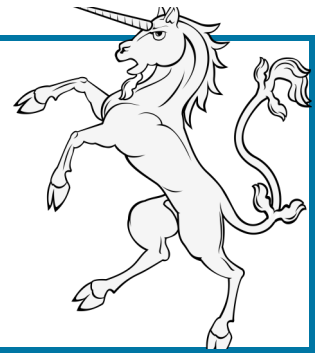


"Nunc Aut Nunquam"

The Unicorn

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Our Nation Mourns Over 100,000 Dead

Here are Two Notable LGBTQ Icons who have Passed



Aimee Stephens, Transgender Plaintiff at Center of Historic Pending SCOTUS Case, Has Died at 59

LGBTQ Nation & Towleroad

The Michigan woman at the center of a high-profile transgender rights case pending before the U.S. Supreme Court has died, her family said.

Aimee Stephens, 59, who had kidney disease, had been in hospice care at

home in recent days. She passed away Tuesday, her brother-in-law John Pedit said.

The New York Times reports: **"She died from complications related to kidney failure, according to the American Civil Liberties Union, which represented Ms. Stephens. Ms. Stephens had been on dialysis for some time and entered hospice care in late April, according to the A.C.L.U. Donna Stephens, Aimee Stephens's wife, thanked supporters in a statement for their 'kindness, generosity, and keeping my best friend and soul mate in your thoughts and prayers.'"**

Stephens' case was argued before the justices in October, and a ruling is expected by July. She was the first transgender person to have a civil rights complaint heard by the high court, according to the American Civil Liberties Union, which represented her.

"Aimee is an inspiration. She has given so many hope for the future of equality for LGBTQ people in our country, and she has rewritten history," Stephens' wife, Donna, said in a statement. **"The outpouring of love and support is our strength and inspiration now."**

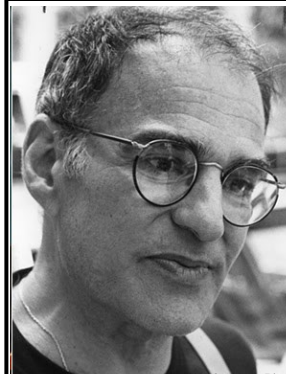
Stephens was in a wheelchair in October when she traveled to Washington to hear oral arguments in her case.

Her condition recently deteriorated to the point that she had to discontinue dialysis and was in stage four renal failure, according to the GoFundMe page that Pedit set up last week to help Stephens' wife, Donna, pay for end-of-life care and funeral expenses.

"Sadly it appears that Aimee will never see the result of her valiant and difficult fight for transgender rights," Pedit had written on the GoFundMe site. The GoFundMe page had raised over \$21,400 as of Tuesday afternoon.

Her death won't render the pending Supreme Court case moot, as

(Continued, pg. 2, AIMEE)



Anthony Fauci Reflects on The Death of Larry Kramer: 'He was truly an icon'

Reprinted from: The Washington Blade

Dr. Anthony Fauci often had a combative relationship with Larry Kramer, but that didn't stop the longtime director of the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases from fondly remembering on Wednesday the gay rights pioneer and AIDS activist upon news of his death.

"It's a very sad day, not only for me, but for so many who have had the opportunity to interact with Larry since the very beginning of the HIV/AIDS era," Fauci told the Washington Blade in an exclusive interview.

Although the two had a relationship that was at times friendly, other times antagonistic, Fauci said he and Kramer had conversations right up until his death, including at dinners, via email and **"a lot of telephone calls, a lot of calls."**

It was in one of those phone calls a couple of weeks ago Fauci said he began to suspect Kramer's passing would come soon. At the time, Fauci said he was calling Kramer to congratulate him on a new honor, calling it a **"personal friendly thing."**

"He sounded extremely halting on the phone, barely able to get the words out," Fauci said. **"I said to myself when I hung up, 'Gee, this is not good news. He's getting very weak and frail.'"**

Fauci acknowledged he was aware Kramer **"was getting very fragile over the last several months"** based on recent pictures of the HIV activist and previous phone conversations.

News of Kramer's passing Wednesday, Fauci said, came to him via a text message earlier in the day from HIV activist Peter Staley, who urged Fauci to call him.

"It was very sad; we both were in tears on the phone," Fauci said, becoming choked-up in his interview with the Blade.

Crediting Kramer with having an **"amazing life, a full life,"** Fauci recalled the late activist's efforts in helping found **ACT UP** and the New York City-based **Gay Men's Health Crisis**.

"He was truly an icon," Fauci said. **"He kind of forged the area, the role of the activist community and participating in the serious aspects of**

(continued, pg. 2, KRAMER)

(AIMEE)

her estate could still recover compensatory and perhaps other damages for the alleged violation of her rights, legal experts said.

At issue in the case is whether Title 7 of federal civil rights law, which prohibits workplace discrimination based on sex, applies to discrimination against transgender people.

The LGBTQ community owes Aimee Stephens our deepest gratitude for her bravery in standing up for the right of LGBTQ people to live as ourselves. We share our condolences with all of her friends & family, and especially her wife, Donna Stephens.

Transgender activists say at stake in the case is their right to work, earn a living and support their families.

