



Murray, Edward B. ("Ed") (b. 1955)

by Linda Rapp

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After a long career in the legislature of the state of Washington, where he compiled an outstanding record of accomplishment and rose to become Majority Leader of the state Senate, Ed Murray was elected mayor of Seattle. From the very beginning of his political career, he has been out and proud and known for his dogged commitment to glbtq rights.

Murray comes from a family of loggers; his grandfather, father, and several uncles worked in the lumber industry, long a mainstay of the economy in Washington. Murray was born in Aberdeen, a city in the western part of the state, on May 2, 1955.

Murray's father suffered a broken back while on the job, causing the family to endure hard times, including what Murray described to Angela Galloway of the Seattle Post-Intelligencer as a "humiliating" several months on welfare. Murray's mother had to become the breadwinner for her large family. Murray is the middle of seven children, with three older sisters and two younger sisters and a brother.

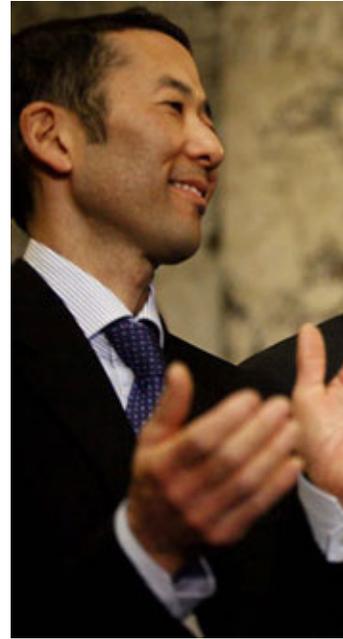
The Murray family is proudly Irish and devoutly Roman Catholic, and so Murray's earliest political memory is of being allowed, at the age of five, to stay up late on the night of the election of 1960 to witness the victory of John F. Kennedy.

"I can't say I really understood what was going on. It just got me excited," he told Galloway.

The Murrays had moved to Olympia, to west Seattle, and then to Lacey in the next county south, where Murray's fellow members of the class of 1974 at Timberlake High School elected him president.

Murray did not immediately go to college. After his mother's death the next autumn, the young man took on various jobs, including one as a volunteer in Ireland in a program to promote connections and understanding between Catholic and Protestant children.

Feeling a possible vocation to the priesthood, Murray enrolled at a Roman Catholic seminary but left after a year because, as he explained to Galloway, "There were many people--gay and straight--in the priesthood who were hypocrites as far as their sexuality." It bothered him that priests were placed on a "pedestal" and that their hypocrisy was never discussed.



Edward Murray (right) with husband Michael Shiosaki. Murray for Mayor campaign photo.

Murray transferred to the University of Portland, a Catholic institution, from which he earned a degree in sociology.

Although Murray had realized that he did not have a calling to be a priest, while he was a university student he spent one weekend a month at Our Lady of Guadalupe Trappist Abbey, adhering to the community's structured life of prayer and contemplation.

"Through silence, solitude, prayer, and meditation, you learn things about yourself--not always easy things about yourself--that help you become a more authentic person," he told Julie Gunter of the National Catholic Reporter in 2012.

Part of the authentic person that he was, however, was a gay man, defined as "intrinsically disordered" by his Church. The anger and hurt that he felt caused him to avoid active participation in the Church for a time, but he did not break his ties entirely and eventually returned. On a retreat at the abbey in the late 1990s he read *The Cloister Walk* by Kathleen Norris, a Protestant poet who had spent time living in monasteries.

"It was as if a glass wall shattered in front of me. I realized: This is me. This is my tradition," he declared to Gunter, but he added that he felt that he would "always have one foot in and one foot out."

Meanwhile, Murray had come out as a gay man and found a mentor in Cal Anderson, the first openly gay man to serve in the Washington legislature. Murray, who was politically engaged but who feared that his homosexuality would be a barrier to election, recalled to Josh Feit of *Seattle Met*, "When Cal Anderson ran, it was like, 'Wow, someone like me can really do that.'"

