
PART I: PRE-1950

Probably the most influential force in changing attitudes toward homosexuality was the Kinsey report issued in 1948. As C. A. Tripp writes in his biography of Kinsey, homosexuality became front-page news, and much of the hostile criticism toward the report was due to its data on the same-sex experiences of American males. Although the report on women did not come out until five years later and faced even more hostile criticism, the revelation of same-sex activity among women did not raise the stir that the report on men did. Because, as Tripp indicates, Kinsey was determined to force Americans to face up to the existence of homosexuality, he must be regarded as a pioneer in the gay movement. This point should perhaps be emphasized, because changing public attitudes toward homosexuality was crucial and Kinsey played a large part in this. He made not only the public but also those who were gay and lesbian realize that a lot of people were homosexual.

Yet no matter how much research is done, the political battles necessary for gay men and women to be recognized have to come from the gay community. This section includes a discussion of a number of individuals from the then mostly secretive gay community. Henry Gerber, whom authors Jim Kepner and Stephen Murray call the grandfather of the American gay movement, emphasizes that the American gay movement did not appear from nowhere but was influenced by developments in Europe.

One who attempted to communicate some of these developments was Edward Irenaeus Prime-Stevenson, who wrote under the name Xavier Mayne. He was the first American to write extensively about homosexuality, first in a novel and then in a long scholarly monograph, both of which were published in Europe and eventually smuggled into the United States. He has rightly been called the father of American homophile literature. Somewhat more open about his homosexuality was the Boston Brahmin, Prescott Townsend, who traced his ancestry back to the Mayflower. He was a fixture in Boston who publicly advocated for homosexuals. During World War II,

while working in a shipbuilding yard, he was arrested and served time in jail for the "abominable and detestable crime against nature," an event which he reported on in his Harvard class report for that year. He later went on to organize Mattachine Society in Boston. Somehow he managed to retain his leadership in the arts community of Boston. Few gays, however, had the savoir faire of Townsend, or the money and family connections that allowed him to be somewhat different.

Jeannette Howard Foster, a librarian, troubled by a lack of knowledge about what she called "female homosexuality" began investigating it and in the process compiled and published a comprehensive bibliography of sex variant women under her own name, which made it possible for a new generation of scholars, of which I was one, to build upon her research. If Harry Hay was the grandfather of the gay movement in the United States, then Jeannette Howard Foster is the grandmother of lesbian scholarship.

Not quite so open about her own lesbianism but very willing to fight for the cause of homosexuality was Pearl M. Hart. She had as one of her missions in life the representation of the underserved in court, and she defended literally thousands of male homosexuals as part of her practice. She was an early closeted member of the Daughters of Bilitis, lived openly with another woman, and was a major force in the Chicago gay community even though she was not public about her own sexual preference.

Lisa Ben is an interesting paradox. She published and distributed an early gay newsletter in the 1940s under her pseudonym. As of this writing, she is still alive and was very reluctant to use her real name in this book. Since, however, she is identified online as Edyth Eyde, it seems permissible to so identify her here. Her biography emphasizes that it takes a variety of people and attitudes to make a revolution, and sometimes a very small step can, in retrospect, seem to have been quite influential and daring.

Berry Berryman was more of a fighter than Lisa Ben but her pioneering study was not published until after she died. Scholarly journals simply did not accept studies such as hers and there was no gay press to publish it. She also lived in Utah, a state that might seem unlikely to have spawned a gay activist, but her case again emphasizes that a lot of gays and lesbians were doing their best to improve the conditions for their compatriots and whose contributions have not yet come to public attention.

Alfred C. Kinsey (1894-1956)

C. A. Tripp



Photo by C. A. Tripp

For many, “pre-Stonewall” versus “post-Stonewall” defines the decisive turning point in the fight for gay liberation. At the time of the 1969 Greenwich Village riots, however, few anticipated that Stonewall would go down in history as the dividing line between radically different eras; in fact, the riots barely penetrated the consciousness of the public, gay and straight alike. This stands in sharp contrast to another major turning point that had seized widespread attention some twenty years earlier, in 1948. Almost overnight it created a divide between radically different eras of sexual understanding: pre-Kinsey versus post-Kinsey. It brought homosexuality out in the open, and Kinsey’s willingness

to do so marks a major step in gay liberation.

