

# 'Exiled' Eugene gay comes out of closet

## 'You don't put feelings aside

By JOCK HATFIELD  
Of the Emerald

Subconsciously, Marilyn Osgood-Knight always considered herself a kind of "exile." She says, "I could never identify with girls. I could never enjoy what I considered to be feminine things." Six weeks ago, at age 36, she openly identified herself as a homosexual.

Osgood-Knight grew up under the Catholic church. Homosexuality and Catholicism did not mix.

"Homosexual feelings were way-out there," she explains, giving a loud whistle. "Really heavy."

At school she spent most of her time with boys. "I didn't want to be a girl," she says. "I liked playing football and climbing trees. I was sort of a tomboy."

When these feelings increased with age, she did her best to ignore them. "I kept telling myself, 'If I find the right man, everything will be fine.'" Eventually she married and had five children. But even

then she did not feel comfortable.

"Each day I was trying to remember how I was supposed to act. I was tired of playing 'What's My Line.'"

"You don't put gay feelings aside and have them go away," Osgood-Knight says. "All through my marriage I could feel something coming to the front of my consciousness."

This something came to the surface during November's Gay Pride Week. She was attending a community gay rights meeting with her husband Bob Osgood-Knight, a computer programmer at the University. She had been at the meeting on the pretext of writing a freelance article, but an opponent of gay rights shattered her front by daring closet gays to stand up for themselves.

"I turned around and said 'I am a homosexual,' then stopped. I had finally said it," Osgood-Knight recalls. The news came as a surprise to her husband.

Osgood-Knight remembers the



Photo by Adrienne Selinger

After 36 years, two marriages and five children, Marilyn Osgood-Knight has come out of the closet to form Gay/Joy, a group which intends to expose and kill what she considers the misconceptions about

gays - that gay women don't like men, that gay women do not have satisfying relationships with men and that gays are out to break down the Christian family and home.

experience of feeling like "the Christian shedding of a burden." She says she ran home to take inventory of her face in the mirror: "Had I changed?"

Something had, and she feels since then her life has been a super high. "I feel good everyday."

A communications consultant for 18 years, with experience as a disc jockey, newspaper reporter and comedian, Osgood-Knight explains she "came out" publicly to tell what it is like being a closet gay.

She has founded an organization called Gay-Joy, intended to expose and kill misconceptions about gays.

"There are so many things about me that one does not usually connect with gays," she says. "When I came out as gay, I wasn't forced into the leather jacketed,

motor cycle riding masculine thing I have always connected with homosexuals.

"I am a gay person, happy and am feeling good about myself."

She says she discovered the majority of gays are part of "normal" heterosexual marriages. Her husband, a heterosexual, reacted predictably to her gay revelation.

"His first reaction," says Osgood-Knight "was 'Okay, as long as nothing changes between us.' And then 'Was I inadequate, what did I do wrong?' It took him time to really understand."

Marilyn and her husband did not, however, divorce. "We went to church and prayed about it, even though we aren't that religious," she recalls. "Finally we decided, 'Hey we still love each other. Why break it up?'"

Osgood-Knight promises she will remain "gay celebate" as long as she stays married to her hus-

band. "I wouldn't have extra-marital sex before I came out and I won't have it now," she says. "This sounds paradoxical, but our marriage is stronger now than ever. We live it day by day."

She believes her five children by her first marriage reacted well to her revelation. "I told them all at Christmas, and after I finished the little girl said, 'If anyone makes any fag jokes around me I'll punch them out.'"

Several years ago Osgood-Knight worked as a Joan Rivers style comedian in county fairs. She has tried to carry this style into her new interests.

On Christmas, she sent out cards reading "Don we now our gay apparel" to all of her business associates.

"The day after I came out, I started to cut off all my hair," she recalls. "Kind of a Joan of Arc thing. Then I said, 'Hey, wait a minute, I'm not religious. I'm a funny person, I'm happy.'" She cut it, but only to neck length.

As a part of Gay-Joy, Marilyn hopes to organize potlucks, town meetings and church groups in the near future to bring straights and gays together. In particular, she hopes to communicate with Maureen Giebar, who in recent months has established herself as an outspoken opponent of the Eugene gay rights amendment.

"Maureen and I have a lot in common," says Marilyn. "We both come from Christian background and we both have five children. I'm sure she's doing the best she can with the information she has, but she is also doing a lot of harm."

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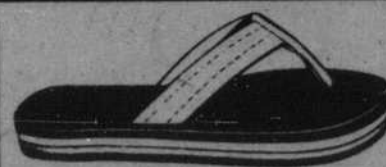


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