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The jury is still out on marriage equality

Marc and I had our day in court last month. Marion County Circuit Court, that is, where Basics Rights Oregon attorney **Mark Johnson** eloquently argued that the only way to define marriage without violating the constitution's equal protection clause is to open marriage to everyone. (Go, Mark!)

Sitting with us in the front row of the panelled courtroom were our co-plaintiffs **Kent Colby** and **Tim Smith** of Eugene, lead plaintiff **Juan Martinez** and his partner, *Willamette Week* columnist **Byron Beck**. Defense of Marriage Coalition attorney **Kelly Clark** (boo!) and Assistant Attorney General **Charles Fletcher** (hiss!) made the dangerous claim that voters have the right to expand liberties and to constrict them.

I also went to BRO's annual dinner, Studio BRO, where many attendees rummaged through their closets (or thrift shops) for just the right disco attire to match the theme. **John Jerkovich** showed up in a vintage '70s flowered Qiana top, **K.D. Parman** showed off in lilac bell bottoms, and **Heather Mole's** Nancy Sinatra boots were definitely made for walking. Filmmaker **Gus Van Sant** and Oregon Ballet Theatre's **Christopher Stowell** joined the after-party at Wonder Ballroom, as did luscious lipstick lezzies **Heather Ward** and **JoAnn Miller**, who let me feel their breasts.

Speaking of costumes, Portland Institute for Contemporary Art brought back the Dada Ball this year to celebrate the conclusion of the Time-Based Art Festival. As usual, outrageous costumes abounded, most of them on straight people. This is a terrific event, and I don't understand why more of us gay creative types weren't represented. But **Dave Heater** heated things up in a bikini made entirely of Barbie dolls.

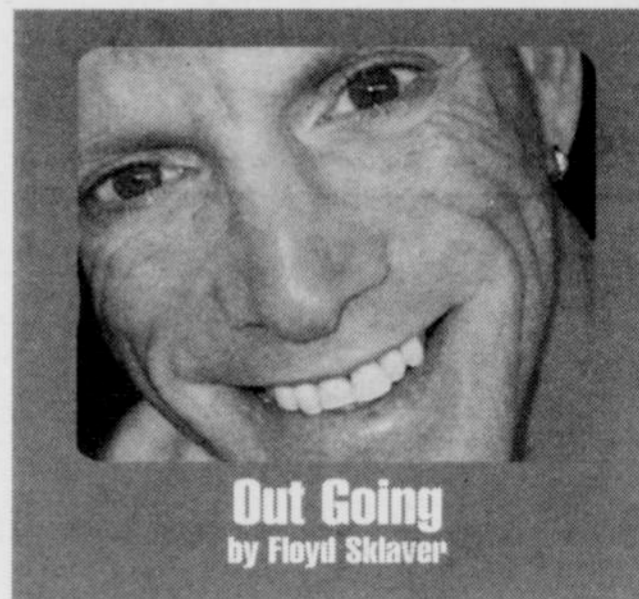
Bluehour served up sumptuous starters to start up Portland's Q Center, with City Commissioner **Sam Adams** and **Gwenn Baldwin** presenting months of research to a gaggle of gays including **Celia Lyon**, **Bob Ball** and **Bill Dickey**. If you ever doubted that Portland needs a queer center, just thumb through this issue of *Just Out* and marvel at the breadth of our community. There are hundreds of organizations and activities listed. And that's just for two weeks. So why don't we feel like a cohesive community?

Part of the answer lies in the fact that we have no center. We rarely mix outside our mixers.

For instance, I've attended every Salon Q event since its inception in March. These monthly gatherings at the hyper-trendy Aura (sponsored by the Human Rights Campaign) act as a magnet for white, good-looking, middle-class men with nice shoes. Men like **Brian Johnson**, **Tom Barreto** and the founder of the event, Portland Center Stage artistic director **Chris Coleman**. But few men of color attend, fewer blue-collar boys and even fewer females.

I'm not criticizing Salon Q, the organizers or Aura's magnetic manager, **Ron Mitchell**, who (thankfully) insists on a no-smoking policy. I'm just pointing out that, besides Pride Weekend, there aren't times and places for all of us to mix and mingle.

Now imagine a gathering ground for queer groups like Ruby Red Flippers, the local chapter of Diving for Life, an organization of gay and lesbian scuba divers. At **David Krause's** loftwarming party, **Jim McVittie** told me the group recently dove



off the coast of Venezuela in Curacao (or, should I say, Queeracao?). During the past nine years, Diving for Life has raised more than \$300,000 for AIDS-related charities.

Or imagine a space dedicated to queer artists. Sure, plenty of queer artists regularly show their work (in fact, Froelick Gallery owner **Charlie Froelick** had a number of very phallic mixed-media pieces by **Paul Arensmeyer** at *Affair at the Jupiter Hotel*), but no gallery dedicates itself to using queer art to teach about our culture. (Although Portland Art Museum curator **Bruce Guenther** has begun the conversation by including two sexually charged **Tom of Finland** drawings in the new Jubitz Center for Modern and Contemporary Art. Check them out on the third floor.)

I thought about all of this listening to the Q Center presentation and was so inspired that, without even consulting Marc, I pledged \$25,000 to be a founder.

But the center won't happen unless others step up to join us at the plate. Q Center needs your time, your ideas and your money. As executive director **Susan Remmers** says, "This is an amalgamation of everyone's dreams, and it's going to depend on how much we can raise."

Think about that the next time you're Out Going. ☐

FLOYD SKLAVER wants to know about your event. E-mail him at floydsklaver@comcast.net.



Mike Doolittle (left) and Dave Heater got all dolled up for the Dada Ball.

TIM GUNTHER PHOTOGRAPHY