The publication of *Sexual Behavior in the Human Male*, popularly known as the Kinsey Report, ignited a firestorm among scientists, psychiatrists, clergy, moralists of every stripe, and, not least, the general public. Indeed, the report raised a furor the likes of which had not been seen since the debut of Darwin’s theory of evolution. Dr. Alfred C. Kinsey, the senior author (and writer of the report’s every word), rocketed from obscurity to international prominence, the nature of which ranged, depending on point of view, from sublime distinction to what struck some as shameful notoriety. The report’s 804 pages of dense prose, replete with 335 graphs and tables charting the activities of 5,300 male subjects, put under the microscope a world of sexual experience that never before had received rigorous scientific scrutiny. In the process it demolished many myths about sexuality in general, and homosexuality in particular.

Such a text demanded a great deal of the casual reader, of course. But then, many readers had no need to crack Kinsey’s tome for themselves. The

popular press, which knew a hot story when it saw one, trumpeted the central findings throughout the world.

The findings included astonishing statistics: 37 percent of adult males at least once had experienced sex with another male to the point of orgasm; fully 50 percent of adult males had acknowledged occasional sexual attraction to other males; and although "only" 4 percent were exclusively homosexual, 10 percent of married males in their twenties had made overt homosexual contacts *after* getting married. Kinsey expected this to be his biggest bombshell, and was much surprised when no reviewer or commentator even noticed it. Instead, all eyes focused on his next comment: "This [37 percent] is more than one male in three of the persons that one may meet as he passes along a city street" (p. 623). Later in the report, in a discussion of demands from some quarters that homosexuals be "institutionalized and isolated," Kinsey noted that "there are about six and a third million males in the country who would need such isolation" (p. 665).

The figures rocked the boat of conventional wisdom, to put it mildly, for it had been widely assumed that homosexuality arises from rare diseases, or from impaired maleness, or from immaturities that thwart heterosexual development. But the report made it plain that male-male attractions were woven into the fabric of ordinary, everyday life. In that light, notions of rarity, illness, impaired maleness, and immaturity suddenly were subject to challenges which, pre-Kinsey, had lacked scientific substantiation. (A terminological note: "Gay" will be used sparingly because few of Kinsey's homosexual subjects thought of themselves as gay in the identity-group sense of the term.)

The report presented several lines of evidence that showed that homosexual males, far from exhibiting "impaired maleness," fully measure up to or even exceed the maleness of ordinary straights. One such indication emerged from some remarkable discoveries about the timing of puberty in boys. Although it is perhaps obvious that, regardless of sexual leanings, early puberty signals a certain hot-to-trot virility—a rush into sexual maturity—Kinsey's examination of that reality uncovered a major difference between homosexual and heterosexual males.

Kinsey found that boys who reach puberty early (by age eleven) are much more sexually active than boys who reach puberty late (after age fifteen), not only during adolescence but, in fact, for the rest of their lives. This link between early puberty and high lifetime sexual activity was a discovery with far-reaching implications. It took on even more significance when coupled with another Kinsey finding: Boys who mature early are *much* more likely to engage in homosexual behavior than boys who mature late. By age sixteen, for example, 31.9 percent of the early-pubescent boys in his sample had had sex with another male, whereas only 12.3 percent of the late-

pubescent boys had experienced homosexual contact. One could suppose that this disparity might flow from the early-maturing boys having had more opportunities to experiment, simply by virtue of their head start. But the trend persists: By age twenty-seven, 42.2 percent of the early-pubescent males had had homosexual contact, versus 22.2 percent of the late maturers—a ratio of almost two to one.

In other words, homosexuality looms very large indeed among males whose sex drives kick in early and continues to stay strong. Early puberty, of course, by definition, is a fairly rare occurrence in the male population as a whole. But Kinsey's data made it clear that for homosexual males, early puberty very nearly approaches the norm. To put it plainly: Gays tend to want and get sex sooner and have more of it than straights, *from adolescence all the way through to old age*.

Furthermore, the data revealed that boys strongly inclined to homosexual activity tend to attain puberty at an especially early age. Indeed, to his amazement, Kinsey found that the greater the homosexual inclination, the earlier the puberty, and the greater the lifetime sexual experience—by a very large margin! A converse finding is equally striking: Boys who arrive at puberty late not only tend to be less sexually active throughout their lives, but also are highly prone to an exclusively heterosexual orientation.

