

# PRIMARY PRIMER: JUST GRIN AND BALLOT

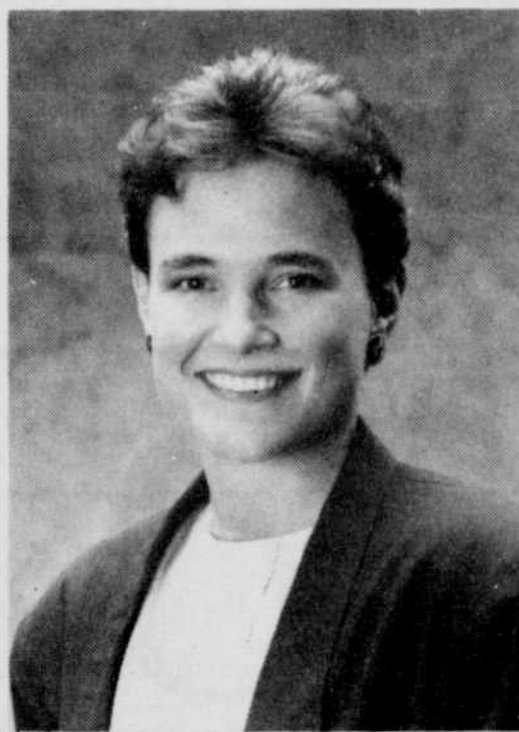
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the communities they represent, so that he could raise his consciousness about issues important to them. Unlike some aspiring politicians, he listens, and he apparently modifies his belief systems to "do the right thing."

Francesconi lacks the political experience of the other two front-runners. At forums he comes across abrasively, although he was very soft-spoken in the *Just Out* office. His heart is in the right place, and there are many reasons to vote for him. What turned the tide for us was his admitted lack of experience working for issues pertaining to lesbians and gay men, and the struggle that was visible in his face when having to deal with issues contrary to the teachings of his church.

**G**ail Shibley is not a one-issue candidate, despite some accusations to the contrary. As the first out lesbian in the Oregon Legislature, she supported the lesbian and gay community and was part of the legislative vanguard for lesbian and gay rights. Some community leaders criticized her for not focusing enough attention on lesbian and gay issues; *Just Out* admired her for the breadth of her focus. As a legislator she has honored her commitment to other communities in her constituency as well.

The very first legislation she sponsored wiped the antiquated racist language from real estate law in Oregon. She



Gail Shibley

fought the anti-immigration legislation spawned by the Republican-dominated House. She worked behind the scenes to facilitate compromise and diffuse confrontation within the Oregon House and Senate chambers, thus earning the respect of her peers—Democrats and Republicans alike. She did all of this quietly and without great public fanfare.

Though Shibley is not as hands-on as Francesconi in dealing with some of the issues of importance to communities of color, neither is she ignorant of the issues. She knows the value of true diversity.

As program manager for the City of Portland's Traffic Management Bureau she researched and lobbied for a bureau-wide diversity committee that reviewed hiring practices and prioritized the involvement of marginalized communities in solving traffic problems in neighborhoods.

As a city commissioner Shibley would advocate for the Bureau of Personnel to adopt the same diversity practices. She has a model for achieving diversity on a citywide level that includes lesbians and gay men of all colors. We think she should have the chance to implement it.

We need the staunchest, most unwavering ally we can get on the City Council. Shibley does not hesitate when asked whether she supports same-sex marriage, whether her workplace has written antidiscrimination policies for gay men and lesbians, or whether she would lead efforts on behalf of lesbians and gay men.

*Just Out* endorses Gail Shibley for Portland City Commissioner Position 1.

## U.S. SENATE

We feel it important to focus on this race—although none of the candidates is gay or lesbian—since Oregon's next senator will help to decide many national issues pertaining to lesbians and gay men in the coming years.

The Democratic candidates that we spoke with who are vying for the seat being vacated by Mark Hatfield appear to hold similar positions on sexual minority issues, including: support for same-sex marriage and publicly funded sexual

minority youth programs; sponsorship of federal legislation barring discrimination based on sexual orientation in employment; and the abolition of the military ban on openly gay and lesbian service members.

