

by Marty Davis

Educate Yourself

Voters should be knowledgeable about candidates and issues appearing on ballot

The third and final debate of the 2008 presidential race has come and gone. Local candidates have been interviewed, polled, quizzed and questioned. Some races and measures have clear definition; others are about as clear as mud. In less than three weeks, the citizens of the United States will be the ones making the final decision as to who will be the ultimate winners.

The day of the final debate was also the day after voter registration was closed in Oregon. Gone that next morning was the elderly fellow who, for days on end, had diligently dogged everyone entering the Southeast Portland post office. Gone were the clipboard-toting volunteers at Pioneer Courthouse Square. Gone also are the newspaper inserts—the last attempts to round up the final holdouts as activists across the nation echo the call to register and vote.

This frenetic desire and need to overturn every rock looking for unregistered voters leaves me pondering, and a little bit concerned, about the value of this late-entry pool of voters. Is this emphasis on the quantity of voters misguided? Should, perhaps, the focus be rather on the instruction of the existing voter base? I harbor this naive notion that voters should be knowledgeable as to the candidates and issues appearing on the ballot. I think it is every voter's obligation to understand the impact of his or her vote. I also readily admit that this is not always an easy task.

Many groups, organizations and virtually every newspaper in the land—including the one you're reading—will proffer their suggestions as to how you should vote. You will find *Just Out's* endorsement package on Page 20 of this issue. It is the responsibility of every voter to avail themselves of sufficient information so that you can vote with confidence and knowledge. If you find yourself stumped on an issue or a candidate, skip it. Ballot measures are often deliberately written with intent to confuse. It is a flaw of the initiative system. Does a yes vote really mean no? Does a no vote mean yes? If you don't understand it, don't vote for it. Leaving some boxes unmarked will not invalidate your ballot.

One Portland measure that I'd like to briefly lobby for is Measure 26-94, the renewal measure for the Portland Children's Investment Fund. Passage of this measure will continue financing the fund, supporting proven programs designed to help the city's most vulnerable children. The fiscal impact to taxpayers is minimal; the positive impact on our overall community is, well, priceless. Please vote yes on Portland Ballot Measure 26-94.

Portlanders awoke Oct. 10 to early morning breaking news. A house in Southwest Portland had suddenly and dramatically slid from its founda-

tion and careened down a hill, damaging or destroying six homes adjacent or below it on the hillside.

One of these seriously damaged homes belongs to David York, his partner, Chris Korsgaard, and their 2-year-old son, Josef. The family was in the home at the time the world above crashed into them. They had about three minutes to understand the scope of what was happening. Moving quickly, they reached safety on the street as a burst of dust, dirt and debris, including a large tree, careened into the lower floors of their home. York is known to many *Just Out* readers as the well-respected past conductor of the Portland Gay Men's Chorus.

The day after the slide, York sent this message to friends and family: "We feel safe and supported. We're staying at Steve Fulmer's for the time being. It seems unlikely that much, if any, of our house can be salvaged. We're waiting for a ruling from the insurance company about our claim."

As of Oct. 16, the claim for damages had been denied by York's insurance. A ruling of the denial is pending. Speaking with York by phone Oct. 16, *Just Out* was updated about a meeting held earlier that same day, attended by all the families affected by damages as well as a multitude of representatives from city agencies. York relayed that government officials were working to soften the impact of an earlier "clumsy communication" in which homeowners had been tersely told that the problem was theirs to solve and clean up, complete with abrupt deadlines. The city's stance has softened, and all are working together to quickly secure the properties.

York, facing the catastrophic loss of his home, took time to ask *Just Out* to relay a positive message to our readers: "In every step along the way in this, with every interested person or party involved, the fact that Chris and I are a gay couple has been totally insignificant. I celebrate that Portland has come to this place, and I express gratitude for the phenomenon of change and growth."

The Hillsdale branch of Bank of America is setting up a fund to assist the families affected by the landslide. At press time details on this fund were pending. Please check www.justout.com for updates. These families are faced with the strong possibility that their insurance companies are going to deny the claim for all their losses. This would include the homes, cars, furniture, clothing, personal items, anything and everything in the homes. Where would you be if this were to happen to you?

Just Out will next appear in print Nov. 7. Between now and then a great deal will happen in the local and national political scenes. Although there is an extra week in our print cycle, daily updates will be published at www.justout.com. There you will find the latest news at your fingertips. 10

reflections

15 Years Ago In *Just Out*... volume 10 number 23, october 15, 1993

- NBC has announced that it will air a two-hour movie based on the true story of Col. Margarethe Cammermeyer during the 1993-94 season. Cammermeyer served 26 years in the military and was the highest-ranking woman in the armed services to be forced out of service for admitting she was a lesbian.

