

climate Change

This spring, as Pacific hosted its fourth major regional LGBTQIA conference, bringing renowned speaker Judy Shepard and hundreds to campus, we look at the transformation that has brought about the more inclusive climate Pacific students enjoy today.

By Sheri Grimes



Change Comes Slowly

When Bill Jones '51 was a student at Pacific in the late '40s and early '50s, being gay was something you not only didn't talk about, but tried to hide. The gay liberation and gay rights movements didn't come until the mid-'60s and early '70s. For young people struggling with their sexual identities, life was anything but gay.

At Pacific, as at universities across the United States, LGBTQIA students struggled for years with loneliness and alienation while trying to complete their education. Few, if any, resources existed to help them come to terms with who they were.

Jones's fear of stigma and rejection by classmates was so strong that he didn't dare pledge a fraternity or even live in a residence hall. The world of sexuality was closed and confusing, leaving him lonely and alienated, but for a few understanding faculty members and a minister in town in whom he could confide.

Even as the national conversation brought the issues to light, change was met with resistance and fear, and newly formed gay student organizations kept a low profile into the early '90s. Looking back, LGBTQIA alumni acknowledge and appreciate their Pacific education, but say they struggled on a personal level.

"While at Pacific, I felt incredibly alone. There were no places I could go to just be myself," says Eric Dingler '87. "I became an overachiever; that was how I learned to feel valued. But I was still empty."

Dawn of a New Day

Today the situation is very different.

As the new century dawned, Pacific's LGBTQIA student organization, now the Pacific PRIDE Alliance, became more active and visible. When Jones returned to campus in 2000, offering to donate \$1,000 to help start an LGBTQIA club on campus, he was delightfully surprised to find one already existed. He made the gift and also gave the group a rainbow pride flag.

Then an incident in 2002 became a catalyst for more sweeping change and more proactive involvement by University administration. During Pride Week, the rainbow flag was stolen and the spirit rock, which had been painted with rainbow colors for Pride Week, was also vandalized. The defaced flag was discovered in a men's restroom, covered with urine.

A student-led rally against hate crimes filled the McCaffrey Center courtyard with hundreds of students, faculty, staff and administrators to take a stand against prejudice, discrimination and intolerance of any kind.

"What we discovered was an incredible community that wanted to support all of us, and when they had the opportunity to stand up for what was right, they did," Cynthia Krieger '01 recalled during her address to graduates at the 2014 Lavender Graduation, an annual ceremony to recognize the accomplishments of the LGBTQIA graduating students.



Bill Jones '51, a former educator and developer, received international notoriety when he became the first single male in California to adopt a child. His estate gift will one day establish the Bill Jones Rainbow Community Room in the University Library.



Eric Dingler '87, audit chief learning officer at Deloitte & Touche LLP, speaks to participants at the 2014 LGBTQIA conference.

LGBTQIA is an acronym inclusive of individuals of all sexual orientations and gender preferences: lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, intersex and asexual. It also includes allies, or people who do not identify as LGBTQIA but support the rights and safety of those who do.



Cynthia Krieger '01, running manager for Nike, congratulates graduates at the 2014 Lavender Graduation where she was the keynote speaker.

LGBTQIA timeline

1972

Gay Student Union publishes statement of purpose, constitution and bylaws

1982

McGeorge Lambda Law Students Association established

1993

Gay Alliance of Pacific listed in the General Catalogue. University of the Pacific included in *The Gay, Lesbian and Bisexual Student's Guide to Colleges, Universities and Graduate Schools*

1998

First gay club registered as a campus organization

Since then...

Numerous initiatives, such as Safe Zone training and the formation of a campus Bias Response Team,



Norm Allen '88, '94, senior vice president at Woodruff-Sawyer and Company, welcomes graduates into the Pacific Alumni Association as Alumni Board President during 2012 Commencement ceremony.

have helped promote and instill the inclusive climate that exists today. Krieger wrote the proposal for the PRIDE (promoting respect in diverse environments) Resource Center, which has created a safe place for all students and coordinates events such as Pride Week and Coming Out Week.

In 2008, Pacific began hosting a biennial LGBTQIA conference with informational sessions, networking

and leadership training. The conference brought hundreds of participants from campuses throughout the Western region and featured prominent speakers such as filmmaker Dustin Lance Black and Judy Shepard, mother of the 21-year-old University of Wyoming student tragically murdered because he was gay. Dingler has been a major underwriter of the



Human rights advocate Judy Shepard was the keynote speaker for the 2014 LGBTQIA Conference.

LGBTQIA conference and Lavender Graduation and recently established an endowed scholarship to support LGBT students with financial need.

McGeorge School of Law Professor Larry Levine established a scholarship in 2002 to honor his late life partner that supports students committed to use their legal education to extend and protect the civil rights of gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender people. Norman Allen '88, '94, established an endowed scholarship in 2011 to support first-generation LGBT students, and a \$1 million 2004 estate gift from Bill Jones will one day create the Bill Jones Rainbow Community Room in the University Library.

"The shame and alienation I felt as a student are feelings I don't want any student on this campus to experience," said Jones. "I want to change that for future generations."

Today's students "are shocked when they hear how difficult things were for these alumni and the challenges they faced," said Devon Guidoux, program coordinator in the PRIDE Resource Center.

Their shock underlines the significant climate change at Pacific for LGBTQIA students. In fact, last year Pacific was awarded 4.5 out of 5 stars on the Campus Pride Index, an LGBT-Friendly Campus Report Card.



Dustin Lance Black, Academy Award-winning screenwriter and human rights activist, shared his personal story with upwards of 700 participants at the 2012 Western Regional LGBTQIA Conference, hosted at Pacific.

"I am so proud of Pacific!"

said Dingler. "The open and inclusive environment, the leadership, the PRIDE Resource Center, Lavender Graduation, the LGBTQIA conferences, and much more. They all help to create a place where LGBTQIA students are surrounded by dreamers, doers, believers and thinkers who see the greatness within them, even when they might not see it. That is why I am now involved, to ensure it gets better!"

Get involved with Pride Alumni Pacific Club: pacificalumni@pacific.edu

Find out more about giving to LGBTQIA initiatives: contact Georgette Hunefeld at 209.946.7375 or ghunefeld@pacific.edu. Learn more about Pacific LGBTQIA accomplishments: go.Pacific.edu/PacificPride

2003

PRIDE Resource Center opens

2005

First annual Lavender Graduation held; Safe Zone program created

2008

First LGBTQIA Regional Conference is held at Pacific; Pride Pacific Alumni Club established

2009

Ashley Stubblefield, president of the Pride Alliance, is elected president of ASuop

2012

Western Regional LGBTQIA Conference hosted at Pacific in partnership with UC Merced draws 700+ attendees