

Terry Bean has much to be pleased about: the glory of hugging the president, his close friendship with a former governor of Oregon, the many awards, membership on national boards, the recent invitation to Seattle to meet with Vice President Al Gore to strategize over some of the Clinton administration's more recent problems. Plus the house—a palatial spread nestled in the nose-bleed zone of the West Hills, buzzing with incoming faxes and phone calls and the ever-ringing doorbell.

"This place is wonderful for fund-raisers," says Bean during a quick tour.

But getting him to talk about himself is no easy task. What you'll likely get is a list of names and phone numbers.

"I'm not that great at being in the spotlight," he says, and excuses himself to take another call.

"I have known only a handful of people whose passion for their cause has shaped who they are, and Terry is one of them," says Barbara Roberts, a former Oregon governor who not only attends formal functions with Bean on a regular basis but often goes to the movies and to dinner with him as well.

"His pride in being a gay man, his openness, his incredible generosity in terms of time, money and creativity—it is hard to be with him and not feel what he feels," she says. "He has moved more people to understanding on this issue than anyone I've ever dealt with."

On a more personal level, Roberts says Bean's friendship sustained her throughout her husband Frank's illness.

"When my husband was dying of cancer, it was Terry who helped me understand about caring for people at home," she says. "Terry was one of the people I could sit down with and talk about what the dying process was really like. He's an incredibly warm person."

David Mixner, who has advised President Clinton on a wide array of gay and lesbian issues, says he is a "huge fan" of Bean. The two met nearly 20 years ago when a contingent of Oregonians went to California to assist in defeating a statewide measure that would have made it illegal for gay men and lesbians to teach in schools.

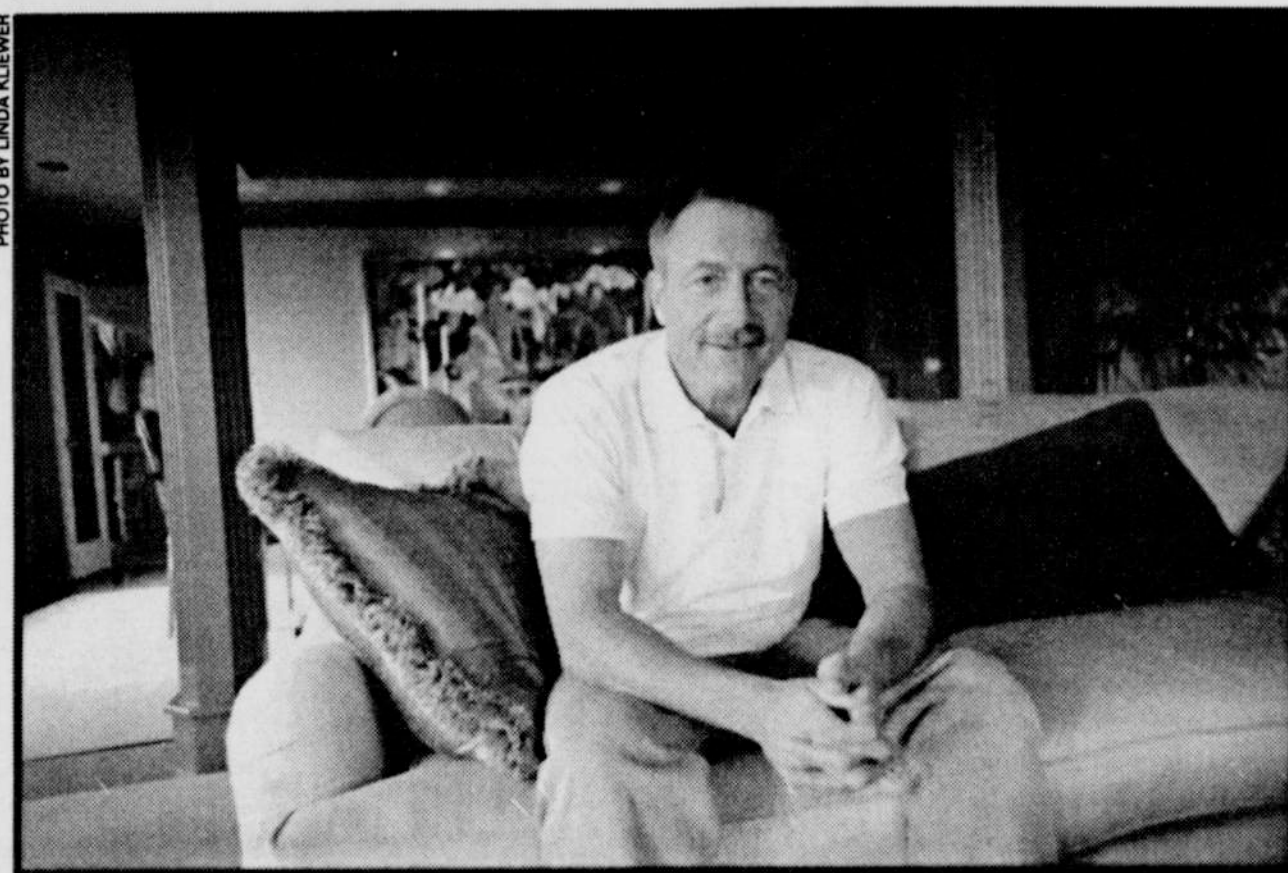
"We met in the political arena and have been friends ever since," Mixner says. "He is one of those people who lives his life on a personal level the way we want to see the world be. He translates dignity from his personal life into politics, and if we had more people like that in the movement—and the world—we'd be in much better shape."

