

letters

No Data Exist for Trans Smoking Behaviors

TO THE EDITOR:

I would like to make a correction to the article on queer smoking rates in Oregon ["Queers Smoke Nearly Twice as Much as General Population," Dec. 2].

The article asserts: "Not enough respondents [to the state health department's adult risk behavior survey, or BRFSS] identified as transgender to provide adequate statistics about their tobacco use." In fact, the state collects no data on transgender risk behaviors, which include tobacco use. There is no place within the BRFSS to identify one's gender beyond "male" or "female." This information would be useful for advocating for increased funding for education, prevention and health care for transgender folks as well as for those who identify as genderqueer or gender-variant.

Specifically related to tobacco use, the extremely limited research that has been done outside Oregon has suggested: 1) transgender people smoke at rates significantly higher than nontransgender folks and 2) transgender people who take hormones and smoke might increase their risk of smoking-related illnesses. Estrogen use might amplify the risk for blood clots that could lead to heart attacks, strokes or other cardiovascular disease. Testosterone use might raise the risk for heart disease, which might be amplified by smoking. It is important to remember that more research must be done in order to understand the impacts of long-term hormone use generally, as well as in combination with substance use.

I apologize for the confusion about the data results.

R.E. SZEGO

Breathe Free, Oregon's LGBTQ Coalition Against Tobacco

Zinged at Hing's

TO THE EDITOR:

I am writing to tell you about something that happened Dec. 30. I had gone out for drinks and dinner for a friend's birthday party. We went to a Chinese restaurant/bar on Main Street in Oregon City called Hing's.

There was a small group of us, and after dinner as we were listening to the band 'Hott Pursuit, we girls decided to dance. We were dancing with some of the men there and with each other. Our group was not the only one where women were dancing

with women. We all were just having a great time.

The place was not too crowded, so there really was not a lot to choose from, but even if there had been, I see nothing wrong with women dancing with women. We had been doing this for about two hours when the band said: "This next song is for the heterosexuals only. That means one man and one woman."

Then they played a slow song. As I looked around, nobody seemed to care what had just been said. I could not believe what I heard. I know in my heart that if any people of color had been there and the band had said, "This next song is for white people only," there would have been a lot of trouble. This is not right, and I cannot believe this band could get away with saying this.

I have been in this bar a few times and have never run into this before. There is always a different band each weekend, I have danced with women before, and nothing like this has ever been said. My friend Bonnie Connors encouraged me to write you.

DOTTY DODD

Portland

Brokeback Mountain in Historical Context

TO THE EDITOR:

Several months ago, when I read *Brokeback Mountain* in anticipation of the movie release, I turned to my partner and said, "I wonder how many gay people will think this is just another story about self-loathing gays and violent bashing?" Judging by your letters column Jan. 6, at least one!

While I'm not going to try to change anyone's mind, I'd like to bring a few ideas to the table.

Most importantly, perhaps, is the fact that in neither the short story nor the movie is Jack killed with a tire iron. Both narratives state that Jack is killed in an accident while changing a tire. It is only in Ennis' mind that the bashing occurs (something he has lived in horror of his entire life—it's the primary reason he turns down Jack's offers), although the nature of movies requires a visual. Is it possible there was a hate crime? Certainly. But that is an assumption some viewers—and Ennis—make.

I would also mention the timeline of the story. That first summer is in 1963, the very beginning of the civil rights movement in America. The first postcard from Jack arrives just about the time of the Stonewall riots, although I doubt Jack Twist keeps up with his *New York Times*. And the story ends in 1983, just as the first reports of AIDS hit the media...and hate crimes against gay people begin to escalate. Perhaps those dates are meant to bring something to the story.

The final line in the story is Ennis' "If you can't

fix it, you gotta stand it," which shows his regret and remorse about a lost opportunity. I'm sorry the screenplay moves the line to an earlier part of the film, where I don't think it means quite as much.