The funeral home and its supporters say a ruling for Stephens could prohibit sex-specific policies altogether, forcing entities to open facilities such as showers, restrooms, locker rooms and shelters to **"men who believe themselves to be women."**

Stephens was fired from her job as an embalmer and funeral home director at R.G. and G.R. Harris Funeral Homes in Garden City in 2013 after informing her boss she was transitioning from male to female and planned to wear women's clothing.

At that time, Stephens had been living as a transgender woman for years outside of work but had decided come out to her colleagues.

On behalf of Stephens, the federal Equal Employment Opportunity Commission in 2014 sued Harris Homes, which operates three funeral homes in southeast Michigan.

The owner of Harris Homes, Thomas Rost, contended that Stephens' dress would become a distraction for grieving families. His lawyer argued the funeral home was within its rights to insist that Stephens adhere to its dress code for male employees during work hours.

The U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals for the 6th Circuit ruled against Rost in 2018, concluding in part that discrimination on the basis of transgender status is **"necessarily"** discrimination on the basis of sex. Rost and Harris Homes appealed to the Supreme Court.

Stephens grew up as Anthony Stephens in Fayetteville, North Carolina.

Stephens initially wanted to become a pastor and spent a year in seminary, but felt a calling to the funeral home industry and comforting families through their most difficult hours, she said in an interview last year.

She married and divorced, then married again after reconnecting with a childhood friend, Donna. She moved to Michigan 20 years ago to be with her, settling in Metro Detroit. Donna supported Stephens through her transition, as did most of her extended family, she said last year.

"Aimee did not set out to be a hero and a trailblazer, but she is one, and our country owes her a debt of gratitude for her commitment to justice for all people and her dedication to our transgender community," Chase Strangio, deputy director for Trans Justice with the ACLU's LGBT & HIV Project and a member of Aimee Stephens' legal team, said.

"When Aimee decided to fight back after she was fired for being transgender, she just wanted it to be acknowledged that what happened to her was wrong. Being a part of Aimee's team at the Supreme Court has been one of the proudest moments of my life because of the amazing person behind the case. As a member of her legal team, I am deeply sad for this loss. As a transgender person and an advocate, I am filled with both grief and rage that we have lost an elder far too soon. As we, and millions, carry her work for justice forward, may she rest in power and continue to guide us on this path."

(Continue, pg. 3, AIMEE)

(KRAMER)

how you respond to a particular disease that afflicts individuals who are at risk, and actually already afflicted. And that's Larry. I mean, that's what Larry did."

As a founder of **ACT UP** in the 1980s, Kramer helped lead protests against **NIH** to encourage the development of a cure to combat **HIV/AIDS** and distribute it to thousands of gay men dying from the disease across the United States.

One such protest was held at **NIH** on April 20, 1990. More than 1,000 demonstrators hoisted placards and shouted in bullhorns as they accused Fauci of taking insufficient action.

"I've had an interesting, unusual, and in some respects, wonderful journey with Larry over the years," Fauci conceded. **"Since I was in his mind a representative of the government that he felt wasn't moving quickly or well enough with HIV, we started off in somewhat of an adversarial role where he was attacking me for any number of reasons, and then as we got to know each other and realized that we both had a common goal that we shared, we became acquaintances, then friends, then really, really close friends."**

In the early days of the HIV/AIDS epidemic, there was no treatment. Fauci took a lead role in the development in 1987 of AZT, or zidovudine, the first antiretroviral approved for the treatment of HIV, but that drug was limited in effectiveness and carried side effects.

It wasn't until many years later in the 1990s, and many, many more protests from HIV activists, that more effective treatments became available against HIV/AIDS, which led to the availability today of Truvada as a prophylactic to prevent infection. Fauci has credited the gay community with having **"incredible courage"** in lifting stigma during the HIV/AIDS crisis to help the push forward for drugs available today.

Although Kramer had a reputation for being cantankerous and personally abrasive, Fauci said that was exactly what made him effective.

"He was very iconoclastic," Fauci said. **"He was theatrical. He was sometimes, not sometimes, but often times, rubs people very much the wrong way, but he got the attention that he needed to make the points that he wanted to make. So, you know, every once in a while, a giant among us passes, and I think this is one of those times when somebody who truly was a giant and an icon and a legend passes."**

Kramer wasn't shy about antagonizing Fauci in recent years, publicly criticizing him for failing to develop a cure for HIV/AIDS. Nonetheless, Fauci said the two continued to be friends, although it was **"a complicated relationship."**

"We gradually grew into a very deep and lasting friendship, and a friendship that he wasn't afraid, even when we were at our very best and closest of still criticizing things that he didn't think were the way he wanted to see me do things," Fauci said. **"So he wasn't afraid to push back even at a time when we were close friends."**

Asked by the Blade what was Kramer's most singularly important act in combatting HIV/AIDS, Fauci identified the late activist's ability to **"organize a group of young people."**

"He was outrageous in some respects, but he brought into his wing a group of young activists who took a very different approach, who took a very analytical approach, a very intellectual approach, a very academic approach," Fauci said.

Fauci identified Staley, Mark Harrington, Gregg Gonsalves and David Barr as among the HIV activists who were associated with Kramer and **"came under his wing."**

(Continue pg. 3., KRAMER)

(AIMEE)

"Aimee Stephens is a hero in the fight for equal rights for all people," said Mara Keisling, executive director of the National Center for Transgender Equality. ***"Aimee was fired for being transgender, and she chose to stand up for herself and for all transgender people. She took her fight all the way to the US Supreme Court. Aimee was deeply committed to justice and fairness, and an incredible person. She has left us too soon."***

Stephens' family announced earlier this week that she was receiving hospice care at home after a long battle with kidney disease. Friends set up a fund to cover end-of-life and burial expenses.