In the Democratic primary, voters will be asked to decide among Tom Bruggere, Bill Dwyer, Harry Lonsdale, Anna Nevenich and Jerry Rust.

**T**om Bruggere is a multimillionaire who has never before held public office. He says he would co-sponsor federal antidiscrimination legislation, and that he backs legal marriage for same-sex couples and supports public funding for sexual minority youth programs. A Vietnam combat veteran, Bruggere calls the Clinton administration's "don't ask, don't tell" policy "wimpy."

Bruggere, who spent many years in the Bay area, says he never considered gay men and lesbians to be oddities.

"Gay people were always a visible part of the culture there," he told us. "There was never a particular defining moment for me with respect to first learning about gay and lesbian people. That's like asking me if I remembered the first time I met a black person."

When asked about his involvement in the No on 9 and No on 13 campaigns, Bruggere, the founder and former chief executive officer of Mentor Graphics Corp., a

local high-tech company, responded, "Which one was the first one?"

When we told him it was 1992's Ballot Measure 9, he said: "I think [Mentor Graphics] gave \$5,000 to the No on 9 campaign. I wasn't with Mentor Graphics during Measure 13, and I don't recall whether I personally gave anything. I'm not sure."

Bruggere supports women's reproductive freedoms, an increase in the minimum wage, protecting environmental safeguards, and an increase in educational funding for programs such as Head Start, job training and middle-class college loans.

Bruggere favors the death penalty. When asked about the system's racial and class inequities, he says: "I don't think that's an issue. If we got rid of the death penalty, then people would say, 'Most of the people in prison for life are minorities.'"

Bruggere, who lives in Wilsonville with his wife and two children, has received Right to Privacy PAC's endorsement.

**I**t strikes us as a tad ironic that a recent *Oregonian* profile of state Sen. Bill Dwyer dubs him a "people first" candidate. The newspaper describes the 61-year-old Springfield resident as a man who holds a "passionate belief in individual freedoms."

Unfortunately, *Just Out* did not have the opportunity to find out. The day we contacted Dwyer—after having our initial phone call go unreturned—he curtly told us: "I will not answer your questions. I will not pander to any community, including yours."

When we asked Dwyer whether we could pose him a few specific questions about issues he might likely deal with as a U.S. senator, he reiterated, "I'm not going to answer your questions."

He hung up on us.

A Dwyer campaign aide called us back to apologize, saying the candidate was "cranky" due to having recently traveled so much. Later the aide told us that he didn't think Dwyer "realized [*Just Out*] was a big publication," and quickly added: "Not that it should matter. No one should be treated that way."

**H**arry Lonsdale feels "all of our citizens should be treated fairly."

Lonsdale, 64, a progressive Democrat, lives in Bend.

"That definitely includes same-sex marriage, which I support."

Lonsdale, who unsuccessfully ran for the U.S. Senate in 1990 and 1992, has made campaign reform and the environment the focus of his campaign. He has vowed not to take any money from out-of-state contributors or political action committees, or individual contributions exceeding \$500. He says he will not spend more than \$25,000 of his own money on this race.

"It's time to get big money out of politics," says Lonsdale, who like Bruggere, acquired his ample personal fortune by starting a high-tech company. "I used to be a millionaire but spent a lot of my money on those previous campaigns," he says.

In addition to backing legal marriage rights, Lonsdale says he would co-sponsor federal antidiscrimination legislation. He describes the military ban as "wrongheaded."

Lonsdale says he actively opposed measures 9 and 13, "especially Measure 13," but admits he never really thought much about gay and lesbian issues until 1989, when he first ran for the Senate.

Lonsdale says that Bruce Amsbary, founder of Beyond the Closet, a Bend-based gay and lesbian rights group, has some duties at his campaign office.

"Bruce was the first openly gay man that I had ever really talked with and spent much time with," says Lonsdale. "I have to admit a lot was new to me."

Lonsdale is a fervent environmentalist, opposes the death penalty, and would like to see cuts in military spending and corporate welfare.