Initially, the findings seemed compatible with conventional psychological or sociological explanations. The day these findings first poured from the Kinsey lab's IBM computer-card sorters, someone hypothesized that a boy who matured at ten or eleven was ready for sex long before he had sufficient heterosexual opportunities, and thus may get into pattern-setting homosexual experiences. It was tempting, that is, to dismiss the association between early puberty and homosexual behavior as an almost accidental by-product of timing combined with having all-male playmates. But another researcher present that day, Dr. Frank Beach, a distinguished experimental psychologist who chaired the psychology department at Yale, was more cautious and wanted to check it with experimental data in his animal lab. Months later, Beach established that the same basic trends prevail in rats: The first to mature are "champion mounters" strongly inclined to homosexual behavior. This confirmed that Kinsey had uncovered a deep, previously unsuspected connection in the biology of sex.

But that wasn't quite all. Previously, laypeople and sex researchers alike had assumed that homosexual males suffer from a deficiency of sex hormones. The report shattered that theory by pointing out that although injections of male sex hormones do amplify sex drive, they do not change the direction of sexual interest; they simply intensify preexisting attractions. Many researchers also assumed that "inversion," the capacity to switch back and forth between male and female sexual roles, stems from impaired viril-

ity. Building on Frank Beach's research, the report found quite the reverse: A propensity for inversion implies not a "weak" sexuality but an especially robust hormonal situation. The report quotes Beach's findings on lower mammals: "[M]ales who most often assume the female type of behavior are the ones who 'invariably prove to be the most vigorous copulators,' when they assume the more usual masculine role in coitus" (p. 615). Translation: Males who readily switch from being a top to a bottom are kings of the hormonal hill—and deliver performances to prove it!

Among the other myths the report exploded was the old chestnut propagated by Boy Scout manuals and the like that masturbation robs the young of their future ability to perform sexually. Kinsey's data indicated exactly the opposite: Sexually precocious boys, the ones most prone to "self-abuse," are destined to enjoy the lustiest adulthoods. Moreover, the folklore that masturbation brings on such calamities as blindness and hairy palms did not square with the report's finding; irksome in the extreme to guardians of purity, the report found that at least 95 percent of males engage in the practice.

Beyond showing that long-standing stereotypes of gays were ludicrously wrong, the report also presented surprisingly high figures on premarital and extramarital sex among heterosexuals in a context that suggested that the prohibition of such activities does far more harm than good. Many found this all the more alarming because of the prestige of Kinsey's backers: Indiana University, the National Research Council, the Rockefeller Foundation, and a roster of consultants that read like a cross-section of mainstream science.

Yet the substance and value of the Kinsey research lay elsewhere than in what seemed sensational. Then, as now, its great value flowed from the establishment, for the first time, of reliable baseline data on sexuality. Since the Kinsey data now are more than fifty years old, a question arises: Have the figures significantly changed in the intervening years as a result of the sexual revolution and other social forces?

Some certainly have changed. The average age at first intercourse is clearly down from age seventeen, where it once was, just as the amount of premarital intercourse is decidedly higher than it was in Kinsey's time. The proportion of homosexual individuals in the population, which Kinsey found to be stable for five generations, has probably remained so. At least, judging from several subsequent studies, nothing indicates it has either increased or decreased significantly.

* * *

The marked originality of Kinsey's work frequently raises the double question of how he came to sex research, and how he was able to make such

a fresh start. The standard answer (true as far as it goes) is that when Indiana University instituted its first marriage course in 1938, Kinsey was elected to teach it. As his students began asking far-ranging questions about sex, he would try to answer them or look them up in the existing literature. What he found in the literature appalled him: a general lack of evidence and rigor.

Kinsey quietly decided to collect his own data. He began to interview people, to ask basic questions about their sex lives, and to polish and greatly expand his questions. Out of both generosity and a desire to learn more about "the reality," as he liked to call it, he provided a good deal of private counseling to students in his course, most of whom were either married or planning to marry. During the spring semester of 1939 alone he conducted some 280 of these personal conferences.

