

Happily Ever After?

Celebrate our long-awaited victory before dropping back into defensive posture

May 2, 2007, will be remembered by many as the landmark day that the Oregon Senate handily passed, by a vote of 21-9, House Bill 2007. Both this bill and Senate Bill 2 now move to Gov. Ted Kulongoski for his signature. We can't say at this time that the story has a "happily ever after" ending, as there are yet measures that could be taken to affect the implementation of both bills, even once signed. But we, as a community, have the right to take a few worry-free days to enjoy and celebrate the long-awaited victory before dropping back into defensive posture. Details will soon be posted on "Blog Out" at www.justout.com about a celebration planned for May 10 at Q Center.

The past few weeks of trips to and from Salem have been eye-openers in many ways. The public hearings are a good reminder that there's a world out there that does not harbor us goodwill. For those of us who live in the Portland metro area, it can be easy to turn inward and away from the intolerance and misinformation that exist all around us. That's how we could once again find ourselves in a bit of trouble in the next election cycle. Beware of complacency.

For the uninitiated, such as myself, watching from the Senate and House galleries is akin to watching some strange new sporting event that you've never been to before. Your eyes dart, your head bobbles, and the questions flow. What are they doing now? What does that mean? Is that guy on our team? Is he allowed to do that? Hey, wait, shouldn't that be a foul? Hey, someone, call a foul.

OK, I'll do it. I'm calling a foul. I call a foul on the opening invocation of each session. It's 2007, and there's no place for prayer in the Oregon Legislature. There, I said it. Do I have a right to complain? After all, as an observer in the gallery, I am a guest in someone else's house, right? Wrong, I am a voting citizen of the state of Oregon, and I have a voice and a right to express what I feel about how our government is run. And I don't like the idea of opening prayer.

Why does the same body that would never allow a Christmas tree or nativity scene in the rotunda allow this activity to continue? Where's the political correctness that strips away all religious references in other aspects of public venues and activities?

Where does the concept of separation of church and state fit in? Does this federal constitutional concept not apply to individual states?

I might be able to muster an iota of tolerance for this prayer if it were perhaps a House or Senate chaplain who opened daily with a *brief* exhortation that the people elected to serve our state work together and accomplish much this day. But as it is now, the opening invocation has instead become a daily opportunity for someone to promote a self-serving, overly long personal agenda. On this most recent day, I swear I had to stand, endlessly and awkwardly, as the minister loudly and energetically recruited football players for Christ. Or so it seemed.

I happily and proudly stand for the presentation of the flags. I honor our

state and our nation, individual politicians and leaders aside. I'll stand for the Pledge of Allegiance, though admittedly I have never been comfortable with the hand-over-heart concept.

I will, however, never again stand for a prayer that I do not offer nor agree with.

If lawmakers wish to seek divine assistance with their daily task, they can merrily and voluntarily meet in the caucus room five minutes prior to roll call.

Words, and their misuse, have been in the news a lot lately. Don Imus mis-spoke badly, and as a nation we all had the opportunity to learn a lesson. Last week I had my own WTF moment.

I was in one of our fine local drinking establishments, taking pictures as it were, and found myself approached by an amiable young man who, in a friendly fashion, offered me a plastic bracelet that was a club giveaway. We were engaged in convivial conversation when a pair of his friends wandered over. He turned to them and said, "I saw that this bitch here didn't have a bracelet, so I brought her one."

This bitch? Say what?

Yup, right there, standing next to me, he turned aside and referred to me as "this bitch."

Mind you, these were words not spoken in anger. Worse, the tone was totally matter-of-fact, as if it was the most normal and logical thing in the world for him to refer to a woman, a stranger twice his age, as a bitch. I stood there silently and watched my mental flame head toward my fuse but then, surprisingly, allowed it to snuff out before the explosion. I was too taken back to react.

Was it the alcohol that coated his conversation? Was it male bravado, a young man showing off for his friends? Was it disrespect for women in general? The conversation, before and after, showed no signs of animosity, quite the opposite actually. It never crossed this man's mind that his words were inappropriate.

