

Historic Highlights of Olympia Lesbian Gay History

1973 Gay Resource Center opens at **Evergreen State College**, one of the first student organizations in the state. Don Martin was the founder. The name changed several times over the years to be more inclusive. It's now the **Evergreen Queer Alliance**. **E**

1974 Children of the 70s: A Laboratory/Festival on Gay People and Culture at Evergreen in spring of 1974. Kate Millet, Jill Johnston, and Arthur Evans, national leaders in gay rights movement, speak. Visibility and action was in the air. Also, **FIST**, Feminists in Self-Defense Training, holds local classes

1975 Vietnam War Ends! Evergreen State College hosts Rita Mae Brown, well-known Lesbian author. **E**

Mid to Late 1970s Tides of Change originally sponsored by **Evergreen Women's Center** with Becca Todd, Lisa Howell, Kathryn Ford, Mary Fitzgerald, and Sue Bell among others involved through the years. Produced Alix Dobkin, Olga Broumas, Holly Near and many others **E**

1976 Women's Music Festival produced by **Tides of Change**.

1976 Olympia Food Co-op opens . It was the first local business dedicated to non-discrimination (its second employee openly GLBT) **5**

1977-79 and on Janes of all Trades, Artemis Construction & Nozama (79-96). These are some of the woman-owned, many self-described "dyke," construction enterprises.

Mid-1970s Women's soft ball team a gay and straight team, spearheaded by Kate Steele, had a rule: "no hugging in the dugout."

1970's Collective households form in Olympia, including **Raging Women West, Revolting Women, Peach Flower, Nannie Noodles, Emma Goldman, Alexander Berkman and Gold Flower Brigade**. From these and others came initiatives including **Hard Rain Printing Collective** and **Theatre of the Unemployed**. **Hard Rain** (1975-85) is a collectively owned small print shop serving the progressive community. **4**

1975-1985 Rainbow Restaurant, local GLBT-friendly bar & restaurant with gay night on Wednesday. **13**

1977 "Take Back the Night" rallies, vigils, and marches.

1978 Capital Lake Bathroom Bust following a period of harassment and police targeting of Gay men. Leopold Schmidt, president of Olympia Beer, a state legislator, and the head of a social service agency were arrested for lewd conduct. **6**

1978 Intermezzo cafe founded by Carolyn LaFond. It was known as, "a 'wild and wooly' hangout for lesbian and gay coffee aficionados. Intermezzo became the **Smithfield**, owned successively by Shannon Osborne and Stewart J. Boyle. It remained a focus for community events, music, and conversation. **8** Also in 1978, **The Book Store**, specializing in books by and about women, is co-founded by Carol McKinley. The Book Store brought lesbian authors such as Jane Rule, Rosemary Curb and Nancy Manahan (authors of *Lesbian Nuns*), Judith Barrington, and Emily Warn for readings to Olympia. **10**

Late 1970s Karen Silkwood Memorial Choir is formed and active. Notably kicked out of **Lamonts** in the **Capital Mall** while singing anti-Christmas carols.

1979 Conestoga: Local activists challenged the Conestoga's blatant discrimination against same sex dancing by patrons. A series of creative protests ultimately shut down the bar. **7**

1979 First "Lesbian Community Meeting" to build unity in the community. Originally scheduled for the Senior Center, thrown out by the Senior Center Director, then welcomed by Carolyn LaFond to the Intermezzo around the corner. This loose organization gave rise to **Matrix (a Lesbian-Feminist local magazine)**, the **Olympia Women's Center for Health (OWCH)** and other women's community organizations. **11**

1979 Olympia Women's Center for Health (OWCH) founded by Helen Thornton in the **Security Building**. **12**

1980 Film *Cruising* with Al Pacino showing at **State Theater** boycotted by local community for its negative portrayal of gay communities.

