

DANCING WITH WOLVES

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Ann was born Dec. 30, 1918, in Kansas City, Mo. After her family moved to Portland, she graduated from Grant High School. She earned an associate's degree from Stephens College in 1938 and a bachelor's degree in journalism from University of Missouri in 1940.

Ann started out working at newspapers in McMinnville and Bend. In 1943 she was hired by *The Oregon Journal*, making her the publication's first female general assignment reporter since World War I.

She became a mother in 1946, which meant putting her career on hold. However, her greatest achievements were still decades away.

Ann unknowingly was enlisted as a civil rights activist in 1971—just two years after Stonewall—when Susie came out to her parents while home from University of Oregon on Christmas vacation. For the next year the couple treated their daughter's sexual orientation as a "family problem."

A year later, though, Susie brought a girlfriend home for the holidays—along with a book on lesbians for her parents to read. "That really cracked me open," said Ann, who had five daughters altogether, three of whom are gay.

In 1976 she was appointed to a two-year term as the "token parent" on Oregon Gov. Bob Straub's Task Force on Sexual Preference. "Then I really started reading in earnest," she said.

Bill, a respected general practice lawyer, founded the Portland Town Council Legal Resource Group that same year. The organization brought together professionals who were committed to ensuring justice for members of the sexual minorities community.

The Shepherds began speaking before civic groups throughout the Northwest, urging parents to accept their gay and lesbian children and convincing churches and organizations to love, respect and include all members. In 1977 the couple teamed with Chuck and Rita Knapp to found the Portland chapter of Parents of Gays, which later affiliated with the national PFLAG.

Ann took pride in "mothering" gay men and lesbians rejected by their families and churches and worked with confused parents to heal the wounds of misinformation and judgment. "Because of the solidarity we have in our own family, we can be good representatives to both the parents and their children," she said.

The Shepherds went on to fight every anti-gay ballot measure and candidate that crossed their path. In 1985 they received the prestigious Lucille Hart Award from the Right to Privacy PAC.



Ann Shepherd made one of her last public appearances Oct. 26 at Coronation 2002



Ann Shepherd served as grand marshal at Portland Pride 2001

Ann was ordained as an elder of First Presbyterian Church in 1982 and deacon in 1995. She served on the board of Young Audiences from 1977 to 1983 and played host to opera apprentices in her home.

In 1986 she began serving on the Community Advisory Committee of the Multnomah County Restitution Center and chaired it from 1995 to 1998. She was named vice president of the Blanche Fischer Foundation in 1995 and elected as president of the organization in 1998.

After Bill's death in March 1995, Ann became the first recipient of Metropolitan Community Church's namesake Shepherd's Award. In 1997 she was honored with the Oregon Gay and Lesbian Law Association's Lifetime Achievement Award.

The Northwest District of the Universal Fellowship of Metropolitan Community Churches gave Ann its 2000 Human Rights Award. In February 2001 she received the Vollum Humanitarian of the Year Award from Ecumenical Ministries of Oregon.

Her legacy lives on with the Bill and Ann Shepherd Legal Scholarship Fund of Equity Foundation, which honors law students in their last year of study who are dedicated to passing the bar exam and donating part of their expertise to helping keep their state hate-free by fighting anti-gay bigotry and discrimination. It was the brainchild of the late Jeff Rose, Mr. Portland Leather 1993, who was determined to bequeath to the community a perpetual gift honoring the couple who had so deeply inspired him as a young gay activist.

"What Bill and Ann have done in founding [PFLAG] deserves ongoing recognition," he said. "They have been a role model of parental love and support to their lesbian daughters and to all their thousands of 'adopted' gay and lesbian kids over the years. They exemplify what 'family values' should be about!"

Gay Portland attorney Joel Corcoran, who received a Shepherd scholarship in 1998, has fond memories of Ann: "She was equal parts Mae West and Mary Poppins. She started holding PFLAG meetings before disco crossed the

Oregon border. She...treated people equally, regardless of whether she was in a crowd of churchgoers or PFLAG moms or drag queens or people in formal evening wear. She treated everyone with dignity, respect and love and made no apology for doing so."

