

by Marty Davis

History Lesson

Why did Portland stop celebrating National Coming Out Day?

October marks the arrival of GLBT History Month. Back in the 1990s, teachers and community leaders believed a month should be dedicated to the celebration and teaching of GLBT history. October was selected to coincide with National Coming Out Day, commemorated on Oct. 11. In Portland, we have a mixed history with Coming Out Day. In the mid-1990s there were very large rallies in Pioneer Courthouse Square. Hundreds, if not maybe a few thousand, would be in attendance. At one of the last large events, then executive director of Cascade AIDS Project Thomas Bruner spoke eloquently of how he looked forward to the day when there's no longer be a need for National Coming Out Day—and that on Oct. 11 we'd just go about our daily lives as everyday people who happen to be gay or lesbian. Well, his wish sorta came true. Indeed, we no longer have a Coming Out Day in Portland, but it's due more to lack of organization than meeting the goal of reaching the promised land. It's been several years since anyone stepped up to take on the event. In many cities across the country, the Human Rights Campaign coordinates activities, but not here. Many local college campus groups stage small events, but there are no more crowds, no more rallies, no more eloquent speakers. I think we're missing an opportunity: Looking ahead to 2007, how about a coalition of organizations that gather us together again in Pioneer Square? Our city and our state need to see who we are. They need to see us in number, and they need to see us in unity.

In Oregon, Gov. John Kitzhaber was successfully petitioned to proclaim October 1995 to be Lesbian and Gay History Month. This was a big to-do for a couple of years, and then it sorta went away. Apparently the governor does not proclaim unless the people ask, and I think that we, the people, might not have stepped up to ask for our annual proclamation. If the proclamations have continued, they have been low-key to the point of muffled silence.

Now, under the guidance and direction of the Equality Forum, the goals of GLBT History Month are to teach GLBT history, to provide inspiring role models and to highlight the GLBT community's important worldwide contributions. For October, Equality Forum has selected 31 leaders, presented on a daily basis. To view each daily selection, please visit www.justout.com and click on "Blog Out."

Its criteria, the forum states, are based on selecting "individuals; living or dead, who have distinguished themselves within their field of endeavor, as national heroes or in the GLBT civil rights movement." The list will raise eyebrows. Sheryl Swoopes? Uh-huh.

Our fascination with "celebrity gays" is, at best, amusing. Why on earth do we give such validation to people who have done little or nothing to earn it? Lance Bass has been out now for what, 45 minutes. For this lifetime achievement, HRC is bestowing upon him a "Visibility Award" next month at its 10th annual National Dinner. I wonder who gets the "Fading Pop Star


Needs Some Press, Any Press Will Do" Award? Maybe Bass will sing "Fly Me to the Moon"?

I recognize that his appearance and partnership also bring celebrity value to HRC and its event. It's a mutual suck-up affair. Nonetheless, our overzealous quest to bestow honors upon the not-ready-yet diminishes the credibility of the hundreds, the thousands of activists and volunteers who have labored to get this movement to the place where celebrities like Lance Bass can feel safe enough to finally venture out of the closet and accept their awards. Where are the damn awards for gay and lesbian schoolteachers who bring positive affirmation as role models and leaders to thousands of students across the country? When do they get invited to Washington, D.C.?

Speaking of getting some press, no doubt you've heard of the misadventures of one U.S. Rep. Mark Foley, R-Fla. His story, his face, his damn instant-message texts are everywhere. It's a real head-shaker. The media are playing out this mess faster than we can possibly keep up. Aside from the bad jokes, the annoyance, there is a very serious component to this "scandal." We will not, must not, allow our opponents to turn this into "blame the gays." We can't follow this story in a timely fashion in the pages of *Just Out*, not with a biweekly publishing schedule. However, again, turn to the Web site and the blog for daily, if not hourly, updates and additions to this ever-changing scenario. Whatever happens, I do not want to see this man on *Oprah* promoting his new book and seeking absolution.

Basic Rights Oregon is continuing its search for a new executive director. I think it should take all the time that it needs to ensure hiring the best possible candidate. It speaks well for the organization that it has structure in place that allows it to continue working forward. I must admit that my eyebrows were raised when I Googled the name of one of its two finalists and came up with *nothing*. Toiling in obscurity might have its place, but that doesn't bode well for filling this position.

