by Marty Davis

For Better, For Worse

The value of loyalty

Eighteenth century poet Alexander Pope, noted for his cynicism on the value of friendship, once stated, "Histories are more full of examples of the fidelity of dogs than of friends."

His perceptions and views ring true today in 21st century Multnomah County. The gay, lesbian, bi and trans voting community, however, has the opportunity to step up and show that we are a community that values loyalty, commitment and friendship.

As the May primary election grows ever closer, it becomes clear that there is a division in the community over whom to support for the position of Multnomah County chair. Incumbent Diane Linn, noted for her longtime support of gay and lesbian rights, faces a candidate with no record whatsoever of standing with us—or for us. And what we have now is an election that has become as much about our credibility as a community as it is about Linn's viability as a candidate. There is no question that we must avoid the diminishing stigma of being labeled a single-issue voting bloc. We are far more than that. At the same time we must also make choices that are best suited to the overall needs of the greater goals of equality and full civil rights—for our community and for all peoples.

MARTY DAVIS

Let's journey back a scant two years. With the commissioners' decision to issue same-sex marriage licenses in Multnomah County, Portland and Oregon were thrust into the national spotlight. We celebrated these women at dinners, heaped them with awards and honored them in parades and ceremonies. All eyes were on us as we married, celebrated, rejoiced and stood together in unity. Linn and her fellow commissioners were with us still as we bore the brunt of setback with the passage of Ballot Measure 36. Through all of this we were supported, encouraged, held up, challenged and thrust forward by the strength and position of straight supporters and allies. Our success was due to the efforts of our partners in business, our allies in politics, our friends in pain and in sorrow. Now, two years later, the eyes of the nation are on us again as we appear splintered over a decision that will speak volumes to those who might next be asked to step up and move forward with us. National groups, funding sources, strategists, movers and shakers are watching to see if we rise to the occasion as we now step into the role of supporting an ally in need.

What is imperative in May is that the gay, lesbian, bi and trans voters of Multnomah County step up and return Diane Linn to office.

To overcome recent setbacks and continue toward achieving goals, we are in need of maintaining strong relationships with elected officials on all levels. City, county, state and federal. We will ask legislators to step up, make crucial votes and take a risk. Faced with the possibility of desertion by those whom you've supported, why would a politician step up, possibly risking his or her own career, as did Linn? We have grown well into the position of demanding support of others. Now we have the opportunity to show that we value loyalty and understand the need to reciprocate. It's a two-way street.

To those Linn detractors who might be dismayed by the appearance of a candidate in distress: Don't overreact. This is not the time to turn our backs on incumbents when they appear on the ballot with worn and torn records. In all attempts to affect change, there will be successes and there will be failures. Any political novice can run against an incumbent and point to a flawed record. The only way to avoid failures is to never do anything at all. A record without failures is a record of no effort. As Alexander Pope did *not* say, "You can't wrestle with pigs without getting muddy." That doesn't mean the pig won.

For us to support a candidate, he or she must have a proven record of working with us and for us. Diane Linn has done so throughout her entire career. Ted Wheeler, by his own admission, has not. Roey Thorpe of Basic Rights Oregon, when asked why Wheeler did not receive a "green light" from the organization, responds: "BRO gave Ted Wheeler a chance to earn a green light because his campaign said that he was a champion of GLBT civil rights. But when we interviewed him, it became clear that although he is a native Oregonian, he has never given a moment of time or a dollar of his substantial fortune to fight the anti-gay ballot measures. We just couldn't understand how he could claim to support the cause, but never step up to do anything about it, even when our community was under attack. We need to be able to count on elected officials to stand with us each and every time, and there just was no evidence that Ted Wheeler had ever done that, or would in the future."

The passage of Ballot Measure 36 did not mark the end of our efforts. It was a setback, not a eulogy. We start the 21st century with goals, plans and lots of work to be done. We require supporters and allies. Diane Linn will be there for us. Keep her in office. And should, one day, another poet muse on loyalty and fidelity, let him say that the gay and lesbian voters of Multnomah County knew the power of friendship. Let him say that we valued loyalty.

2006 Primary Election Endorsements

- **Governor of Oregon:** Ted Kulongoski
- **Representative in Congress District 1:** David Wu
- **Representative in Congress District 3:** Earl Blumenauer
- **Representative in Congress District 5:** Darlene Hooley
- **Multnomah County Chair:** Diane Linn
- **Multnomah County Commission District 2:** Gary Hansen
- **Portland City Council Seat No. 2:** Erik Sten
- **Portland City Council Seat No. 3:** Dan Saltzman
- **State Representative District 44:** Tina Kotek

just out
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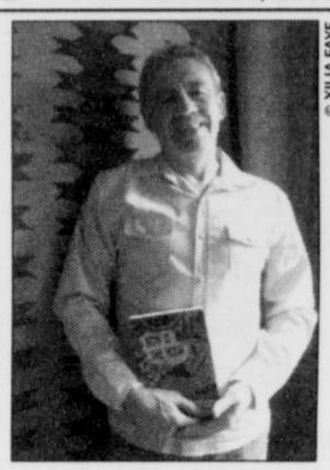

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FEATURE

20 NOW IS TOM'S HOUR
A conversation with Portland's most dangerous writer

NEWS

8-15 NORTHWEST
BRO luncheon draws business crowd; Equity funds Prides; Eugene Q Center seeks volunteers; GLSEN keeps quiet, makes noise; BRO welcomes new hires; Portland activist wins HRC award; state's first openly gay judge retires; ROP holds annual gathering; Martinez welcomed back to Rojo's staff; endorsements abound; Linn scores labor endorsements; gay network runs Christian PSA; Trung Tu runs for judge; queer community sees parallels with immigrant civil rights movement

16-17 NATIONAL
Sexual minority parents attend White House Easter egg roll; ACLU report: Gay parenting restrictions hurt kids; Feingold takes a stand for gay marriage; Equality Riders arrested at BYU; Kentucky governor axes protection for gays; expulsion jeopardizes college's funding, accreditation

18-19 WORLD
PM: Ireland will have civil unions; Warsaw closes down prominent gay club; gays win inheritance rights in South Africa; Australian Capital Territory to enact civil union law; domestic violence law to cover gays in Taiwan; Colombian president favors gay couple rights; Bahamas bans *Brokeback Mountain*; Canadian Tories threaten same-sex marriage

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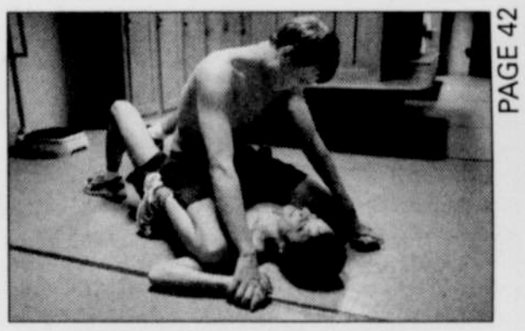

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