One could not have predicted from Kinsey's rigidly religious upbringing that he would follow this path. His straitlaced father, a devout Sunday school teacher who insisted that the family walk rather than ride to church, enforced a triple Sabbath: Sunday school, church, and evening prayer meeting. Part of this moralism stayed with young Kinsey until at least his first year in college, during which, he later recalled with amusement, a classmate once sought him out to confess to "excessive" masturbation. Kinsey took his friend back to their dormitory and knelt down beside him to pray for God's help to make the youth stop.

Although Kinsey soon rejected religion, in other respects he continued to lead a conventional life. After receiving a PhD in zoology from Harvard, he secured an assistant professorship at Indiana University, got married, fathered four children, and pursued a career of teaching, writing, and fieldwork in entomology (the study of insects). The fieldwork presented physical and social challenges that Kinsey greatly enjoyed. In fact, a theme never to reverse itself was his lifelong fascination with nature and its effect on his interpersonal relations.

As a boy he was entranced by the outdoors. He loved to go alone on long hikes across the countryside, everywhere noticing the characteristics of plants and animals, particularly the differences and similarities between individuals of the same species. He was fascinated, too, by the sorts of people he found—farmers and country folk from generally less-educated backgrounds than his own, whose permission he often needed to cross land or camp out. He learned to meet strangers very different from himself, to tune into their views and attitudes, and to quickly establish rapport and gain cooperation.

For twenty years Kinsey put these abilities to extensive use while conducting field research on his first great academic passion, the gall wasp. "Bug hunting," as he called his pursuit of the tiny insect, took him on treks for thousands of miles across the then forty-eight states, and into Guatemala

and Mexico, during which he met an even more diverse array of strangers. In Mexico, for example, he would hike for days into mountainous back regions that the government warned were inhabited by hostile Indians. At one point, officials required him to sign a document absolving them of any responsibility should he come into harm's way. Kinsey took the alleged perils in stride. His colleague, friend, and biographer Wardell Pomeroy gave this account of how he dealt with them:

On the first night [out in the wilderness] he set up his tent and went to sleep quickly, exhausted by a long day of collecting specimens. Next morning he emerged to find himself virtually surrounded by a circle of impassive Indians, who sat on the ground and studied him solemnly, with what purpose he did not know. Casually he set up his camp stove, then drew a chocolate bar from his pocket. He bit off a piece and ate it, to show that it was not poisoned, and offered a piece to the man nearest him. Then he divided the bar, giving a small piece to each man. When they had eaten it, he invited one of the Indians to examine his galls. The offer was accepted. After a few minutes of peering at them, the Indian called on the others to join him, and they took turns looking, equally interested. A few hours later, the hills were covered with natives searching for galls to bring to the American professor. (Pomeroy, 1972, p. 39)

From such experiences Kinsey developed "a system for discharging danger in strangers," the cardinal principles of which proved extremely useful in his sex research: "Try never to move forward or back, especially in dangerous situations, be they dealing with the Mafia, interviewing prostitutes, or getting around the nervousness of ordinary people" (Pomeroy, 1977, p. 39). ("Moving forward" can seem intrusive, "moving back" can look defensive or rejecting.) "Be considerate and thoughtful, never selfish in your pursuit." "Let people know what you want, then allow them to bring it to you" (Pomeroy, 1972, pp. 39-40). These are but a few examples; there were many others.

The boyhood hiking, the bug-hunting expeditions, and the sexual counseling thus laid the groundwork for Kinsey's development of one of his most consummate skills: making interview subjects comfortable. His kindly, nonjudgmental manner and simple language almost instantly put strangers at ease. He always reminded his college-bred interviewers to use the vocabulary of their subjects: "The lower-level individual is never ill or injured, though he may be sick or hurt. He does not wish to do something, though he wants to do it. He does not perceive, though he sees. He is not acquainted with a person, though he may know him" (Kinsey, 1948, p. 52). Everywhere

in Kinsey's approach it seemed that even plainness and politeness were powerful stuff, part of his respect for each person's makeup and the right to be himself or herself regardless of current position or predicament. Kinsey insisted that anyone generous enough to give a sexual history deserved to be treated as a friend or guest: "The tottering old man who is a victim of his first penal conviction appreciates an interviewer's solicitation about his health, appreciates being provided with tobacco, candy, and other things the institution allows. The inmate in a women's penal institution particularly appreciates the courtesies that a male would extend to a woman of his own social rank, in his own home" (Kinsey, 1948, p. 48).

