

# Just news

## In pursuit of justice: the Gay and Lesbian Alliance

*The fight is not only for justice for gays and lesbians, but also for justice in general*

BY KAMILA AL-NAJJAR

April 1988 marked the 15th annual Gay Pride Week at the University of Oregon in Eugene. Organized by the Gay and Lesbian Alliance of the University of Oregon, Pride Week, with two events per day and help from 30 volunteers, was considered a success.

GALA, the oldest gay student union on the West Coast, is well organized and has taken a more outspoken approach to politics in the past two years.

"Part of the radicalization came from the backlash from the right-wing community. Two years ago there were two severe incidents of harassment during Gay Pride and last year we found derogatory pamphlets around the student union," explained Tora Johnson, co-director of GALA.

"We also felt frustration with the administration regarding housing issues and discovered that although there was a student conduct code, it did not protect us and it didn't allow us any way of enforcing the code against student harassment.

"Amazon Housing [UO housing for married students] is only available if you are a legally married heterosexual couple. Gay couples, no matter how long they have been together, do not qualify, and heterosexual couples who are not married do not qualify. The school administra-

tion would not budge on the big battle three years ago. So I think there was a climate of frustration with the administration compounded by the harassment.

The pamphlets found on campus last year, the most abundant of which was called 'The Gay Plague,' had some 'interesting' statistics about gays, never differentiating between men and women. The pamphlet said that all gays had some sort of nymphomaniacal behavior and that the average gay visits a gay bath three times a week and has sex with three different partners with each visit. For along time we did not know who was distributing the pamphlets, but later we found out it was Floyd Beam, chairperson of the Lane County Republican Committee, and his cohorts. One of the persons cited in the pamphlet was Dr. Paul Cameron, who has had involvement with the PTL Club. Verbal confrontations with him led to some serious radicalization.

"Last year we also got frustrated with the gay rights bill the ACLU proposed, partly with the ACLU not being forward and aggressive to push the bill through, but primarily with the Legislature for being so lackadaisical about it and a number of persons being uncommitted. This office did a lot of work on the bill, so that's the climate we entered this year with," said Johnson.

Johnson, who will graduate this year with a

biology degree, said that GALA started out this fall by meeting with the Greeks on campus.

"We explained to them that we had better work something out because people in the community are getting more and more radical, especially the young people, and we didn't know how we were going to control the situation if things got out of hand. They were very receptive.

"Tim Hughes, co-director of GALA, ran for the Incidental Fees Committee, received the Greek endorsement and won. I would say that is a big step. There is no secret that Tim is gay."

Hughes is a 32-year-old sophomore who has enriched the leadership of GALA with his life experiences. Johnson and Hughes are public and aggressive about charges that are needed concerning the school administration and the

state of Oregon in general as it applies to students.

"As GALA co-director I don't see myself as just a gay rights activist, I see myself more as fighting against injustice. I really don't dig injustice and I don't like anyone who does, and that's how I see the function of GALA partially. The fight is not only for justice for gays and lesbians, but for justice in general," explained Johnson.

GALA also functions as a gay and lesbian resource and referral service. Volunteers are trained to take crisis calls and refer them to gay-supportive services. GALA has a housing board, library and various discussion groups, and it is a center for political and social activity for the gay community in Eugene.

## Adoption moving forward for lesbian couple

*Celeste and Sharane are working toward the first adoption by a lesbian couple in Washington*

BY KAMILA AL-NAJJAR

Celeste and Sharane met in 1981 at their church in Spokane, and three years later they became lovers, although they were both married to men. The church to which they belonged at the time found out about their relationship and told them to straighten up or leave.

They decided to leave the church in 1985 and move to Boise with Sharane's children, five-year-old Marianne and eight-year-old Daisy.

"All my life I had been taught to get married and have children. I was really involved with the church, and I thought that if they were to find out I was gay, I would lose everything. Sharane and I went to Boise with the intention of starting over, but we still were not admitting we were gay. I thought it was against God to be gay because I grew up in a church with those values," commented Celeste.

In Boise, Sharane joined the Metropolitan Community Church and in time they both

accepted the fact that they were gay.

Both women divorced their husbands and moved back to Spokane with the two children. Celeste and Sharane are now working toward the first adoption by a lesbian couple in Washington.

Sharane's husband has given her full legal custody of her children and is supportive of Celeste adopting the children, Sharane said.

"I'm not trying to take the place of Daddy, I'm just there to provide for them, be a guardian, and love them," explained Celeste. "The kids call me Celeste. I feel if I'm going to raise kids, I want legal and emotional rights since I am responsible for them.

Celeste said that both girls want the adoption; she and Sharane have explained the full situation to them. There are no laws in Washington preventing such an adoption, so the decision will be made by the judge who presides over the case.

## No obligation to protect queers, House report says

On April 20, 1988, Rep. George Gekas (R-Pa.) and four Republican members of Congress filed a minority report to the House Judiciary Committee's report on the Hate Crimes Statistics Act (HR 3193) urging that sexual orientation be removed from the bill. The Hate Crimes Statistics Act would mandate the collection of statistics on crimes that are motivated by prejudice based on race, religion, sexual orientation and ethnicity. The House Judiciary Committee voted 21-13 to support the bill and report it to the House floor for action.

The National Gay and Lesbian Task Force expects the bill to reach the House floor in late May. NGLTF and a coalition of 53 religious, feminist, professional and civil-liberties groups have secured 109 co-sponsors in the House. A companion bill in the Senate (S 2000) has six co-sponsors to date.

Gekas has led two previous attempts to remove sexual orientation from the legislation while it was in committee. Both attempts failed. The filing of the minority report assures that another attempt to delete the provision will be made during floor consideration of the bill. The other signers of the minority report are Rep. Bill McCollum (R-Fla.), Rep. William Dannemeyer (R-Calif.), Howard Coble (R-N.C.), and Lamar Smith (R-Texas).

The Gekas minority report asserts that "It is not a federal obligation to protect citizens in their sexual orientation." Responded Kevin Berrill, director of NGLTF's Anti-Violence Project, "This statement is utterly reprehensible. It says that because we are gay, government has no duty to protect us from violence. This is exactly the attitude that is the cause of violence we are trying to end."

In spite of a recent Department of Justice study that found gay people to be the most frequent victims of hate violence today, the Gekas report disputes the prevalence of anti-gay violence. In spite of documented evidence of hundreds of instances of organized hate-group activity against gay men and lesbians, the minority report asserts that gay people are not the targets of organized hate-group activity by groups like the Ku Klux Klan.

NGLTF is actively working with groups in Pennsylvania to challenge Rep. Gekas's bigotry in his own district. Letters of support for the bill and the sexual-orientation provision continue to be needed. **Readers are urged to write to their representatives today!**

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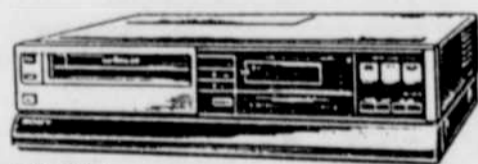
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### In Memoriam William Matthias

September 6, 1943-February 6, 1988

William Matthias was born in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania and died of AIDS in San Diego, California. He lived in Portland, Oregon, from 1984 to 1985.