

Reciprocation was important, and something that Stevie Remington, former American Civil Liberties Union of Oregon executive director, also instilled in these early activists. In return, they eagerly gave back and helped elect and re-elect those who supported gay rights.

"We were Vera's foot soldiers when foot soldiers were a really great thing to have," says Shepherd. "It was easy to volunteer for her because you loved her so much. It was never work. It didn't matter how cold it was or how rainy it was. It was never work."

And then there was the first fund-raiser for Katz and Kafoury: a \$5-a-plate spaghetti feed sponsored by the Portland Town Council in February 1976.

"We debated for hours as to whether or not \$5 would be too much to charge," laughs Shepherd. Perhaps they should charge only \$3.50. But no, this was supposed to be a fund-raiser. People would just have to cough it up.

Shepherd doesn't remember how many people attended, perhaps as many as 25. But she does remember Katz and Kafoury were there.

"She was just the belle of the ball when she showed up," says Shepherd. "And we just loved her so very, very much."

"We would have been at least a year behind where we were in terms of beginning to build momentum if Vera hadn't given us the guidance and support that she did," adds Shepherd. "I can say that flat out for sure because she was so consistently there."

Vera Katz realizes how much her support meant to these early Portland activists, but at the same time she saw being supportive as an intrinsic part of her job.

"I always felt that my job as an elected official as well as a citizen of this community was to give back—to educate others to be successful, to talk to individuals or groups that wanted to know how to get their work done and to use the position of power to make things happen," she says. "There was a core group in the Legislature that really worked together on a lot of issues, including gay rights issues, but without the Portland Town Council and without the visibility of an organized effort, it would have been very difficult."

Katz and Kafoury made other appearances at various charitable fund-raisers in the gay community. Wherever they went, they received huge standing ovations, recalls Shep-

herd, but they also paid a price for showing such support to homosexuals.

The Anti's—that's the term Shepherd and other Portland Town Council members called the early anti-gay folks—went around town attaching negative posters of Katz to phone poles and the sides of buildings. The posters often showed pictures of Katz with gay supporters and claimed she was pro-sodomy.

"There were these awful, ugly, nasty black-and-white posters," says Shepherd. "They were hand-printed, usually with a black felt-tip pen with ugly printing and poor grammar. They were just hate material."

The community keeps thanking me and showing their gratitude and their love, and I say to them, You know, this is easy —Vera Katz



Katz marches with Tom and Katie Potter during Portland Pride 1999

Katz remembers those posters as well. She had negative posters because she supported gay rights as well as other unpopular causes such as gun control. She and Gretchen Kafoury also had their faces on shooting targets.

"It was shocking to me because I loved the city and the state and to know that there were very angry and hurtful people out there who were willing to send bullets to you in an envelope," says Katz.

As a member of the Legislature, she points out that she was visible throughout the state at a time before gay rights organizations were doing much outreach to rural communities. "Still, to get bullets in the mail," she says, shaking her head.

When Katz first ran for mayor in 1992, the anti-gay Measure 9 was also on the ballot. She remembers that it gave her and other politicians a chance to stand up to "speak out and let folks know that their potential next leaders

feel very strongly about this issue of gay rights. It was a critical time for the state."

As mayor, Katz continued to strive for equal rights for everyone. Under her watch, domestic partnership benefits for city employees were instituted. City contractors could no longer discriminate on the basis of sexual orientation. Support was garnered for the domestic partnership registry at Multnomah County. The city participated in the case of the United States vs. the Boy Scouts, supporting the gay Scout who had been discriminated against because of his sexual orientation. Katz presided over the inclusion of gender identity in the Portland

sions when she was dealing with queer issues. He recalls once when a transgender man, who had been a victim of discrimination, came to talk to her.

"I remember how visibly angry she was hearing him describe incidents of mistreatment, and how personally she took that as the mayor of the city," he says. "It was important to her to follow up and to make sure that it didn't happen again, that the city admitted its mistakes and that we pushed forward protections for transgender folks as part of amending the city's Civil Rights Ordinance."

"She was always very interested and had a special sensitivity for any sort of hate crimes or alleged hate crimes that came across her desk," says Adams. "She really wanted to confront that. She was always on the lookout for it and always wanted to hear about those crimes."

Supporting gay rights wasn't always serious. Katz enjoyed entertaining elements of Portland's gay scene as well. Before becoming mayor, she and Gretchen Kafoury performed at a fund-raiser with Darcelle XV, belting out Helen Reddy's "I Am Woman."

"We sang together—badly," laughs Darcelle. "None of us knew the words. The only part we knew was 'I am woman.'"

Katz loves Darcelle and even celebrated her 70th birthday at the club. The feeling is mutual: "She has been a good friend to the community—not just the gay community, but the Portland community," says Darcelle. "She embraced everybody. Nobody is left out. She has always been a good friend."

And she always has a hug for Darcelle.

"I don't care if the president of the United States was standing there—if she saw me, she would come up and get a hug, especially if I was in drag," says Darcelle. "The only drag queen in the world who can hug a mayor no matter where they are."

Katz also marched in Pride parades.

"Vera comes totally alive in Gay Pride parades," says Adams. "This is a woman who has lots of energy anyway and always has a sparkle in her eye, but that sparkle and that smile just crackle with enthusiasm at Pride parades."

The crowds loved her. Adams recalls that people would scream and holler as she marched

Continued on Page 23

bellamar
AN AVEGA CONCEPT SALON & DAY SPA

embracing your beauty
from the inside out

- Hair
- Facials
- Make-Up
- Waxing
- Manicures
- Pedicures
- Massage
- Wedding

4605 NE Fremont, Suite 105 503.244.0275

ZAZEN
ZAZEN
ZAZEN

www.Dharma-Rain.Org

www.ncnm.edu
503.552.1551

NCNM

Imagine...
Doctors that treat your whole person
The clinics of
National College of Naturopathic Medicine
Honoring the Healing Power of Nature

The Enchanted Owl
Educational Toys & Games • Special Needs Books & Toys

Portland's finest specialty
toy store in the heart of the
Westmoreland/Sellwood
shopping district.

Free gift wrapping
Birthday Club

Hours: Tues-Sat 10-6, Sun 12-5,
Closed Mondays.
Call about our extended holiday hours.
(503) 239-6928

7325 SE Milwaukie Ave., Portland, Oregon 97202