

transitions

Gregg Ruffin

Gregg Ruffin, who died Thursday, August 11, moved to Portland from the Emerald City in 1970. He worked for several years at the Organ Grinder, where his love of the food and beverage industry originated. From the beginning, Gregg was friendly and outgoing, forming many lifelong friendships. In the mid '70s he transferred to EarthQuake Ethel's, the Disco Mecca, honing his skills working as an assistant manager. In 1979 he flipped from the straight to the gay world and debuted on Stark Street, combining his professionalism and provocative wit. A great example was during his first Stark St. Rose Festival, when he made T-shirts proclaiming, "I've never been in the Navy, but the Navy's been in me!"

When Gregg started bartending at CC Slaughters, he found his true calling, making every customer feel important and welcome. His complimentary style and unreserved personality became a big hit. Gregg was the consummate hostess, always greeting patrons with a smile, maintaining his work ethic and sense of humor while never missing a beat. Many people attributed their ease in "coming out" to sitting at Gregg's bar. He was accommodating to his customers, who soon became regulars, often saving phantom places at the bar—knowing they would want to chat while enjoying their favorite cocktail. In 1990 Gregg was reunited with the owner of Ethel's, working at both The Brig (now Red Cap Garage) and Boxxes. He remained an integral part of the staff for 21 years. He will be dearly missed.



SUBMITTED PHOTO

Anti-Gay Seattle Church Expanding to Portland

A controversial and anti-gay church based in Seattle is starting a new ministry in Southeast Portland.

Mars Hill Church has purchased a castle-like building at 3210 SE Taylor Street, where it plans to start services September 10.

Mars Hill was founded in 1996 and has since become a mega-church with eight locations in Washington and one in Albuquerque, N.M. In addition to the new location in Portland, two other locations are planned for Everett, Wash., and Orange County, Calif.

The church is popular among young people. Its various media have a slick production value, and its pastor, Mark Driscoll, has been known to give sermons on such topics as "Biblical Oral Sex."

Nevertheless, Driscoll preaches that homosexuality, as well as any sex outside of heterosexual marriage, is a sin.

"I will never say that homosexuality is okay because it's not," Driscoll said in a sermon posted on the church's YouTube channel. "I will likewise never say that it is the only sin or it's a sin that rises above the other sins and that the gay guy who comes to Mars Hill and sits next to the couple that is dating and sleeping together is any less or more righteous."

The belief is not uncommon among conservative evangelicals, but even among them, Driscoll is controversial for his hyper-masculine views of how Christian men should behave.

"The problem with the church today," Driscoll said in another YouTube video, "it's just a bunch of nice, soft, tender, chick-i-fied, church boys."



LGBTQ religious leaders in Portland are wary of the church, but they say the community should have dialogue with the church's members.

"We don't get anywhere by bouncing our rhetoric off of each other," said the Rev. Tara Wilkins, executive director of the nonprofit Community of Welcoming Congregations, "because relationship matters. It's hard to form a relationship with someone who believes the exact opposite of what you do, but that's where transformation can happen."

At one of the largest LGBTQ-welcoming churches in Seattle, University Congregational United Church, administrator David Anderson said the LGBTQ community in Portland shouldn't feel threatened by Mars Hill.

