

## Preface

This book has had a long gestation period and in the process lost its original parent. The book was originally conceived by Wayne Dynes nearly a decade ago and some of the articles that appear in it now were commissioned then. One of them, by the late Jim Kepner, has been revised and finished by William A. Percy III. Due to other commitments and some difficulties with potential contributors, Dynes decided to withdraw from the project. A couple of other possible editors were approached by John De Cecco, the editor at The Haworth Press who originally commissioned the work, but finally, at the urging of Percy, he requested that I take over. The book has changed considerably from what Dynes envisioned, and for this I take responsibility. I have included many more individuals than he would have, but in spite of this it is by no means all-inclusive. Many people, such as Martin Block, made important contributions but are not included here. In Block's case, it is because this book is intended to be more than Mattachine, Los Angeles, or ONE, Inc., and although he was significant, there is still a disproportionate number of Angelenos, as residents of Los Angeles call themselves, included in this collection.

The purpose of the book is to cast as wide a net as possible, and suggestions and nominees were made by many people who played significant roles in the organization or emergence of the gay and lesbian community. It also includes a number of individuals who have not self-identified as gay or lesbian but who made significant contributions and were active on the firing line, which, in the long run, is what counted. There is also some disparity in length of biography because, although all of those in the book were out there "fighting" the battle, some had more important roles or were better known than others. The hardest decision was to cut out those who were more or less quietly in the struggle before 1969 but only later emerged as prominent in the cause. C. A. Tripp, for example, one of the contributors, played a significant role, particularly in his influence on Kinsey, but it was only after 1969 that he made his most significant and public contributions. Although Allen Ginsberg is included, in part because he was so outspoken about his homosexuality, Gore Vidal is not. Vidal, although he wrote a significant gay novel, was not so much in the public arena for the gay cause. Still, some feel he

should have been included; the decision was not to do so. Other more closeted gays of the pre-Stonewall period were not even considered.

It is difficult for those who were not active in the 1950s or 1960s to realize the stigma that the activists suffered, and the actual fear and hostility their presence aroused. The reader will find, however, that these early barrier breakers were a varied lot, and about the only thing they had in common was a commitment to change public perceptions of gays and lesbians. They often disagreed on methods and on specific action, and much internecine warfare existed. Some, such as Lisa Ben, worked anonymously and are still reluctant to come out publicly. The ultimate key, however, was to stand up and be counted, even if under a pseudonym, and this book is essentially about those who did.

I wish to acknowledge the help and encouragement of John De Cecco, William A. Percy III, and William Palmer, Publications Director of The Haworth Press. All of my contributors are owed a special thanks because of their willingness to suggest others to be included and for their willingness to meet my deadlines. Two women, Sharon Valente and Judith M. Saunders, were particularly helpful; I have listed them as associate editors. C. Todd White, a doctoral student, rounded up photos and found missing documents, therefore he is listed as an assistant editor. I would also like to thank the staff at The Haworth Press for their assistance, particularly Karen Fisher and Peg Marr.

## Introduction

Same-sex relations are not new. They have existed in every culture and every time period. Occasionally, as in the Greek world, they were open and tolerated and even institutionalized, but until recently most modern historians refused to talk about such subjects. The English translations of Plato, for example, used all sorts of subterfuges to avoid mentioning the subject, and it was only in the last part of the twentieth century that this defect was remedied. It is perhaps no wonder that at least some of the founders of modern Greek studies, such as Johann Joachim Winckelmann (1717-1768), were gays who probably achieved pleasure in realizing the contribution of same-sex people to history, although they themselves did not come out openly. This was because Western culture, since Christianity had become the official religion at the end of the classical period, forced such discussions underground, stigmatizing and officially condemning same-sex activities. In spite of this, we know that in many of the royal courts there were homosexual coteries and in the large urban centers there was an underground gay and lesbian culture which was often harassed by the police and authorities but which continued to grow and expand. There were even covert organizations of gay men (although so far no record of lesbian organizations has been found) since at least the eighteenth century, and others have argued that they existed before then. Informal alliances were formed through male brothels, bars, and clubs. Often, however, individuals and occasionally whole groups were publicly exposed, ostracized, and even imprisoned. This happened frequently enough that few men or women were willing to publicly proclaim their same-sex preferences. Some who had great power or influence did not hide their same-sex interests, but even in this case they usually acted with caution. Most homosexuals attempted to exist invisibly in society at large without making too many waves.

