letters

Just Out & Me

To the Editor:

When the wife and I moved to Portland 2 1/2 years ago, all we knew of the place was that a few of our good friends live here, that it's cheaper than the Bay Area and that "rain" is the city motto. We soon learned that Portland has a kick-ass queer community—as varied in its membership as it is cohesive in its struggle for equality.

A couple of months into cruising Craigslist, I found a post for a writing gig at *Just Out*. I'd worked for newspapers and magazines in the past, but never one so community-oriented. Stepping into the job, I got a crash course in city, county and state politics. I met volunteers and activists (gay and straight) who inspired me on a daily basis. Sometimes I had the privilege of sharing the story of someone in crisis and watching others step up to help.

At one point, Publisher Marty Davis offered me the opportunity to write my own column, which I called "Out of My Mind." So I not only got a grand introduction to my new home, I had the chance to process with the entire readership (any lesbian's dream). I wrote about the wife's and my domestication on Valentine's Day, about the oft-forgotten gay and lesbian victims of the Holocaust and Portland's memorial to them, about my first-ever Pride parade and about various other topics.

Since moving on to "greener pastures" (literally: I took a job in the environmental field), I've marveled at how much the paper still affects my daily life. Besides the lifelong friends I made among *Just Out* staff, I still keep an eye on the paper and its blog for local, national and international gay news as well as tips on good times around town. I'm grateful for the opportunities *Just Out* makes available for all of us to get together—especially Gay Skate. And as the wife and I continue to settle into Portland, we look forward to the next 25 years of meeting more of our neighbors, working for equal rights and reading a great paper.

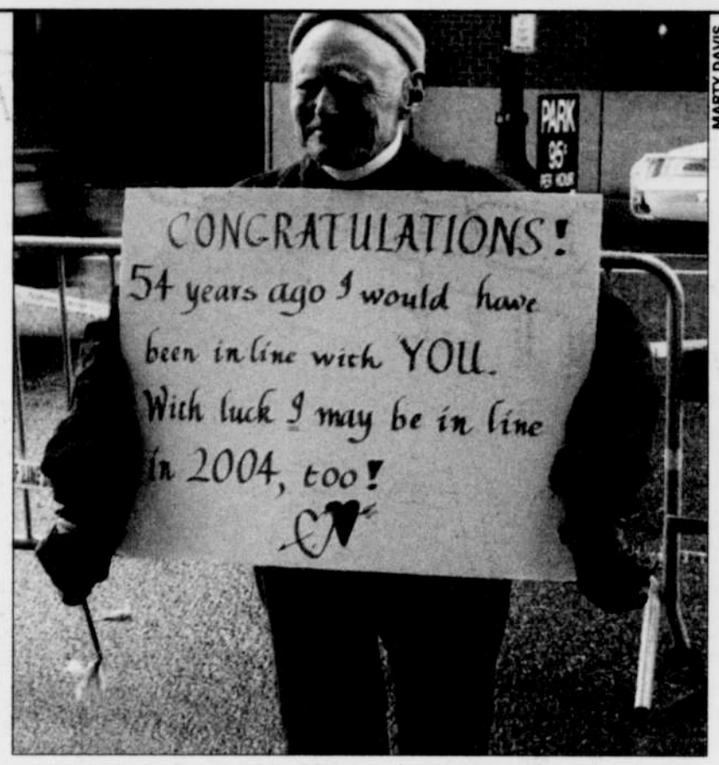
Malka Geffen
Portland

Gone Urban

To the Editor:

I moved to Portland from a village in the Willamette Valley to see, I guess, if the city could take the country out of the "boy."

Just Out and its publisher helped me a great deal to understand, admire and want to be a part of the gay community. The paper led me to hearings on gay marriage. On the day the weddings took place, I went to the front of the Multnomah Building with a sign of strong support. I stood next to a ranting so-called Christian who was damning all of the gays to hell. Later, I was asked to join a double ceremony, a great occasion.



MARTY DAVIS

The picture of me and that sign, along with a current picture of my partner, appeared in the May 21, 2004, issue of *Just Out* along with a great story by Tom Stevenson of my long gay history. I later received the Equity Foundation's Torchbearer Award for activism: a proud event for me. Unfortunately, a medical condition has really slowed this 79-year-old man and prevented his being very active at all. The city, the attitudes of Portlanders, the urban life and *Just Out* (to name but a few) have made this former country boy into an urban male. Thanks.

Nelson L. Jones
Portland

Local, with Content

To the Editor:

When I came to Portland in August 1980, the information on gay community activities was fairly nonexistent unless you already belonged to a niche. Finding a social circle or a bar was like the gold rush—you followed the masses and hoped for the best. Or you listened to everyone at work talk about the "fag bar" they had stumbled upon over the weekend.

Try being from out of town and find a new bar that you heard about. Your friends knew sort of where it was, but were too drunk to remember what street it was on. There were never brochures or bar guides then.

The only thing I seem to remember finding was *The Bay Area Reporter*. It was the only regular news out there, and with Ronald Reagan in office, a lot of us could not afford to go to San Francisco that much.

