

UPPER LEFT EDGE

VOLUME 8 NUMBER 3

AUGUST 1999

FREE!

UPPER LEFT COAST PRODUCTIONS ▲ P.O. BOX 4222 CANNON BEACH OR 97110 ▲ 503 436 2915 ▲ bhults@pacifier.com ▲ www.upperleftedge.com

Desperation as Inspiration is So Common.

PRIDE

by Dan Savage

For a group of people long labeled sinners — and understandably sensitive to the charge, which is still made — it's more than a little ironic that gays and lesbians should select a sin as our annual rallying cry. And it's not just any sin but the sin Pope Gregory the Great called "the queen of them all."

An early Christian monk, Evagrius of Pontus, made a list of "wicked human passions," of which he determined there were eight. He listed them in ascending order of all-around wickedness: gluttony, lust, greed, sadness, anger, sloth, vainglory, and pride. In the sixth century, Pope Gregory the Great took Evagrius' list and cut it down to seven, combining some (sloth and sadness, vainglory and pride), and adding a brand new sin, envy. Gregory's revised list — pride, envy, anger, sloth, greed, gluttony, and lust — were known to his contemporaries as the Seven Capital Vices. We call them the Seven Deadly Sins. In the 13th century, St. Thomas Aquinas chimed in, observing that before a person could lust like a weasel or go green with envy, he first had to commit the sin of pride. This made pride not only the deadliest of sins, but "the beginning of all sin."

Gays and lesbians embraced the sin of pride 30 years ago to combat something that was, at the time, a much deadlier problem for queers than any of Evagrius' wicked passions or Greg's capital vices: shame. Webster's defines shame as "a condition of humiliating disgrace or disrepute," and until the late '60s, shame was a poison that killed queers. And straights weren't the only ones who viewed homosexuality as disgraceful — most gays and lesbians did too. Shame kept us closeted and fearful, made our oppression possible, and led some of us to write very bad plays and wear too-tight trousers. Clearly, strong medicine was needed. We searched for an antidote that would purge us of this poison, and found it in pride.

If it took a deadly sin to undo the damage done by shame — a condition imposed on us, not something we did to ourselves — surely Eva, Greg, and Thom would understand. Webster's defines pride as "inordinate self-esteem," or "a reasonable and justifiable self-respect." Whether inordinate or justifiable, pride was an effective antidote: as more gays and lesbians committed the sin of pride, fewer were victimized by shame. We became less closeted and less fearful, making it increasingly difficult to oppress us, and we started writing better plays and wearing more comfortable clothing.

But 30 years after the antidote arrived — in the form of a riot and an annual parade to commemorate that riot — gays and lesbians stand in renewed danger of being poisoned. The poison threatening us now isn't shame, however, it's pride. In medical terms, once the antidote cures you, you're supposed to stop taking it. Why? The funny thing about antidotes is that they're often toxic, and if taken too long, they can kill you just as surely as the original poison. Even Tylenol, the antidote for hangovers, is deadly if you take too much. Pride isn't killing anyone — not yet, anyway — but the fwap of rainbow windsocks is definitely making us dull and slow, and leading to a resurgence of bad plays and tight pants. Surrounding oneself with constant reminders to feel prideful — rainbow flags, freedom rings, "family" bumper stickers, pink triangle tattoos, "freedom tumblers," rainbow-striped dog collars (!) — is to constantly be reminded of shame. The only way to be truly and finally free of stultifying shame is to break free of equally stultifying (if better accessorized) pride. Instead, American gays and lesbians act like cancer patients who, having been cured, remind themselves that they aren't sick anymore by dropping by the hospital every once in a while for a little chemotherapy.

Of course, all gay or lesbian people have to struggle with shame prior to and during their coming out. Simple pride in being gay or lesbian — simple-minded pride, I should say — is useful, but should be thought of as a stage young queers must pass through, like puberty, and not an ecstatic state all queers must live in, like Ohio. (When I say "young and gay" I'm

(Continued on Page 5)



Baby Gramps at the Oregon Country Fair *

*You can also catch Gramps at 5PM Sunday at Vernonia Days August 6th through 8th in, you guessed it, beautiful downtown Vernonia, Oregon.