Murray became the manager of Anderson's successful campaign for re-election to the Washington House of Representatives in 1988.

Murray continued a close political relationship with Anderson, but he took a job with Seattle City Council member Martha Choe. In that capacity, Murray became something of a "policy wonk," particularly with regard to transportation issues. "If I learned retail politics from Cal," he stated to Feit, "I learned public policy and how to do budgets from Martha Choe."

After several terms in the Washington House, Anderson won election to the state Senate in 1994. The following year, knowing that he was terminally ill with AIDS, he urged Murray to run to succeed him when the time came. Shortly after Anderson's death, therefore, Murray announced his candidacy for the vacant seat. Murray was defeated by state Representative Pat Thibaudeau, another Democrat, but was then appointed to the seat that she had previously held in the state House.

Murray stated to Galloway that in his first days in the legislature there were some awkward moments, such as when a few of his Republican colleagues refused to shake hands with him, but, he said, "the vast

majority of people were pretty good."

A strong proponent of glbtq rights from the start, Murray has seen attitudes change for the better, albeit slowly. In 1998 he told Lynda V. Mapes of the Seattle Times, "I'm the only openly gay person a lot of them [i.e., his colleagues] have ever met. They ask me questions. . . . There's a level of uncomfortableness with some of the conservative Republicans. It feels like high school."

In the Washington House, Murray became chair first of the Capital Budget Committee and then of the Transportation Committee. In the latter capacity he worked to improve auto emissions standards and was also a leader in successful efforts in 2003 and 2005 to raise the gasoline tax to secure funds for needed maintenance and upgrades to the state's transportation infrastructure.

In order to get the road projects built, Murray had to hone his political bridge-building skills, not considered one of his strengths at the beginning of his career. By the early 2000s, however, he was bringing together coalitions of business, labor, and environmentalist groups to move legislation forward.

Murray announced his plan to run for the Washington Senate in 2006, challenging the incumbent Thibaudeau, who eventually abandoned the race. Murray prevailed in the general election and won by comfortable margins in his bids for re-election.

In the Senate Murray chaired the Ways and Means Committee, where he fought hard for adequate funding for education.

Throughout his legislative career Murray worked for glbtq rights. Long recognized as a strong advocate, he was nevertheless sometimes criticized for not pushing hard enough. In 1998, after the legislature outlawed marriage equality, he angered some activists by advising against trying to put the question on the ballot.

Murray favored a step-by-step approach. By 2006 he had successfully shepherded an antidiscrimination bill through the legislature and then moved on to sponsor bills to create domestic partnerships in Washington. Again he had detractors who wanted to push immediately for marriage equality. As he recalled it to Feit, "I believed strongly that we had to walk our way toward this, both to make legislators comfortable and to make people in the public comfortable."

In 2007, in the aftermath of a ruling by a bitterly divided Washington state supreme court that gay and lesbian couples had no constitutional right to marriage, the Washington legislature adopted a relatively weak domestic partnership law. It provided hospital visitation rights, the ability to authorize autopsies and organ donations, and inheritance rights when there is no will.

In 2008, again with the prodding of Murray, the legislature expanded the law to give additional rights to domestic partners. The law was further expanded in 2009 to confer on same-sex partners all the rights and responsibilities that Washington state offers to married couples.

Soon after the latter law was signed by Governor Chris Gregoire, however, a conservative organization announced that it would begin the process of gathering signatures to qualify a proposal repealing the new law. In September 2009, the Washington Secretary of State certified the signatures, despite irregularities in collecting and submitting them. The law thus was presented to the voters in November 2009 for approval or rejection.

Although disappointed that the referendum was submitted to the voters, Murray expressed confidence. He told the Seattle Times, "While it's regrettable that a referendum is being filed to undo the progress we have made this session to treat gay and lesbian families the same as married families, I don't believe that voters will decide in November to take away rights from anyone."

Murray's prediction was correct. On November 3, 2009, Washington voters, by a 53% to 47% margin approved the domestic partner legislation. It was the first time gay partnerships were affirmed by a popular vote.

