

Season's Greetings

Holidays are a time to create powerful good memories

Americans have a love-hate relationship with labels. We deplore them as quickly as we attach them. We find a name, a niche, a spot, whether it fits or not, and we label and shove everyone and everything into little boxes. The past few years have seen a special rush to do just this, most notably with the holiday formerly known as Christmas, repackaged now as *The Holiday Season*. The retail portion of us leans toward *The Season of Giving*, while our nonprofits and charities nudge us toward *The Season of Sharing*.

Therefore, in this spirit of labeling and nomenclature, I hereby declare December 2007 to be, for myself personally at least, *The Season of Memories*. I'm basing this on a couple of factors, among them the decision of my family to relocate from Oregon to Texas and, most very recently, the loss of my longtime companion and housemate, my little dog Peanut. Memories are on my mind this holiday season.

Peanut fell prey to old age shortly before Thanksgiving. With a couple of weeks now to settle with the actuality of her departure, I've arrived at that bittersweet space where everything goes along smoothly until a little *ding* goes off in my head. This causes me to retreat into an inner quiet space where a quick memory will bring a smile, or perhaps a tear and a sniff.

The process of remembering has been revealing and, I'm sure, quite good for me. It's one that I need to carry over into other aspects of my life. In the past year or so, my relationship with my dog had become one strictly of caretaking. It wasn't until her passage that I was able to find myself smiling about the totally outrageous dog that had been her younger version. As Peanut had grown older and lost her hearing and vision I, too, had lost sight—sight of the dog she'd once been. In her last weeks and months, the highlight of the day had become a gentle cajoling of "come on, you can do it, just pee a little, OK."

It took the shared memories of those who knew her to open the doors to my own memories. Their stories were usually accompanied by head-shaking and rolling of eyes, as they recounted tales of previously forgotten errant behavior. Thanks to them, I can smile and think fondly of my dog, even while mourning my loss. I hope that this season—this season of whatever you choose to make it—will include pleasant memories of the past as well as the making of new ones for the future.

The next issue of *Just Out* will be our year in review, but because interest was so high, I'm going to tell you now a few more details about an article that we featured in our Nov. 16 issue. News Editor Jaymee R. Cuti wrote a very fine and accurate story, "Thorn of the Rose," about two gay travel columnists, Don Pile and Ray Williams. These fellas had not been pleased with Portland and were going to let the world know about it. They would, in their own words, "tell our thousands of readers that we do not recommend that they visit Portland."

As evidenced by our letters page, this story did not sit well with our readership. Angry Portlanders rose in defense of the homeland. The story, my friends, does not end there. Pile and Williams' automated e-mail sent the following response Nov. 19 to a follow-up question from Cuti:

"Because of the 'hate mail' that we have received (and one death threat) we are unable to reply to your e-mail. A few e-mails even went so far to say that if we ever returned to Portland that our tires would be slashed and the other windows in our auto smashed! So much for the good gay citizens of Portland. All e-mails about our Portland, Oregon, travel column are now being forwarded to our attorney and he is forwarding them to the authorities. We have received a few very constructive criticisms about our Portland, Oregon, travel column and we thank you for those."

But wait, it gets better. While I was off on Thanksgiving break and not checking e-mails hourly, as I had happily taken myself out of cell and e-mail range (yes, it can be done), I was sent a message from a gentleman in Texas. He indicated that he was starting a new gay publication and that its first issue in January would include the saga of Pile and Williams and the atrocities heaped upon them by Portlanders. He went on to describe Cuti's article as "very nasty" and concluded that Portland "must not be a good city for gay people to travel to." Umbrage was then taken because, due to my vacation, I didn't respond as promptly as he thought I should have, and the conclusion was then made: "When people don't want to talk about something, there is usually a 'problem.'"

So, Portland, the story may or may not continue. We'll keep you posted on whatever happens next. We may be boycotted. Stay tuned.

The recent flooding in our area is going to stretch the resources of local food banks far beyond the normal winter demand. The need for replenishment was great to begin with; it's more severe now. As such, I'm stepping up the pace with our 2007 food drive and asking you all to come to the aid of the folks served by Esther's Pantry.

How exactly are these folks affected by rural flooding? Most, if not all, of the smaller food banks receive their food from the Oregon Food Bank. When the shelves go bare there, everyone runs out. Heavy demands are going to be made upon the Oregon Food Bank, and we need to step in and help.

Coming back to the idea of memories, I'm asking you to help create a memory for someone else this holiday season. Let's show people that in their time of trouble and need the burden was made lighter by the help of friends and allies in Portland's gay, lesbian, bi and trans community. So, even if you feel that you only have Grinch-like memories of your own regarding the holidays, you can set that aside and become a part of creating someone else's powerful good memory. And then—guess what?—you have a positive new memory of your own, too.

Gay Skate Night on Dec. 17 will be a big food drive night. The November event drew in a crowd of nearly 300 highly energetic skaters, and it was something to behold. I'd love to see everyone return in December and fill our tables with food items. Also, please note that Oaks Park has been very generous with its pricing with us but now must increase the costs, to help offset its own expenses. Starting in January, the cost for Gay Skate will increase to \$6, which does include the skates. This still makes this night the best entertainment value in

Portland. And, as always, a portion of the proceeds does come back to the community by way of the *Just Out* Scholarship Fund. Don't forget also that I have two tables available at each skate night for nonprofits and community organizations and groups to set up shop and showcase yourselves. If you'd like to join us, please contact me at marty@justout.com.

As I'm writing this I'm also in discussion with folks in the community to see if, at this late date, it's possible to still do a credible job of hosting the traditional women's New Year's Eve dance. It would be quite a feat to pull it off at this late date, but we'll decide within days if we're going to try. Please check www.justout.com daily to see what is decided. This event has been important to many for years, and if there's a way that it can be done, we'll give it a try. We will need your support if we step in at this late date, so don't put away your dancing shoes yet.

In closing, remember you can find us at 6234 N. Greeley Ave. Please stop by, say hello and drop off your donations for the food drive. We thank you very much. ☺



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