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### UPCOMING EVENTS

All events wheelchair accessible

Sat., Aug. 6 • 11am - 7pm  
LCP's Annual International Picnic  
Laurelhurst Park near 39th/Ankeny

Tues., Aug. 9 • 6pm  
"On Track" Newsletter Mtg.  
At LCP Office - Volunteers needed!

Tues., Aug. 9 • 7:30-8:30pm  
Small Events Mtg.  
Coffee People, SE 35th/Hawthorne  
Everybody Welcome! Volunteers Needed!

Thurs., Aug. 11 • 7-9pm  
Speakers Bureau Orientation  
It's My Pleasure, 4526 SE Hawthorne  
Speak out for lesbians everywhere!

Sat/Sun, Aug. 13-14  
Tournament of Choice  
9th Annual Softball Tournament  
Prairie Fields - Brush Prairie, WA

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## local news

# Mystery benefactor

Closeted gay man leaves hundreds of thousands of dollars  
to HRCF and Phoenix Rising

by Martha Allen

Nobody really knew John James Vasey, the World War II Navy vet who spent the last years of his life in a Seattle Veterans Hospital. Vasey lived in Portland in the late 1970s and early 1980s, leading a quiet life in a hotel for transients.

The manager of the Jack London Hotel doesn't remember Vasey. A local lawyer hired to act as executor of Vasey's estate never met him. And Vasey's few living relatives hadn't seen him for years before his death in late 1992.

But though the man's life remains shrouded in mystery, one of his final acts will be remembered. When Vasey became ill with leukemia, he decided to write a will. In it, he left an estate worth more than \$400,000, including an Illinois farm, to a national lesbian and gay rights organization.

Vasey contacted William Shepherd, an attorney he had apparently read about in gay newspapers. Shepherd and his wife were the founders of the support group Parents and Friends of Lesbians and Gays in Oregon. Shepherd helped Vasey write his will, in which the veteran laid out his plans to fund the fight to end discrimination against lesbians and gay men.

Vasey chose another prominent activist, Jerry Weller, as the executor of his estate. At the time, Weller was serving as co-chairman of the board of the Gay Rights National Lobby. Vasey named the GRNL as one beneficiary of his will, and Weller agreed to serve as executor without ever meeting the man.

"I assumed he was a transient," Weller said recently. "I thought it would just be a matter of cleaning out his hotel room."

By the time of Vasey's death, in December 1992, the GRNL no longer existed. In 1986, faced with financial problems, the board of the GRNL agreed to merge with the Human Rights Campaign Fund. As a result of that merger, and Vasey's generosity, the HRCF has inherited Vasey's farm, worth more than \$400,000.

The farm will be sold at auction within the month, Weller said, adding that he did not know what the HRCF planned to do with the money. Vasey also left money to the Phoenix Rising Foundation, Weller said. That organization can expect to get a check soon for about \$180,000.

"I'm sure, in 1981, that Mr. Vasey had no idea what the farm would be worth today," Weller said. "But he knew he had money. He lived a very solitary life and a very frugal life. This is a great benefit to the HRCF, and it's great that he watched the work I did and had enough faith in me to leave this money to the organizations I was involved in." Weller said he tried to find out more about Vasey after the man's death.

"I read some notebooks he left, and talked to some distant cousins," Weller said. "He was estranged from his family, and had basically left Illinois to join the Navy and never went back. His cousins didn't even know where he lived—that's how he wanted it."

## Gov. Roberts joins HRCF effort to fight radical right

Oregon Gov. Barbara Roberts is joining forces with retired Republican Sen. Barry Goldwater and a team of campaign organizers and leading political strategists to fight the radical right. Roberts, Goldwater and others have joined a campaign launched by the Human Rights Campaign

Fund in states where homophobic ballot initiatives are attempting to institutionalize discrimination. The ballot measures would block or repeal state and local policies that prohibit discrimination based on sexual orientation.

"The radical right takeover of state and local Republican parties is just the tip of the iceberg," said Stacie Spector, director of the campaign, which is called Americans Against Discrimination. Spector said, "They seek to institutionalize discrimination and promote a narrow agenda of intolerance. Anti-gay ballot initiatives are being used by radical right groups to raise money and turn out the extreme right wing vote. In a year when moderate incumbents are under attack, a heavy radical right turnout could shift the political landscape."

Discrimination against sexual minorities is emerging as an issue in election campaigns across the country and could influence the outcome of local, state and congressional races, according to Tim McFeeley, executive director of the HRCF.

Idaho and Oregon, where discriminatory measures have recently qualified for the November ballot, face contested races for governor and the U.S. House of Representatives.

"While their rhetoric focuses on gay people, the radical right's agenda is much broader," McFeeley said. "Radical right groups seek to roll back progress on civil rights, freedom of choice, freedom of speech, and any other freedom that doesn't meet their agenda of intolerance. The

radical right's agenda is sponsored by a network of multimillion-dollar political organizations working to elect extremist candidates and institutionalize discrimination. They have already won seats on local councils and school boards, and they are determined to carry their divisive agenda all the way to the White House."

Americans Against Discrimination has assisted state and local efforts in seven states to defeat radical right signature-gathering efforts that would have placed discriminatory measures on local ballots. The campaign provides training, funding, research, communications and political support to local and state campaigns working against the ballot measures. It also works nationally to educate the public about anti-gay and -lesbian discrimination and the need for legal protections.

Goldwater and Roberts are honorary leaders of Americans Against Discrimination.



Martha Allen