

Center chief won't abandon rape victims

By Vicki Jarmulowski

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Anne Pride smiles when she thinks about her mother's early reaction to her activism. Ten years ago it wasn't easy to have a daughter speak out on behalf of rape victims.

"I think she used to wish I'd get myself another cause," she states.

Now Pride's family has grown used to the publicity, and her mother merely tells her that she's "really getting famous now" when the media interviews her about her work as the administrator of Pittsburgh Action Against Rape. The Oakland center counsels rape victims, and was one of the first centers of its kind.

Her family's adjustment to her work is really a reflection of the times, Pride says.

"A lot of things that I felt strongly about were once unacceptable. Well, I'm still the same. It's just that the issues have gotten more acceptable."

Greater acceptance and public support may come just in time for the 37-year-old Edgewood resident.

In July she was charged with contempt of court for not surrendering a PAAR counselor's notes of an interview with a rape victim as evidence in a rape trial.

A state Supreme Court justice kept Pride out of jail with a stay of the contempt order. The question of whether a rape counselor's notes should be immune from subpoena will be decided by the Supreme Court in October.



Anne Pride

"We always assumed we could promise them (rape victims) confidentiality," Pride says.

This week she was called upon to support that belief again. Since the first subpoena, seven more have followed. Pride now says that she will go to jail rather than appeal to the Supreme Court each time a subpoena is served.

The shower of publicity makes it hard to imagine that this is the same housewife whose first job was as a library assistant at Edgewood Community Library in 1968.

Although she and her children still live in the community where she grew up and attended school, nothing else remains the same. The 12 years between her first job and her present one have been full of changes for Anne Pride. The end of her marriage and her emergence as a public figure have been two major ones.

"Looking back I can see the tracks of what I feel today," Pride states. "I always worked passionately for what I believed in, but I never had a focus."

The Women's Movement provided that focus for her. Pride became involved with the First Pittsburgh Chapter of the National Organization for Women in 1970. Her involvement with NOW included time as a board member, officer and public relations director on the local and national levels. The women's movement provided more than a forum for her views.

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Won't abandon rape victims, center chief says

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"Through the women's movement I've learned things that several masters' degrees and Ph.d.'s wouldn't have taught me," she says. "It gave me a broader view of what people's problems may be. I've been able to see how different people react to different life experiences."

Her job with Pittsburgh Action Against Rape grew out of her work with NOW.

"At that point, NOW in Pittsburgh was smaller. PAAR grew out of its task force. I had friends who were involved with PAAR, and it was natural that I became involved," she explains. "When I sat down and read the job description it sounded as if I had written it."

Her first position with PAAR was as education/prevention coordinator. In that job she developed public education programs. She is especially proud of the education programs she initiated in the schools. Pride became the rape counseling center's administrator in 1978.

She has seen the organization grow and become more effective. Today it has six paid staff members and between 80 and 100 volunteers that keep it operating smoothly.

Many of the center's goals concerning

the treatment of rape victims have been realized.

"There's been a lot of progress, and I have to think about that to avoid being totally frustrated," Pride states. "People who work with rape victims have had their consciousness raised. The medical and criminal justice systems are definitely working better."

"At this point PAAR's been around longer than anybody else, and people look to that. We're a more established agency, and that has its good and bad points. Now that we're working within the system, our credibility is very good."

"The bad point about it is that it puts us in the position of compromising ourselves. For example, in the case of the records being subpoenaed, a couple of years ago, we probably would have burned the records. Now we're more worried about the work of the center going on."

The changes that occurred within Anne Pride have paralleled the changes in the organization. Her radicalism has also been tempered.

"Since I've been with PAAR I've become a little less hot-headed," she admits. "My idealism has been balanced with reality. I'm more future-oriented. If we can't change something today, I think

about how things might look in five years.

"I'm probably more angry than I was before, because I've seen more," she adds. "But it's a different kind of anger. I've learned realistically what it's possible to do."

Pride says that becoming more realistic has meant coping with the lack of successful prosecution in rape cases. It means dealing with PAAR's constant struggles for funding.

It also means seeing that the number of women who are afraid to give their names when they call PAAR has increased since the attempts to subpoena the center's records. But Pride remains optimistic about the outcome of that controversy.

"If the question were put on a ballot, we'd win hands down," she says. "This is the first case that we know of where it will go to a higher court. What happens in Pennsylvania will be important across the country."

In the meantime, Pride will head PAAR's third "Take Back the Night March" on Saturday. The event, emphasizing safety on the streets after dark, will climax Rape Awareness Week.

While Anne Pride's public work flourishes, she continues to pursue her per-

sonal growth.

This winter she hopes to complete her bachelor's degree at Antioch University, West. The independent study program has helped her document the experiences in her work with PAAR.

Besides finishing the degree, Pride also plans more work with Motherroot Publications, the small feminist press that she operates out of her home. She founded it, and oversees the quarterly review that two other women help to publish.

"Literature and books were always my first love," she says, recalling her first job with Edgewood Library.

Pride sees changes in herself that aren't part of her public, academic or literary achievements. These changes are perhaps the most important, although the media may never notice them.

She gestures toward the dress that she wears and recalls a time when choosing to wear pants was tantamount to making a political statement. Today, her attire reflects the fact that she is more comfortable with herself as a woman.

"I've come to realize that being a feminist doesn't mean I can't be feminine, and that being feminine doesn't mean that I can't be strong," she says. □