

RON ANSIN

b. March 28, 1934

d. June 28, 2023

PHILANTHROPIST & ACTIVIST

“Find the best people — who push you, support you, and share your values.”

Ron Ansin was a passionate philanthropist and often anonymous benefactor, a business and civic leader, and an activist. He played a pivotal role in North Central Massachusetts, where he bolstered the economy; supported the arts, education, health care, and multiple charities; and helped advance LGBTQ rights.

Ansin was born in Worcester, Massachusetts. His family moved to Miami Beach when he was 7. Ansin attended Phillips Academy Andover, an esteemed Massachusetts boarding school. He received his bachelor's degree from Harvard College and attended Yale Law School, where he earned his J.D. in 1959. The year before he graduated, Ansin married Betsey Kander. The couple settled in the state and had four children together.

He was a prominent philanthropist and LGBTQ activist.

After completing his degree at Yale, Ansin took over the family business, the Anwelt Shoe Company, in Fitchburg, Mass. Under his leadership, Anwelt became one of the nation's most successful shoe companies and Cole Haan one of its most respected national brands. Ansin served as a footwear industry advisor to the U.S. Office of the President. In 1996 he was inducted

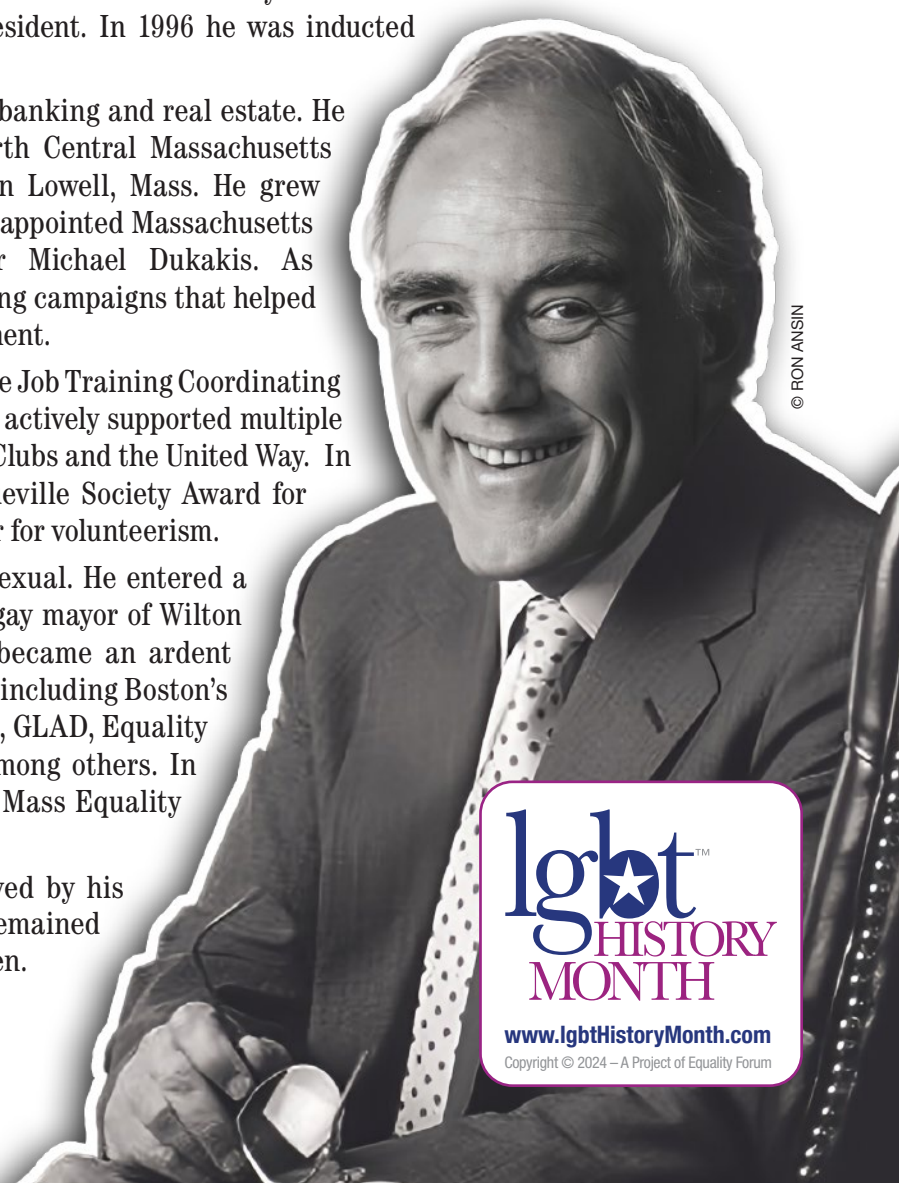
into the Footwear Industry Hall of Fame.

In addition to shoe manufacturing, Ansin pursued banking and real estate. He was named chairman of Merchant's Bank in North Central Massachusetts and helped establish the first Enterprise Bank in Lowell, Mass. He grew increasingly interested in politics, and in 1983 was appointed Massachusetts Commissioner of Commerce by then Governor Michael Dukakis. As commissioner, Ansin launched iconic state marketing campaigns that helped drive tourism and significantly reduced unemployment.

Ansin served on numerous statewide boards, from the Job Training Coordinating Council to the American Civil Liberties Union, and actively supported multiple issues and charities, including the Boys' and Girls' Clubs and the United Way. In 1999 Ansin received the National Alexis de Tocqueville Society Award for Community Service, the United Way's highest honor for volunteerism.

In the early 2000s, Ansin came out publicly as bisexual. He entered a romantic relationship with Jim Stork, the openly gay mayor of Wilton Manors, Florida, whom he later married. Ansin became an ardent supporter of LGBTQ organizations and individuals, including Boston's Fenway Community Health Center, GLSEN, GLAAD, GLAD, Equality Forum, and the National Stonewall Democrats, among others. In 2012 he received the prestigious Icon Award from Mass Equality for his work toward marriage equality.

Ansin died in 2023 at the age of 89. He is survived by his husband, his four children with whom he always remained close, 10 grandchildren, and two great grandchildren.



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