



Dr. Margarethe Cammermeyer Ph.D, RN, Colonel, USAR
Activist and Author, *Serving in Silence*

Dr. Margarethe Cammermeyer PhD, RN, Colonel, USAR, retired from the Army after six years on active duty and 25 years in the Army Reserves and National Guard. Concurrently she worked as a Clinical Specialist and sleep researcher at Veterans Administration Medical System. She has a BS in Nursing from the University of Maryland, and a M.A and Ph.D. from the University of Washington.

During her military career she challenged policies that discriminated against married women, and married women who became pregnant. In 1989, Colonel Cammermeyer, having served for 25 years, challenged the military's anti-gay regulation. Her story drew national attention since she was nationally recognized as a specialist in neuroscience nursing, was Veterans Administration Nurse of the year in 1985, had earned the Bronze Star for Service in Vietnam, was Chief Nurse of the Washington National Guard, and had an earned Ph.D. in Nursing Science.

Her book *Serving in Silence* (with Chris Fisher) was published in 1994. In 1995 a made-for-television movie, *Serving in Silence*, in which Glenn Close portrayed Colonel Cammermeyer was aired earning the Peabody award and three Emmy Awards.

Dr. Cammermeyer continues to challenge the status quo and promote civil and human rights throughout the world. She is an avid spokesperson for lifting the ban against gays and lesbians in the military. Using the military as the paradigm she weaves stories of social change, stressing the necessity to change the military as well as the corporate workplace to an accommodating environment for everyone. The challenge to the sexual minority community in disclosing and the challenge to the sexual majority to feel less threatened is illustrated as she shares anecdotes about grappling with her own sexuality, dealing with her children, being a political candidate and now an activist. Her lectures are adapted to the forum and not canned so that the personal touch is felt in virtually any forum in which she speaks.

Dr. Cammermeyer was born in Oslo, Norway under Nazi occupation in 1942. She immigrated with her family to Washington DC in 1951. In 1965 she married a fellow military officer but divorced in 1980. She has four sons from that marriage. In 1988 she met her life partner, Diane Divelbess. They share a home on Whidbey Island, Washington and are frequently visited by sons and grandchildren.

The Program

The Cost of Serving in Silence

The cost of serving and living in silence is extraordinary to the individual, the family, the corporate world, the church and reality. It is not just a simple "why can't you just be quiet?" as Senator Warner asked Colonel Cammermeyer at the Senate Armed Services hearing in 1993 on lifting the ban against homosexuals serving in the military. Col. Dr. Margarethe Cammermeyer's compelling story of trials and tribulation in the military, to running for public office, to dealing with children and grandchildren give her a unique perspective of the costs and benefits of an open accepting society and work environment. The weaving of her own experiences with the changes in society makes the topic of gays in the military and in society and ever present and challenging topic of her lectures and discussions.

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Demystifying the unknown is the only way to challenge even subliminal biases. The benefits are in providing a safer work place, challenging prejudices, providing security with respect to home family and community. It occurs one person at a time coming out and speaking their truth. Colonel Cammermeyer's truth cost a military future and gained her the respect and integrity of all who hear her story. Her story is an exemplar of the lives of thousands unsung and unheard in America.

"In 1989, during an interview for top-secret clearance, to apply for the War College, I told the military 'I am a lesbian'"

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