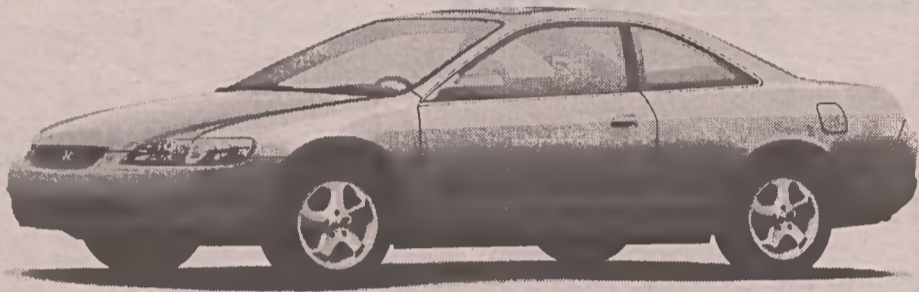


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## The truth about breast cancer

by **Stephany Saari**  
 Special to Q-Notes

In this second installment of our three-part Breast Cancer Awareness Month series, we will explore and dispel some of the many inaccuracies associated with the disease.

### Breast cancer mythology

**Myth:** Only women with a family history of breast cancer are at risk for developing it themselves.

**Truth:** This is definitely not true. A breast cancer-free history gives you slightly less to worry about, but more than 80 percent of breast cancer occurs in women with no family history of the disease.

**Myth:** If a mammogram finds no signs of breast cancer, you can relax your self-exams for a little while afterward.

**Truth:** Although mammograms can detect tumors long before they can be felt, mammograms do give a significant number of false negatives. The danger of this occurring is particularly great among pre-menopausal women. Among younger women, whose breasts tend to be more dense, it is also more difficult to detect a tumor.

Giving yourself regular breast exams is essential.

**Myth:** The best time to examine your breasts is in the shower.

**Truth:** Doing breast exams in the shower is not the best idea. Wet soapy hands can make it more difficult to probe deeply and finding irregularities early requires intimate knowledge of your breasts.

**Myth:** If a breast lump hurts, it is not cancerous.

**Truth:** Usually, this is the case, but don't fail to have a lump checked just because it is painful. Painful lumps are associated with approximately 10 percent of breast cancer cases.

**Myth:** Underwire bras cause cancer.

**Truth:** This is absolutely ridiculous.

**Myth:** If you eat a low fat diet and abstain from drinking and smoking, your chances of developing breast cancer are nearly eliminated.

**Truth:** You may improve your odds this way, but there are many more factors involved, including genetic predisposition, early menstruation and having a first child at a later age.

**Myth:** A woman with lumpy breasts is more likely to get breast cancer.

**Truth:** There is no connection between the factors that cause benign lumps and those that lead to cancer.

**Myth:** If breast cancer is detected, a mastectomy gives a woman her very best shot at survival.

**Truth:** Not necessarily so. Women do not die of this disease because it comes back in the breast, but because it has spread to other parts of the body. If the cancer hasn't spread before surgery, a breast-preserving lumpectomy followed by radiation treatments offer the same outcome as breast removal.

For more information on lesbians and breast cancer, visit Q-Notes Online's Pink October site on the Internet at [www.q-notes.com](http://www.q-notes.com).

[Ed. Note: Part three will appear in our October 31 issue.]



## California protects TGs under new hate crimes bill

by **Melinda Whiteway**  
 Special to Q-Notes

SACRAMENTO, CA—On September 29, Governor Pete Wilson signed into law AB 1999, a bill which clarifies that gender and gender expression are protected categories under California's existing hate crimes laws.

AB 1999 was authored by Assemblymember Sheila Kuehl (D-Santa Monica). Assemblymember Kevin Shelley (D-San Francisco) was the principal co-sponsor.

The major effect of the bill is to clarify that hate crimes against transgendered people are covered under California hate crimes laws. District attorneys in San Francisco and Los Angeles counties, who supported AB 1999, already prosecute such hate crimes under existing law, but other district attorneys do not use this interpretation of the statute. The new law creates uniformity of application of the broader reading of the law.

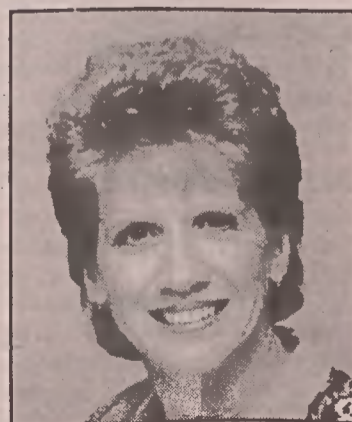
"This is a milestone for the transgender community of California" said Vicky Kolakowski, co-chair of the Bay Area Transgender Law Association (BATLAW), a sponsoring organization of the bill. "Hate crimes are a major problem for transgender people everywhere, including the Bay Area, and I am very happy that the legislature and the Governor understand the

importance of enacting this legislation. I hope that this becomes a model that will be used nationwide."

"What a miraculous change from two years ago, when former state senator Milton Marks' (D-San Francisco) transgender civil rights bill SB 1964 died in committee without a single yes vote," Kolakowski added. "Last time, most legislators seemed uncomfortable with just hearing the word 'transgender.' This time around they publicly championed on our behalf."

Kolakowski attributes the bill's passage to the work of a coalition of public safety advocates, hate crimes experts, and lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender community organizations, but gave Kuehl and other gay and lesbian leaders the bulk of the credit for changing attitudes. "Most of that transformation was due to the leadership of Sheila Kuehl, her marvelous staff, and the support of gay and lesbian groups such as the now-defunct LIFE Lobby, Community United Against Violence (CUAV) out of San Francisco and the Lambda Letters Project out of Sacramento."

AB 1999 received wide bipartisan support throughout the legislative process, partly due to the early endorsement of the bill by Attorney General Dan Lungren, the GOP candidate for governor.



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