The first modern challenges to this sub-rosa existence came in Germany, a consequence of the result to unite the disparate German-speaking states into what came to be called the German Empire under the leadership of the Prussian royal house, the Hohenzollerns. This unification was accompanied by an attempt to unify the German legal code. Generally, until the end of the eighteenth century, Europeans outside of England had been governed under

a civil law tradition that had been heavily based on Roman law and that since the medieval period had condemned homosexuality. Matters changed during the French Revolution, and one of the lasting accomplishments of the revolution was the legal revision that came to be called the Napoleonic Code. At the beginning of the nineteenth century it was adopted in most of the areas of Europe under French occupation, including parts of Germany. In terms of sex, the code adopted two standards to determine whether a sex act was legal or illegal: age and consent. Children were a protected class, but otherwise sex activity taking place between those who had reached the age of consent (usually fourteen) was not against the law. When Germany was being unified, the question was whether the Prussian law (traditional civil law which made sodomy a crime) would become the basis for the legal code of the new empire or the provisions about homosexuality and other sexual issues that the Napoleonic Code had adopted would be followed. The threat of abandoning the Napoleonic Code emboldened a few daring spokespersons to make the debate public, notably Karl Heinrich Ulrichs (1825-1895), a homosexual himself, who set out to publicly challenge attitudes on same-sex relationships and to urge the adoption of the Napoleonic code. He argued in a series of longish pamphlets and short books that the instincts which led men and women to same-sex relationships were inborn and therefore natural to a significant percentage of human beings. Sex between such individuals was not any more dangerous to society than was procreative sex between married persons, and there was no basic reason to outlaw such relationships. Ulrichs developed a complex schematic for the development of homosexuality, which those who are interested in the subject should read; it was finally translated into English in the 1990s. Ulrichs sent his publications to important people everywhere, from the kaiser to members of the medical community. Others contributed to the campaign to recognize same-sex relations. Karoly Maria Benkert (or Kertbeny) (1824-1882) coined the term *homosexuality* to describe such relationships. Although it was homosexuals themselves who raised the issue and started the discussion, the questions also aroused interest among many in the legal and medical communities. Most notable among these was forensic physician Richard von Krafft-Ebing (1840-1902), who adopted, in part, Ulrichs' biological explanations. Krafft-Ebing, however, also held that certain behavior patterns such as masturbation, which he condemned, were also crucial in "perverting" heterosexuality. Still, the major contribution of Krafft-Ebing's work, in spite of many of its negative qualities, was to bring homosexuality out of the closet, making it a subject fit for scientific discussion, and ultimately to political action.

The leader in such action was Magnus Hirschfeld (1868-1935) who began the first public movements for what might be called the emancipation of homosexuals. A researcher into homosexuality as well as a homosexual

