

My Personal Pride Retrospective

It was a weekend of overcrowded dogs, overpriced crab sandwiches and underappreciated organizers

Portland Pride, June 2008, it's all over now, save for the memories and the photos. With this issue of *Just Out* we provide a bit of ours. Your memories, of course, remain your own. What happens at Pride stays at Pride, right?

"Pride. Bring It." That was the theme of this year's Portland Pride activities. Bring what, we all asked? The theme, it was decided, was meant to inspire us individually to bring that which—ah hell, let's face it, no one really knows what it meant. Bring it. Bring what? Dogs seem to have been the most popular choice of those in attendance. They came, they brought dogs. Big dogs, small dogs. Dog, dogs and more dogs. Pride, of course, is all about diversity, so in addition to dogs, I also spotted two snakes, a couple of cats and one ferret. One fella demanded payment to take a photo of his cat. I declined. For two days a woman stood near our booth stroking a stuffed toy snake wrapped around her shoulders. I never figured that one out.

Me personally, what did I bring? Well, funny you should ask. Unbeknownst to me, it turned out that I brought to Pride a hefty dose of pent-up frustration and anger created by a yearlong rift in an ebbing friendship. Saturday morning started off like a very bad day on *The View*. Yeah, I brought it all right.

Bringing a simple sack lunch would have been a far better choice.

Now I anxiously wait to see what next year's theme is. Perhaps something with a healing message?

The sack lunch, the one I should have brought, would have served me well on Sunday. A few hours after the parade, amid the mayhem of seemingly thousands of people hitting our booth at once, I realized I had gone far past the reasonable time for eating breakfast and lunch. I was running on empty and needed fuel. The food booths at the festival on Sunday are in great demand; a few more choices would be an enhancement. A few more quality choices, that is. Lines at the booths were long, longer and longest. Pondering my options, I briefly considered simply grabbing food from a passerby and running for it, chewing and swallowing while on the lam. Then, behold, there it was. A food booth with no line. Could this be? Was my hunger manifesting itself by way of delusions? What were these people serving that no one wanted? Please, anything short of organic vegan root-a-bobs would do. Sandwiches, it was crab sandwiches that they were attempting to sell, to no avail. Yup, tiny little \$8 crab sandwiches. When I weakly protested the price, the counter person snarled back, "It's crab, fool!" (OK, the "fool" part was implied, but clearly implied.) Great, I thought, overpriced seafood that's been sitting out in the sun all day because no one will pay for it. Would it be lunch or an express ticket to the port-a-pots? What to do?

I bought one, of course. The minuscule sandwich, accompanied by lemonade, set me back 12 bucks. To be fair, though, both bites were actually quite tasty. Better yet, I lived to tell about it.

My other thoughts on Pride? Since you asked, a vendor gate needs to be kept open at all times at the west fence, midsection. Vendors have to lug items in and out throughout the weekend. Hiking through crowds, clear to either end of the site, waiting in a long line for re-entry, being searched and hassled is not a realistic expectation of vendors. I can see that a side gate would not work for a main entry, as lines would quickly back up into the street. That said, there still needs to be a clearly marked "vendors only" side entry.

What I had expected to see, and didn't, was a mass of bicycles. Were they not being allowed in the gate? Was there a bike coral set up under one of the bridges? An earlier thought of mine was that this would be a great project for a nonprofit to take on, providing a secure valet bike parking corral. Getting bikers to pay—now that would be a separate problem. Two bucks a bike would be the goal. You'd need 1,000 paying bikers to make it worthwhile to cover expenses and come out a bit ahead. Maybe the bike community itself should take this on? Opportunity presents itself for a clever entrepreneur also. Someone could make some bucks, bring in portable lockers and create a biker comfort station, not just at Pride, but any and all events in the area. Would you pay \$2 to know your bike and gear were being watched over?

Of course, no one knows what any of us will be doing for transportation this time next year. "Pride 2009: Bring It on a Bike. Bring It on a Bus."

What else needs to be mentioned in a Pride overview? Here's something that is always missed: acknowledgment from the community that Pride Northwest is a volunteer organization that annually pulls off a massive undertaking, for which it receives little or no credit from the community at large. How about a thank you from everyone who attended? Did I have my own annoyances with Pride Northwest this year? You bet. I felt that this paper's 25 years of work to this community could have, and should have, been acknowledged at some point during the event. Do I have a right to these feelings? Probably not. *Just Out* is a business, after all. It's our job to do what we do. Am I over it? Sure. After all, we're now mere years away from our 30th anniversary; maybe it will happen then.

Next up is Saturday in the Park on July 12 in beautiful—and I mean that seriously—downtown Vancouver, Wash. Esther Short Park is a delightful setting for this calm and enjoyable event. *Just Out* will be there, with papers, visiting and chatting as we hand out our purple 25th anniversary bags. Please come by and say hello. Enjoy lunch at the adjacent Vancouver Farmers Market, browse the booths of your community groups and business organizations, and chill out in the grass, enjoying the entertainment. The park is less than 30 minutes away from most parts of Portland and quite accessible by bike paths.

As part of my personal Pride retrospective, I'd like to acknowledge and thank the great vendors who, year after year, accommodate my frantic last-minute orders for Pride materials. Each and every year I know exactly 52 weeks in advance when the next Pride Weekend will occur. Each and every year I wait until the last minute to order supplies—the types of items that say "four to six weeks for delivery" in their respective catalogs. Year after year I make frantic phone calls, and year after year Witham & Dickey, Jeff Fisher LogoMotives, The Lippman Company and Signs by Tomorrow pull it off for me. I swear, guys, next year I will order earlier. Really, I will.

While the staff of *Just Out* worked diligently to produce two of our largest issues of the year, we were plagued by destructive Web terrorists who were determined to bring down the *Just Out* Web site. ("Blog Out" remained safe.) We fought valiantly for several weeks but ultimately had no recourse but to dismantle the main *Just Out* Web site. The hackers won. At our level of sophistication we were incapable of warding off attack. There are very technical ways to describe what happened. I understand none of them. What I do know is that somewhere, apparently in Europe, a group of [expletive deleted] caused me a great deal of trouble and expense; along the way they frustrated the hell out of a lot of you, too.

The good news is that now we do have a new site back up and running. I think of it as my preemie. Delivery of this new site was not expected until November. We had to work frantically to bring it up now. Watch us change and develop. We are bringing serious meaning to the phrase "work in progress."

The *Just Out* Web site staff consists of one very overworked and underpaid person. Ashley Austin wore herself to a frazzle trying to keep on top of the mess that greeted us every morning for the past few weeks. All of you would be lucky to have someone as dedicated to your business as Ashley is to *Just Out*.

Now we move on to election 2008. The race for Gordon Smith's Senate seat is significant to all of us—perhaps as much as, if not more so, than the presidential race, a contest that appears to have already been won. We'll talk to the candidates, to the supporters, to the opposition. We may even talk to you.

Stick around—there's more than summer weather heating up in these parts. **io**



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