At *Just Out* we love our blog. Well, OK, I love it. It's like adding an addition to an overcrowded house. We now have room for everything. We have space for trivia, opinion, the mundane and the weird. I blogged about spinach. Why? Because the spinach scare had potential for a negative impact upon the economy of our region and our state. And that affects us all. It's all better now, so head off to Starky's for its excellent chicken sesame salad with spinach.

If you haven't been to Q Center, or haven't been in some time, go check it out. The place is really coming together. There's art, comfortable furniture, reading materials and a growing list of events and activities. Portland has spent decades trying to build a community center. It's here. It belongs to you, to all of us. Use it well. 

reflections

15 Years Ago in *Just Out*... volume 8 number 12, october 1991

- AIDS activists inflated a giant "reservoir-tipped condom" over U.S. Sen. Jesse Helms' house Sept. 5 in Arlington, Va., a suburb of Washington, D.C. The inflated rubber extended 15 feet into the air and covered most of the North Carolina Republican's roof. Large printing on the section that covered the front of the house read: "A condom to stop unsafe politics. Helms is deadlier than a virus."

- U.S. Rep. Les AuCoin, D-Ore., and 27 other members of Congress sent a letter to Mexico's ambassador to the United States condemning the behavior of officials who forced the cancellation of the International Gay and Lesbian Conference in Guadalajara.

- The 10th annual Lucille Hart Dinner is Oct. 12 at the Oregon Convention Center. The Right to Privacy PAC is bringing comedian Sandra Bernhard for its biggest fund-raiser of the year.

- There's a new newspaper in Portland with its eye on the gay community. *Alternative Connection* is being published by Elwood Johnson, also known as Lady Elaine Peacock. Johnson has hired Robert Thomas, previously with *The Oregon Gay News*, as the editor. Writers from *The Cascade Voice* and *Eagle News* magazine are also on board. The paper will be a monthly about



the size of *Willamette Week* and is planning to cover community news, events and activities.

- The Oregon Commission for Women has awarded state Rep. Gail Shibley, D-Portland, the 1991 Woman of Achievement Award. She and science fiction writer and lecturer Ursula Le Guin were honored for professional excellence, commitment to women's equality and inspiration as role models for women.

- The Portland premiere of Gus Van's Sant's film *My Own Private Idaho* will benefit Outside In and Transition Projects.

- Celebrate National Coming Out Day at Pioneer Courthouse Square. Come out and hear speakers including Donna Redwing, Marge Work and John Baker with music by Bridges. There will be booths and an open mike for you to tell your story. Promote gay and lesbian visibility.

- The Village People will be the entertainment at Fears, Phobias and Fantasies, a Halloween Costume Party benefiting Cascade AIDS Project. You can expect wild and outrageous costumes vying for great prizes and a stellar panel of celebrity judges making the final determination.

FEATURE

24 A DECADE OF DARING

Portland film festival celebrates 10 years of queer cinema



NEWS

8-19 NORTHWEST

Stark sale unclear; The Funky Door is open; recycled time; AIDSWalk breaks record; hate crime investigated at Urge; Pride of the Rose payout; learn about queer parenting; changes in HIV testing; pastor's departure marked with award, song; BRO takes action; September to remember; become aware; old lesbians organize; commissioner addresses gay Mormons; TIRC future in question; making Oregon schools safe; get busy at Q Center; no tem like the pro tem; PABA embroiled in conflict; Transforming Faith; reproductive rights

20-21 NATIONAL

Florida congressman resigns amid scandal; HIV testing plan worries ACLU; support grows for "don't ask, don't tell" repeal; CARE Act moves forward in House; Out in America celebrates Gay History Month

22-23 WORLD

Polish PM says nation is gay-friendly; gay adoption OK'd at Scottish Parliament; Quebec might get gay premier; Uruguay to legalize same-sex unions; Ugandan lesbians outed

ARTS & CULTURE

44-45 DANCE

Women choreographers from four countries bring their work to Portland

47 BOOKS

Former governor's autobiography disappoints; trashy memoirs take us inside the world of porn

49 FILM

Jackass: Number Two cranks up the homoeroticism

50 PEOPLE

Fallen nun makes the transition from kneeling to standup



52 CULTURE

Portland Gay Men's Chorus visits Eastern Oregon

54-55 MUSIC

Get to know these up-and-coming queer artists

COLUMNS

41 MS. BEHAVIOR
Strange Bedfellows

42 OUT GOING
Cherchez La Femme

53 EPIQUEEREAN
Hawthorne Reborn

57 DEAR ETHEL
Good Form

58 JIM'S CLOSET
Rosie vs. Ellen