* * *

Kinsey early on recognized a need for broader knowledge of what sex is like in special and diverse contexts; he wanted to see behind the curtains of privacy that people use to disguise or to entirely hide what they do from others, and sometimes from themselves. By July, 1939, he had collected some 350 sex histories. The material persuaded him that he needed more information on homosexual behavior. A student whose history he had taken told him of someone in Chicago who could introduce him to homosexuals and show him how they live. Acting on this tip, he arranged for a trial visit to meet the contact and soon was making weekly trips. "He would leave Bloomington after his last class on Friday, drive the more than 200 miles to Chicago, work through the weekend, then drive back on Monday morning in time for his 8:30 a.m. class" (Christenson, 1971, p. 107).

Within two months he had collected scores of homosexual histories and was astounded by the variations among them. Although the subjects he met in Chicago did indeed constitute valuable urban samples, he later was amused by how naive he had been about "the homosexual." The kinds of histories he'd traveled great distances to gather could have been found in abundance, had he but known it, within walking distance of his Bloomington office.

On other occasions he traveled far and wide to study particular groups: prisoners, prostitutes, paragons of virtue in religious sects. Nothing he ever saw diverted or defeated him for, as a colleague put it, "He was always able to look through any ugliness to something lovely beyond" (Earle M. Marsh quoted in Pomeroy, 1972, p. 166). Whenever he ran into something unique, he immediately tried to investigate it. Once, when a sixty-three-year-old man claimed that he could come to orgasm in ten seconds from a flaccid start, Kinsey reacted with a skeptical glance, whereupon the man demonstrated this particular feat on the spot. Deep in rural Kansas, Kinsey searched out a community where, remarkably, all the women were easily

able to reach orgasm in ordinary intercourse—unusual the world over, both then and now. It turned out that the community's prevailing style of pacifying babies involved a particular patting and stroking technique that soon induced sleep. Unbeknownst to the caregivers, the technique accidentally brought their baby girls to orgasm, thereby leaving traces in their sexual substrates that made them "easy responders" for life. Other special cases (tabulated separately to keep them from biasing the averages) involved such things as the sexual responses of people who had had brain surgery, others who for religious reasons had struggled all their lives against any sexual expression, members of nudist colonies, and paraplegics.

In addition to investigations of people plain and special, Kinsey and his co-workers made an extensive study of the differences between the sexes that so affect their psychology and compatibility. (A central finding revealed that males tend to be genitally focused, and females are more "peripheral," i.e., tend to place more value on the moods and ambiance *around* sex than on genital stimulation.) Kinsey also pursued literally dozens of subprojects, including studies of fourteen mammalian species, and of human neurology and physiology. He launched cross-cultural surveys of ancient and modern societies, including a detailed investigation of sex practices in pre-Columbian civilizations and a study that traced shifts in Japanese sexual mores over 400 years. Legal experts were brought in to gauge the relationship between a man's education and how well he fared in the legal system. A bevy of scholars worked to accurately translate into English important classical literature, previous translations of which distorted or outright omitted sexual passages, particularly ones dealing with homosexual themes. For example, Kinsey asked Dr. Hazel Toliver, an authority on ancient Latin and Greek, to check the prestigious Oxford-published Benjamin Jowett translation of Plato's *Symposium*. She found, among many others, the following instances of censorship:

JOWETT: He who under the influence of true love rising upward begins to see that beauty is not far from the end.

WHAT PLATO REALLY WROTE: Through the nightly loving of boys a man, on arising, begins to see the true nature of beauty.

JOWETT: As Pausanias says, The good are to be accepted, and the bad are not to be accepted.

PLATO: As Pausanias says, It is honorable for a man to grant sexual favors to the good among men and shameful for him to grant them to the unbridled.

JOWETT: Now I thought he was seriously enamoured of my beauty and this appeared to be a grand opportunity of hearing him tell what he knew.

PLATO: Now I thought he was eager for my bloom of youth and I believed that it was a windfall and my marvelous piece of good luck that it should fall to me to sexually gratify Socrates in order to hear everything he knew.

