

# Family guy

*Sex columnist and gay rights activist Dan Savage talks about his followers, detractors and spending an ideal St. Valentine's Day with the love of his life*

BY SUE ZALOKAR  
STAFF WRITER

Dan Savage grew up in a Catholic family in Chicago. At 18 years old, he came out as gay to his family, who after one rocky summer, Savage says, became aggressively supportive.

That support has served him well.

Today, his name is synonymous with gay activism and sex positivism. He is the author of the syndicated Savage Love column and host of the Savage Love podcast. And he's the editorial director of *The Stranger*, a weekly newspaper in Seattle and the sister paper of the *Portland Mercury*.

His journey to Seattle was all determined in a serendipitous moment at an independent film store in Madison, Wisc. Savage was the store manager, and there he befriended Tim Keck, co-founder of *The Onion*. One day, Keck announced that he was moving to Seattle to help start an alternative weekly newspaper titled *The Stranger*.

Savage made an offhand comment advising Keck to include an advice column. Keck suggested Savage submit his ideas. Savage typed up a sample, and, to his delight, Keck offered him the job. Twenty-five years later, Dan Savage is still "America's Sweetheart."

On Feb. 13, Dan Savage will be recording a Savage Love podcast and hosting "Unlucky in Love – A Pre-Valentine's Pity Party" at Revolution Hall, 1300 SE Stark St., as part of the new venue's soft opening. The show is sold out, but we had a chance to talk with Savage about family, giving advice and, of course, those critics.

**S.Z.:** *Your column and podcast are kind of like the secular, sexual/emotional version of the confessional from my Catholic youth. Are you bombarded with people's questions and problems in public?*

**D.S.:** Yes! It's funny you should say that. Of course it's an affirmation of the column and the podcast, that people who are familiar with them, and then who I get to know personally, feel like I am a safe, and perhaps wise, person to confide in or ask for input.

It can get a little crushing, but I'm pretty insulated. Terry (Miller, his parter of 20 years) is very protective. We have a small and tight social circle. I'm not that exposed. I don't go out much – we're very boring people, Terry and I. We have dinner at home a lot. We are often in bed at 9:30 or 10 o'clock ...

**S.Z.:** *What moral compass do you use to offer advice?*

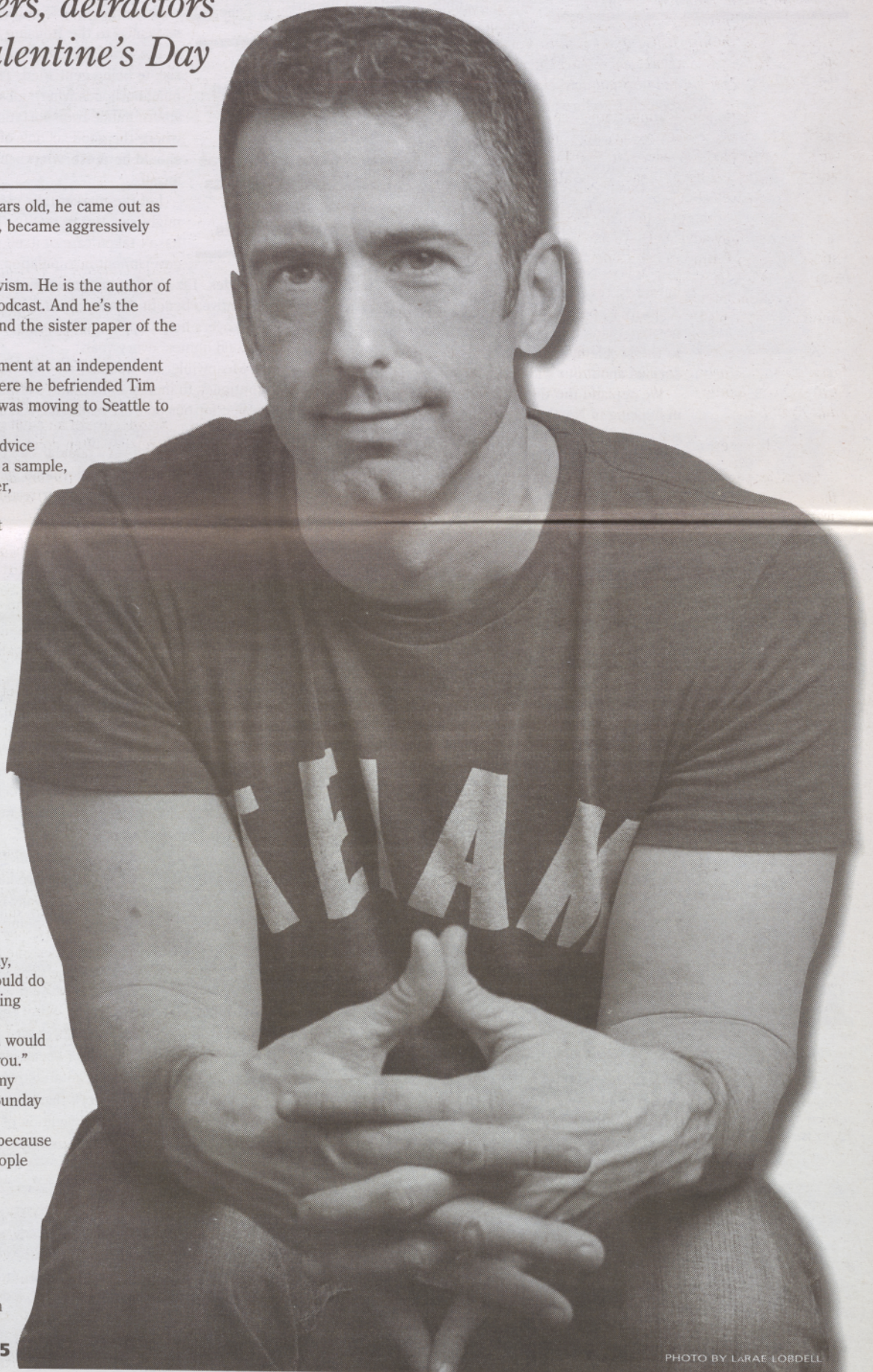
**D.S.:** Sometimes when people don't read my column very closely, they will say that I sign off on anything and I think that people should do whatever they want. But if you read the column, there is a moralizing sort of core to it – a moral sensibility.

If you put all of the columns in a pot and boiled them down, you would come out with: "Do unto others as you would have them do unto you." With the understanding that people are doing unto each other in my listening universe possibly, something very different, than in the Sunday school universe.

People have to be as considerate as possible. I don't think that because someone will let you use them, that it's OK to use them. Some people are self-destructive. You don't get to be the rocks that they throw themselves against and escape without being compromised or damaged yourself. Do unto others and be thoughtful about your actions and choices. That's my advice.

**S.Z.:** *Where do you go for love and sex advice?*

**D.S.:** I used to go to my mom, but sadly she is deceased. I often



See SAVAGE, page 5

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