

Amazon Trail: Weeding Out

OWell, I went out and bought a Weed Eater last night. I really don't want to play this gardening game. I can remember Grandma Lynch on her hands and knees yanking crabgrass out of her lawn interminably. While it's true that she grew the best corn, strawberries and beefsteak tomatoes in the world, I understand why my father became an avid apartment-dweller. It's ridiculous to spend significant parts of one's life pulling weeds.

Which got me thinking about how much of gay life these days is spent wresting out noxious growths of the anti-gay sort. Once we were the great unmentionable, now the people who revile us can't seem to speak of anything else. I fear that the carefully laid plans of the right will succeed and W. will

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be reelected in order to squelch us. There is no way rational people can vote for him, but by raising this ruckus over our patient requests for equal rights, the populace is being frightened into making irrational decisions. How awful it must feel to be told that gay people are destroying marriage and the family, the very core of many Americans' lives. Some will vote Republican in the belief that they are defending themselves and everything they hold sacred.

Out, damned weeds! Look at the weeds sprouting at every reference to gay marriage. At first they were lively early spring green shoots, a handful of protesters in Portland and San Francisco. This is to be expected — a sign of the healthy soil of free speech. Their biblicized signs could be laughed off and we could pity them for the venom they must live with

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to produce their hateful words. Such a smattering of them just after the oppressive winter did not seem to require sharp weeding hoes and cutters.

But look at how they've spread tough tangled roots through this democratic soil to block gay civil rights. Imagine needing a con-

stitutional amendment, much less 50 of them, to defend heterosexuality against you and me. Yet we have to reckon with these ridiculous efforts or they will take over the life of the garden, sucking the nourishment from the soil, casting dank shade over everything we've painstakingly grown. The belief systems of the non-gays who find us pernicious go deep and can sometimes tap into scarce water, leaving us strangling from a thirst to just live our lives. That's how it was in the ballot measure wars — eventually all our energy went into the fight and drained our lives. Which, of course, was the intent of the naysayers.

Look at the thorned stems and hairy leaves that steal space from the gentler, carefully nurtured plants. How come we scare them so? What was it with that Southern county that just tried to legislate us

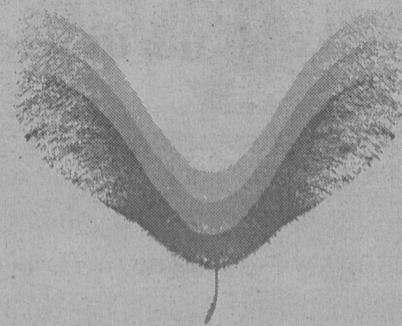
out of town? Kentucky is back to considering a measure to stop gay couples from adopting children — didn't we already win the battle against that weed? Look how nasty Virginia's getting, with conservatives trying for a measure (it failed) that would have prevented same-sex couples from getting subsidized home mortgages.

Look at these perennials, these persistent, ugly weeds, resistant to freeze and drought and carefully wielded cutting tools. When a couple wants to marry, to adopt, to buy a house, share health insurance, inherit from each other or even, it feels like, plant a garden together, the weeds of ill will will spring from the earth again and again. Do I prepare my garden only for these weeds to thrive? It is as true of human effort as of gardens that the soil which is good for the flower is also good for the weed. It seems like gays just start to blossom, when suddenly anti-gays are everywhere, trying to crowd us out with unconstitutional laws, suspect polls and violence.

Some of the most troublesome of these weeds, like bindweed, the stuff that sneaks underground and doubles, triples itself every time a root is cut, can come up looking pretty. Bindweed can be mistaken for morning glory. In politics bindweed wears suits and ties and has the fragrance of flowers in aftershave and perfumes. They are the most ambitious of the plot. They look for backs to climb on. When every other minority group is made off limits to them, they stand on us and shout about the way the pansies have invaded and are overrunning the garden, when it is the parasitic weeds that survive by attacking us.

Well, heck, no more Mr. Nice Guy. I'm not kneeling on the gardening kneepad for these weeds, cautiously exposing their roots and yanking them out one by one. I'm going to set up this Weed Eater and mow them down. I expect the next election will take care of the other little nuisances. ▼

Copyright Lee Lynch 2004. Lee Lynch is the author of eleven books including The Swashbuckler and the Morton River Valley Trilogy. She lives on the Oregon Coast.



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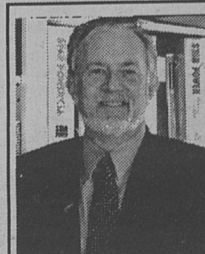
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