* * *

As noted at the outset of this chapter, the report generated enormous commotion. Its most controversial elements, by far, were those that explored homosexual issues. For although homosexuality was only one of the six basic forms of sex examined (the others were nocturnal emissions, masturbation, heterosexual petting, heterosexual intercourse, and sex with animals), and although it represented only a fraction of the research effort, nothing disturbed critics more or brought them to such a fever pitch of hate and rage than did the findings on homosexual behavior. A. H. Hobbs, an associate professor of sociology at the University of Pennsylvania, issued a typical denunciation: "There must be something wrong with Kinsey's statistics, which [coupled with] the prestige of the Rockefeller Foundation, give unwarranted weight to implications that homosexuality is normal, and that premarital relations might be a good thing" (Jones, 1997, p. 734). Others insisted that homosexuality just can't be that prevalent—and, anyway, by talking about it you encourage it. The president of Princeton University, Dr. Harold Dodds, actually likened the report to "toilet-wall inscriptions" (Pomeroy, 1972, p. 287). Clare Boothe Luce, author of the racy play *The Women*, felt obliged to proclaim at a lecture for the National Council of Catholic Women in 1984 that, "The Kinsey Report, like all cheap thrillers, would fall into obscurity if so much attention was not paid to it."

Similar sentiments came from congressmen, from a handful of anthropologists and psychoanalysts, and more stridently from Union Theological Seminary's Henry Van Dusen (who, dangerously, sat on the board of the Rockefeller Foundation). A respected scientist had poked a stick in the eye of American prudery, and the leading prudes, aghast at the sudden airing of heretofore forbidden topics, ferociously lashed back. The hue and cry raised such doubts about Kinsey's data that the National Research Council asked the American Statistical Association (ASA) to examine the work in detail. Kinsey was well prepared for this challenge, but not for the delay it entailed, during which his financial backing began to evaporate. Originally he had envisioned publishing nine further volumes on human sexuality; of these, only *Sexual Behavior in the Human Female* (1953) saw print.

When the ASA finally weighed in, it rated Kinsey's research as the best ever done in the field. The last three words of its summation characterized the report as "a monumental endeavor." (Strangely enough, even here, ho-

homosexual behavior was the central issue; it was the only one of the six kinds of sex that Kinsey studied to appear in the index of the ASA's 338-page report.) But by then, the battle with reaction had been lost.

Heartsick at losing support for his "right to do sex research," as he always put it, and exhausted by efforts to seek new backing, Kinsey's health began to fail. He died on August 25, 1956. Shortly before, he memorably commented: "There isn't a day that I do not regret that we do not have a raft more of our material in print for people to use" (Christenson, 1971, p. 169).

In fact, one of the more haunting aspects of Kinsey's legacy is that perhaps as much as 90 percent of the data that he and his staff gathered has yet to be published or even prepared for publication. Furthermore, changing political winds, budgetary constraints, and mismanagement have severely restricted scholars' access to the treasure trove of information still held by the Kinsey Institute for Sex Research at Indiana University. It is both shocking and sad that many decades after Kinsey started gathering the information, those who control it still consider it too hot to handle.

* * *

A few comments are in order about a pair of recent Kinsey biographies, *Alfred C. Kinsey: A Public/Private Life* by James Jones (1997), and *Sex the Measure of All Things: A Life of Alfred C. Kinsey* by Jonathan Gathorne-Hardy (1998). The Jones book, although a tour de force of meticulous detail distributed over nearly 1,000 pages, makes serious misjudgments throughout that cumulatively destroy the uninitiated reader's ability to grasp Kinsey's character, either his size as a man or his stature as a scientist of great merit. With regard to the nature of Kinsey's homosexuality, his alleged lifelong masochism, and, above all, his "sense of shame," Jones' mistakes are simply too coarse and careless to warrant rebuttal. More serious by far are other misperceptions, such as Jones' notion of "Kinsey the reformer," of a "compulsive" obsessed with revolutionizing sexual mores. This is absolute nonsense. For although the report made a landmark contribution to the intellectual underpinnings of the sexual revolution, Kinsey always maintained that the whole matrix of our mores is stubborn, ancient in origin, glacial in pace, and quite often indifferent to scientific facts. His vision, focused on the individual's striving to understand his or her particular sexuality, was almost exactly the opposite of what Jones portrays. To sum up the vision: If you as a person, whoever you are and wherever you live, can "get ahold of the facts" (a favorite phrase of his), *you can work out your own solutions*. This was not the credo of a man who would impose a new sexual order.

