



JUST OUT IS CELEBRATING OUR 30TH YEAR OF PUBLISHING UNDER THIS TITLE BY DEVOTING THIS SPACE TO TELLING THE STORIES OF IMPORTANT HISTORICAL MOMENTS. THE GAY AND LESBIAN ARCHIVES OF THE PACIFIC NORTHWEST (GLAPN), WHO HOUSE NOT ONLY EVERY JUST OUT ISSUE PRINTED SINCE OUR 1983 INAUGURATION, BUT MANY OTHER SIGNIFICANT BITS OF LOCAL LGBT HISTORY, ARE OUR PARTNERS IN THIS LOOK BACK OVER THREE DECADES.

Imagine this: you have enjoyed a passionate night with your special someone, and in the morning, you head out for breakfast. Outside, you find your landlady and two policemen waiting. Another robbery, you think, or a weirdo on the loose.

No. Your nosy landlady never really liked you much. She's sure there's *something wrong* when two men spend so much

time together. She has reported you to the authorities. The policemen are there to arrest you!

The charge will be sodomy. Your apartment will be searched. Your friend may be charged, or offered a deal to testify against you. You may plead guilty – or plan on standing trial. Witnesses will be called. The newspapers will be involved. You will almost certainly be fired from your job. If convicted, you will spend one to 15 years in the state penitentiary.

It sounds like something out of the dark ages – but until 1972, this could have happened in Oregon. Before 1965, along with the prison sentence, you could have been sterilized!

But, you're thinking, you'd never be convicted. There were no witnesses. There is no evidence. Besides, Americans don't go around sterilizing people. That would be incorrect, times four. "Perverts" and "moral degenerates" were often convicted on testimony alone, and the Eugenics Board referral was automatic.

Oregon's first sodomy law dates from 1853. In 1913 the law's scope was expanded, and the maximum penalty tripled. It specifically banned anal and oral sex, along with unnamed "perversions," and treated it all the same as sex with animals. In 1928, consensual masturbation was included, and in 1961, the Oregon Supreme Court added cunnilingus to the list.

Sodomy law got extra bite in 1917, from a eugenics law that authorized sterilization of the "feeble-minded," habitual criminals, sexual "perverts," and "moral degenerates."

Arrest, imprisonment and sterilization didn't *always* happen. But it could happen, and there was little recourse. When someone lived out and proud before 1972, this was the risk they took.

Fortunately for us, things changed. After 1965, the eugenics law applied only to the mentally ill and the mentally retarded, and it was repealed for good in 1983, the year *Just Out* was first published. In 1972, Oregon was among the first to decriminalize consensual adult sexual activity, except for prostitution. Nationally, sodomy laws were struck down by the U.S. Supreme Court in *Lawrence v. Texas*, in 2003. §

Robin Will is the third generation of his family to be born in Oregon. His great-great-grandparents were among the first members of the Aurora Colony, the Utopian commune that dissolved in 1883 to become town of Aurora, Oregon. A Portlander since 1956, Robin graduated from Benson Polytechnic High School in 1966, with a major in Graphic Arts. He began college at Pacific University, Forest Grove, in 1966, and graduated from Portland State University in 2007. His work experience has been primarily in the field of publishing, sometimes as a writer or editor, sometimes in print production management. Currently self-employed, he writes for several Portland publications, edits newsletters for non-profits, and assists local car collectors in the areas of documentation and display in addition to working with GLAPN.

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