himself, Hirschfeld organized the Scientific Humanitarian Committee in 1897 in Germany designed not only to carry out research but to remove from the German legal system (which had ultimately rejected the Napoleonic solution) the negative laws on homosexuality. Although he was unsuccessful in attaining such a revision, his organizing efforts led to the establishment of committees in Germany and elsewhere in Europe to campaign for the rights of gays. The existence of such organizations was often precarious not only because of the stigma its members might suffer but also because the trauma of World War I, the Great Depression, and the rise of the Nazis and communism undermined their financing, their right to proclaim their identity, and in many cases led to the imprisonment of their members. Americans were not unacquainted with these groups, and some such as Henry Gerber wrote for continental publications and tried unsuccessfully to initiate a similar organization in the United States. Although initially many individual communists had urged a change in the law toward gays, including Emma Goldman (1869-1940), the Russian Communist Party, by the time Stalin came to power, had come to regard homosexuals as a product of capitalist degeneracy, and the USSR did little to improve their lot. The Nazis were more openly hostile; shortly after they came to power they destroyed the research materials that Hirschfeld had collected, and by the end of World War II they had embarked on a program of putting homosexuals into concentration camps where thousands died. Some of the organized groups in Europe still managed to survive despite the Nazi and communist policy, and the oldest continuous group is that associated with the publication of *Der Kreis*, which started in Zurich in 1932. In the Netherlands, still another group originally affiliated with Hirschfeld's group in Berlin continued to exist after the destruction of his institute by the Nazis, but it disappeared with the Nazi occupation of that country. Immediately after the end of World War II, surviving members began publishing *Vriendschap*, and this was soon followed by the emergence of a new reinvigorated organization. The Dutch group also began publishing *Lesbos*, a lesbian-oriented publication, one of the earliest to deal with topics of special interest to women. Other postwar groups were established or revived in Germany, France, England, and elsewhere, although not in the Eastern bloc countries.

Progress was not easy, however, since even the most innocent effort to organize groups could be made to sound sinister to those willing to exploit the existing homophobic tendencies in large segments of the population, particularly in the United States. For example, an early attempt to bring various gay and lesbian groups together in the International Committee for Sexual Equality in 1951 led to a sensationalist denunciation of the committee by an American, R. E. L. Masters. He portrayed the mostly letterhead group as the the most powerful body in the history of homosexual organizations, and a

major threat to the world through its attempt to put forth policies favoring same-sex toleration.

In the United States, informal groups centered around bars, taverns, and bathhouses in most urban areas served as a haven for various gays in the last part of the nineteenth century and first part of the twentieth. Prohibition destroyed the bar culture, but bathhouses continued to be a meeting place for male gays, and so eventually did some speakeasies. We know that some gays and lesbians found refuge in other kinds of groups. In Salt Lake City, for example, not a city noted for its bars or taverns, the Bohemian Club attracted a mixed group of nonconformists, many of whom were gay or lesbian. Certain neighborhoods such as the Tenderloin in San Francisco, Greenwich Village in New York City, the Near North Side in Chicago, and other similar neighborhoods were islands of toleration in a hostile world. Few gays or lesbians, however, dared to come out openly to their nongay friends because exposure could mean disaster if not imprisonment. Some even adopted public attitudes of hostility toward the lesbian and gay community; some would claim J. Edgar Hoover as a sad example of this.

This fear of exposure continued almost until the end of the twentieth century. The pianist and performer Liberace serves as a good example, since he continued publicly to deny he was homosexual (even in a court case) until his death, although significant numbers of people knew otherwise. He was such an exaggeration of the gay queen that although many of his fans probably suspected, they wanted to accept his denial—and he was afraid of exposure. Rock Hudson, who had publicly denied his same-sex preference, revealed himself only as he was dying, but his deathbed admission struck a major blow for the gay and lesbian community.

Although police and law enforcement agencies frequently kept records on suspected homosexuals, they often adopted a policy of ignoring these files except when it was convenient to do otherwise. As a police reporter in the mid-1940s, I had access not only to the official reports and complaints about alleged sexual indiscretions but to the informal notes and cards compiled by the police on the sexual activities of a large number of individuals in the city in which I lived. Although only a handful of these people were arrested during my tenure in that job, their activities were observed (perhaps unknown to them) and their files were periodically updated. Such a practice could pose threats to any gay person whenever the police wanted to interfere, and could act as a paralyzing force in any attempt to elicit change.

There was also a kind of unofficial censorship on the topic. The Bell Telephone Company, for example, refused to list any group with the word *homosexual* in its title until the late 1960s, and it was not until after this situation that the words *gay*, *lesbian*, and *homosexual* could be listed in any public directory or “family” newspapers. Instead, circumlocutions were

used to avoid open discussion of the subject and large numbers of people remained totally ignorant about the extent of homosexuality in their community.