Fortunately, no such complaints can be leveled against the Gathorne-Hardy biography. Every time it comes to hand, I'm amazed anew at how

good it is—rich, important, lively, greatly detailed in its own way, and occasionally hilarious in a fashion that only a polished writer can manage to bring off. For instance, while evaluating how studies subsequent to Kinsey have tried to measure some of the same variables he explored, Gathorne-Hardy takes us behind the scenes to meet the “Blue Rinse Brigade,” a group of elderly ladies hired by a Chicago research organization to gather sexual histories. The “extensive training” that these women were said to have received turned out to consist of only a single page of guidelines and three days of actual practice—a woefully inadequate level of preparation that has plagued many other post-Kinsey studies as well. Kinsey, who wrote extensively on interviewing techniques, in contrast demanded that his history takers receive training for a *full year* and set extremely rigorous standards to maximize their “people skills.” He would have laughed out loud at the very notion of the Blue Rinse Brigade. For as one of its potential subjects asked with plaintive bewilderment, “Do they think I’m going to tell some old woman who reminds me of my mother that I’m a cocksucker?” (Gathorne-Hardy, 1998, p. 286).

* * *

Numerous researchers have stepped in since Kinsey’s death to continue his work, with some achieving success in a few areas. But no one has matched his cutting edge or has come close to the quality and detail of the *Male* and *Female* volumes (both of which have recently been republished). They endure as the standard reference works on what people did and mostly still do in sex. They also endure as the first, and to this day the most comprehensive, refutation of myths associated with homophobia.

REFERENCES

- Christenson, Cornelia V. *Kinsey, A Biography*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1971.
- Gathorne-Hardy, Jonathan. *Sex the Measure of All Things: A Life of Alfred C. Kinsey*. London: Chatham and Windus, 1998.
- Jones, James H. *Alfred C. Kinsey: A Public/Private Life*. New York: Norton, 1997.
- Kinsey, A. C., Pomeroy, W., and Martin, C. *Sexual Behavior in the Human Male*. Philadelphia: W.B. Saunders, 1948.
- Kinsey, A. C., Pomeroy, W., Martin, C., and Gebhard, P. *Sexual Behavior in the Human Female*. Philadelphia: W.B. Saunders, 1953.
- Pomeroy, Wardell B. *Dr. Kinsey and the Institute for Sex Research*. New York: Harper and Row, 1972.

Henry Gerber (1895-1972): Grandfather of the American Gay Movement

Jim Kepner
Stephen O. Murray

If everyone keeps aloof, nothing will be done. As Goethe said:
"Against human stupidity even the gods fight in vain."

Henry Gerber, October 23, 1945, letter to Manuel Boyfrank

Henry Gerber (1895-1972), the crotchety Bavarian-born forefather of a gay movement in the United States, arrived in the United States in 1913. In 1917 he was briefly institutionalized in a mental institution for being homosexual. After the United States declared war on Germany, Gerber was given a choice between joining the U.S. Army or being interned for the duration of the war as an enemy alien. He chose to join the army, working as a printer and proofreader in Coblenz (in the Rhineland) as part of the American Army of occupation during the early 1920s. Gerber contacted the then-thriving Bund für Menschenrecht (Society for Human Rights, founded in 1919 by Hans Kahnert) and worked either on *Blätter für Menschenrechten* (*Journal for human rights*, a gay periodical published in



Chicago Historical Society

Shortly before his death, Kepner drafted a two-and-a-half-page biographical sketch for a precursor of this book. Murray edited this sketch and added material from Gerber's letters—letters that Kepner had collected and that are now in the ONE/IGLA collection at the University of Southern California—and from the material Kepner supplied Katz (1978). Dates following quotations are those of letters to Manuel Boyfrank. Page numbers that are not part of a fuller reference are from Katz (1978). Kepner did not supply citations for the direct quotations in his sketch.