

## A High School Athlete With An Image to Protect

Sam, varsity baseball player for a Contra Costa County (CA) high school, oozes cockiness. Maybe it's because he's one of the more popular students at his high school, or maybe it's because girls have always been drawn to him in ways few know. Either way, it's clean Sam doesn't mind looking at himself in the mirror.

And it's easy to see why. Sam is the physical stereotype of an all-American teenage boy. Built low to the ground, with broad shoulders and a boyish face, he's a skilled athlete blessed with an equally skilled ability to live a lie. You see, Sam is gay. Always has been — for as long as he can remember, at least. The scantily clad women on Sam's bedroom walls are there for inspiration and cover, but mostly they are just *there*, thoroughly unappreciated.

The *real man* ideal - for a long time, Sam tried desperately to like women in *that* way, wanting badly to find some sort of attraction to the women his friends fawned over. Finally, he has accepted that he is gay. And, unlike many gay students who aren't nearly as adept at fitting into the mainstream, Sam's *cover* is relatively easy to maintain.

"I've got them all fooled," he says, seated in

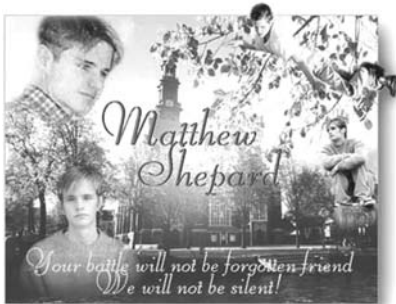
a booth in a Denny's restaurant. "They all think I'm straight." For Sam, being an openly gay athlete in high school is hardly an option he's prepared to consider. Like countless high school, college, and professional athletes before him, Sam has made the calculated decision to keep his sexuality to himself.

"The sports world lags years behind the rest of the world when it comes to living an honest and open life," says David Kopay, a former running back for the San Francisco 49ers, Washington Redskins and Green Bay Packers, who publicly came out in 1975. "The sports world tends to confuse bravery and strength with this warped, sick idea of what it means to be a *real man*. We are sending absolutely the wrong message to kids."

Sam keeps his private life (namely, his boyfriend, who wanted nothing to do with an interview) to himself. The two boys are just *friends* at school. There is no holding of hands or displays of affection. Sam doesn't see himself coming out anytime soon. "I've kind of gotten used to living this way," he says ▼

*From the Contra Costa Times,  
Walnut Creek, CA*

### Don't Let God's Children Be Victims of Intolerance



Matthew Shepard  
1977 - 1998

Art by Dick Alexander

"Matt is loved by God. It is love that has radiated out of the midst of this tragedy, love which empowers his parents to speak compassion rather than condemnation, love which inspired his friends to acts of prayer and witness, love which is more powerful than any voice of hate.

He was not always a winner according to the world's standards. He struggled to fit into a world not always kind to gentle spirits. What was important to Matt was to care, to help to nurture, to bring joy to others in his quiet, gentle way."

— Rev. Anne Kitch

## Honesty Retreat Witnesses to All

People from seventeen cities attended the two day Honesty retreat, held in September at University Baptists Church in Austin, Texas. Rev. Rembert Truluck, of Oakland, California lead the retreat. Truluck, a retired Southern Baptist minister writes tirelessly on the subject of homophobia and the Bible and runs a website, *Steps to Recovery from Bible Abuse*.

UBC welcomed members of Honesty, the Southern Baptist gay and lesbian support, education and advocacy group for the second year in a row. "What a joy it was to see and feel the love and acceptance for homosexuals by Southern Baptists who have learned, believed and acted on the truth about God's love for all people," said Truluck.

Dr. Larry Bethune, pastor of UBC gave a inspiring sermon Sunday morning and members of the church welcomed retreat attendees with open arms, many church members housing participants in their homes. For many people it was the first time they had been welcomed into a Baptist church where they did not have to hide who they are.

The retreat was also a time for people to share their stories. One of the people who told his story was, Skip Allen, son of Dr. Jimmy Allen, former president of the Southern Baptist Convention.

"A new generation of Southern Baptists and other evangelicals is learning that God loves and accepts homosexuals as God's children." According to Truluck, "Truth is bringing freedom and hope to multitudes of GLBT people who had once given up on God, Jesus, the Bible, the Church, and themselves." Truluck says the Church still needs a lot of work. "God," he says, "is doing just fine. Jesus has never really been in trouble, just misunderstood and misrepresented."

You can visit Honesty online at [www.rainbowbaptists.org](http://www.rainbowbaptists.org) and Rev. Truluck's website at [www.truluck.com](http://www.truluck.com) ▼

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