**L**ane County Commissioner Jerry Rust, 53, is taking at least partial credit for getting "the commission to adopt language in the early 1980s that forbids discrimination based on sexual orientation."

"Now it's politically safe to do that," says Rust, who has served on the Lane County Commission since 1976. "But back then, it wasn't. I felt strongly then, as I do now, that we have a responsibility to stand with our gay and lesbian brothers and sisters."

Rust is a solidly progressive candidate who admits, however, that he's "just out" on the question of legal marriage for same-sex couples.

"There was a moment of hesitation when I first thought about it," says Rust, a lifelong Oregonian, "but having really thought it through, I have psychologically, emotionally and intellectually concluded that two consenting adults who want to formalize their union with the approval of the state should have the right to do that, whether heterosexual or gay."

Rust, who grew up in Prairie City, says his initial hesitancy stemmed from the fact that he "was raised in the same society as everyone else."

He says he actively opposed measures 9 and 13, going so far as to send a letter to Lon Mabon in which he called the Oregon Citizens Alliance chairman a "purveyor of intolerance."

Rust opposes the death penalty, and would also like to see big money removed from the campaign.

"Why do people with money always want to start at the top?" says Rust. "I've been in the trenches. I've been elected five times. I have a record of accomplishments."

**W**e won't lie, *Just Out* likes women with spunk, and Anna Nevenich, who has been written off by the mainstream media as a fringe candidate, is one of those women.

Nevenich, a registered nurse and business-

woman, admittedly lacks campaign money, but she has lots of desire.

"And compassion. What's missing from Washington is a sense of compassion and understanding of other people," says the 48-year-old Nevenich, who came to the United States from Yugoslavia nearly three decades ago.

Nevenich is a "proud feminist" and self-described "freedom fighter."

"Even as an 8-year-old child, when I saw a man abusing a woman, I said something," says Nevenich, who earlier this year made an unsuccessful bid for former Sen. Bob Packwood's seat.

Nevenich is pro-choice, supports "tutorial services and counseling for at-risk children," and wants to "reduce our military budget and put the savings into human services."

"Of course, of course I would co-sponsor any legislation giving people equal rights," says Nevenich, when asked about same-sex marriage and antidiscrimination legislation. "People must have a right to personal freedom. We shouldn't be so judgmental."

Nevenich, who has been virtually erased from all mainstream political coverage, says: "It's frustrating, but it can't kill my spirit."

**O**f all the candidates, Rust is the only one with experience in elected office. Rust, Lonsdale or Bruggere would probably have the best chance of beating the likely Republican nominee, Gordon Smith, in the general election in November. All the candidates would be supporters of our community—though Bruggere could do with some major sensitivity training. Again, the lesbian and gay community could not go terribly wrong with any of these candidates.

But we want to do better than "not terribly wrong." We're going to take a bold step and endorse Anna Nevenich. The U.S. Senate needs more women in its patriarchal chambers, and Oregon will not have another chance at electing

one for some time. Often political action committees, media and political organizations only focus their attention on well-funded candidates. Most have ignored Nevenich, who is as viable a candidate as the others. We're glad we took the time to look at Nevenich. We believe she most closely fits the profile of representative government that the founders of the United States designed over two centuries ago.

One of the things that touched our hearts about Nevenich is the fire of her commitment to end social injustice. During her years as a nurse Nevenich has

worked with patients with HIV, and she vows to be a vocal ally in the fight for increased funding to fight HIV and AIDS.

Some will criticize this endorsement because they view Nevenich as having no chance of winning an election against Smith. If people looked closer at Nevenich and her ideas, she would have a chance. Let's truly get big money out of electoral government and send someone to Washington, D.C., who bucks the status quo. Elizabeth Furse had no prior experience in elected office when she ran for the U.S. House of Representatives in 1993, and she has served Oregon well since her election. We feel that Nevenich will be an elected official in the same tradition and deserves the chance to prove it. Vote for Nevenich—make a positive statement.



Anna Nevenich

Teri Ventura contributed research and political expertise to these endorsements.