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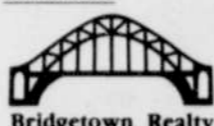
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## ONE PARENT'S CRUSADE

*Robert Bernstein sends a message to parents of gay men and lesbians that mere acceptance is not enough*

by Richard Shumate

**H**is wife, Myrna, doesn't care for the analogy, but Robert Bernstein plows ahead anyway. Some parents, he says, view their child's homosexuality like they would view a case of hemorrhoids.

A little uncomfortable. Not life threatening. But certainly not something to discuss with the neighbors or the folks at church.

And those are the very parents Bernstein

right organizations.

"I tried to find a variety of people and a variety of stories," he says. "I found these individual stories dramatic and inspiring."

Bernstein's book is introduced by Robert MacNeil of the Public Broadcasting Systems' *MacNeil/Lehrer NewsHour*. MacNeil is one of a number of celebrities whose stories are chronicled in the book. Others include Republican presidential candidate Barry Goldwater; Broadway producer Joe Papp; U.S. Rep. Lynn Woolsey of California; Robert Mosbacher, a Cabinet member in the Bush administration; and former Portland Police Chief Tom Potter.

"I have a gay son, and that's all right with me," MacNeil writes. "What is important is my son the person—his character, his generosity, his talents. His sex life is of no more importance to me than that of his heterosexual brothers and sisters, or of my close friends."

## Books

hopes to reach with his new book *Straight Parents, Gay Children*. Other books have been written to help parents cope and learn to accept. His book is aimed at getting them to act.

"Unless and until we stand up and speak out, growing up gay is going to remain an extremely difficult proposition," says Bernstein. "I think it is up to us parents to make it clear that that is not acceptable."

Bernstein is a retired tax attorney from Maryland who spent many years working for the U.S. Justice Department. When his daughter, Bobbi, came out to him in 1987, he says it wasn't a shock because he already suspected she might be a lesbian. But he went to a P-FLAG meeting to support his ex-wife, Bobbi's mother, who was having a more difficult time accepting her daughter's sexual identity.

In P-FLAG, Bernstein found a home and a cause, and his book is, in large part, the story of how P-FLAG and its members have spoken out and stood up for gay men and lesbians in their families.

"Bobbi's coming out has, in a way, created a whole new life for us," says Bernstein. "We found something that really invigorates us and makes us feel like we're doing some good. We've met so many marvelous people. It has done so much to raise our consciousness."

"I've often told Bobbi that if she ever decides she made a mistake when she came out, don't tell us."

*Straight Parents, Gay Children* uses a series of personal anecdotes from parents who have come, in Bernstein's words, "not just to accept but to celebrate their gay children."

Among those parents chronicled are Jim and Elise Self of Grants Pass, Ore., who led the fight in their community against Oregon's anti-gay-rights initiatives, going public on the front page of their small-town newspaper with the revelation that their daughter, Jennifer, is a lesbian.

Bernstein also tells the story of Bonnie and Buzz Frum, evangelical Christians in Colorado who have a gay son. They campaigned against Amendment 2 and headed up a P-FLAG chapter in Colorado Springs, home to dozens of religious

# Straight Parents Gay Children

Keeping Families Together

## Robert A. Bernstein

Introduction by Robert MacNeil  
of the MacNeil/Lehrer NewsHour

*Straight Parents, Gay Children uses a series of personal anecdotes from parents who have come, in Bernstein's words, "not just to accept but to celebrate their gay children."*

During book signings, Bernstein says he is often approached by gay and lesbian youth who tell him they are buying the book in order to send it to their parents. That's music to his ears.

"I would like to reach the millions and millions of parents who are, well, OK about it but kind of reticent," he says. "If all the family and friends of gay people spoke out about the gay people in their families and among their friends, society's homophobia would be on its way out."

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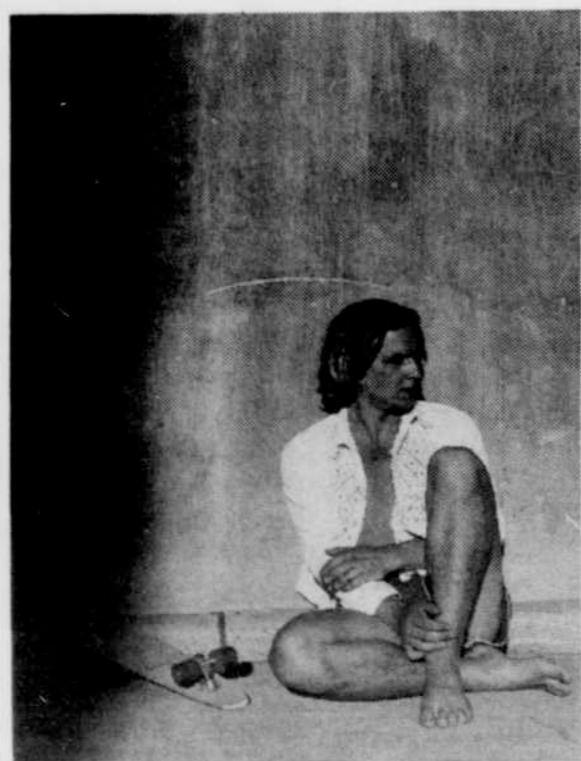
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