Several factors worked to bring about a change in attitudes, although ultimately it was the action of the people in the gay and lesbian community themselves. Undergirding the potential for such action, however, was a growing body of research about sexuality itself and same-sex relations in particular. Much of the research was done in the United States. One of the first studies of same-sex relations was conducted by Katharine Bement Davis in her study of the *Factors in the Sex Life of Twenty-Two-Hundred Women*, carried out in the 1920s. She found that about half of her college-educated sample of women had experienced "intense emotional relations with women" (Davis, 1929, p. 248). The number giving these feelings of overt sexual expression, and whom she classified as lesbian, however, was about 200, slightly under 10 percent. The study was one of many underwritten by the Rockefeller-supported foundations and bureaus.

Interestingly, for a brief time in the United States during the first few decades of the twentieth century considerable research on homosexuality was undertaken, but little of it was published. The sociology department at the University of Chicago, as part of its efforts to understand the changes in social and sexual mores resulting from the growing urbanization of the United States, had begun researching homosexuality in 1910, and a number of student papers and dissertations appeared which included some discussion of the phenomenon. Chicago researchers also found large homosexual networks in Illinois penitentiaries and reform schools, and also reported that some of the individuals involved in same-sex activities seemed to engage in such practices only while confined to prisons. What is known sometimes as the "pansy craze" in the 1920s attracted sightseeing tourists to gay and lesbian haunts and led to novels with gay or lesbian themes such as Radclyffe Hall's *Well of Loneliness* (1929), Blair Niles' *Strange Brother* (1931), and Robert Scully's *A Scarlet Pansy* (1933). Realistic novels by such writers as James T. Farrell also included discussions about same-sex relationships.

This brief outpouring of research and publication declined in the 1930s as American psychoanalytic explanations of homosexuality increasingly gained popularity and convinced both local authorities and the general public that homosexuality could best be explained and dealt with in terms of individual psychopathology. Homosexual and lesbian staff and professors, as well as those who were not but who had participated in the early research projects, more or less ceased such research and went underground. The University of Chicago, the early example of tolerance, for example, admitted in the year 2001 that as late as the early 1950s Paul Goodman, a not-so-closeted gay man, was dismissed from the university because of his same-sex

activities. The U.S. government itself in the 1950s and 1960s moved against known homosexuals in government; among those dismissed was Franklin Kameny, whose biography is included in this book.

Most psychoanalytic studies of the time are now more or less rejected because of sampling errors and false assumptions, but one or two of the better ones can still be mined for information. The first large-scale American study was by psychiatrist George Henry who subscribed at least in part to a biological origin of homosexuality. The data in his *Sex Variants* published in 1941 were better than his conclusions, which were influenced by his own prejudices and reflected the general attitudes of the time. Henry had the support of large segments of the underground New York gay and lesbian community who recruited subjects for his study, and it is the information that they provided which makes the study important. Both the earlier Chicago studies and the Henry study indicate the existence of widespread gay and lesbian communities even though much of the public knew little about them.

Although such scholars as Howard S. Becker (1965) and Erving Goffman (1959) questioned the assumed pathology of homosexuality, arguing that it received its "deviant status" because of rules and sanctions imposed by society, it was Alfred Kinsey's work that raised the whole issue of homosexuality to national attention, especially in his book, *Sexual Behavior in the Human Male* (1948). Homosexuals found in reading the report that they were more numerous than the general public (or perhaps they themselves) realized and that many "heterosexuals" had also had same-sex experiences. Popular reports of the percentage of gays in the population ranged from one person in twenty to one person in ten, to even higher, depending on which Kinsey statistic was used. Still, at the heart of the report was that 4 percent of Kinsey's male subjects could be labeled as exclusively homosexual. Although low, this was still a number the public could not ignore, and it caused an impassioned public debate.