And by saying nothing, I compounded the error. Avoided a hassle and eliminated any possibility of trouble, sure, but left, not bruised nor hurt by the words, but decidedly uncomfortable. I'm no stranger to animosity and harsh words. I've earned my share, but there was something very different about this experience. I have never felt such utter disrespect before, not for being gay, not for being fat, not for anything I'd written or said. This was ignorance. Pure and simple. How do we deal with that?

For some months now I've been searching for a first-person columnist to join *Just Out's* cadre of writers. I knew I wanted a woman with wit, edge, political acumen and the boldness needed to publicly share her world. I found her 8 feet from my desk. Staff writer Malka Geffen, who shares her life daily on our blog, will now be found in each issue. She describes herself as "an opinionated Jewish lesbian who's sowing her married oats in her new hometown."

I think you're going to enjoy her. **JO**

reflections

5 Years Ago in *Just Out*... Volume 19 Number 13, May 3, 2002

- The most perplexing matter on this election agenda for me has been Portland Measure 26-30, the Good Government Initiative. This reform proposal is complex and imperfect, as is our current commissioner form of city government.

- Portland Police Chief Mark Kroeker revealed April 22 that he has thrown his hat in the ring for the top position at the Los Angeles Police Department, where he worked for 32 years before coming to Oregon. He is certain to face a great deal of grilling from sexual minorities in the City of Angels about the anti-gay remarks he made 10 years ago.

- After going more than half a year without a pastor, Metropolitan Community Church of Portland has named an interim replacement. The Rev.



Mike Nikolaus off MCC Los Angeles arrived May 1 in the Rose City, where he will stay for six months to a year until a permanent pastor is found.

- A gay man, Karl Rohde, is running for state senator of District 19. The Republican has served on the Lake Oswego City Council since 1996 and owns a small business, Precision Events.

- Attend Georgena's Journey: A Community Confronts Multiple Sclerosis, an all-women's dance with DJ Lauren at Trinity United Methodist Church to help fund a much-needed operation.

- The Egyptian Club is throwing a bash to raise funds for Catherine Stauffer's legal costs to fight the Oregon Citizens Alliance. Drag kings, fire dancers and hair bands. Dress as your favorite big hair band to win a prize.

- The Portland chapter of Affirmation: Gay & Lesbian Mormons welcomes the public to a special candlelight vigil to remember those who have lost their lives to suicide as a result of anti-gay pressures.

- Pride also announces a national call for artists for the Codex of Queer Art exhibit on the festival grounds during Pride weekend followed by a show at Our Dream Gallery/Alberta Arts Pavilion.



ON THE COVER

Chad Tolson is pictured in a turn-of-the-century Victorian attic in Northeast Portland wearing a vest (\$180) and white shirt (\$250) by Gibbous (www.gibbousfashions.com).

FEATURE

20 GAY FACES, PORTLAND PLACES

Photographer delves into local fashion scene

NEWS

8-11 NORTHWEST

Cyclists raise funds; Seattle Pride files for bankruptcy; Red Dress Party presents profits; VegFest draws gays; CAP expands staff; acupuncture comes to NoPo; Videorama stays on top; coaching causes success; historic bills pass; Realtors discuss insinuating campaign; Equality Riders hit Oregon campus

16-17 NATIONAL

ENDA reintroduced; report: abstinence education does not work; Lambda plans day of action; Arkansas man threatens to ban lesbian sex book; Iowa Legislature approves nondiscrimination bill; New York governor introduces marriage bill; Equal Rights Washington director announced

18-19 WORLD

Anti-gay leader threatened; Moldova bans Pride again; court: Latvian Pride ban was illegal; Jamaican police quell riot at funeral; China gets gay radio program

ARTS AND CULTURE

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The Page Turner gets revenge on vulnerable pianist in French psychodrama; *Puccini for Beginners* is smart, snappy romantic comedy

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