Elizabeth Birch, executive director of the Human Rights Campaign, offers a simple explanation for her admiration of Bean.

"If I ever lose my way and it's all coming down on my head, which happens a lot, Terry

MR. FUND-RAISER

Charity-minded man about town Terry Bean is about more than money by Patrick Collins



Terry Bean

calls me and reminds me that what we're doing is keeping kids from jumping off bridges," she says.

Born 50 years ago, Bean was raised in Portland. When recalling his youth, he does not speak extensively of his parents or other family members, or of academic or athletic pursuits. What he does remember from his childhood and early adulthood can be summed up in one word: fear.

"I was constantly, constantly afraid," Bean says, and fires up another Old Gold.

He says he knew he was gay since the age of 9 or 10. "I was afraid of being found out. I was afraid to go to sleep at night for fear I would say something incriminating in my sleep."

He graduated from Lake Oswego High School in 1966 and went to the University of Oregon on a partial golf scholarship.

It was in Eugene that he got his first real taste of political organizing. He protested the Vietnam War and later opened Cassidy's Tavern, which became a local hot spot for grass-roots activists.

He began lobbying the Oregon Legislature and the Eugene City Council for gay rights in 1973.

In 1977, his dreams came to fruition with the passage of a gay rights measure in Eugene. The following year, however, city voters overturned the measure.

"It broke my heart," Bean says now, and the pain of the moment is etched so clearly on his face that it could have happened yesterday. "I don't mind saying that I hate the Christian right," he adds, and pauses for a moment. "What they're doing to us is murderous."

Over the years, Bean transformed his activist anger into insider effectiveness. In the early 1980s, along with four others he launched a Portland-based political action group called Right to Privacy, later renamed Right to Pride. He started his own commercial real estate firm and began to walk, very tentatively, onto the stage of national politics.

"Remember," says Roberts, "this is someone who can walk into the White House and they know who he is, but he's horrified of public speaking. So much so that he doesn't eat or sleep the night before a speech."

Bean found his niche behind the scenes, in the dark and murky cavern known as fund raising.

"He's one of the best political fund-raisers in the country," says Mixner.

Birch says that Bean is part of the first wave of gay activists who understood the importance of money.

"He understood, coming from the grass roots of the 1960s, that we would never be able to move forward if there wasn't a mainstream political strategy," she says. "He understood that politics needed to be played with votes and money, even though the much more fun stuff was happening on the street."

Even though Bean has attended rallies from coast to coast, his main work has been behind the scenes. He sat on the board of the Gay Rights National Lobby, and in 1982 helped found the Human Rights Campaign Fund, now known as the Human Rights Campaign.

In 1991, he helped establish the Gay and Lesbian Victory Fund, which raises campaign money for gay and lesbian candidates nationwide. He also put together GRNL's first major-donor club, known as the GRNL 48, which was comprised of people who gave at least \$1,200 annually. The group is now HRC's Federal Club.

During the 1980s he stayed close to home and dealt with the ravages of the AIDS epidemic, which, he says, claimed the lives of nearly half his friends.

Since 1991 he's served on HRC's board of directors and maintained close ties with RTP. Known nationally and locally as Mr. Fund-Raiser, Bean has never, ever stopped asking people to put their money where their mouths are.

As usual, he downplays the significance of his fiscal accomplishments.

"All you do is ask," he says, and points west. "Out there, in Beaverton, you can still be fired or kicked out of your apartment just because you're gay. Did you know that? People are willing to give time and money when they learn things like that."

How much money has he raised? He shrugs his shoulders and sighs.

"I'm not sure, exactly," he says. "It's in the millions."

It is difficult to persuade Bean to divulge information about his personal life. He has lost two lovers to AIDS, but this is not a topic he wants to dwell upon. Politics, and the money that fuels it, seems to be his first love.

Equality rather than tolerance should be our goal, he says, and he warns folks had better get their checkbooks out. Although the Clinton administration has done more than any other to advance gay and lesbian causes, sexual minority youth are still committing suicide in disproportionate numbers, he says—and then reveals that he tried to take his own life before he turned 20.

"Nobody should have to live a life with the fear of being found out," he says. "And as long as people are, I'm going to continue asking people for money."

66 **T**he right to be let alone is the most comprehensive of rights and the right most valued by civilized people."

— Justice Louis Brandeis



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