But Stephens had difficulty finding work in the funeral home industry after her 2013 firing. She eventually got a position as an autopsy technician at the Detroit Medical Center's Sinai-Grace Hospital. She worked through the end of 2014, when her kidneys failed, and then retired.

Despite financial hardship in the years since, Stephens told The Detroit News last year she did not regret challenging Harris Homes' decision. But she never expected the case to go all the way to the U.S. Supreme Court, where she was optimistic about the outcome.

"I believe in what I'm doing. I've stood up for myself to make sure that it happens. That's what keeps me going," she said.

"If you're part of the human race, which we all are, we all deserve the same basic rights. We're not asking for anything special. We're just asking to be treated like other people are."

"Aimee Stephens just wanted to continue to do the job she was hired to do, that she was good at, and that she was prepared to continue while living as her true gender," Brian K. Bond, Executive Director of PFLAG, said in an emailed statement. ***"It is with heavy hearts that we at PFLAG mourn Aimee's passing. Her fight will continue as we strive for equality for all, inclusive of sexual orientation and gender identity."***

"Like so many LGBTQ working people, Aimee just wanted to do her job and be her authentic self," Jerame Davis, Executive Director of Pride At Work added. ***"Her fight for equality gave hope to transgender working people around the country and provided inspiration to all LGBTQ working people. Aimee's fight continues as the Court could rule any day on her case. We must take up the fight she cannot finish and ensure every LGBTQ working person can obtain the dignity and respect they deserve."***

"Thank you, Aimee, for your courage to stand up and be yourself. Your voice will be missed, but your cause will win the day."

Democratic Presidential Candidate and presumptive Nominee Joe Biden had this to say, ***"Jill and I are saddened to learn of the passing of Aimee Stephens. We send our deepest condolences to her wife, Donna, and her family. Aimee's spirit and courage will not only be her legacy but our guiding light as we carry on her fight for equality."***

Alphonso David, President of the Human rights Campaign (HRC), the largest organization fighting for LGBTQ equality and a Civil Rights Lawyer stated, ***"The LGBTQ community owes Aimee Stephens our deepest gratitude for her bravery in standing up for the right of LGBTQ people to live as ourselves. We share our condolences with all of her friends & family, and especially her wife, Donna Stephens."*** David added that, ***"Stephens will be remembered as a trailblazer."***



(KRAMER)

"He would shake the cages and they would go and get things done in their interaction," Fauci said. ***"So, I think it was a combination of him breaking down the barriers between governments and the activist community but also adding a degree of impact...by training and mentoring young activists."***

Asked what he thinks epidemiologists can learn from Kramer, Fauci said the HIV activist's teachings are more applicable to others.

"I'm not so sure epidemiologists can learn something," Fauci said. ***"But I think people who are involved in response to outbreaks and then you have a disenfranchised community that's unfortunately... the major target of a particular outbreak that you got to learn from Larry that people speak up and make their voice known even if they're in some respects disenfranchised. That's the lesson that Larry learned."***

Larry Kramer died Wednesday, May 27, 2020 at 84 years old during a pandemic that today reached a milestone 100,000 death count in the US. The cause was neither the AIDS crisis he so passionately fought nor the Covid-19 crisis he watched aghast as it unfolded. Kramer died of pneumonia, according to his husband David Webster.

Kramer was often soft-spoken, almost shy, and, at least the first time you met him, was unfailingly polite. But when he spoke in public his voice became a Moses-like lightning rod, parting the waters, some would say the nation, demanding respect and dignity for the lives of a people that were being decimated by a then hidden plague, AIDS. He turned his audience into an army that was unafraid to confront the evils of prejudice, hatred and ignorance. They created **ACT UP**.

Kramer was a noted author and playwright who began his career at Columbia Pictures and United Artists.

His screenplay for the 1969 film **"Women in Love"** (1969) earned an Academy Award nomination. Among his many accomplishments and awards, he was a finalist for the Pulitzer Prize for his play **"The Destiny of Me"** (1992), and a two-time recipient of the Obie Award.

Even before AIDS, Kramer was known as a critic of his own community; his novel **"Faggots"** (1978) depicted gay male relationships of the 1970s as hedonistic, destructive and unaware.

He co-founded the **Gay Men's Health Crisis** (GMHC), which has become the world's largest private organization assisting people living with AIDS. But Kramer felt the agency had frozen and become reactive.

His highly acclaimed 1985 play **"The Normal Heart,"** produced at Joseph Papp's Public Theater reflected on the failings of a bureaucratic approach to combating an epidemic and honed his belief in the power of collective political provocation.

Kramer's 2015 novel **"The American People, Vol. 1: Search for My Heart,"** was a behemoth, nearly 800 pages that tells variously of prehistoric monkeys, the Puritans, the American Revolution, the Civil War and also the abundant, in Kramer's vision, homosexual proclivities of the U.S. Founding Fathers with a dizzying cast that includes Washington, Hamilton, Lincoln and even John Wilkes Booth.

