

Activist Debuts the FagBug



What do Erin Davies, 29, of Albany, N.Y., and Opie Taylor (Ron Howard's cherubic character on *The Andy Griffith Show*), of make-believe Mayberry, N.C., have in common? Both have red hair, freckles and an aw-shucks smile. And both like girls.

But there are differences. Whereas Opie was a boy, Davies was a tomboy.

"I slept with my basketball. And rather than ride the bus to school, I walked so that I could dribble all the way there and back."

However, Davies did dabble in frills.

"My mother enrolled me in a beauty pageant when I was in first grade. I wore a white, shiny dress with a pink bow in my hair. There was only one other girl in my age bracket. She was much more done up than I was and I felt kind of embarrassed. I won second place, but that's only because there were only two of us."

But the biggest difference between Opie and Davies is their antagonists. Whereas the moonshiners of Mayberry were loveable, Davies lives in a world where a tiny rainbow sticker sent a homophobe to deface her beloved, gray Volkswagen Bug with a red "fAg" and "u r gay." Davies first reacted as most might.

"I first saw the red from a distance. Then I read the words. I was shocked and ashamed. Still, I was late for work, so I started driving. People stared and pointed, so I went home."

In near tears, Davies parked and ran back to her girlfriend.

"It took the police an hour to come. We waited in my girlfriend's car and watched. In that hour, about 50 people passed."

But not a single person could easily pass the Bug.

"They all stopped. Everyone reacted. When the police arrived, they kept insisting that I must have an enemy. For too long, they didn't see it as a hate crime."

Since her car was drivable, Davies' insurance company, per their policies, told her to drive it until the graffiti could be removed.

"When I first explained my situation to an agent, he laughed. I did get a rental car, [but], by then, many in my neighborhood knew about what had happened. People stopped me to talk. They even stopped me in traffic. They'd say, 'I saw your car. I can't believe that happened.' I just couldn't get away from it."

Since Davies, a former Division 1 basketball player with basketball-sized ovaries, couldn't flee the hate crime, she took it on: one on one. She created fagbug.com to share what happened, but she's not limiting her activism to the Internet. This summer, she'll go on the road, driving her fagbug across the country. Along the way, she'll document the responses it provokes. The fagbug is a rolling billboard for anti-homophobia. Even parked, it provokes.

"When I return to my car, I now always wonder what I'll find. People have left notes on it expressing their sorrow. Some put money in the notes. One note was left by a guy who does detailing. He offered to remove the red paint for free."

But Davies decided that some things aren't so easily—or best removed.

"Someone told me that even if the defacing were removed, I'd still see it. I think that's so."

She's giving others a chance to see it, too. Through the Web site fagbug.com, her impending trip and various interviews, Davies is offering a discomfiting look into the heart of hidden bigotry—and the inspiration of a woman who won't hide.

"I don't want to look back at the end of my life and have any regrets. Even if something turns out bad, at least I am not someone who will wonder what if. I have no what ifs." — KM



Hot Hoodie

There are few things hotter than a girl in a Rocket World Creature Hoodie. Seriously, tell me you wouldn't blink if this girl walked down the street by you? Limited to only 444 pieces, this limited edition I.W.G. Creature Hoodie has two zippered hand warmer pockets, with inside stash pockets, a left sleeve slot for your Sharpie marker and an iPod pocket (with a headphone wire slot). And of course, it makes you look like a bear! There's a back story but you'll have to discover it yourself at rocketworld.com. Polartec just got hotter. — DAM

Dirty Dames and Card Sharks

I'm not a big poker player and am not sure I've really ever seen a wolf deck or stag deck, but I can't get enough of *Stacked Decks: The Art and History of Erotic Playing Cards*, a lavish hardcover book with over a 100 illustrations of playing cards from 1807 to present day. With titillating nude and semi-nude models, burlesque singers, flappers, 1950s pinup girls and more, the book also offers vintage ads and some sexy cultural commentary. It ain't just about the kitsch, baby. — DAM

