

WHAT WE DO:

Marie Harvey '69

In distinguished company

Marie Harvey is on the phone, serenely navigating a crisis.

Nothing in her manner, or in the appearance of her office, decorated in wood, muted colors, and the artwork of her sister, fellow Puget Sound alumna Anne Harvey Hironnelle '66, gives away the urgency of her situation, and no passing outsider, walking in Oregon State University's historic Women's Building and likely beguiled by the easy sunlight of the summer morning, would suspect a thing. But this is part of Marie's strength: she works, she fights, and especially lately, she wins, unobtrusively, humbly, calmly.

Now the recipient of OSU's Distinguished Professor title (granted to only two faculty members every year) for her trailblazing work in reproductive and sexual health, Marie is credited for both advancing the fields of sexually transmitted infection and pregnancy prevention in women and helping shift the academic focus from the health of women, independent of men, to the health of men and women, both, as a means of stopping disease transmission and unwanted pregnancy. However, early in her life, and before any of these achievements, she first had to recognize her own power—as a woman and as an independent person, coming of age in the tumultuous 1960s.

Things are wrapping up.

She says goodbye, and hanging up the phone, she takes a breath and turns her gaze to meet mine. "Let's begin," she says.

Born in Vancouver, Wash., and raised "across the river," in Oregon, Marie grew up on a farm outside of Salem.

"I observed very early on that girls could do anything," she says. "I'm a woman, but I've never felt disadvantaged by that." Her parents raised her with a strong work ethic, and she continually applied herself in school, earning a scholarship to Puget Sound, where she studied European history. "I was given a work-study position, as well, and worked for the registrar, filing things. It wasn't much fun," she says with a laugh.



Bryan Bernart

Marie: By her own admission, 40-years a troublemaker ... but for good reasons.

Eventually joining a sorority, Marie (then known as "Sandy," her first name; Marie is her middle name) explains she there developed her rebellious streak.

"Sororities were very exclusive during that time, and I realized that I didn't like that at all. So I quit," she says. "There was a lot of social turmoil then. When I started school, women had to wear dresses or skirts every day, except on Saturday mornings." A nightly residence curfew forced all female students inside by 10 p.m., lest they face locked doors. "It meant that women couldn't stay up to study in the library, which was open until midnight," she says. "Men could." Emboldened by her feelings of discrimination, she, along with others, helped stranded women sneak back into the dorms. "I was a total troublemaker. But there was a reason."

During graduate school, early in her career in public health, she volunteered for a small organization that provided contraception to women.

"I was a counselor for those who got pregnant accidentally, and at that time I had already worked in social services—I'd seen the cycles," she explains. "These young women, very capable women, tended to, once they'd had their first child, if they were unmarried and alone, simply continue having children. I wanted to prevent this."

Again, Marie discovered that what she knew was "right" flew in the face of convention. She recounts the story of a young girl who came to their office in search of birth control. "She was alone, and obviously not 18," (the legal age for women to receive con-

traceptives) she says. Instead of turning her away, Marie told her to simply go outside and have her mother sign for her permission, then return. After a moment of furtive confusion, it dawned on her what Marie was suggesting. The girl left, returning scarcely a minute later, the form freshly signed. "You have to break the law sometimes," says Marie, squarely. "Some laws aren't keeping up with us."

Marie says, of her career, that she didn't set out to become a professor, but rather to focus on the work, which happened to lead her down the road to her current position as associate dean for Research and Graduate Programs in the College of Public Health and Human Sciences. For the last few years she has spearheaded the push for the CPHHS to become the first accredited school of public health in Oregon. In June she succeeded.

"I am immensely proud," she says. "I came here to do this." Thanks to her and her colleagues' efforts, the CPHHS has hired more than 30 new faculty members and revamped its curriculum to suit today's undergraduates, who, like her, many years ago, face their own set of social challenges in a rapidly changing culture.

"If I had two messages, it would be that sex and sexuality are a joy, and also that that joy comes through being knowledgeable about how to engage in sex in a healthy way. ... I've spent my career studying so many negative consequences, but more recently, as I've studied relationships more, I just think that sharing an intimate relationship with a partner is a wonderful experience." She smiles. "I would wish that for everybody." — **Bryan Bernart**