

Martin applied as a single parent, while Bond had to wait several months until the Illinois court began granting second-parent adoptions before she could legally adopt the children.

Dealing with discrimination

Bond and Martin also faced homophobia during the processing of their son's adoption. They had relocated to Portland and were required to work with agencies in both states to process the adoption. Searching for an agency in Illinois to handle the interstate adoption, Bond says, "When agencies found out we were two women adopting, we were shut down."

Eventually they located an agency willing to process the interstate adoption, but Bond says, "In order for the agency to work with a lesbian couple, we got taken advantage of."

Martin explains, "The agency made us pay the fee for an entire adoption, when all they had to do was process two pieces of paper."

Adoption attorney Sandy Hodgson admits that same-sex couples can face roadblocks during the adoption process, especially when adopting internationally. "There are adoption



PHOTO BY TIMOTHY REHAUSE

Bonnie Tinker, executive director of Love Makes a Family, chose to become a parent through artificial insemination with a known donor

agencies with religious bents that won't work with same-sex couples and birth mothers who won't consider same-sex couples as adoptive parents," says Hodgson, who facilitates private adoptions in her Northeast Portland law firm, Bouneff and Chally.

A report released last month by New York's Adoption Institute indicates things are getting better. About 60 percent of adoption agencies now accept applications from gays and lesbians, and almost 40 percent have placed children with gay and lesbian adoptive parents.

Costly considerations

With the cost of private adoptions running upward of \$15,000, lack of funds can

be a significant roadblock for many couples. But in Oregon cost doesn't have to be a defining factor: Adopting through the state of Oregon is free.

"We don't want any child to grow up without a permanent, loving home simply because a family believes it cannot afford to adopt a child," says Marilyn McManus, adoptions social worker for the Oregon Department of Human Services. "People don't need to have substantial assets or savings to adopt, but we would certainly like them to be more than a few paychecks away from disaster."

Eight years ago, Portlander Cherry Hartman decided she was ready to fulfill her longtime dream of becoming a mother. "I had wanted to adopt for a long time but was never in the right relationship or the right place in my career," the 56-year-old says. She attended an orientation session hosted by the state for prospective

adoptive parents in 1997 and began processing the paperwork to adopt as a single parent.

Almost immediately, Hartman was being considered as an adoptive parent for a 5-month-old boy. "I didn't get the child," she says. "A case-worker for Catholic Charities thought the child would be better off with another family. I felt like I'd had a miscarriage. I thought: 'I see how this goes. Who knows if I'll ever get a child.'"

But just a few months later, she did.

Her social worker showed her a picture of a 12-month-old girl named Rosie. Hartman fell

in love and immediately began the adoption process. Though Rosie was considered a "legal risk" adoption because her birth parents had not terminated their parental rights, Hartman was willing to proceed. She became Rosie's foster parent in 1997 and adopted her in 1998. All in all, Hartman says it wasn't difficult to adopt through the state.

"Every adult has the right to choose, create and structure their families. If you want to have children, you should have a way to do that."

—Bonnie Tinker

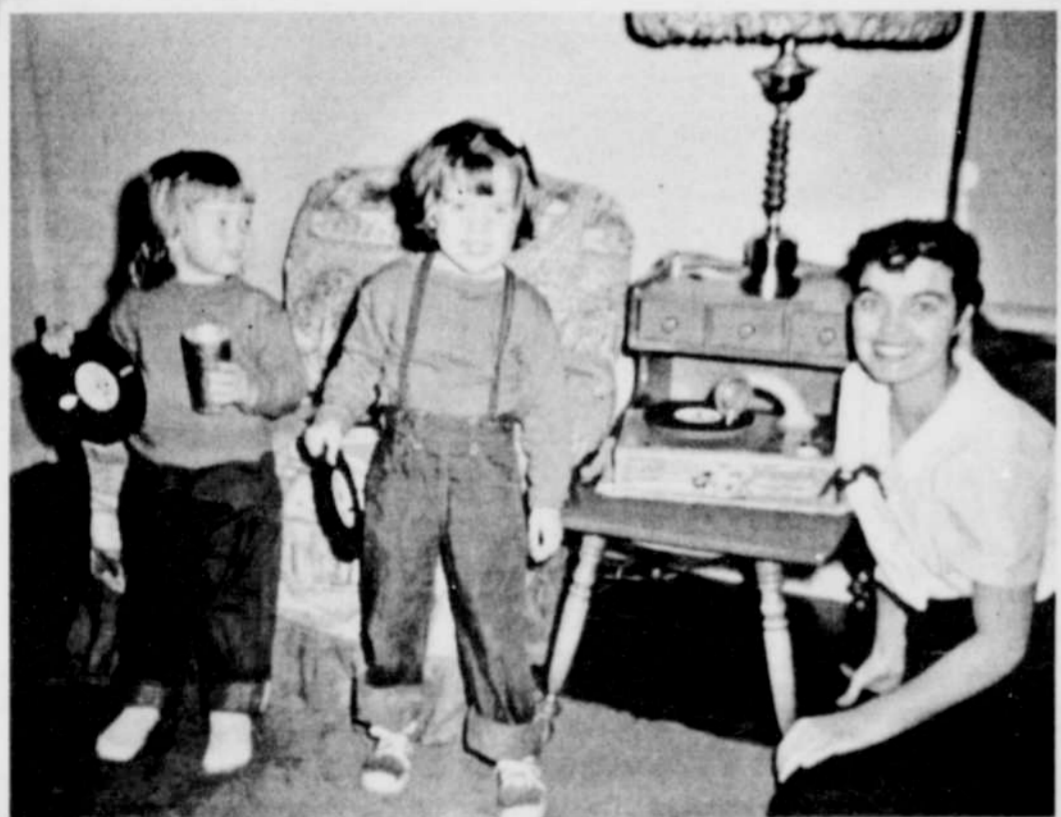
Oregon "is actively working to make adoption easier for gay and lesbian parents."

Like Hartman, Portland partners Steve Wagenhoffer, 42, and Mitch Zahn, 44, also opted for public adoption. "It was a decision we came to really quickly and clearly," says Zahn. "We felt like we could be more open about being gay parents in public adoption."

In the beginning Wagenhoffer and Zahn were presented with several children, including biracial

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