

letters

Taking Back Religion

TO THE EDITOR:

I just finished reading Glenn Scofield Williams' piece about the death of Jerry Falwell ["My Wish for Falwell," June 1].

I thought it was a wonderful piece that put a human face on a man who many in the LGBTQ community have simply seen as a symbol of hate and fear that is so often emitted from the evangelical Christian community. I admit that there was a part of me that rejoiced in the death of Mr. Falwell, but there was a greater part that felt bad for my feelings of celebration at the death of a fellow human being.

I hope that, like Mr. Williams, others will be able to find forgiveness in their hearts for a man who found little tolerance and forgiveness in his. I know that, like myself, many in our community have been hurt by the words of Jerry Falwell and others in the evangelical community, perhaps including members of their own families. It is my hope that we as a community can begin to heal those wounds and begin to forgive, regardless of our spiritual affiliation.

It is time that members of the LGBTQ community come to understand that we cannot allow the hate and fear of others to imbue us with similar feelings. It is time that we also realize the importance of spirituality for those who choose it and stopping looking upon those who reclaim Christian spirituality as weak or self-hating. Spirituality and religion do not belong to bigots and the intolerant. It is time for those of us who think of ourselves as progressive to stand up and take back the right to worship and pray if that is the path we seek. It will always be better to find love and peace in our hearts than to let our pain and anger turn to hatred for those who have hurt us.

BRENT A. LANK
North Portland

Challenging Logic

TO THE EDITOR:

I was glad to see the interview with Thomas Bruner, the new CEO of the Oregon Trail Chapter of the Red Cross ["Blood Ban," June 1].

It was great to see how his chapter is discussing the controversial ban on MSM [men who have sex with men] blood donors. And while it makes sense that such a conversation focuses on gay men, I was somewhat disappointed that there was no mention of the impact this policy has on other members of the queer community.

Bruner even said, "Lesbians can give blood, so they can give twice as often to make up for their gay boyfriends who can't." Unfortunately, that's not true.

Anyone with a gay boyfriend, even lesbians, would be barred from donating blood. As a dyke with a fag fuckbuddy, walking in to donate blood is no easy process for me. Of course, trying to determine someone's gender makes things more difficult. Would I still be turned away if I revealed that he's trans? That I'm trans? That brings up another question of whether I'd rather have my gender violated and be allowed to donate blood, or keep my gender intact and be turned away. I don't have a clue what would happen when I tell them about one of my genderqueer partners.

The silliness of it all is that when ze identifies as a boy one day and a girl the next, that doesn't change my risk of HIV exposure from one day to the next. That really highlights one of the major problems with the Food and Drug Administration regulation of blood donors—it's not based on behaviors but on demographics.

One friend of mine cannot donate blood because she visited England for a few days longer than the cut-off amount, and that puts her in a high-risk category for mad cow disease. Of course, that doesn't take into account the fact that she's vegan.

Considering there's been a big push for a harm-reduction approach to disease prevention, it's ludicrous to ignore the difference between protected and unprotected sex or between penetrative and oral sex. The logic that allows the FDA to tell a couple of gay boys who just had sex for the first time with protection that they are at higher risk than a straight serial monogamist who has unprotected sex is the same logic that allows the FDA to tell a vegan that she is at higher risk for mad cow disease than someone who eats burgers daily but only stayed in England for a week and a half.

And that logic is what needs to be challenged as much as the inherent homophobia.

TOBI HILL-MEYER
Eugene

CORRECTION

Just Out mistakenly printed the wrong date for North Portland Pride in the June 1 article "Statewide Pride." North Portland Pride is from noon to 4 p.m. Aug. 12 at University Park United Methodist Church, 4475 N. Lombard St. For more information visit www.upumc.net. Just Out regrets the error.

TRANSITIONS

David James Hamilton, 1935-2007

"Open a new window, open a new door, travel a new highway, that's never been tried before" is a line from the theme song of Portland's beloved Rose Empress VI Mame. Born David James Hamilton on Jan. 2, 1935, in Oregon City, Mame went on to become one of Portland's most legendary gay icons.

Hamilton suffered a massive stroke June 4 while watching the Starlight Parade. It seems only right that a man who led such a colorful and light-filled life would go out with the twinkling lights of the parade as his backdrop.

As a young man, Hamilton served his country as a sergeant first class in the U.S. Army before returning to Portland to become a buyer for Stevens & Sons Jewelers and finally a customer service representative for Abbott & Rinehart Jewelers downtown.

One of the founding members of the Pruitts of Portland, Mame was crowned Rose Queen VI in 1967. In 1970, all the Rose Queens were proclaimed Rose Empresses, and eventually the Pruitts of Portland evolved into the Imperial Sovereign Rose Court we know today.

During his more than 40 years as the Minister of Madness and Mayhem, "Auntie Mame" was the City of Roses' most notorious and flamboyant ambassador. Always the life of any party, Mame loved to show guests and residents alike a great time.

Hamilton helped raise hundreds of thousands of dollars for countless charities over nearly half a century. As Mame, he conceived Christmas in July, co-hosted the San Francisco Portland Party and, for the past 24 years, hosted Valentines from Hell. The Pride of the Rose and Audria M. Edwards scholarship funds, Esther's Pantry, the Friends of People with AIDS Foundation, the Brinker Fund, the Oregon Bears and Camp Starlight are just a few of the organizations that have benefited from Hamilton's work. He never turned down an opportunity to help.

Hamilton traveled extensively and was especially fond of Mardi Gras, Southern Decadence and the lights of Broadway. However, San Francisco held his heart, and he fondly referred to the "city by the bay" as his Oz.

A community memorial will be held 3 p.m. June 24 at Darcelle XV Showplace, 208 N.W. Third Ave.

Remembrances may be made to the Pride of the Rose Scholarship Fund by writing to Equity Foundation, P.O. Box 5696, Portland, OR 97228; calling 503-231-5759; or e-mailing info@equityfoundation.org.

—Kimberlee Van Patten



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