All's Fair

Well, we got back from the Thirtieth Annual Oregon Country Fair and folks have been asking how it was. "Did you have fun?" Yes. "Were there lots of nekkid folks?" Yes. "Is it really drug and alcohol free?" No. Nothing is free. Stumblefoot came and got me in his new/old Dodge Dakota. (I'm sure he bought it just for the name.) For those of you who don't know Stumblefoot, he is a spiritual consultant (medicine man) in the Rastified Church of the Cowboy Buddha, and attends vespers at Bill's semi-regularly, and is a member and host of good standing in the Thanatopsis Literary and Inside Straight Association's Tuesday night Potlatches. He is also a regular visitor to the Nevada Test Site and walks his talk; except when after one or two too many barley pops he becomes Sasquach, but that's another story.

We headed down the coast under a rare blue July sky, stopping only for used bookstores and Smoked Salmon at the Siletz store in Depoe Bay. We stopped at the Alpha-bit cafe in Mapleton for some lunch and a few choice paperbacks, and left them Sally's and Michael's books to show the buyer. (Yes, this was in fact a business trip, and by golly I think that it might be tax deductible. I love America.) then we popped into the grocery store for a couple of cases of Bud, a carton of Camels, and lots of Ice. We were ready. We got to the site, and after the usual hour or so of standing in lines of undeniably individualistic looking folks, and proving our worthiness, and documenting our credibility, we were safely parked and wristbanded, and blessed in the eyes of the powers that be. I set up my humble wickiup in the camp of the tribe from Duvall. Miss Paula, Russell, Wendy, and assorted folks of various ages. Miss Paula, Russell and Wendy have been coming to the Fair for decades. Wendy makes hats, and nice light cotton dresses and other stuff, and she says she's becoming a computer animator. She is a nice smart woman with a very smart son, who reads almost as much as your beloved Rev. Russell is a tall skinny, longhaired logger. He builds bird houses and bat houses out of cedar scrap. He is the kind of logger who asks forgiveness from every tree he cuts. I think he is a logger because he thinks that it is better if he cuts down a tree than if someone who doesn't understand trees does. Yes, it is strange. Miss Paula is of course the reason I stay there. I've known Miss Paula since ought seventy something, and was once a sharecropper, with Dirty Ernie (Johnnie Ward) on her Ferns of Mystery Slug Ranch in Duvall, Washington. It was there that I cut up my driver's license, it was there that I began the Rastified Church of the Cowboy Buddha. She works at the bookstore in Duvall, and makes toys. Well, toys is a pretty small word for what she makes. She hand sews velvets and laces and beads and makes animals, teddy bears riding ponies, dressed in buckskins, tigers dressed for the Court of Louis XIV, giraffes in lace Victorian dresses, yes, wondrous 'toys'. It should go without saying that her work sells high and fast. They are a pleasant tribe to camp with.

The thing about the Fair is its contradictions. The Fair started in '69 as the Renaissance Faire, and was a benefit for a pre-school or something, but the deal was a bunch of hippies got together in the woods by a creek, played music, sold food and art and dope to

(Continued on Page 5)

Artis (the Spoonman)



