

Keeston Lowery



Alan Keeston Lowery was born on November 17, 1949 in Jackson, Mississippi. Lowery was trained as an occupational therapist, receiving a degree from Mississippi State University. He worked in Sen. Robert Kennedy's campaign for president in 1968.

Keeston left Mississippi to attend the University of Arkansas. He worked in the mid-1970's for then-Attorney General Bill Clinton in Arkansas. This is what brought Keeston to the attention of Arthur Warner who then invited Keeston to become a member of the committee.

In 1977, Keeston was the local contact for the Nationaal Committee I Arkansas, lobbying the Attorney General and the Governor to stop passage of a bill to recriminalize consensual sodomy – an endeavor that the religious right and their political allies were determined to accomplish. Unfortunately, despite his herculean efforts, and support from Bill Clinton, the governor signed the bill into law.

Keeston moved from Arkansas to Oregon in the late-70's to take a job as a physical therapist for Emanuel Hospital. Keeston quickly became a leader in the local gay and lesbian community.

In 1982, Keeston and a few others started a new political action committee and a non-profit organization called Right to Privacy; the organization later became known as Right to Pride. The organization was dedicated to ensuring full human and civil rights for lesbian, gay and bisexual Oregonians. The organization also inaugurated the first Lucille Hart fund-raising dinner in 1982, named after the first transgender man to undergo gender affirmation surgery in Oregon, Dr. Alan L. Hart (1890-1962). In 1995, this dinner became known as the Right to Pride Dinner.

Keeston became an aide to Portland City Commissioner Mike Lindberg in 1987 -- a time when very few LGBT people were out and open in politics. He quickly became a force on the political scene. He worked with Kathleen Saadat to create the first civil rights ordinance in Oregon banning discrimination based on race, religion, gender, and sexual orientation and was a strong advocate for spaces for LGBT youth. Keeston received an award from the ACLU in 1991 for his efforts to establish the ordinance.

In addition to his work at City Hall, Keeston served on the board of directors of the Portland Town Council, a grass roots gay rights organization.

When Keeston died in 1993, everyone in politics attended his funeral, including Oregon Governor Barbara Roberts, Portland Mayor Vera Katz.