

# I Do Declare

Cleaning the house together – legally

**W**e're in the paper, baby. Our local daily's For the Record page – right in there with Deaths, Blood Bank Donors Needed, and Dissolutions of Marriage – now features a new listing: Declarations of Domestic Partnership. Yes, indeed. The self-same newspaper that refused to print marriage announcements during 2004's brief era of issuing licenses to same-sex couples (and to this day has yet to print birth announcements of babies born to same-sex parents) is now providing us space in the public record and advancing our foray into legitimacy. We're here. We're queer. Read all about it.



The names of two-man and two-woman couples printed in our local rag every day is a momentous shift. Now, just as undeniably as Lewis and Clark, Steve Prefontaine, and the KKK, Oregon's homos are at last being woven into the historic fabric of the Beaver State (don't go there).

## Oregon's homos are at last being woven into the historic fabric of the Beaver State.

Other than entering history's annals (don't go there, either), what does domestic partnership really mean? I guess the biggest difference is that we're legal. We don't have to worry if anyone should dare challenge our entitlement to accompany each other into the ER, make end of life decisions or dispose of our mate's remains. Fabulous or what?

My Domestic Partner and I have been advised that we now need to add a codicil to our wills affirming that we, being of sound body and mind (no jokes here, please), do hereby attest that we meant what we said and intend for our partner to inherit our worldly goods, real property and, just for the romance of it, debts.

The thousand-some couples who have only this month been allowed by law a smattering of state rights and protections are still a bit giddy even though most of us have been doing it for years. And by "it" I mean sharing an address, expenses and cat care.

Take Wifey and me for example. Since 1987, we've loved, honored and tidied up after each other. Fairly domestic and clearly partnered. This winter when a mysterious illness struck our dear Pussy (not her real name), Wifey and I jointly rushed her to the emergency vet. We love our cat, but if we could bring her back to life without having to re-hock our house, we'd do what we had to. So we teamed up as home health nurses to administer injections, force-feed concentrated nutrients and drip in 200 mls of subcutaneous fluids per day. Funny, during that whole month-long ordeal of reviving dear Pussy, we never once were asked to show anyone proof of our domestic partnership.

I'm not unhappy with our new status, but "Declarations of Domestic Partnership" does sound kind of weird. Partly because those words strike me as such an odd combo. Is it just me, or does the phrase "Declarations of Domestic Partnership" conjure a kooky Southern belle/housekeeper/cowpoke – as in "I do declay-ah, where's the Pine Sol, pahd'ner?" Any other domestic partners out there having a titch of identity crisis?

Don't get me wrong, gaining legal rights at long last is a good thing, for sure. A definite step toward justice for all. But now that the daily is printing names – along with our ages, as many of us pretending to be younger than we are have been somewhat shocked to discover – we're also now open to all manner of nut jobs who might be inclined to pray for our hellbound souls, or worse. This newsprint roster has been deemed "the Gay Hit List" by one not-necessarily paranoid friend.

Not that the closet door was ever bullet-proof, but you'd think in exchange for the additional risk we could at least collect each other's Social Security or cross state lines without losing our rights. No such luck.

That's OK, though. We're headed in the right direction. With so many queer Oregonians publicly declaring our domestic partnerships, once-homophobic folks will surely come to see that the sky isn't falling and the sanctity of their marriage is no more questionable than it ever was. Then maybe we can lift this whole silly cloud of inequality and get on with life.

*Sally Sheklow has been a part of the Eugene community since 1972 and is a member of the WYMPROV! comedy troupe. Her column, which began at EW in 1999, also runs in several other newspapers and magazines around the country and Down Under.*

### REST OF THE STORY

C'mon, Eric Bertrand. After reading the review for Ratatouille in Chow (1/31), I feel as though there is an important part of the story missing. The restaurant Ratatouille is a direct result of the closing down of the Sundance kitchen. Four of the laid-off employees of that kitchen came over to start Ratatouille with the former kitchen manager's, Bertrand's, funds.

Eric worked on the front of the house while the rest of us got the kitchen going. The entire planning and execution of the menu was without Eric's input. As the restaurant started to get busy, the chefs who created the food were fired. So I was surprised to see in the article that no mention was made of the hard work that the chefs put into making that food, that restaurant. I sincerely hope that this place does well as I believe that we need an organic and veggie place in town.

Give credit where it is due though, Eric. In the two years I worked with you, I never saw you cook.

*Winter Hose  
Former head chef, Ratatouille*

### BLAME CITY, TOO

I would like to thank B.D. May of Eugene for his letter (1/10) concerning urban blight. This problem is not only prevalent in the areas of Adams Street, 24th and 25th avenues, but it has taken hold of a broad area of the Friendly Street neighborhood, and no one seems to care. There is so little pride among some homeowners when it comes to

keeping their yards clean and trimmed.

Much of the problem lies with the city of Eugene. The city plants trees in the parking strips, but does not care for them. Young trees are allowed to grow not as trees but as shrubs. Consequently, these bushes, as well as an assortment of other shrubs planted by the homeowners in the parking strips, block the view of drivers at intersections. A city ordinance meant to control these plantings is not enforced.

I have lived on Friendly Street for 21 years. I have watched this neighborhood deteriorate, especially since the city made this street a connector between 18th and 28th. Adding speed bumps was a sick joke and a waste of money. Friendly Street was never intended to become a "freeway." Speed and heavy trucks are tearing up the surface of the street which will not be repaired in the foreseeable future.

Eugene not only needs to update its codes, as May mentioned. It needs to enforce ordinances or remove them. Catering to the affluent communities and utter failure to declare a war on urban blight in the older sections of the city seems to be the future plan by the powers that be.

*Betty Williams Johnson  
Eugene*

### MAN FOR ALL REASONS

Well, apparently, we in Oregon may have a rare opportunity in May to have a small say as to who will be the nominee for, at least, the Democratic candidate for



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- Ella Fitzgerald

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