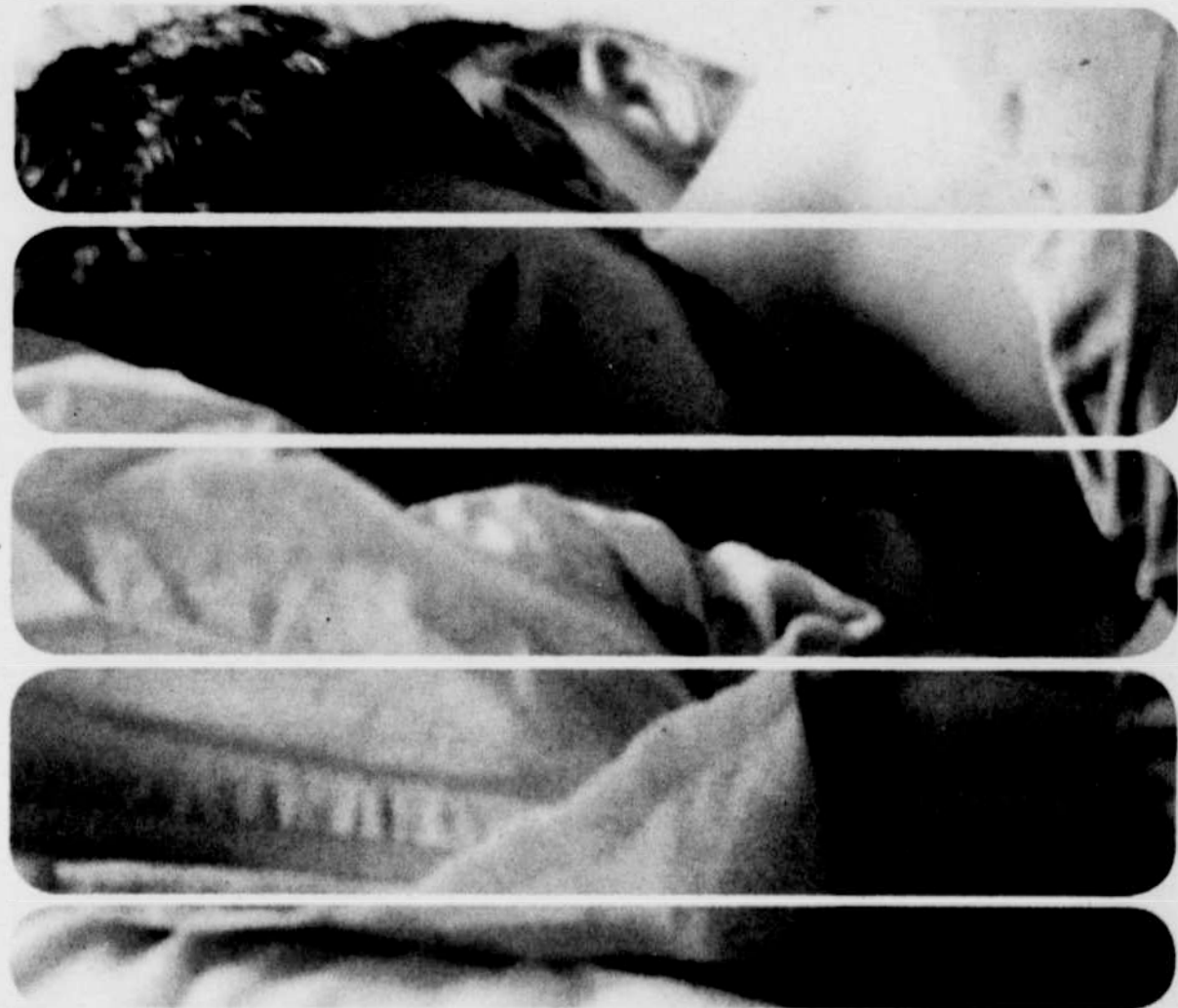
"They have not made my life as a gay man more difficult, and I think they have challenged me to be more articulate in my faith," he said.

Representatives from Mars Hill did not return calls for comment by press time.

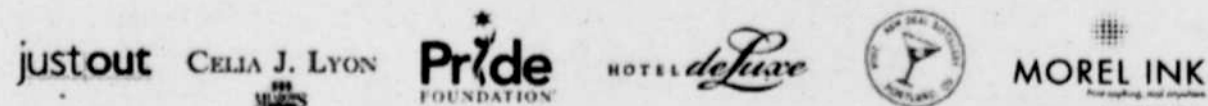
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—AARON SPENCER

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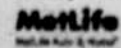
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