Kramer, a D.C. native, is widely known for his groundbreaking and searing play **"The Normal Heart,"** adapted into an HBO Emmy-winning film, and other works. He lived in New York's Greenwich Village with his husband, David Webster (they wed in 2013) and their Cairn Terrier, Charlie, a rescue dog Kramer, a dog person, said is **"very good natured."**

David Mixner, longtime politico, author and theatre soloist Performer: ***"My friend Larry Kramer never ever negotiated our personal freedom or health to make others comfortable. Being liked or personal power just wasn't part of his strategy."***

Gambier Becomes First Ohio Town to Pass LGBTQ Protections by Zoom

The law mirrors the *Ohio Fairness Act*, which bans discrimination in work, housing, and public accommodations based on sexual orientation and gender identity or expression.

The *Gambier Village Council* Monday made the town the 29th municipality in Ohio to pass its own version of the Ohio Fairness Act, legislation that adds sexual orientation and gender identity or expression to antidiscrimination laws in the Buckeye State. Gambier also happened to be the first to do so via Zoom.

"The world seems to be on hold, but many people can't wait to be afforded basic legal protections everyone else has," Alana Jochum, executive director of Equality Ohio, said in a statement. ***"Generally, LGBTQ people in Ohio are not covered in the laws that make discrimination illegal. We are all making hard decisions right now. Whether or not you can be out and open at work should not be one of them. We applaud Gambier for protecting its residents and advocating for all LGBTQ Ohioans."***

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Most of the council attended the monthly meeting remotely via Zoom, the *Mount Vernon News* reports. Only Mayor Leeman Kessler, Fiscal Officer Kathi Schonauer, and Administrator R.C. Wise attended in person at the village community center.

The Ohio Fairness Act is the name given to bills pending in both houses of the state legislature that would outlaw discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity in housing, employment, and public accommodations. The Senate version of the bill, SB 11, was introduced by lesbian Sen. Nickie J. Antonio and Sen. Michael Rulli.

"This bill has support from the Ohio Chamber of Commerce, the Ohio Manufacturers' Association and hundreds of other businesses in our state," Antonio said in a statement when it was introduced last year. ***"Employers know these policies are good for business and create opportunity for communities, businesses, and workers, which can further Ohio as a serious contender in the global economy."*** Antonio tried to pass a similar bill four times while serving as a representative in the House.

Introduced by Reps. Michael Skindell and Brett Hillyer, the current House version of the Ohio Fairness Act, HB 369, is a bipartisan effort. Hillyer is a conservative Republican who felt the bill's protection of individual liberties and the right to work fit well with his beliefs in self-reliance and individual liberty.

"As a conservative, it's my belief that you should be able to work and be yourself, and so long as you can show up and do your job and do what your employer asks of you, then you should have protections under the law," Hillyer said in a statement.

Gambier, which is home to Kenyon College, and the other towns that have adopted LGBTQ-inclusive civil rights laws are the exception to the rule in Ohio. But their actions mean that over a quarter of the state's population is covered by such laws.

Meanwhile, the Ohio Fairness Act is stalled in the legislature. Jochum is asking for the community's help in getting the bills heard and passed. ***"We need everyone to call their Ohio elected representatives right now and ask that the Ohio Fairness Act move forward. This is not the time to withhold worker protections,"*** she said.

International Mr. Leather & IMBB Cancelled for 2020

Organization Leaders sent out the Following Message:

Dear Leather Family and Friends,

As you know, we have been monitoring the Coronavirus situation closely following updates from the CDC, State, and local government. The Governor of Illinois and Mayor of Chicago have issued plans to re-open Illinois and Chicago in phases. Not until that final phase is reached will large group gatherings and conventions be permitted. Movement between phases is dependent on improvement factors and not dates on a calendar. With the uncertainty, we feel for the safety of our attendees, volunteers, vendors and staff that it is best to cancel IML/IMBB 2020 in its entirety now.

After hundreds of hours of organization, reorganization, debate and frustrations with 2020 we have made this difficult decision. We know most will be supportive, but others will disagree with our decision. Please understand that this makes us as disappointed as it does you. However, the health and safety of our community and those around us is far more important, as well as the need to be compliant with the State and Local officials reopening plan.

To honor this year, with great respect for the world's situation, we choose to not ignore 2020 and will put International Mr. Leather 42 and International Mr. Bootblack 28 in the books as "the year without winners". Instead, we move forward to the future and International Mr. Leather 43 and International Mr. Bootblack 29 when we can be together in May 2021.

We look forward to releasing materials for 2021 over the next several days, and we cannot wait until our family can celebrate together again.

We are aware that this cancellation will bring many questions, we implore you to seek the most current information on hotel and package refunds on our website www.imrl.com after June 1, which will be updated with several options to meet the individual needs of those who are affected by the change.

In Leather,

The IML Executive Committee

Ohio Lesbian Sheriff Candidate Could Replace the Man Who Fired Her

Taking over the job of the boss who fired you is a dream for many workers and for Charmaine McGuffey, it may come true.

McGuffey, a lesbian who's running for sheriff of Hamilton County, Ohio, is already partway there. She defeated that boss, Sheriff Jim Neil, in the Democratic primary in April, winning nearly 70 percent of the vote. Now she's set to face Republican candidate Bruce Hoffbauer, a Cincinnati police lieutenant, in November. If she wins, she'll be one of only a few out lesbian sheriffs ever elected in the nation.