MOONS & TIDES

WASHINGTON & OREGON COASTS
1999 Corrected for PACIFIC BEACHES

DATE	DAYS	HIGH AUGUST				LOW AUGUST			
		AM	PM	AM	PM	AM	PM	AM	PM
1 SUN	•	3:18	7:9	4:19	7:9	9:53	0:5	10:21	1:4
2 Mon	•	4:08	7:4	4:57	7:9	10:31	0:1	11:14	1:2
3 Tues	•	5:06	6:8	5:41	8:0	11:14	0:5	•	•
4 Wed	•	6:16	6:3	6:32	8:1	0:16	1:0	12:05	1:1
5 Thur	•	7:37	5:9	7:30	8:2	1:27	0:7	1:06	1:7
6 Fri	•	8:57	5:9	8:32	8:4	2:41	0:2	2:16	2:1
7 Sat	•	10:10	6:2	9:35	8:6	3:51	0:4	3:27	2:3
8 SUN	•	11:12	6:6	10:34	8:8	4:53	1:0	4:34	2:2
9 Mon	•	12:07	7:0	11:31	8:9	5:48	1:4	5:35	1:9
10 Tues	•	•	•	12:56	7:3	6:38	1:6	6:30	1:6
11 Wed	•	0:23	8:9	1:42	7:6	7:24	1:7	7:22	1:4
12 Thur	•	1:13	8:8	2:24	7:8	8:06	1:5	8:11	1:2
13 Fri	•	2:01	8:5	3:03	7:9	8:46	1:2	8:59	1:0
14 Sat	•	2:48	8:1	3:41	7:8	9:24	0:7	9:45	1:0
15 SUN	•	3:34	7:5	4:17	7:7	10:00	0:1	10:31	1:0
16 Mon	•	4:22	7:0	4:52	7:6	10:36	0:5	11:20	1:1
17 Tues	•	5:15	6:4	5:30	7:4	11:14	1:2	•	•
18 Wed	•	6:16	5:8	6:13	7:2	0:13	1:1	11:58	1:8
19 Thur	•	7:25	5:5	7:03	7:1	1:14	1:1	12:51	2:4
20 Fri	•	8:38	5:5	8:00	7:1	2:20	1:0	1:53	2:7
21 Sat	•	9:44	5:7	8:58	7:2	3:24	0:6	2:59	2:8
22 SUN	•	10:41	6:0	9:54	7:4	4:21	0:2	4:01	2:7
23 Mon	•	11:29	6:4	10:44	7:6	5:10	0:2	4:55	2:5
24 Tues	•	12:11	6:7	11:31	7:9	5:53	0:5	5:43	2:2
25 Wed	•	•	•	12:49	7:0	6:32	0:7	6:28	1:8
26 Thur	•	0:15	8:1	1:25	7:3	7:08	0:9	7:11	1:4
27 Fri	•	0:59	8:2	1:59	7:6	7:43	0:9	7:52	1:1
28 Sat	•	1:42	8:2	2:31	7:8	8:17	0:8	8:33	0:7
29 SUN	•	2:26	8:1	3:04	8:1	8:51	0:5	9:16	0:4
30 Mon	•	3:13	7:7	3:39	8:2	9:27	0:2	10:03	0:2
31 Tues	•	4:04	7:3	4:17	8:3	10:06	0:4	10:54	0:1

AM TIDES • BIGGER THE DOT - BETTER THE FISHING • PM TIDES
LITE TYPE DAYLIGHT TIME BOLD TYPE

I am the inferior of any man whose rights I trample underfoot.
Horace Greeley

BASEBALL

I was at the Country Fair, and they have this shrine, that is a sort of all purpose prayer place. There are statues of Buddha, Vishnu, Jesus, holy objects from Native American, Jewish, pagan, and other belief systems, all together on a low table with a pillow in front to kneel on. There is a pad of paper and ball-point pens to write your prayer and put it in a small bowl on the altar. I am prone, given the opportunity, to pray for peace, so I respectfully took off my Cubs hat, knelt on the pillow and wrote a prayer for peace on the pad, folded it, put it in the bowl and with a little groaning and cracking of bones, got up to leave. "Excuse me, sir," said a young woman. I looked back at her and she was pointing at the pillow. There was my Cubs hat, its bill pointed directly at the shrine, and as I stood there, I could almost hear it praying, "Please Buddha, just some solid pitching. Jesus, is it too much to ask to make the play-offs? God, it's been ninety years since we made the Series, and it's going to take a miracle." I stood there looking at the little blue baseball cap with its bright red "C", and wondered if either of our prayers had a chance. I bent and with a little embarrassment, picked up my hat. I bought this hat at HoHoKam Field where the Cubs play their Spring Training Home games. I've lost it three times and it has returned every time. I'm not saying it is magic, but well, I've never seen a baseball hat pray before, but if any hat was going to pray, it seems likely it would be a Cubs hat. So, the next time I pray for Peace, I'm going to tip my hat respectfully, and throw in a little prayer for some pitching. It couldn't hurt. Go Cubbies!!!



UPPER LEFT EDGE AUGUST 1999