



PAGE 3 by Marty Davis

Forty Years Ago

Looking Back on Stonewall, and Ahead To Our Next Fight

As the nation celebrates June, and Pride month, there will be many references to the 40th anniversary of Stonewall. Journalists, bloggers, Pride organizers, all will toss about the reference with ease – assuming, perhaps, that everyone knows exactly what Stonewall is, and what happened there that people still talk about 40 years later.

The thing is, many, if not most people attending Pride celebrations now are far younger than 40, 50 or 60 years old. And in today's world of internet news – reported instantaneously – and forgotten just as quickly, 40-year-old events are ancient history. That said, Stonewall is a lesson that bears repeating.

What happened at the Stonewall Inn in New York's Greenwich Village on June 27, 1969 is very well documented. There are countless books, articles and even films detailing and analyzing the events of that night. The most concise versions usually begin by describing an event that many younger people can't imagine happening today. Gay life 40 years ago was quite different than it is now. Today, in 2009, in Portland, Oregon, our mayor is likely to appear at an event in a gay bar. Not so, then.

Forty years ago, in June 1969, the New York police raided a gay bar. It happened a lot in those days. On that particular night, however, the patrons of the Stonewall Inn and, eventually, many hundreds of their friends, decided that enough was enough. That evening, the gays, the lesbians, the queens, they all fought back. On that night, gay politics, activism and culture were changed forever. On that night, and the four to follow, the nation and the world saw the birth of the

modern gay rights movement.

That evening saw brave men and women stand up and fight back against the oppression that most had known all their lives. That night saw brave men and women stand up and fight back so that 40 years later, we can march with pride and assurance through the streets of downtown Portland. While the frontline battle for many today is marriage equality, a scant 40 years ago people quite the same as us today were fighting for the right to simply *be*.

And that, in the proverbial nutshell, is the story of the 40th anniversary of Stonewall – and why it matters to us today.

On a personal note, I'd like to congratulate Darcelle XV, Portland's legendary personality, for being named by the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force as one of 'Stonewall's 40 Trans Heroes.' Further details on this award are found on page 8, but I want to acknowledge here the magnificent work of Portland's own Stonewall Hero.

Today, as noted, the gay rights agenda has turned mainly to marriage equality. For people living in places like Central and Eastern Oregon, people who still face and fear oppression due merely to their sexual orientation or identity, same-sex marriage might seem like tomorrow's problem. Nevertheless, marriage equality is where the focus of activism has come to rest today. As such, on the heels of discontent over the passage and upholding of California's Proposition 8, banning same-sex marriage in that state, the call has again been heard for a national gay, lesbian, bi and trans march on Washington, D.C.

Organizers of the "National March for Equality" have selected Sunday, October 11,

2009 as the date to gather in the nation's capital to show elected leaders that we demand full, equal rights for gay, lesbian, bi and trans people. And beyond what I've just written, I don't have much more to tell you. Questions, yes, I've got questions. Answers, not so many. Not yet, anyway.

There is a Web site, of course, www.nationalmarchforequality.com. Once there you will be asked to sign up to receive additional information. October 11 – also National Coming Out Day – is not that far away. To stage an event sufficient in size to garner national attention will require a great deal of work, money and organization. And if there's anything that people have to spare right now, it's money. Just saying.

Back to Pride, *Just Out* will be headed to the Waterfront Festival for Portland Pride, where we look forward to meeting and greeting just about every one of you. And if we miss you in Portland, there's always Vancouver, Salem, Eugene, Bend, Lincoln City, Corvallis and who-knows-where else. *Just Out* staffers will drag themselves home from Portland Pride on Sunday evening, and then we take a you-have-no-idea-how-well-deserved week off. We'll return in print on July 3 with pages and pages of photo memories from all the Portland Pride activities. Our July 17 issue will feature the history of Portland's Q Center, as the community unites in July to celebrate the grand move to the center's new location.

We have much to celebrate this 40th anniversary of Stonewall. Let's do it together.

We'll see you at Pride.

REFLECTIONS

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- The Portland City Council has taken one more step toward the enactment of civil rights for all persons. They just passed a resolution that gives unmarried domestic partners health benefits comparable to those of married employees.
- The Church of Scotland said May 26 that it still considers queer sex "contrary to God's will for humankind." The announcement followed heavy debate at the church's General Assembly. However, attendees did agree that gay men and lesbians should not be discriminated against.
- Over 300 grassroots AIDS activists came to Washington, D.C. May 22 to 24, from 40 states across the country, to lobby for increased funding for AIDS. AIDSWATCH '94 was a coalition effort of 20 national and local organizations, with principal coordination by the National Association of People with AIDS.
- *In the Life* is the first national gay and lesbian series to run on the Public Broadcasting System. The program is now being shown on over 60 PBS stations around the country. On Wednesday, June 22, OPB plans to air one episode of the series, at 10:30 pm, following a documentary on Stonewall. OPB currently has no plans to run the programs on a regular basis.
- Just in time for the 25th anniversary of the Stonewall riots, it's *Unnatural Acts*, an evening of original comedy and music

and extra-special rites, featuring Carol Steinel and Howie Bagdadonutz. The duo will perform a variety of topical skits and solo work for three nights only.

■ Dr. Mary Ann Humphrey, author of *My Country, My Right to Serve* and co-host of *Nightscene*, gives a call to action and video presentation on Wednesday, May 29.

■ The Metropolitan Human Rights Commission is soliciting applicants for appointments to the commission. Appointments are made by Mayor Vera Katz and County Chairwoman Beverly Stein for three-year terms, beginning in September. The mission of the 15-member commission is to foster mutual understanding and respect, and to protect the human rights of all persons in the city of Portland and Multnomah County.

■ An original and eloquent voice for change was stilled with the death of filmmaker Marlon Riggs, from complications of AIDS, in April of this year. Riggs achieved, in his films, a rare and compelling blend of artistic and political expression.

just out

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