By 2012 Murray felt that the time was right to seek marriage equality and he sponsored a bill to authorize same-sex marriage. He skillfully moved the bill through the Senate, garnering the support of four Republicans to provide the coalition needed for victory. The bill passed by a wider margin in the House and Governor Gregoire signed it into law in a joyous ceremony at the state capitol.

However, homophobic organizations again launched a petition campaign and again subjected the question to the voters as a referendum on the ballot.

Murray's sense that Washington voters were ready to extend equal marriage rights to glbtq citizens was verified in the results. In the historic election of November 2012 the citizens of Washington approved marriage equality by a margin of 53% to 46%. On the same day, voters in Maine and Maryland also approved referenda on marriage equality, and voters in Minnesota rejected a constitutional amendment that would have banned same-sex marriage.

Soon after the November 2012 election, Murray, who had served for two years as chairman of the powerful Senate Ways and Means Committee, was elected by acclamation Senate Majority Leader. Election to that position made Murray the most powerful openly gay lawmaker in the state and among the most powerful openly gay legislators in the country.

However, Murray was to serve only a year as Majority Leader, for he soon decided to run for mayor of Seattle.

On August 10, 2013 Murray wed his partner, Michael Shiosaki. It was the twenty-second anniversary of the day that they had met on a camping trip to Mount Rainier that had been organized by some mutual friends.

Murray told Lynn Thompson of the Seattle Times that he was immediately smitten upon seeing Shiosaki: "I thought, 'Wow. Who's that?'"

The two men quickly discovered that, in addition to sharing a love of nature and a passion for glbtq rights, they were each deeply committed to a personal religious faith. Shiosaki belongs to the Methodist Church.

The couple moved into a house in Seattle where Shiosaki, a landscape designer, created a beautiful garden. Shiosaki is the director of planning for the Parks Department of Seattle.

Murray and Shiosaki were a visibly out couple and, as a result, reported Thompson, "Over the years, both received death threats and what they refer to as 'after-death threats' of the 'you'll burn in hell' variety." The couple refused to be deterred.

Murray and Shiosaki were married at St. Mark's Episcopal Cathedral in Seattle, a congregation with a long record of welcoming glbtq worshippers.

Murray was escorted to the altar by two of his sisters, Margaret Fox and Judy Murray. Shiosaki walked down the aisle with his parents, Fred and Lily Shiosaki. The nuptial couple's King Charles spaniel, Rory, performed the role of ring-bearer and, according to Thompson, "barked when the sermon was in danger of running too long."

The newlyweds did not take a honeymoon trip since Murray was in the midst of his campaign for mayor of Seattle.

Murray received numerous endorsements from labor, business, and environmentalists, as well as from legislative colleagues and from former Governor Gregoire.

During the campaign against an incumbent mayor with whom he had few policy disagreements, Murray emphasized his ability to solve problems and get things done. His mantra was that "I am not running to be a gay mayor of Seattle. I am not running to be a progressive mayor of Seattle. I am running to be an effective mayor of Seattle." Yet it was clear to many observers that his sexual orientation was actually an asset in his race rather than a hindrance.

Indeed, during the campaign, Murray made his leadership in the area of gay rights an important element of his appeal to voters. His commercials prominently featured Shiosaki and his advocacy for marriage equality, as well as a photo of him with former U.S. Representative Barney Frank.

In a story about the campaign, Kirk Johnson noted that Seattle now surpasses San Francisco in having the highest percentage of same-sex households and that Seattle voted overwhelmingly in favor of the marriage equality bill.

The final television commercial featured, in addition to the image of Murray and Shiosaki walking together, also "a parade of supporters not so subtly answering a question about their belief in Mr. Murray and the city's future under his leadership with the repeated refrain, 'I do.' The ad's final scene: a lesbian marriage."

In November 1913, Murray defeated incumbent Mayor Mike McGinn by a 54% to 46% margin.

On November 9, 2013, Murray stepped down as Senate Majority Leader and submitted his Senate seat effective December 31, 2013. He will be sworn in as mayor of Seattle on January 1, 2014.

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