"I'm thrilled that we came out with such a big victory" in the primary, McGuffey has said. ***"It did surprise me a little bit that we had such a large margin."***

She spreads the credit around for that big victory, thanking her wife, Christine Sandusky; her campaign manager, Mary Carol Melton; and her campaign volunteers. But she also notes, ***"I have a story."*** And it's a compelling one.

McGuffey joined the Hamilton County Sheriff's Office in 1983, shortly after receiving a bachelor's degree in criminal justice from the University of Cincinnati. Hamilton County, which includes Cincinnati, is Ohio's third most populous county. ***"I knew from the age of 14 that I wanted to be a police officer,"*** she says. ***"I wanted to help people. ... I wanted to be one of those***

people who makes someone's life better."

She rose steadily through the ranks, and in 2013, Neil, in his first year as sheriff, promoted her to major in command of jail and court services, making her the highest-ranking woman in the department's history. In 2015, she was named local and regional Law Enforcement Officer of the Year. The following year, the Ohio House of Representatives named her Public Citizen of the Year. During her tenure, the Hamilton County Justice Center went from being the worst-ranked large jail in Ohio to the best.

But Neil fired her in 2017. She says it was because she's a lesbian and she raised concerns about the use of force by officers. He says it was because she created a hostile work environment. She has sued him in federal court, and the lawsuit is still pending.

"My story resonates with people," McGuffey says. She says she called out *"horrible behavior by some officers,"* although she emphasizes that they represent a small minority in the department, and opened jail services up to public scrutiny. *"I dropped the drawbridge, filled in the moat, and put the welcome sign out,"* she says.

She emphasized rehabilitation, collaborating with social service agencies to match prisoners with programs that could help them reenter society — assistance with writing résumés, developing other job-search skills, finding housing, getting a driver's license reinstated, obtaining child support. She created a program focusing on military veterans and started a book club for women prisoners, with books donated by the public library system.

Her promotion of rehabilitative services doesn't make her any less a champion of law and order, she says. *"There are consequences for behaviors,"* she says, *"and when people commit crimes, they have to pay a price. But that doesn't mean they should be thrown away,"* she adds. *"People redeem themselves all the time,"* she points out.

The accusations of creating a hostile atmosphere at the jail, McGuffey says, are baseless and stem largely from sexism. A couple of officers said they didn't like the way she spoke to them, and they claimed she hated men because she wanted to encourage women to take promotion exams.

Along with her compelling story, a factor in her primary victory was that Neil had alienated many fellow Democrats by appearing onstage at a rally for Donald Trump in 2016. His apology didn't mollify them, and he also faced criticism about use of force by officers and gave party officials a tone-deaf response when questioned about racial disparities in the criminal justice system. McGuffey received the party's endorsement in the primary. She expresses optimism about her chances in November, noting that Hamilton County, once deep red, is turning blue.

She also has the endorsement of the LGBTQ Victory Fund, which works to elect out candidates. *"Defeating an incumbent in this environment is difficult because you cannot knock on doors or meet directly with the people you want to serve,"* Victory Fund President and CEO Annise Parker said in a statement shortly after McGuffey's win in the primary. *"Yet Charmaine ran a brilliant campaign throughout, speaking to her criminal justice reform initiatives while calling out the current sheriff's homophobia and sexism, and those messages clearly resonated. Her primary victory should give other LGBTQ candidates reassurance that despite the challenges of running for office in a pandemic, authenticity and the right message can still lead to upset victories at the ballot box."*

She also expresses gratitude to her wife, Sandusky, who works as a real estate appraiser. They have been together for nine years and married in June 2015, as soon as same-sex couples could marry legally. *"She's more than my soul mate,"* McGuffey says of Sandusky. *"She's absolutely the person who was meant for me."*

Finally, why should Hamilton County residents vote for McGuffey? *"I'm a strong and courageous leader,"* she says. *"I want the right thing for everyone. I want fair and equal justice. I make myself approachable. I take time to talk to people. That's what I'm going to bring as sheriff."*

A 'Tremendous Victory' Same-sex Couples, Surviving Spouses now Eligible for Social Security

A federal judge Wednesday, May 27, 2020, ordered the Social Security Administration to pay benefits to the surviving partners of same-sex couples who had been denied the opportunity to marry sooner due to state marriage bans.

As Slate's Mark Joseph Stern notes, the ruling reversed *"one of the last remaining vestiges of federal discrimination against same-sex couples."*

The case centered around Michael Ely and James A. Taylor, a committed Arizona couple of 43 years who wed shortly after the Supreme Court struck down same-sex marriage bans nationwide in June 2014. Six months later, Taylor died of cancer. But when Ely applied for federal survivor benefits, he was denied because federal law requires couples be married for at least nine months in order to qualify. The fact that the couple had been illegally banned from marrying sooner was deemed immaterial.

The case was brought in 2019 by the LGBTQ advocacy group *Lambda Legal* as a class action suit, arguing that the Social Security Administration *"cannot rely upon unconstitutional state laws that have since been overturned to justify discriminating against same-sex surviving spouses today."*

U.S. Magistrate Judge Bruce Macdonald agreed with that reasoning, writing that *"reliance on an unconstitutional law" perpetuated an "unconstitutional infringement on Mr. Ely and Mr. Taylor's fundamental right to marriage."*

Lambda Legal counsel Peter Renn called the ruling a *"tremendous victory for surviving same-sex spouses nationwide. No one should be penalized for being the victim of discrimination. The denial of access to these critical benefits can have dire consequences, with some of our class members experiencing homelessness,"* Renn said.

