

PHOTO BY K.H. KIMBALL



Snickers LaBarr stops to whip up some biscuits at the end of the Oregon Trail

PIONEERING QUEERS

We can't prove we were on the Oregon Trail, but we can offer snippets of our rich history from 1969 onward

COMPILED BY PAT YOUNG

Sure, queers have been around forever. But let's face it, many of us in the United States rewind to 1969—the year of the Stonewall riots—when we think of “queer history.” Given that 1999 marks the 30th anniversary of Stonewall, 1969 does seem like a sensible place to begin our glance at some of the gay goings-on that have left an imprint on Oregon.

1969

© A few of Portland's female impersonators organize the Portland Forum, which provides social and cultural activities for the gay community.

Besides having fun with yearly balls and the crowning of a queen or empress, the group concentrates on citywide charity campaigns. Within the next five years, the group raises thousands of dollars for charity.

1970

© Portland Gay Liberation Front forms after John Wilkinson and Holly Hart write articles about gay life in Portland for the alternative newspaper *Willamette Bridge*. Mostly men join the group.

Hart determines that women would feel safe to join if they thought a group of lesbians already existed, so she writes several articles and signs them with different names, giving

the illusion that women already belong. The idea works.

© The Second Foundation of Oregon forms as an organization offering referral services and discussion groups for gay men and lesbians.

1971

© The Second Foundation of Oregon publishes a newspaper, *The Fountain*, and sponsors a gay pride celebration in Portland to commemorate Stonewall with indoor events such as dances and drag shows.

© Portland's court system holds the first public elections to select an empress instead of having judges select one during a ball. Tracey St. James wins the election and becomes Empress XIV. In 1972, Darcelle becomes the 15th empress.

1972

© Oregon's revised state criminal code that repeals the sodomy statute goes into effect in January.

© The Second Foundation of Oregon opens the Gay Community Center at 258 S.W. Alder St. in Portland.

© After playing softball all summer, a lesbian team called the Lavender Menace takes up volleyball.

1973

© A Woman's Place Bookstore opens at 706 S.E. Grand Ave. in Portland.

© Activists in Klamath Falls organize the Klamath Gay Union.

© In Portland, five people attend an organizational meeting of the Gay Public Employees Federation of Oregon. Organizers post 100 notices in public buildings to announce the meeting; all but two of the notices are torn down.

© The House State and Federal Affairs Committee hears testimony on House Bill 2930, the first gay rights bill introduced in the Oregon Legislature.

A lobbyist supported by the Second Foundation works long and hard in favor of the bill, which is narrowly defeated.

© Eugene City Council votes against including gay people in the city's equal opportunity ordinance.

1974

© Five lesbians purchase land in Southern Oregon and start the collective called *WomanShare*. In the fall, lesbians living in Wolf Creek publish the magazine *WomanSpirit*, which runs for 10 years.

© The Portland Association of Gay Equality wants Portland Mayor Neil Goldschmidt to issue a proclamation for Gay Pride Week. The mayor decides to skip it.

© By a 3-2 vote, the Portland City Council adopts Resolution No. 31510 banning job discrimination on the basis of sexual orien-

tation for city employees. By the same margin, the council rejects efforts to put the issue before voters.

The president of the Portland Police Association speaks against the resolution saying it should not apply to police officers because it would decrease public respect for them.

© Motivated by the passage of Portland's resolution, the Portland Town Council organizes a lobbying effort aimed at the 1975 state Legislature in hopes of passing a statewide gay rights bill. Previously, PTC served as an umbrella organization for the gay community and coordinated bar events so they didn't occur on the same days.

1975

© Despite a broad-based lobbying effort by the Portland Town Council, House Bill 2637, which would ban discrimination against gay people in employment, housing and public accommodations, stalls in committee. A few months later, HB2288—a compromise bill dealing only with employment—fails by one vote.

© About 200 people attend Portland's first outdoor, public gay pride fair.

1976

© Gov. Bob Straub establishes the Task Force on Sexual Preference.

© Portland Town Council holds a fund-raising event for two pro-gay politicians. The spaghetti feed nets \$230— that's \$115 for Vera Katz and \$115 for Stephen Kafoury.

© Parents Ann Shepherd and Charles Knapp staff a sign-up table at the gay pride

rally, thus starting Parents of Gays, which grows into the Portland chapter of Parents, Families and Friends of Lesbians and Gays.

1977

© Jerry Weller forms PTC-PAC, a political action committee that raises money for pro-gay candidates. It is the second gay political action committee to form in the nation.

© The Capital Forum forms in Salem as 24 people attend the first meeting. The organization serves the needs

of gay men and lesbians in Benton, Lincoln, Linn, Marion, Polk and Yamhill counties.

© Portland Mayor Neil Goldschmidt issues a proclamation for Gay Pride Day. Negative phone calls flood his office and opponents launch a short-lived recall effort. Pastors from

Continued on Page 21

