

# STYLE

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Marlene Karas/The Pittsburgh Press

Pittsburgh Action Against Rape director Anne Pride has focused her feminist commitment on the issue of violence against women.

## Feminism transforms her from housewife to activist

(Third in a series on the changes Pittsburgh women have experienced since the birth of the feminist movement. Part III explores women and the community.)

By Patricia Lowry

The Pittsburgh Press

TEN YEARS AGO, her wardrobe was built around blouses, blue jeans and a belt with a buckle bearing a symbol of women's liberation.

Today, at 41, Anne Pride resembles nothing so much as the suburban housewife she no longer is. The long, straight hair has been trimmed to soft curls that frame her face, and the clothes she wears to work each day as director of Pittsburgh Action Against Rape (PAAR) are conservative and, well, matronly.

Her style has changed radically, but in 15 years her commitment to improving the status of women in Pittsburgh has not.

Anne Pride's transformation from homemaker to community activist parallels that of other women whose involvement with a cause pulled them out of the home and into the front line of neighborhood and community organizations.

For Anne Pride, that cause was feminism, and her credentials are impressive.

- Her name was in the news often in 1980 when, as director of PAAR, she refused a judge's request to turn over to a defense attorney notes a counselor made while talking with a rape victim. With the threat of jail hovering, Ms. Pride held her ground.

- Her stand eventually led to the 1981 passage of landmark legislation in Pennsylvania guaranteeing confidentiality between rape victims and crisis center counselors.

- From 1969 to 1976, she was an

### PITTSBURGH WOMEN

### TWO DECADES OF CHANGE

editor at KNOW, Inc. in Wilkensburg, the country's first feminist press. She later founded Motheroot Writers Guild, which publishes a quarterly review of women's small press books.

Ms. Pride served on the literary panel of the National Endowment of the Arts from 1978 to 1980, and is currently vice chairwoman of the literary panel of the Pennsylvania Council on the Arts.

- An early member of the First Pittsburgh Chapter of the National Organization for Women, she was elected to the national NOW board and served 2½ years.

- She joined NOW in 1969, when a neighbor she didn't know very well came over for coffee one day and made what she identified as a feminist remark. She asked the neighbor if she knew anything about the women's movement, and when the woman told her she was a member of NOW, "that was it. I paid my dues on the spot without ever going to a meeting because I knew. I still remember what I wore to the first meeting, it was that important to me."

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- Anne Pride was born Anne Huggett at Magee-Womens Hospital in 1942. At the age of 16, though she'd planned to go to college the following year, she mar-

ried Edwin Kurlfink, 12 years her senior, because she felt a need to "get on with" what she felt was expected of her — to marry and have children.

Her father was an advertising executive and her mother, though she'd earned a degree in journalism, stayed home to care for Anne and her two younger brothers.

Ms. Pride was 17 when she gave birth to her daughter Beth. Five years later, her son Edwin was born.

During the years that she was doing the things "I thought I ought to do, working in (her children's) nursery school on my day, doing laundry, entertaining friends, being part of the local women's club and active in the church ... in looking back, there was always something missing.

"When I began to hear about the women's movement, I began to understand what the pieces were that were missing — in self-esteem, in satisfaction with the job. Not so much that the job wasn't a worthwhile job, but the fact that it was a job that society didn't put much worth on and never had, and that was part of what was missing." That was in the late '60s. "Then my life began to change pretty radically."

When Anne Pride joined NOW in 1969, the First Pittsburgh Chapter was the only Pittsburgh chapter. NOW's eight Allegheny County chapters have 3,000 members today, but there were only about 30 NOW members in 1969.

Pittsburgh NOW, she says, had a "heavy-duty philosophy that was more challenging than a lot of NOW chapters." It was a kind of ideological forge that shaped future national NOW presidents Wilma Scott Heide and Eleanor Smeal.

Ms. Pride remembers taking her children, then about 9 and 4, to a NOW demonstration and they "weren't very happy about it, but they were cute, and

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# Former homemaker turns activist

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they ended up on television that night. They really didn't argue after that."

Her daughter became active in NOW and at about 13 was on the board of directors of the Pittsburgh chapter, "which was something that she really did on her own."

For her family, her schedule "wasn't easy. As I got more involved I was away a lot, particularly when I was on the NOW board and was away for weekends." Then, too, "the marriage was foundering, and that probably was one of the reasons I was away a lot as well."

Her husband "tried very hard. You can always make complaints, but I think he went a long, long way to try to understand how all this fit together and how he fit into it."

They separated in 1977. "It was a very young marriage, people that grew in different ways." They finally split up when she could support herself. "For a long time it was a very good marriage. I don't consider it a failure at all. There was a lot of good and a lot of fulfillment out of it, and then there was a time when that wasn't true anymore."

Her parents' response to her feminist conversion was marked by fear and anger. "When I first got involved in the women's movement, it wasn't something you talked about. It was not something you told your mother immediately.

"I don't think (my mother) understood it. I think it was scary for her, though she's tremendously supportive now."

But the search for her own identity led Ms. Pride to a painful estrangement from her father. When she decided to change her surname from Kurlfink back to Huggett, her family name, her father protested. If she was going to be involved with the women's movement, he didn't want his name associated with it. "It had never occurred to me that he regarded it as his name. It had been my name.

"At that point I made up my mind that I wanted a

name that no one could ever reclaim," and she became Anne Pride, a name symbolic of her own sense of who she was becoming.

The gulf between father and daughter eventually narrowed; they reconciled before his death last year.

The strength of commitment that led to a new life and a new name for Anne Pride has now been brought to bear on the issue of violence against women — for her one of the "most vital, most immediate issues that encompasses everything that's important."

PAAR, which began in 1972 as a volunteer organization, was the first rape crisis center in Pennsylvania and one of the nation's first federally funded centers.

In 1977, the first year PAAR was funded and had a staff, the center counseled 127 victims. Last year, it saw 919 victims. In recent years, PAAR consistently has seen more victims than the number of rapes reported to police in Pittsburgh and Allegheny County.

The difference, says Ms. Pride, can be attributed in part to people who were not victimized that year, such as childhood incest victims who seek counseling as adults. But it also has a lot to do with people "feeling more comfortable to come here."

Centers like PAAR provide a place for victims to go for counseling and someone to accompany them to the hospital. But more than that, they "empower women" to "take back the ability to run their own lives."

The problem, she says, is that "women have never been equal in our society. Our society promotes that and condones it," and violence against women is the byproduct.

She allows this is "a hard time for men," even feminist men. It's hard for "a gender who have always sort of been in charge to stand back and let women take charge of things."

While feminists have "attacked a lot of things legally," a priority now, says Anne Pride, must be to "change the base under which we all operate."

**TOMORROW: Women, politics and the law.**