The local newspaper *Flash!* came and went. It was more of a cosmopolitan fashion and advertising rag than anything else. Semi-glamorous pictures of people you recognized from Portland on the cover, always in black and white, and no real news to speak of. Fun little thing, but it never caught on.

Then, while bowling one Sunday morning, I met Renée LaChance and Jay Brown. They were asking the bowlers what type of newspaper they thought might be of interest to the Portland community and its outlaying areas. Many people dismissed their fellow bowlers and their ambitious idea, but others took a moment from their cigarettes and beer in between their frames and talked. And they listened.

So with very little hype, the first issue of *Just Out* appeared. It was the first time I remember seeing something local with content. You found out about things to do in the city before it happened. And you had addresses for the new bars and other businesses.

Just Out offices were on the third or fourth floor downtown on Southwest Third Avenue, just up from Dahl & Penne's. Renée and Jay were co-editors, putting their love and quest for success in it. Somehow, Jay knew to be open to anyone with a comment because that person might be the one who provided the niche to catch the public's eye.

Just Out was the first publication that I cared enough about to write a letter to the editor. Neither praise nor complaints—just a few suggestions about more of what I'd like to read about. Well, I'm not saying they ignored me, nor did they praise my letter. They just ran it for all to see. However, *Just Out* is still around. I'd like to think that my continued reading and caring about it has kept it going to the 25th anniversary.

Mark Sustello
Portland

If You Like Vodka Martinis

To the Editor:

In January 2006, I was in limbo. I was single after a yearlong relationship with my first girlfriend—the girlfriend who followed my husband of 10 years. I was abandoned by the suburban homemaker friends of my past and had little connection to the Portland lesbian community.

I found myself lonely—lost between two very different worlds.

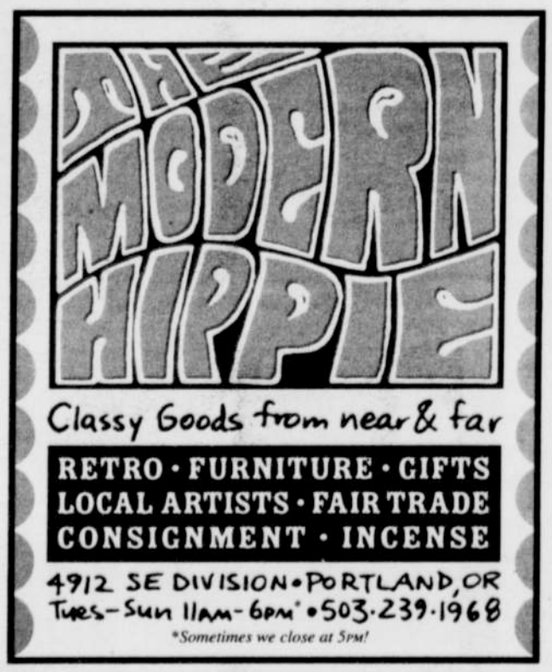
I didn't want to Internet date—or date at all. I had too much baggage, too many loose ends. I only wanted a friend or two—someone to meet for coffee, shop with or see a movie; someone who might help me integrate into the GLBTQ community.

I found myself on *Just Out* personals, staring at the computer screen and contemplating. I had never done anything like this, but I placed an ad; I was honest and forthcoming: "I'm looking to expand my circle of friends," I wrote.

The next day there were replies, but I only responded to one—she looked kind in her photo. We sent e-mails and decided to meet for coffee on Martin Luther King Day 2006. Our coffee was pleasant, and she was nice; I talked too much, as usual. She, like me, had just ended a relationship; she, like me, didn't have many friends and was looking to expand her social circle. She wasn't interested in getting in a relationship, either. We spent the week e-mailing and chatting online; I invited her to go out with me that Saturday, as friends. Although it wasn't a "date," I felt compelled to buy an outfit and new perfume and to cut and color my hair. When I arrived to meet her, I slipped into the booth and looked across at her and my heart jumped. I was in deep trouble.

We had vodka martinis.

Hers was dirty; mine was lemony goodness. We left, and I wondered if she was having the same feelings that were bubbling inside of me. It turned out she did. Two months after placing that ad in *Just Out* personals, Cheryl and I wrote an offer on a house. We began our life together as a couple and as a family. We had a commitment ceremony that November, and on Feb. 16, we went to Washington County Courthouse, registered as domestic partners and petitioned to change our surnames—to Martini.

Kathryn Martini
Sherwood

St. James
LUTHERAN CHURCH
• Downtown Historical District •
• On the corner of Park & Jefferson •
• 100-year-old Sanctuary •
Sunday Services 8:30am and 11am
Jazz Services 5pm every third Sunday evening
Jazz Service for November:
The Randy Porter Trio November 16th at 5pm
1315 SW Park Ave. Portland, OR 97201
503-227-2439 www.stjamespdx.org
"St. James shares God's inclusive and eternal Love with everyone"