

Guardians Spotlight

Marcia Alvey — Becoming Her True Self

It's been a year of new beginnings for OTLA Past President Marcia Alvey. A process almost three years in the making, Alvey started her gender transition in July 2016. Her decision to transition was continually reaffirmed, but especially in the fall of 2017 when her first college roommate died suddenly of leukemia. It was then her heart and mind shifted from "can it happen?" to "how do I make



Marcia Alvey

this happen" with the realization life is fleeting. She knew she needed to fully transition to the person she always felt she was inside.

By September 2017, she began working with legal marketing guru Corinne Hazzard to explore what it would mean personally and professionally to live openly as a woman. A six part plan was put into place to transition both her personal life and her practice. The risks were enormous. Beyond friends and family, Alvey wondered how her former and future clients would respond. Would referrals cease? Would friends and family accept Marcia after 30 years of history as "Marty"? All her fears began to wash away as she began telling her closest friends and colleagues one-by-one. She wanted those closest to her to understand this was not a mid-life crisis, but rather after years of therapy and waiting for her grown sons to finish college, this change was purposeful and timely.

The response was tremendous. Alvey was overwhelmed by the positive support and encouragement she received from OTLA members and has saved every single email and listserv post from her colleagues who jumped at the chance to extend their support.

Now a whole new world has opened up for Alvey. Not only

have clients returned to her practice, but she finds herself energized and embraced by the LGBTQIA+ community as well. Simply put, Alvey considers herself a trial lawyer, who happens to be trans. Her advocacy remains the same. She is a lawyer for injured people, first and foremost. She was honored at the Basic Rights Oregon Ignite Gala this past October. Many of her OTLA colleagues stepped up to sponsor tables to show their admiration and support for her bravery, her friendship and continued service to those in need of a champion.

In the words of Marcia Alvey....

My work life has changed in the last year because:

I transitioned my gender from male to female.

The opportunities I see from that change are:

Different doors have opened. I am very

involved in an advocacy and supportive role with Basic Rights Oregon. I have joined Oregon Women's Lawyers and the OTLA Women's Caucus. I have joined the National Trans Bar Association, the Oregon Trans Law Caucus and the Oregon Gay and Lesbian Law Association.

I was fearful before I transitioned that my pool of friends would be static. I would lose some of my old friends and gain some new friends in the Trans and LGBTQIA+ community. Nothing like that has happened. I retained all of my old friends who knew "Marty" and added many, many new friends in the LGBTQIA+ community.

The best thing about my job is:

I own my practice and am my own boss. This allows me to set my own schedule.

The hardest thing about my job is:

Bashing my head against the Oregon Workers Act. The Workers' compensation law has become incredibly complex and increasingly anti-worker since I started practicing almost 32 years ago. It is incredibly hard to have a client go without compensation because the law is against them.

What I do in my job is:

I represent injured workers, victims of negligence in a variety personal injury claims and disabled individuals in claims for Social Security Disability.

Growing up I thought I would become:

A lawyer who tried cases. Having an office practice never appealed to me.

Why I give to The Guardians of Civil Justice program:

NOTHING gets done without resources. OTLA would not have the ability to serve and protect our clients without the Guardian program. The Guardian program truly is practice insurance.

What I'd like colleagues to know about OTLA is:

Joining and being active in OTLA, is the best thing you can do to strengthen your practice, create professional contacts and create close friendships.

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Marcia Alvey at the Basic Rights Oregon Gala with her mother Patricia Alvey.

There's more to life than my job.

My favorite activities are:

Book collecting, going to rock concerts and Italian cooking.

I knew I was grown up when:

My first son, Sean, was born.

I've always wanted to:

Go to Italy. Art History was one of my favorite classes in college. I want to see all the famous works, particularly in and around Florence.

I'll do it (see above) when:

I can figure out how to take significant time away from the office. That has not happened yet.

The classes in law school I dreaded were:

I had, shall we say, an "active social life" in college so I was not prepared for law school. My entire first year was dread filled. Looking back my fears were misplaced. I love practicing law. I was not a motivated law student.

My first job was:

A pizza chef at Pachino's Black Knight Pizza in Coos Bay, 1977.

I'm Proudest of:

Hands down-my two sons. Both are college graduates and fine young men.

I wish:

I had more time away from the office.

Guilty pleasure:

Macallan's Scotch Whisky; Italian cooking and Italian food in general.

I can't live without:

Books

Most influential person in my life:

My mother. She is an example of how to live a life of unconditional love. Her support of my gender transition has been amazing.

Favorite fictional character:

I have many favorites: Harry "Rabbit" Angstrom; T.S. Garp; Donald "Sully" Sullivan; Henry Star; Frank Bascombe and lately Elena "Lenu" Greco.

Advice you would give to a new lawyer:

Join OTLA and get

involved.

Not many people know that I am:

A fifth generation Oregonian. My great-great grandfather, Patrick Flanagan, arrived in 1854, aboard the U.S. Transport "The Captain Lincoln" which was shipwrecked about two miles north of the Coos Bay Bar. The site where they came ashore was named "Camp Castaway" and was the

first settlement of white men in the Coos Bay area.

What I appreciate most among my friends:

Their steadfast loyalty and support. I have not lost a friend (that I know of) because of my gender transition. That fact is a testament to the quality and character of my friends.

My favorite authors/poets/musicians/movies are:

Authors: John Updike, George Saunders, Raymond Carver, Annie Proulx, Ann Patchett. Musicians: The Doobie Brothers, Steely Dan, John Mellencamp, Bob Dylan. Movies: *The Big Lebowski*, *True Confessions*, *Men in Black*, any other Coen Brothers movie, The Godfather series.

The reformation/revolution I appreciate the most:

The Enlightenment (particularly the political theorists); FDR and the New Deal.

My motto:

"I am fearfully and wonderfully made."

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