

Straight ALLIES

Sure, we know *we're* everywhere, but did you know *they* are, too? That's right, glance around and you'll spot friends and family, associates and acquaintances, all of whom are straight and support you. *Just Out* checks in with a few of our community's many straight allies.



PHOTO BY LINDA KLEWER

Everyone's favorite mom, Ann Shepherd

SHEPHERD'S FLOCK

Mother with a mission

BY WILL O'BRYAN

The world was a much different place when Ann Shepherd entered it in 1918. World War I had ended and Woodrow Wilson was calling for a League of Nations. Also, within a year of her birth—according to *The Gay Almanac*—Franklin D. Roosevelt, acting as undersecretary of the U.S. Navy, sent young enlisted men to act as decoys to root out “sexual perverts” at Rhode Island’s Newport Naval Training Station, leading to the arrest of 20 sailors and 16 civilians on morals charges.

Some of the differences that have changed U.S. society in the decades since—changes that have improved the position of queer citizens—can be credited to Ann Shepherd and people like her: straight people who aligned themselves with the underdogs.

It's not necessarily the life she imagined for herself. If Shepherd had been confronted long ago by someone who could've shown her how

her life would unfold to make her a catalyst in sexual minority activism in Oregon, she guesses she would've reacted to the information with a blunt “What the hell are you talking about?!”

Nevertheless, that's exactly where she ended up. While she credits her upbringing with helping her choose the path she did—“Daddy was liberal. He never swore, but ‘damn fundamentalists’ was one phrase he allowed himself”—things really started to jell in 1971. It was the year 18-year-old citizens won the right to vote and the year the L.A. Gay and Lesbian Community Center was founded. It was also the year Shepherd's daughter Susie told her parents she is gay.

“We certainly couldn't get mad at Susie for being gay... She knew she was loved and cherished,” Shepherd says, recalling how she and her late husband, Bill—a maverick gay rights activist in his own right—handled the news. “It still took us a while to get accustomed to it; there was no one to talk to.”

Indeed, until they and another couple founded Parents of Gays—the precursor of Oregon's branch of Parents, Families and

“We certainly couldn't get mad at Susie for being gay... She knew she was loved and cherished,” Ann Shepherd says, recalling how she and her late husband, Bill—a maverick gay rights activist in his own right—handled the news.

Friends of Lesbians and Gays—there may not have been a support group to give the Shepherds an opportunity to talk with other parents of gay and lesbian kids, but Ann Shepherd still did a lot of talking.

In 1975, the U.S. military pulled out of Vietnam following the deaths of 56,555 U.S. soldiers there. Shepherd was fighting her own war, and testified in Salem in favor of legislation that would have protected gay and lesbian Oregonians from discrimination in employment, public accommodations and housing. She and her family appeared in newspaper

articles. They were interviewed on television. Ann Shepherd did a lot of talking.

Through the years, Shepherd's high profile put her in a position to act as surrogate mother to a mountain of lesbians and gay men whose own family lives were less than idyllic because of their sexuality. Her association with such folks has left her more certain than ever that she's on the right side of the fight, and she defends gay people zealously.

She says: “For the most part, gay people I know—and I know a hell of a lot—many of them have tried to repress [their sexuality] through puberty, marriage...before realizing, ‘This is who I am, damn it. Take it or leave it!’”

Shepherd, an ordained minister in the First Presbyterian Church, takes particular issue with people who use the Bible to defend anti-gay bigotry.

“I get very mad,” Shepherd admits, when faced with such theological arguments. “I try to keep my temper down, though.”

She adds that she “very sweetly” tries to explain that Biblical passages don't support bigoted arguments, but concedes: “The people who want to believe the criticisms in the Bible—and there are only about six sentences anyway—are the people who won't be convinced of anything else.”

A somewhat easier argument for Shepherd is convincing parents with gay and lesbian children to give PFLAG a shot. Considering that three of her five children identify as sexual minorities, Shepherd definitely knows what she's talking about.

“At PFLAG you meet so many parents... and we all love our children,” she explains. “Once [parents] realize they're not alone, they realize their children are fine.”

The years now find Shepherd a long way from her birth in Missouri 80 years ago. It's 1999. A space station is being assembled. Animals are being cloned. Stealth bombers are flying over the Balkans. Shepherd is now a widow. She has five grown kids and a leather vest, given to her by members of Oregon's leather community, that reads “Den Mother” on the back. And, at least in regard to her activism, she apparently has no regrets: “Bill and I knew this is what we were supposed to do.”

■ A CLASS ACT, a fund-raising event for the Bill and Ann Shepherd Legal Scholarship Fund of Equity Foundation, takes place Friday, April 9. For more information, call 244-3225.

The PFLAG OREGON STATE CONFERENCE is scheduled for Saturday, May 1. To register, call 636-4427.

The PORTLAND CHAPTER OF PFLAG meets on the second Tuesday of each month. For more information, call 232-7676.

SEALED WITH A KISS

The attorney behind Tanner is a humble hero

BY INGA SORENSEN

The ruling, both prodigious and expansive, begs for an idol to cling to.

Yet the person who must be held most accountable is not by nature covetous. Indeed, though 6-foot-5, he is unassuming and tender, and quickly credits others when discussing the

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