The tone of the movie is, indeed, a tragedy, as are so many great romances: *Romeo and Juliet*, *Love Story*, *Titanic*. It is through viewing these stories of love lost and loss regretted that the theme comes through: Love who you can while you can when you can; who knows what tomorrow may bring or take? If Jack and Ennis had run off and started that ranch, it might have been a sweet story, but hardly not the stuff of drama, and certainly not the movie experience that is leaving audiences in tears. Those feelings of pain prove the audience is learning something.

In a time when *Will & Grace* and Byron Beck are considered windows into gay life, I commend everyone connected with bringing *Brokeback Mountain* to the screen and wish them every success, especially at Oscar time.

(P.S. On a prurient note, "spit" and "the first time" are a mainstay of every gay porn story I've read; it seems odd to quibble about it in a Pulitzer Prize-winning story.)

DONALD FINCH

Portland

Queer Beavers Turn 30

TO THE EDITOR:

In 1976, about 10 students formed the first gay student group to be officially recognized by Oregon State University. To celebrate the 30th anniversary, I hope other charter members will share their memories in a letter to *Just Out*.

While researching early gay student activity at OSU, I recently reread the 1972 to 1978 microfilm copies of the OSU student newspaper, *The Barometer*. As a result, I stumbled onto some interesting bits of history.

For example, *The Corvallis Gazette-Times* newspaper published a two-page article Jan. 9, 1976, headlined "Gay Women Coming Out of the Closet in Corvallis: 'Now I Want to Marry This Woman.'" The resulting angry letters and subscription cancellations are summarized in my Sept. 13, 2005, opinion piece, "30 Years Later, Views of Gay Issues Same," which is available in the archives at www.gazettetimes.com.

Present-day press coverage rarely mentions that gay activists started fighting for gay marriage in 1970. The U.S. Supreme Court ruling against the gay marriage of Jack Baker and Mike McConnell in Minnesota was national news.

Predating the first OSU gay student group was an experimental college class on homosexuality.

One of the instructors, Dunbar Aitkens, was recently quoted in a *San Francisco Chronicle* story about his participation in the 1964 free speech movement at UC Berkeley.

Unfortunately, ex-gay groups predated gay-friendly student groups. Even today, several Corvallis churches are still sponsoring ex-gay groups on campus to "help homosexual students" become straight through prayer and unethical psychotherapy.

Fortunately, OSU president Ed Ray cut the ribbon at the official opening of the new "Pride Center" on National Coming Out Day in 2004. This level of support is amazing given that just 30 years ago the first OSU gay student group struggled to recruit the one faculty adviser required for official recognition.

THOMAS KRAEMER

Corvallis

Brokeback Mountain a Classic Tragedy

TO THE EDITOR:

Memo to Jack Janisch: This film *Brokeback Mountain* and the novella upon which it is based are period pieces, authentic to a specific place and time 43 years ago [*Brokeback Mountain Gave Me Nothing*, Jan. 6].

To read Annie Proulx's story is to understand storytelling genius. The question isn't whether she's "qualified to write about gay sex and what gay men feel" (what, is there a test or something?), it's how she does so with such truth and power. *Brokeback Mountain* is a truly remarkable film with two of the best performances (by Heath Ledger and Jake Gyllenhaal) I've ever seen in the context of a gay story.

The truths it speaks to the rapidly growing legions of people who are seeing it nationwide is about the way love changes us and the heartbreak of regret in not being true to your feelings—both relatively new ideals in terms of gay subject matter produced for mass audiences. The tragedy at the heart of the film is not only appropriate to the story but draws on some of the oldest traditions in literature. *Romeo and Juliet*, anyone?

TODD SIMMONS

Eugene

CORRECTION

The Jan. 6 obituary for Ray Southwick erroneously reported that donations to the Audria M. Edwards Scholarship Fund should be sent to Equity Foundation. Remembrances should actually be sent to P.O. Box 8854, Portland, OR 97207, and e-mails can go to info@peacockinthepark.com. *Just Out* regrets the error.



HOME BUYING TIP #1

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