Another big fan of Ann's was the Imperial Sovereign Rose Court, which invested her with the title of Immortal Legend of Diversity in December 2000. Explains Empress XLIV Poison Waters: "Never have I met such a friendly and lively person. From the first time I met Ann, she always greeted me with a smile, hug and a kiss. Whether enjoying her company at a PFLAG meeting, church or other social occasion, I always left feeling loved and thankful to have been friends with this marvelous woman. She truly was the mother of our community."

The Shepherd family sent an e-mail to friends Jan. 5 thanking them for their support during the past several months as their mother's health deteriorated. Susie found comfort knowing that Ann has joined her late husband and dog in heaven.

"Mother is dancing with Daddy, Misha and all her other marvelous dogs and family and friends over Kauai and other favorite places," she wrote. "She loved each and every one of you ferociously and will be your guardian angel like you've never known one!"



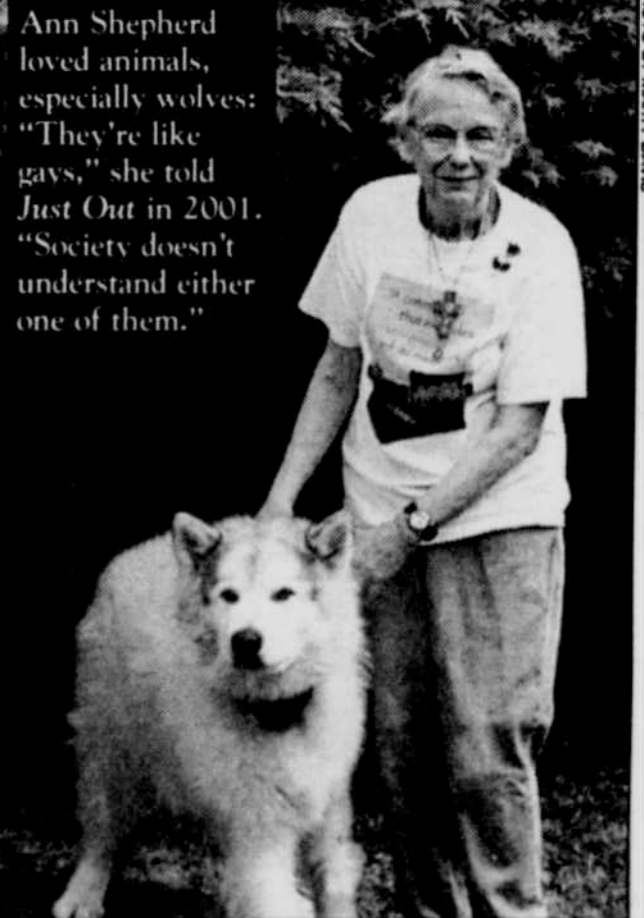
Bill and Ann Shepherd

A memorial service for ANN SHEPHERD will start 11 a.m. Jan. 25 at First Presbyterian Church, 1200 S.W. Alder St. The Revs. Dudley Weaver; Susan Leo of Bridgeport United Church of Christ; Dick Berg of the Macdonald Center and University of Portland; and Troy D. Perry, founder of the Universal Fellowship of Metropolitan Community Churches, will officiate. A reception will follow. Remembrances can be sent to the BILL AND ANN SHEPHERD LEGAL SCHOLARSHIP FUND OF EQUITY FOUNDATION, P.O. Box 5696, Portland, OR 97228-5696. Premier jazz musician Skip Elliott Bowman will perform during *A Class Act*, a concert and decadent dessert revue benefiting the fund, April 25 at Portland's



historic Old Church, 1422 S.W. 11th Ave. Tickets will be available in early spring. For more information call 503-286-1752.

For details about PORTLAND PARENTS, FAMILIES AND FRIENDS OF LESBIANS AND GAYS call 503-232-7676; e-mail support@pflagpdx.org; write to P.O. Box 8944, Portland, OR



Ann Shepherd loved animals, especially wolves: "They're like gays," she told *Just Out* in 2001. "Society doesn't understand either one of them."

PHOTO BY MARY DAVIS

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