Pride update: Your International Guide to events that have been canceled or rescheduled

It's a tough year for [pride celebrations across the globe](#), caught in the cross-hairs of the coronavirus pandemic.

Since the majority of pride celebrations fall in June—the anniversary of the Stonewall riots—it's simply too soon in the progression of the virus for towns and cities to allow sweaty throngs to congregate.

However, not all is lost. Many pride events have organized virtual events to enjoy from the safety of your living room. Dozens more have tentatively rescheduled for the summer and fall, provided the world is able to get a handle on the spread and come up with more widespread testing measures.

Here at *GayCities*, we've done our best to bring you an updated Pride in Places calendar, whether canceled, rescheduled, or virtual.

[Take a look for a pride near you...](#)

Pride in the CLE has been postponed until September, you can

[Volunteer to Help make it a success here...](#)

Cyclops



CYCLOPS, UNMASKED

In the original Broadway version of the Rogers and Hart musical *“Pal Joey”*, the rich Chicago widow Vera is ecstatic about the highly secret love nest she has created for her kept hoover- gigolo, Joey. In a very wry romantic duet they blissfully extol the glamorous mirrored ceiling above their bilious floral carpeted and wallpapered boudoir, lyrically singing:

“The chambermaid is very kind.

She always says we’re so refined.

***Of course, she’s deaf, and dumb,
and blind.”***

Well, that hapless drudge who scrubs other people’s dirt for a living, and suffers something of a judgmental lapse, plus God only knows what else, pretty much fits my profile of the average member of the Trump Cult, unfortunately having been hoodwinked into trading her lace cap for a MAGA dink. So, uneasy sits that crown, not only on the poor soul’s brow, but on the President’s citrus-hued head as well. And are the rumors true, now that many nail salons have reopened in Trump country, along with tattoo parlors and gun stores, that his nib’s nails have been lacquered in Jungle Red? It is election year and his poll numbers are tumbling and lately, he’s been running around in more circles than a slinky toy. Besides, that shade of nail enamel clashes terribly with all the electric-tangerine slap, underneath which his true complexion color can be kindly described as asylum gray. All in all, he honestly believes that disorder is de-order of the day. Dream on, big guy!

Every day, a new distraction, a new pseudo-thrill for his supporters and enemies alike. Each morning invokes a new challenge to the Constitution. Every day we see the fate of the nation dumped in the laps of sycophants like Beastly Barr, Moscow Mitch, and Pifitful Pence. And in the case of the Corona Virus, with death rolls hurtling into the stratosphere, Trump employs more denial of proven scientific fact and propagation of his own unsubstantiated hunches and wild accusations. Only last week, Vice-President Pence, Trump’s pathetic savant (Wow, Central Casting really nailed this role!) had the unmitigated gall to attend a Corona conference at the very distinguished Mayo Clinic, defiantly and singularly, wearing no face mask, despite the Mayo’s rule that everyone must be masked. I’d like to see what would happen if Pence ever tried to pull that infantile behavior at our equally esteemed Cleveland hospitals! Of course Pence was only mimicking his Commander-in-Chief in their maniacal crusade against common sense and public safety.

Last Sunday morning we awoke to see on the local television news, bars in downtown Cleveland, packed to the rafters with unprotected youthful celebrants with not a mask in sight. Perhaps these happy young party going tots might even reverse the trend of young people against Trump and vote for him in November, those of them not still hospitalizes, or even alive.

In the meantime, such low-type defiance hardly negates the sane efforts of our own Governor DeWine who has received nationwide praise for his handling of the pandemic here in Ohio. Heretofore I have not been a great supporter of DeWine, but in this program, I certainly am impressed and more than willing to comply with his suggestions and decisions. Unfortunately some of our neighbors don’t completely agree. On the national news, this morning, we were disturbed seeing many demonstrators outside the Michigan state capitol in Lansing carrying assault rifles and more conventional firearms joining Donald Trump’s denunciation of that state’s Governor Whitmer because she is a believer in reason, acting from medical fact,

and worst of all for him, a woman for none of which he has any respect at all, isn’t the success he demands. Fortunately nearly 80% of those voters polled in Michigan support her!

And so, American death numbers are rising, maybe passing one hundred thousand by the time this is printed which, of course, the President would call fake news. In the meantime, he mounts new attacks on the VA, the Post Office, the C.D.C., and the W.H.O. Exactly in WHAT does this terrible man actually believe aside from his fatuous ego? Meanwhile, on the Home Front, while the Fungus is Amungus, how are we keeping busy; both fortunate retirees and less so, those who are on furlough from their regular paying jobs and in some cases, volunteer, non-remunerative work?

One of the nicest things one can do for others is to telephone old friends during this crisis, particularly those you haven’t seen or heard from in some time. Perhaps devote a half or a whole hour of your day to wishing others well. Esteem for others is getting to be a vanishing value in American society. I think we should work toward keeping it, You might easily experience the pleasure of brightening someone’s day as well as your own.