The gay community was deeply involved in this debate, and its power and influence was growing, even though it was still not fully out in the open. World War II had helped many rural and small-town Americans find others similar to themselves in the military service. Although the various services occasionally dishonorably discharged a person for being homosexual, vast numbers of gays and lesbians went through the World War II experience either undetected or ignored and were able to make lifelong friendships. It was this factor that stood them in good stead when they went back to civilian life and began to seek other gays and lesbians.

There had already been some glimmering of gay organizations in the 1920s, such as Henry Gerber's Society for Human Rights in Chicago which was quickly abandoned after the "leaders" were put in jail. Lisa Ben had



produced some nine issues of *Vice Versa* in Los Angeles in 1947-1948; she quit after a year, yet her efforts proved symbolic of what was to come. In 1948, a group of mostly gay men in Los Angeles campaigned for Henry A. Wallace under the euphemism "Bachelors for Wallace." Some of the same people in this group emerged to organize or join the Mattachine Society, a group founded by Harry Hay and four others. The Mattachine Society itself was initially secret, but many of its leaders became publicly known and eventually the group went public. The formation of the Mattachine Society marked the beginning of what might be called gay activism; without this period there could have been no Stonewall. Dale Jennings, one of the Mattachine Society's founders, is called "the Rosa Parks of the gay movement" in this book because of his willingness to confront the authorities.

The groundwork for the gay movement was also helped by studies and reports such as the Wolfenden Committee in London which had advocated legalization of homosexuality, as had the model penal code of the American Law Institute and the ninth International Congress on Criminal Law, the American Civil Liberties Union, the Quakers, and other religious groups, all of whom argued for equal rights for gays and lesbians. Unofficially, even the U.S. government had begun to change its attitude under the leadership of the National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH) which had established a commission to study the issue. The commission, headed by Evelyn Gentry Hooker, whose research into homosexuality was an important factor in changing scientific opinions, urged that homosexuality be decriminalized and that discrimination in employment against those labeled as gay or deviant be eliminated. There was an attempt by some to bury the report, but it was published by the gay community itself.

Also aiding the gay movement was the demand of other groups for equal civil rights and the elimination of discrimination. These movements followed the leadership of those involved in gaining civil rights for blacks, a movement that helped pave the way for demands for changes by other groups, including homosexuals. Although no single leader in the gay and lesbian communities achieved the fame and reputation of the Reverend Martin Luther King Jr., a large number of activists put their careers and reputations on the line, many of whom are commemorated in this book. In retrospect the radical drop-off in public hostility toward homosexuality came about in a remarkably short period of time. One reason it is so remarkable is that the gay and lesbian movement, unlike the civil rights movement, had more or less to build their legal case from scratch because there was not the centuries-long foundation of struggle and legal advances which had been won over several generations by the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), Congress on Racial Equality (CORE), and the American Civil Liberties Union, which had built up a caseload of

law and precedents—all of which had been lacking in the fight for gay rights.

Also building on the civil rights movement was a well-orchestrated campaign to give women equal rights with men, a struggle that had begun in the United States in the middle of the nineteenth century, again a much longer history of activism than existed in the gay movement. Here, as in the gay movement, the leadership was more dispersed than in the civil rights movement, although the National Organization for Women (NOW) seemed at times to have a dominant position. The passage of civil rights and anti-discrimination legislation again served as a model for the gay community. Other groups also struggled to be heard and to have the laws changed including Latin Americans, Americans of Asian descent, the physically disabled, and others. Although they all had difficult struggles, none of them had been so long officially ostracized as the gay and lesbian community. Thus although all of these factors were important in the growing success of the gay movement, it was the activism of the homosexual community itself that carried the brunt of the battle in changing medical, scientific, social, and political opinions about homosexuality and lesbianism. It was a motley crew of radicals and reformers, drawn together by the cause despite personality and philosophical differences, who helped lay the foundation for a successful battle that brought gays into the twenty-first century as a stronger community than ever before.

It is their story that is told in the following pages.

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