged in *Summit*, the union catalog of the Orbis Cascade Alliance, and can



Andy Mangels poses with the Oregon Leather History Project display.

be borrowed from the center whenever a search identifies material as being in its holdings.


The consortium has acquired several films in the series *Gay Rights Movement*, which includes 575 reels of microfilm:

- **Series 5:** Gay Activism in Britain from 1958: The Hall-Carpenter Archives from the London School of Economics.
- **Series 6:** Atlanta Lesbian Feminist Alliance Archives, 1972-1994.
- **Series 7:** Lesbian Herstory Archives.
- **Series 8:** Selected Periodicals from the GLBT Historical Society of San Francisco. [G]

To get involved with the GAY AND LESBIAN ARCHIVE OF THE PACIFIC NORTHWEST contact Christa Orth at [christamae@yahoo.com](mailto:christamae@yahoo.com). For more information visit [www.oregonleatherhistory.org](http://www.oregonleatherhistory.org), [www.ohs.org](http://www.ohs.org) or [libweb.uoregon.edu](http://libweb.uoregon.edu).

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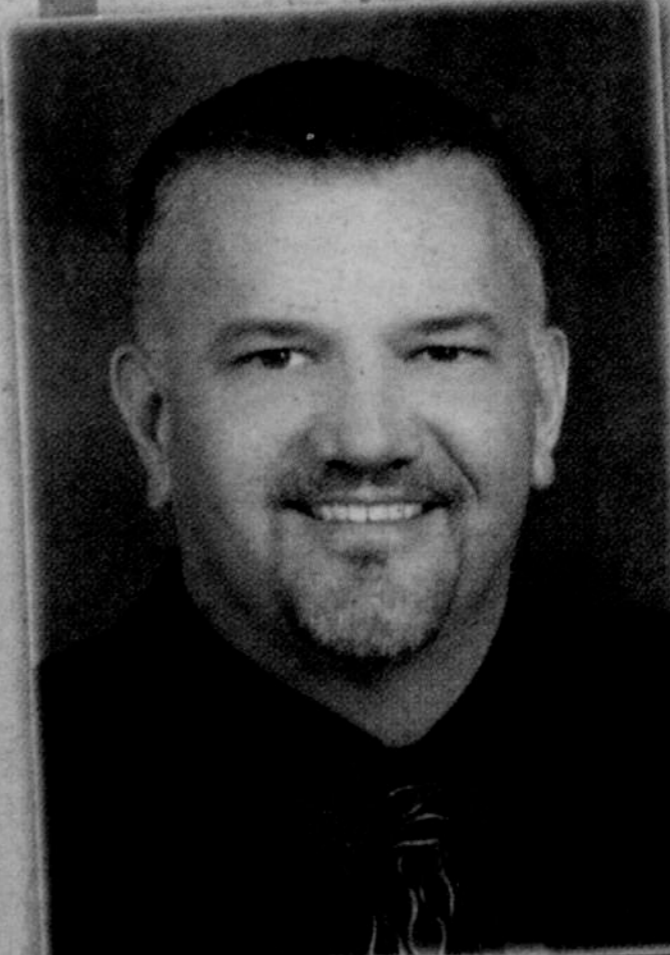


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