Well, I’m one of those fortunate retirees. Despite missing my volunteer work plus a day of study each week in the Ingall’s Library of the temporarily closed Cleveland Museum of Art, I keep busy at home. One of the secrets of a happy home is the reward of having collected objects, recorded music, films on DVD, and books, books, and more books that you personally love, even esteem like those aforementioned old friends. One cautionary note about book collection. You might have well-meaning friends of slightly different literary tastes than yours who recommend this and that novel to you, ones you usually disdain, hugely best-selling romances, ground out by-the-carload by American ladies of incredible celebrity and wealth. In polite self-defense, try making-up some cutesy, half-witted book homily, the likes of: “Have you heard? They’re building Nora Lofts out of Danielle Steele, out on Belva Plain?”, then go and read something else – something YOU deem of worth. For example.....

Everyone needs a great laugh and one of the naughtiest and funniest books I own is *“South Wind”* by Norman Douglas which has already been rapturously mentioned in these pages. Well, Douglas knew a lot of people of great inspirational friendship during his life, not the least of which was Elizabeth David, the grande dame of kitchen letters. For his last literary fling, Douglas, using the pseudonym of Pilaff Bey, wrote a very jolly canard entitled *“Venus in the Kitchen”* which calls itself a ‘Collection of Recipes for Seduction’ with an introduction by Graham Greene. The cream of the joke is that the book seems a parody in the style of Elizabeth David’s *“Mediterranean Food”*, her first literary outing, written during the time of her great friendship with Douglas. All the exoticism, ethnicity, and history, plus a touch of Ali Bab, are all there, give or take edibility, in a style which David made her own. If such outre goodies as ‘Sweetbreads as Hedgehogs’, ‘Sparrows’ Brains’, or ‘Pie of Bulls’ Testicles’ tickle your culinary funny bone, this book is your meat! David herself loved the book, but in its peerless collection of essays in the invaluable *“Penguin Book of Food and Drink”* David’s really took the original English publishers of *“Venus”* to task for it’s ridiculously decorated dust jacket, and for missing the hoax entirely. She questioned whether any one of the publishers had actually read the thing at all. Copies of *“Venus in the Kitchen”* are as scarce as sparrows’ brains, but my champion book friend Clint, rustled a rare American paperback copy, on line, via the internet services of Half Price Books. What a spirit lifting present!

I’ve been promising myself for years that I was going to scale down and really organize my collection of classical CD’s. This shut-down, stay-in or drop-dead strange interlude during Covid-19 (Sounds like Sak’s-5th, or Sak’s-34th!) has been a godsend. Laboriously and with ruthless determination, I thinned-down the sizable collection to only those discs I found absolutely essential, discarding two, dusted the lot, and arranged everything by composer, including all those operas, amid which I found some great surprises. I assume that any opera queen worth his salt has the boxed set of Wagner’s *“Ring des Nibelungen”* or in brief, *“The Ring Cy-*

cle" (Immortalized and explained by Anna Russell!) the biggie's, conducted by Sir George Solti. Well, I discovered a marvelous Sony (ex. Columbia) budget priced disc of Wagnerian orchestral music from "Tristan", "Meistersinger" and "The Ring", by the Cleveland Orchestra, Conducted by George Szell. It is still in print and sets a benchmark for this music, possibly unequalled and decided no opera house pit band. It has a rosette in the Penguin guide. (A word of warning, buyers of this or any other budget CD from the shameless shop at Severance Hall will pay the full list price of a brand new CD recording which will range from ten to twelve dollars more than the normal price for budget discs, on-line or in the very meager selections at such venues as chain book stores like Barnes and Noble. Library sales are sometimes good, albeit unpleasantly competitive sources.)

Another amazing find was a performance of "Die Walkure", the second opera in Wagner's "Ring" cycle, with each of three acts on a completely separate, unrelated disc. The first disc, from 1935, features Lotte Lehmann, Lauritz Melchior, and Emanuel List, with the Vienna Philharmonic, Conducted by Bruno Walter. The second disc, of Act 2, continues with Lotte Lehmann, Melchior, List, and Martha Fuchs as Brunnhilde, again with Walter conducting the Vienna forces. However, somewhere in the middle of all this, Melchior, List, and Walter went into exile during a Nazi purge of Jews. Lehmann also went to America in protest, and the remainder of the act was added from a Berlin recorded performance conducted by another Bruno, last name Seidler-Winkler, plus another Brunnhilde and a different Wotan from the first part of this act.

Fast-forward to 1951 and another disc, Act 3, one of EMI's "Great Recordings of the Century". (EMI also released the other recordings here discussed), the first live recording ever made at the Bayreuth Festival. Here the conductor is Herbert von Karajan who had finally been cleared to conduct for the occasion by the Allied de-Nazification Office. The new Brunnhilde was the great Astrid Varnay and the sensational stand-in for Lehman was the debuting Leonie Rysanek who created a sensation. A truly fascinating and relevant little cycle of its own, stitched together ala Mary Shelly! The Brits would call this one a dog's breakfast, and a gourmet one at that.