1981 Women's Health Clinic co-founded by Pat Shively, first on the Westside then on the Eastside, constantly targeted by anti-abortion demonstrations. **14**

1980s to present **Gay Men's Social Network** hosted potlucks, game nights and **Men's Volleyball** at Woodruff Park. **15**

1983 Dice T-Shirts founded by Nancy Sigafoos in a little storefront next to the Intermezzo. Dice prints movement T-Shirts, including shirts for Lily Tomlin concert, and the 1987 Olympia Queer shirt. **9**

1984 Olympics Women's Marathon Trials, a national first. **16** In conjunction with the Marathon, Lily Tomlin appears in Olympia produced by **Pacific Productions at Capitol Theatre**. **17** Producers Carolyn McIntyre and Mary Fitzgerald also brought Holly Near, Meg Christian and other women's music events

1985 United Communities AIDS Network founded, originally as "**Olympia Aids Task Force**."

1986 Northwest Women's Cultural Celebration at Evergreen produced by lesbian community members. Two days of poetry, music, and art, including the **Righteous Mothers**, part of the women's music movement that inspired social change and the lesbian and gay community through music. **E**

1987 First Northwest Lesbian Gay Film Festival founded by Marge Brown, Helen Thornton, and Kathryn Ford, and held at Evergreen. **E**

1989 Lynn Grotzky and Lisa Brodoff make legal history with victory in first open trial of lesbians doing a second parent adoption in the United States. Thurston County Superior Court. **18**

1988-89 Lesbians in Motherhood and Beyond (Out on a Limb). Started by Lynn Grotzky and Lisa Brodoff to support families with two moms.

1990s Lesbian Fun Society and Halloween Dances. "If it's not fun, we don't do it."

1991 First Pride Celebration in Olympia organized in partnership with Evergreen students working with community based activists, started at **Marathon Park** and marched to the State Capital. **GLOW**, Gays and Lesbians of Olympia Washington, founded. **20**

1991 Stonewall Youth, founded by Zan McColloch-Lussier as student project, continues to provide support to LGBT youth. Over the years, the organization has had several office and meeting locations downtown, including space donated by health services agencies and **Darby's Restaurant** in the basement of the old **Eagles Hall** in the mid 1990s. **22 RVing Women** co-founded by Evergreen faculty member Lovern King. Still a great resource for older lesbians on the road.

1993-1998 Hands Off Washington (HOW) Thurston County Coalition founded, hosted by United Churches. HOW was the first statewide GLBT rights organization in US history to effectively leave the safety of the big cities and go statewide with active chapters. **23**

1993 PFLAG (Parents, Families and Friends of Lesbians and Gays) Olympia founded by Rev. Paul & Betty Beeman and hosted by United Methodist Church. **24**

