

page 3

by Marty Davis

Happy Anniversary

Just Out celebrates a marvelous partnership with our readers, advertisers and community

These columns are never easy for me to write. I am not, by nature, a communicative person.

This column that you're reading now, marking the 25th anniversary of *Just Out*, is proving, by the very nature of its importance, to be even more difficult than usual.

I've stopped and started several times, headed off in one direction, and then turned in another. One early thought was that I'd "interview myself." People often remark that they don't feel as they know me, as a person. They see me everywhere; they know what I do, but not really who I am. I am aware that there is curiosity about my background and how I came to own *Just Out*. These are valid questions and interests, all of which I will diligently set about addressing. Some other time, that is.

Today the story of *Just Out* is much bigger and more important than that of the publisher. With this issue we celebrate 25 years of publishing and community partnership. In this day and age this is quite a remarkable achievement, one to be celebrated by all of us. We are not an entity unto ourselves. We are a part of a marvelous partnership—a partnership consisting of *Just Out*, our readers, our advertisers and our broad, diverse, complex and difficult community.

I have not been at *Just Out* throughout the 25 years of her history. There is no one person who can lay claim to that. I am, however, the most senior person on staff. I arrived at the paper, as a salesperson, late in 1995, at the 12th anniversary mark. I assumed ceremonial ownership of the paper on the 15th anniversary, in November 1998, and then legally took the helm in January 1999. There are some who have been waiting for the ship to sink ever since.

It's not going to happen. *Just Out* will be around for many more anniversaries past the 25th.

That said, I admit that the coming months, year, who-knows-how-long, will not be easy. Surviving the current economic crisis will be a challenge for *Just Out*, a challenge I have every intention of taking on victoriously. This paper, like many other small local businesses, is caught in the landslide of the failing economy. It is the nature of the national crisis that affects us, not the nature of our business. Yes, you are reading, and hearing, over and over that newspapers are failing. The end is in sight, the Internet wins. Newspapers are gone.

There is some truth to this. Yes, indeed, the traditional daily newspapers are in trouble. Like the major automakers, many daily papers did not respond with needed quickness to the changing needs and demands of their market. Now they face dwin-



dling revenues, staff cutbacks and a declining readership. That's the bad news.

The good news is that alternative media, such as *Just Out*, will step in, step up and fill the void that daily papers might no longer supply. In these changing and troubled times for the newspaper industry, well-run and well-cared-for gay and lesbian publications will not only continue, we will thrive. We will step up to fill the void left by minimized dailies with coverage for and about our specific community. People are always going to read. There will always be a place for papers, albeit not so many of them. There will always be a need for education, for entertainment and for realizing a sense of community. There will be a need for *Just Out*.

There will be some belt-tightening here. There will be innovation in utilizing resources. That is a given. Our advertisers are feeling the pinch. Business doors are closing, money is scarce. *Just Out* will ride it out. We'll get smaller, for a while; that won't impact quality. We'll expand coverage to our Web site and our blog. As we go into the first quarter of the new year, always a traditionally slow time, we'll seize the opportunity of available time to reinvent and redesign ourselves. We have plans, we have vision, we have goals. We are aware that that which has brought us to our 25th anniversary will not necessarily get us to the 30th. We are ready to grow, respond and meet the changes of an evolving readership.

As noted, I've not been here the entire 25 years of *Just Out*. But I do study my paper, and I have a feel for the history. We are definitely not the same community that *Just Out* reported on in 1983. Publisher Jay Brown noted in the editorial of the first issue, "*Just Out* has no ax to grind other than the eradication of oppression." Today *Just Out* still proudly carries the mantle of fighting

oppression, but we also celebrate victory, accomplishment and achievement. Our community is rich and representative of all walks of life. We are more than the voice of oppression; we are also the chorus of victory.

In 25 years we have seen the AIDS crisis played front and center in our pages. We have seen the pandemic go from the unknown, to the deadly, to the now-even-more-frightening stage: the accepted. AIDS destroyed much of our community, and then it moved on. AIDS is not over; it is now sitting next door, on the steps of the communities of color, the women and the underserved. AIDS is not over. We've simply let it become someone else's problem.

In 25 years we have seen the rise and fall, and now possibly the re-emergence, of grassroots political activism. Once we took to the streets, then were taught to sit back

quietly and send in our checks. Is it time for us to now reclaim the streets? Is the new gay activism the story for the start of the 26th year of *Just Out*?

We've seen the growth of families, of gay dads and lesbian moms. We've seen a cultural media presence and acceptance that would never have been thought possible in 1983. We've got Ellen, for God's sake.

And then, of course, there's Oregon's Ballot Measure 36 and California's Prop 8. We take two steps forward, one step back. It's still progress.

There is one constant over the course of the 25 years: our need for, and our relationship with, our advertisers. It can't be more simple. *Just Out* does not exist without advertisers. Advertisers do not exist without your business. We need, and must support, each other.

I am proud to be able to say we have advertisers with us today who have been with us from the beginning. Deborah Betron from Bridgetown Realty was in the very first issue of this paper. Her ad appears in this very issue, 25 years later. Also present were Hobo's, Diana Plunkett, Karen Zumwalt and Essential Lotions and Oils. We thank them and celebrate their 25-plus years of business.

As I run out of room with much left unsaid, I send out a sincere thank-you to Ron Mitchell of Aura, Boxxes and Red Cap. He is throwing *Just Out* the best 25th anniversary party anyone could ever hope for. If we don't see you there, you'll find all the details on the blog and in the Dec. 5 issue.

Finally, you will note that this is not a typical *Just Out* issue. Much of what you'd expect to find isn't there. For newsbriefs, breaking news and calendar updates, we direct you to www.justout.com. We'll only be turning 25 once, and we wanted to make this a very special issue.

Thank you for reading. Thank you for being here. We appreciate you and look forward to year 26. 10

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VOL. 26 NO. 2 NOVEMBER 21, 2008



FEATURE

10 JUST OUT AT 25

A quarter-century of our history

NEWS

9-31 Person of the year; 25 years of AIDS; a roundup of anti-gay foes; straight allies make their mark; reflecting on community groups that have come and gone; deceased leaders are gone but not forgotten; *Just Out* writers obtain national acclaim; a hat tip to honorable mentions

ARTS & CULTURE

42-43 MUSIC

Women's music, gay choruses raise spirits during tough times

44-45 DANCE

Portland's vibrant contemporary dance scene developed over decades

48 NIGHTLIFE

Bear bar encourages NoPo nudity

51-56 FILM

Two Indian women in 1950s South Africa fall in love against a background of pervasive police brutality and racism in *The World Unseen*; *Tru Loved* is both a convincing message movie about living authentically and a diverting entertainment; for a burg of its relatively petite size and stature, Portland is a haven for queer cinephiles of all stripes; *Milk* reaffirms Gus Van Sant's gifts as a filmmaker

COLUMNS

41 EPIQUEERAN

All in the Family

65 MS. BEHAVIOR

"You Are My Life"



PAGE 10

PAGE 44

PAGE 56

PAGE 10