An equally splendid find was an Italian produced set of obviously pirated recordings of the music of George Gershwin, all conducted by Arturo Toscanini. Included are: "un Americano a Parigi", "Concerto in FA per Pianoforte e Orchestra" with Oscar Levant, and "Rapsodia in Blu" with Benny Goodman, clarinetto, and at the piano, Earl Wilde. Earl Wilde was a celebrated post-war American pianist who during his year as Distinguished Visiting Professor at the School of Music, The Ohio State University (Yeah, they do other things there beside football!), would occasionally pop into L'Armagnac restaurant where I held forth, along with some of his cronies, a few of whom were also mine. Sitting in the dining room, he always called me forth from the kitchen to adjudicate my performance that evening, keeping me up to snuff, as it were. A marvelous pianist and a charming man.

Movies are a great time passer when you're in quarantine. If one is lucky enough to receive Turner Classic Movies on cable television a great treasure awaits. However, for the last couple of months, TCM, well aware that there's a captive audience out there in virus-land, has been turning up a number of stinkers lurking in the darker corners of those vaults, things dating back to the early talkies. Imagine, for example, seeing Aline McMahon, who in my childhood usually played someone's ethnic grandmother, even, in one instance, helping to drag locomotives across the mountains of China, out of reach of the Japs, cast as a quite believable gold digging chorus girl named Trixie in a film that featured Ginger Rogers dancing forward, and, in the immortal words of critic Pauline Kael, Ruby Keeler "glancing anxiously down at her little leaden feet!

Try on for size, TCM's revival of Monogram's only successful franchise, the complete films of the Bowery Boys; ten minutes of just one is quite sufficient for me. Well, one could just turn the box off and try to sleep which might be impossible because you might have just watched the Rachel Maddow Show and you're either too terrified or pumping with rage at her brilliant revelations.

In all fairness, TCM actually does toss us an occasional juicy bone, sometimes twice in one week showing something which is compulsory watching, like "Laura", "Casablanca", or "The Big Sleep". (Surely, you will have your favorites too!) Forget that the living room ceiling is sagging dangerously downward, or that you're hanging outside, fingers clutching a window ledge seven flights' up. Pull yourself together, grab a cup of tea, a beer, or a glass of wine then sit down, snuggle up with someone marvelous, if handy, (All right, someone had to pull your ass in, off that window ledge!), and chill out. You gotta watch, NOW, even if you own all three films on DVD. It's reassuring to know that out there in the momentarily questionable atmosphere, there's beauty and comfort. Wonderful inside too, even if that special someone is a domineering cat or a big sheep dog with a bulbous wet nose.

Now that we're rested or otherwise inspired, some activities are traditional and very involving. Try rearranging the furniture in your dwelling; great exercise. Consider repainting a room in the place. Telephone one of your best friends for the third time that day. Go on line and read your favorite newspaper; mine is the New York "Times".

Unfortunately, a few weeks back, I missed a key story in the "Times" that the Cleveland "Plain Dealer" had been sold. One of the first acts of the new owners was to fire all of its members in the troubled paper's writers' guild. Union busting seems a questionable way for new owners to introduce themselves to an essentially union city. My partner Bob, who was for many years on the staff of the now defunct Cleveland "Press", sadly speculates that Cleveland might be the nation's first major urban area without a daily newspaper, even though the "Plain Dealer" is a mere shadow of its former self.

Another worthwhile activity revolves around the kitchen. Fortunately my great friend, the Craftsman, drives me once a week to shop for the kitchen and to dispose of recyclables in spaces provided by the city of Lakewood (My absentee landlords seem to consider a separate recyclable dumpster an unnecessary frill!). Actually I live within walking distance of Heinen's and Whole Foods, but it's great to have a lift. There is also an Aldi's about a fifteen minute bus ride away. All three of these stores practice strict and through sanitary maintenance during these urgent months, scrubbing each cart after usage, limiting the number of patrons inside each store, and protecting cashiers with plexiglass partitioning. Some it all looks daunting, but business continues functioning smoothly in each venue. Heinen's has carefully monitored the health of its employees, with daily testing for the virus. Three separate Heinen's stores, two in the Cleveland suburbs and one in the greater Chicago area have been temporarily closed having discovered an infected associate in their staff. After thorough sanitizing of the premises, all three stores have reopened. This is a costly but enormously responsible step for any grocery. Heinen's also has published a sheet of rules for its customers that make great sense. They are to be congratulated. There only remains for these stores to clarify the sources of their meats and poultry in the wake of mass infections of workers in midwestern processing plants. In spite of ordered shutdowns of meat processing facilities by the governors of South Dakota, Nebraska, and Iowa for closure, they remain open by order of Donald Trump, regardless of the cost in human health.

Freedom Valley campground has just announced a partial opening for the season, but with closure of many of its featured facilities, including: bunkhouse, swimming pool, dining hall, dance hall, forest walking trails, etc. For the moment, it would appear that Freedom Valley is best set up for the more permanent, sheltered summer residents or rough, seasoned outside camper than for the casual transient visitor.

Cyclops, on behalf of Unicorn M.C. wishes all of us health and safety. And generate great enthusiasm to vote in November. Oust the autocrat! CY



Upcoming Birthdays!

June 2020

Brother Tim Tavcar, June 11th

Brother Jim Todd, June 23rd

July 2020

Brother Tom Johnson, July 28th



Due to the Current

Restrictions on Large Gatherings

The Events Calendar is on Hiatus

We will resume once Events are Permitted

Meanwhile we urge you to stay inContact

With you Organizations

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