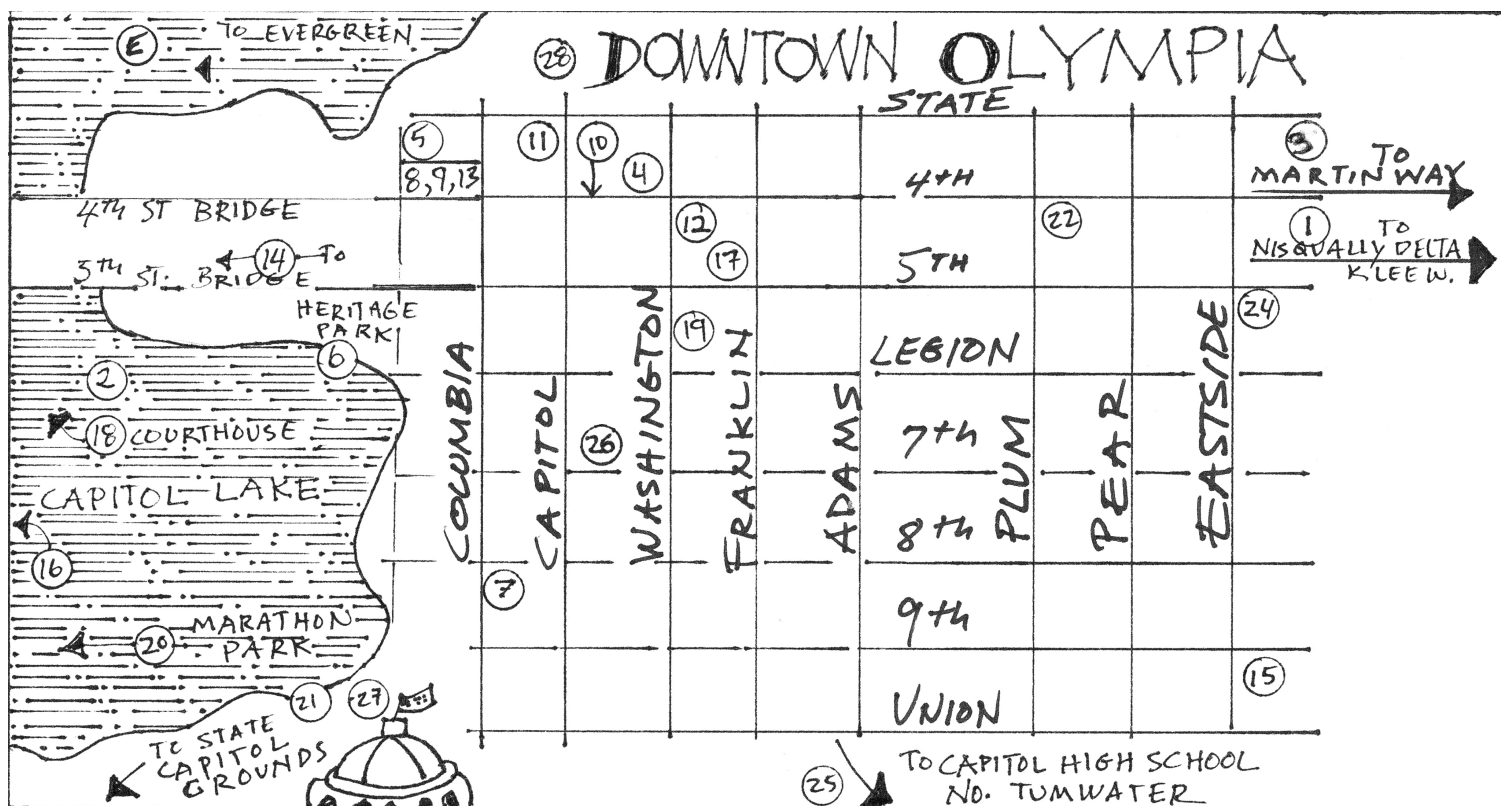
1995 February: HOW brings **Colonel Margarethe Cammermeyer** to speak at a record-breaking fundraising breakfast; March: **Olympia High School** students ask Cammermeyer to give a talk at **Olympia High School** for Women's History Month. Invitation touches off a huge debate that fueled standing room only School Board meetings. An assault took place on Olympia H.S. campus. **Bill Clayton** was injured. **25**

1995 April 14: Anti-Hate Rally in **Sylvester Park** in support of Bill Clayton and his friends who had been assaulted. Colonel Cammermeyer returns to show support. Bill Clayton committed suicide a month later. **26**

1998 Black Hills Pride founded at **Olympia Community Center** as a local affiliate of the Seattle-based **Pride Foundation** to encourage stronger local involvement with GLBT philanthropy. **28**

For More stories, photographs, and to make contributions, visit our Facebook Page:

<https://www.facebook.com/OlympiaGayHistory>. We hope this project will evolve into a more complete history with your help!!!



1977 Senator Pete Francis (D-Seattle) introduces first "Gay Rights Bill" to Washington State Legislature.

1987 Rep. Cal Anderson (D-Seattle) becomes first openly gay Legislator and pushes a bill to prohibit discrimination based on sexual orientation every year until his death in 1995. See **Cal Anderson Tree, 27**

1992 Rep. Cal Anderson chairs the first House public hearing for the anti-discrimination bill, attended by 1,000 evenly divided supporters and opponents; signals the beginning of the "Gay Nineties" political battles in Washington.

2006 Rep. Ed Murray (D-Seattle), Cal Anderson's replacement, pushes for passage of the bill that adds "sexual orientation" to existing

prohibitions on discrimination, to its passage. Signed January 31, 2006.

2006 State Supreme Court ruling bars same-sex partners from getting married (DOMA).

2007 Registered Domestic Partnership created by State Legislature.

2008 and 2009 Registered Domestic Partnership provisions expanded to "all but marriage" status.

