

by Gene Males

In 1982, Representative Barney Frank was a freshman Democrat from the state of Massachusetts when the congressional districts were redrawn. Forced into a tough race against veteran Republican Margaret Heckler, Frank initially protested the new redistricting and was hesitant about running. He commented at the time, "There are certain limits to what you put up with in an effort here. I'm not gonna act out a speaking role in my own mugging." The statement was only another example of the congressman's quick, irrepressible wit. In what was to be one of the most expensive congressional races ever, he eventually decided on more than just a speaking part. Not for the sake of his own mugging, however. Instead, in a new district heavily favoring the eight term Heckler, he won the race resoundingly by capturing 60% of the vote.

In a time when some freshmen congressmen experience difficulty with the hometown newspapers spelling their names correctly, Barney Frank seemed to have little trouble in getting the *New York Times* and the *Washington Post* to cover his redistricting troubles. An ardent supporter of social programs and civil rights, Frank has proven he has more than firm ideological convictions to offer. He has also the intelligence and force of personality to become a well heeled spokesman for his concerns. One of the few consistent liberals in Congress, he has long played a strategic role at the national level in the fight for gay and lesbian rights.

Prior to his election to Congress, Frank sat for eight years in the Massachusetts state legislature. He soon impressed many as a smart and aggressive politician. Very management oriented, he learned quickly that you don't provide the programs you want to provide by throwing money down the drain. A natural politician, he became an outspoken and unapologetic backer of liberal issues of all kinds. He first entered national politics in 1980, winning an open congressional seat created by a papal order barring priests from elective politics.

The 1980 order by Pope John Paul II was widely assumed to be targeted for Representative Father Robert F. Drinan of the 4th congressional district of Massachusetts. Drinan had occupied his seat since 1970, initially winning it on the basis of his opposition to the Viet Nam War. Drinan was also an outspoken advocate of human rights, particularly in Central and South America, and believed abortion was best looked upon as a political issue. When Barney Frank decided to run for the vacant seat, Drinan and his supporters quickly coalesced around him. Though opposition surfaced to Frank's candidacy, particularly from the local Catholic church, he ultimately won the election.

Two years later Frank was up against Margaret Heckler in the newly redrawn 4th congressional district. Seventy percent of the constituency had been hers the previous 16 years and it was suspected that the redistricting plan had purposely favored Heckler. Ed King, then Democratic Governor of Massachusetts, was apparently afraid he'd have to face Heckler himself in the next governor's race if she lost her district. He went so far as to say he'd be surprised if the new plan did not favor Heckler, pointing out he had "... a certain amount of say in that, and I won't let it happen."

The new district was composed of large, middle to upper income liberal Jewish populations, a few rich Republican strongholds that are "pure preppyness," several old New England towns of mixed ethnic backgrounds, and a large group of working class suburbs consisting of young families with children. This last group casts over a third of the votes and had heavily supported Heckler in the past. Barney Frank, on the other hand, had only represented 26% of the new district.



Rep. Barney Frank

Representative Barney Frank, of Massachusetts, will be the Keynote Speaker of the 1984 Lucille Hart Dinner, principal fund-raiser of Oregon's Right To Privacy Political Action Committee. The Portland Gay Men's Choir will open the event, to be held at the Portland Westin-Benson, at 7:30 pm on Saturday, September 29, 1984. Local gay rights supporter and former State Representative Gretchen Kafoury will serve as Master of Ceremonies for the evening.

The Right to Privacy, PAC is an outgrowth of the now defunct Portland Town Council and currently in its third year of existence. A large, active group of lesbians and gay men, its goal is the well-being of the gay community through the political process. The PAC's

annual fund-raising dinner honors Lucille Hart, the only Oregonian mentioned in *Gay American History*. Hart was a lesbian physician who practiced in Oregon during the early 1900s.

In the May 15 primary elections, Right to Privacy donated almost \$6,000 to Oregon candidates. Approximately 500 supporters are expected to attend this year's dinner, including over 35 elected officials, and the PAC has targeted \$16,000 from the evening for several critical election campaigns this fall. Tickets are still available for the occasion, your support of which can ensure you a personal voice in your own political future. For more information on the 1984 Lucille Hart Dinner, call 224-4369.



LUCILLE HART

Margaret Heckler's eight terms in Congress made her the senior woman Representative

in the nation and the White House considered the race a "must win" for her. Though she



Gretchen Kafoury standing next to Geraldine Ferraro at the Westin-Benson.

likes to style herself as a liberal, Heckler had trouble distancing herself during the election from the policies of the Reagan administration. Also, some of the campaign tactics she used might have had Joe McCarthy standing up and applauding from his grave.

Heckler ran television ads which presented "facts" in such a way as to suggest conclusions opposite from the truth. In one such ad, Heckler suggested Frank was trying to promote prostitution and pimping everywhere. Frank, at the request of the Boston commissioner of police, had introduced a bill which would allow communities to restrict "adult entertainment" to specific zones (as in a similar proposal, though not entirely the same, made here recently by Portland's City Club). The race, in which Heckler also attacked Frank for his support of gay rights, soon became one of the most bitterly fought congressional races of the year.

Frank said during the campaign, "Just to get things straight, I'm the one who did not kiss Ronald Reagan on the night of the State of the Union address"; he stood firmly on his record of liberal support for human rights and social issues. Virtually all of the women's groups in the state, angry at Heckler's anti-abortion stance, joined together in support of Frank. He eventually won by a solid majority. He faces reelection in November, but is likely to be a representative from the 4th congressional district throughout the '80s.

The son of a Bayonne, New Jersey, truck stop owner, Barney Frank's quick wit and rapid-fire delivery were nurtured early. Second oldest of four, his family subscribed to seven daily newspapers. They were read and discussed nightly at the dinner table. Frank grew up among average working class people and this has always been a part of his orientation. A natural politician, he loves the give and take, the cajoling, and the browbeating of the legislative process.

As a cigar-chewing, heavy set 24 year old Harvard graduate working in Mississippi during the '60s civil rights movement, Frank seemed every bit the traditional "pol." Known in the past for his rumpled appearance, he once used the campaign slogan, "Neatness isn't everything." He has recently shed 50 pounds, however, and his appreciation of a trimmer self is evident in a new, less disheveled image.

Barney Frank has consistently been an ardent supporter of lesbian and gay rights. He has worked closely with the national lobbying effort, always helping to organize strategy and instrumental in getting co-sponsors on important gay rights legislation. He is a staunch opponent of the McDonald Amendment, which specifically bars lesbians and gay men from obtaining legal defense funds available to other minorities through the Legal Services Corporation.

Frank's very popular nationally as a liberal activist; his wit can indeed be very sharp and to the point. He has said of the New Right's opposition to both abortion and child-feeding programs, "Sure, they're pro-life. They believe that life begins at conception and ends at birth." He remains an avowed liberal, never tiring of "... trying to alleviate the misery that's been inflicted on a lot of innocent people through no fault of their own."

Barney Frank is a politician who cares deeply. His personal relationships are molded around his political beliefs and tend exclusively to be political exchanges. Though he does not yet have any major committee posts, his political savvy alone makes him one of the most formidable Democrats in the house. Lesbian and gay communities across the country should consider themselves fortunate that his personal beliefs and concerns have led to an integral role on the national level in the continuing fight for our civil rights. Oregon should be particularly honored he has chosen to continue his efforts by delivering the keynote address at the 1984 Lucille Hart Dinner, September 29, at the Westin-Benson Hotel.