



by Leo Schuman

We're not living up to our progressive values when it comes to equity.

Mayor Sam Adams

Novelty quickly seems normal in 21st century Portland. It's all too easy to take for granted that a "faggot" from Newport could drive a 30 year public service career to become the first openly gay man in history elected mayor of a major American city (or at least one with it's own TV show). No matter what anyone may have thought of Sam Adams at any point, he's made history, and survived to talk about it.

After a rocky start, Adams's tenure as mayor has been focused and effective despite a non-stop critical barrage from his detractors. Some of the criticism has been valid, of course. Adams made mistakes, and no politician pleases everyone. At the same time, some criticism has flowed from sources that would second-guess, diminish, and oppose anything a gay man does, simply for his being gay. Bigotry doesn't end just because someone wins an election. Ask Obama. Fortunately, Adams has had the strength of character to deliver a solid performance, regardless of it all. If anything, he seems to have enjoyed rising to the challenge. He's a man not easily beaten.

On his way to becoming "Citizen Sam," Adams was happy to talk with *Just Out* one more time as mayor of Portland.

**Just Out:** So, when did you first fall in love with another man?

**Sam Adams:** Oh? Uhh ... well, his name was Barry. It was years ago when I was growing up in Newport. He was a teammate on my basketball team. He was full of ... exuberance ... and he was smart, and popular, and um ... he was very cute (grins).

**JO:** Have you ever personally faced openly anti-gay discrimination?

**SA:** Oh yeah...

**JO:** Physical violence?

**SA:** Yes, a long time ago. And I don't ... well, in this job you get called a lot of names. It just goes with the territory. So I try not to give them any power or encouragement by giving them any visibility at all.

One of the more humorous stories along these lines, though, was when I was a City Commissioner. I was showing a business representative, who was looking at various towns to locate in, a parcel of land near the Convention Center. We were driving around with staff, and sitting there talking — this guy was new to Portland and new to me — when someone drives by and yells out, "Sam Adams sucks cock!" And, this guy

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