2009 Domestic Partnership Legislation ratified by voters in November, a national first.

Important Media Through the Years

1979-1984 Matrix: local Lesbian Feminist Magazine, produced by an all-women collective, part of a nationwide network of women's newspapers in the pre-"zine" era.

1980s and 1990s Dick Safety comics distributed around **Marathon Park**. These pocket-sized comics were part of an effort to encourage safe sex. **16**

Gays of Our Lives on KAOS Radio in the early 1970s. **E**

Capital Q, Alan Artas

Sound Out, 1993, produced and edited by Cam Combs and Wendy Morissette.

Alternate Route and **Sister Sound**, hosted by Janet Benke, **KAOS Radio** (1980s). **E**

In the **1980s and 1990s** local churches and temple become welcoming. **Triangles**, affiliated with the Olympia Unitarian Universalist Congregation, is founded in 1998.

2011 Tumwater: First local city to fly a rainbow flag during Pride Festival

OLYMPIA GAY/LESBIAN HISTORY



*Francesca Scheel and friends. Olympia, 1914**

Pre 1970.....more to come!

1953 Klee Wyk Studio founded near old Nisqually. Visual artists Del McBride, Oliver Tiedemann, Albert "Bud" McBride and his life partner Richard E. Schneider produced paintings, ceramics, and wood block prints. Klee Wyk is well known throughout the region. Del became a well known historian of the area and curator at the State Capital Museum. **1**

1940 Sherwood Press, founded by Jocelyn Dohm, which she operated with great joy for 63 years. She shared her life with Margery Sayre, an Olympia activist. Sherwood Press sponsored a women's soccer team. **2**

1970s and before **Lee's restaurant** was the meeting place of the **Dorian Group**. Tom Howdeshell was a key member. These men "stood up and pushed back." Some had been active in the Olympia area for years. **3**

City of Olympia/Tumwater FIRSTS

1986 Olympia: First local GLBT Non-Discrimination ordinance in Thurston County. Followed by 25 other ordinances and policies to support GLBT rights.

1987 Thurston County: First GLBT rights policy.

1995 Olympia: First Domestic Partner Benefits ordinance.

1996 Tumwater: Ed Stanley, first out gay elected official, becomes Tumwater City Council member.

1991 Olympia: First city permit issued for **Pride** march and rally.

1999 Olympia: First Domestic Partner Registry.

2001 Tumwater: First Equal Benefits Ordinance, requiring municipal contractors to offer employee benefits to domestic partners if offered to married employees.

1993-1998 Babes with Big Hair, a musical revue featuring many local performers, first at the Capitol Theater and then the Washington Center, raised money and awareness for UCAN and HIV/AIDS services. Produced and directed by Rick Wehmeyer.

Conceived and produced by LLyn De Danaan and Carol McKinley with contributions from Don Martin, Anna Schlect, Mary Fitzgerald, Nancy Sigafoos and many others who were there. Many photographs (for Facebook and future editions) courtesy of Mary Fitzgerald, Carolyn LaFond, Michi Thacker, LLyn De Danaan, and Jean Eberhardt.

In Fond Memory of and with thanks to some iconic folks who walked to the edge for us: Pat Shively, Kay Engel, Jocelyn Dohm, Ed Stanley, Cal Anderson, Mike Cook, Tom Howdeshell, and Marge Brown.

1970s-1990s LGBT-themed theater productions:
A Woman Is Talking to Death (1978) by lesbian poet Judy Grahn, performed by Theatre of the Unemployed.
Bent (1985) an Evergreen student production. The play was later made into a film produced by former Evergreen student Michael Solinger.
As Is (1988) produced and directed by Ruth Palmerlee at Evergreen, featuring TV actor Kim Kennan who died of AIDS later that year.
Torch Song Trilogy (1990) at Washington Center directed by Don Martin. **19**
I've Been to See Sophie (1994) written by Nancy Sigafoos, performed at the Capitol Theater.

1995 Meeting Magdalene, a locally produced film by Marilyn Freeman, screened at the Capitol Theater. Her film **The Group** also featured several local actors and won awards in 2001 and 2002.

*Photo Courtesy Erin Scheel