- A doctor in Austin, Texas, says two women who recently tested positive for HIV appear to have contracted the virus through sex with women. Experts have long contended that HIV is transmittable through vaginal secretions, particularly if the other partner has open sores or abrasions on a body part that comes in contact with the vagina.

- In a 63-33 vote, the Senate has endorsed legislation that will considerably tighten President Clinton's original "don't ask, don't tell, don't pursue" policy on gays and lesbians in the military.

- The annual Pride of the Rose Scholarships were recently presented at Darcelle XV. Recipients of

- \$750 scholarships from the 14-year-old fund were Ben Anderson of Washougal, Wash., a student at Evergreen State College, and Matt Werner of Portland, a student at Lewis & Clark College Law School.

- The official mortgage burning ceremony, with former pastors participating, will be held at Metropolitan Community Church of Portland. The ceremony includes the formal installation of the Rev. Dennis Chappell.

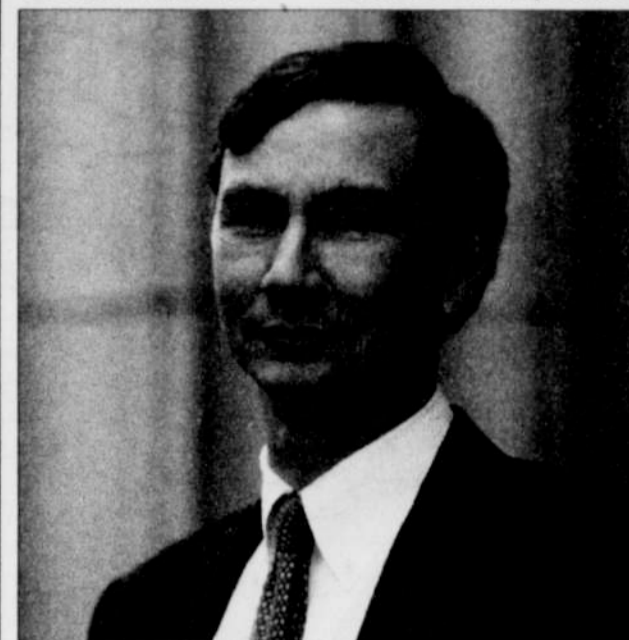
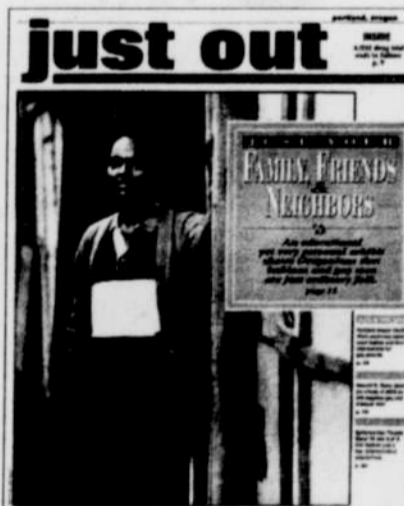
- For the past 10 years the 29th Street Writers have gathered regularly to critique and support one another's work. Join Karen Brummel-Smith, Cherry Hartman, Kathleen Herron, Mimi Maduro, Ila Suzanne and others for an evening of storytelling and poetry.

- Actor Michael Mendelson is receiving rave reviews for his one-man show *Intimacies/More Intimacies*. Written by Michael Kearns, the play is a glimpse into the lives of 12 HIV-positive individuals, from Denny, a drag queen, to Big Red, a prostitute.

- The Portland Gay Men's Chorus enters its 14th season with Bob Mensel as its new conductor. Mensel comes to Portland from Salt Lake City, where he serves as artistic director of the Salt Lake Men's Chorus. While there, he formed the Salt Lake Choral Scholars, a group that performed regularly at the noted Temple Square Concert Series.

- Got excess stuff? Need more stuff? Come to Phoenix Rising Foundation's garage sale. Quality donations welcome.

- The Portland Institute for Contemporary Art hosts the Dada Ball, recalling the spirit of the early 20th century Dadaist art movement that was absurd, playful, entertaining and outrageous.



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Just Out's top-to-bottom 2008 election guide

NEWS

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BRO gala was a political affair; Merkley pinch-hits for Smith at Portland AIDS Walk; Peacock Productions brings 'A' game; examine oppression at women's conference; BRO decodes ballot measures; men's sports teams meet with prospective players; Pride of the Rose scholars announced; CAP holds HIV/AIDS conference; Portlanders attend HRC gala; plan for financial future at Q Center; teacher sacrifices job for gay-themed play; queer-owned small businesses brace for economic downturn; mayor-elect gets personal with Lewis & Clark College students

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