

N.S. Vol. 26 No. 3 March 2022 #373



Jeff Howe and Woody



Dr. Krewasky Salter



Sam Rodriguez with wife and child

MISSION POSSIBLE
THE STORY OF REPEALING DON'T ASK DON'T TELL
C. DIXON OSBURN

FREE Virtual Event!
Author C. Dixon Osburn

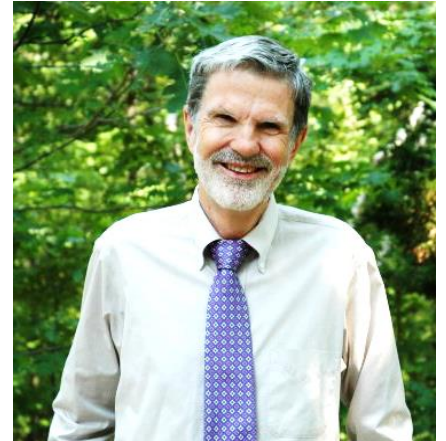
Online with Dixon April 7, 7pm



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Stokes (1965), Stokes and Kassing (2012), & Easley



In Celebration

We pay homage to a great AVER leader, **Jim Darby**, on the celebration of his 90th birthday in late February. Jim has been a longtime leader in the battle to end the ban on gays in the military and to fight for marriage equality. He served in the U.S. Navy from 1952 to 1956 as a cryptologist and Russian translator. He cofounded the GLBVA in 1990, which later evolved to AVER. He was arrested outside of the White House in 1993 in protest of “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell” and back inside the WH as guests of President and Mrs. Obama in 2014 to celebrate marriage equality and LGBTQ pride. Thank you for everything you have done for this country. You inspire us.

Upcoming Virtual Book Club Event

Dixon Osburn, author of the book “*Mission Possible: The Story of Repealing Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell*,” will join us in a virtual book club Zoom meeting on **Thursday, April 7, at 7pm** (Central time zone). Check our website for further information! The repeal of DADT was a milestone in the fight for equal rights so it will be a fascinating discussion!

One Year Later – Some Highlights

The Biden-Harris White House (WH) and Administration officials noted many significant changes since taking office a year ago with respect to the LGBTQI+ community.

January 2021: Issued a sweeping Executive Order making it clear that gay and transgender people are protected against discrimination in schools; Reversed transgender military ban, and the U.S. State Department issued the first-ever U.S. passport with an “X” gender marker for Americans who do not identify as male or female.

February 2021: Advancing the Human Rights of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, and Intersex Persons around the world by directing all agencies to treat everyone with respect and dignity and recognize their equal protection under the law for freedom from violence and discrimination.

March 2021: Proclaimed March 31 as *Transgender Day of Visibility*, to engage and encourage everyone in the fight for equality for all transgender people.

June 2021: Issued a proclamation affirming June as LGBTQ+ Pride Month to mark a time of hope, progress, and promise for all Americans, and to voice support for the passage of the Equality Act that would provide federal civil rights protections to all LGBTQ+ Americans and their families while strengthening some key civil rights laws for people of color, women, people with disabilities, and people of faith.

December 2021: Senate confirms **Rufus Gifford**, former Ambassador to Denmark, as Chief of Protocol for the U.S. State Department; **Gautam Raghavan**, a gay Indian-American, will be the highest-ranking out member of the WH staff with his appointment as Director of the Office of Presidential Personnel; Senate confirms **Chris Magnus** as Commissioner of Customs and Border Protection (first out commissioner of the U.S. government’s largest law enforcement agency); **Jay Gilliam** appointed Senior LGBTQI+ Coordinator at U.S. Agency for International Development; WH commemorated World AIDS Day and issued new strategic goals for HIV/AIDS.

January 2022: The Bureau of Prisons issued new guidance on considering the safety of incarcerated transgender people; Senate confirms **Holly Thomas** as judge for 9th Circuit U.S. Court of Appeals (second black woman

February 2022: WH spoke out against Florida’s “Don’t Say Gay” bill prohibiting teachers from discussing LGBTQ people and issues in schools; the Senate confirmed **Chantale Wong** as Director of the Asian Development Bank (first LGBTQ person of color to hold the rank of U.S. Ambassador); WH spoke out against South Dakota’s law that bans transgender youth from participating in school sports; WH recognized National Black HIV/AIDS Awareness Day with a post remembering the activism of **Reggie Williams** with a section of the AIDS quilt.

Please help us reduce publication costs!

A **digital** version of *VetPride* is also now available. If you wish to receive a **PDF file of the newsletter by email**, instead of a printed copy by U.S. postal mail, **please send an email message to avernewsletter@gmail.com**.

Thanks! You get less postal mail and it *helps to reduce our newsletter printing and postage costs*.

Cantigny Park and First Division Museum

To close out our celebration of Black History Month, we reflect on the gift of a lifetime, Cantigny Park, the 500-acre former estate in Wheaton of Colonel Robert R. McCormick, the longtime editor and publisher of the Chicago Tribune. The Park is home to the First Division Museum, dedicated to the history of the “Big Red One,” the famed list of Infantry Division of the U.S. Army, from WWI to the present. Colonel **Krewasky A. Salter**, Ph.D., is the Executive Director of the Museums at Cantigny Park, having served in the U.S. Army for over 25 years, and more recently as Guest Curator at the Smithsonian Institution’s National Museum of African American History and Culture. Dr. Salter is an author of several books including “The Story of Black Military Officers, 1861-1948” and “Dream A World Anew: The African American Experience and the Shaping of America.” We encourage you to visit the Park, located about 30 miles west of Chicago, and read his books on Black Military history.

Nonbinary Troops

Navy Petty Officer 2nd Class **Sam Rodriguez**’s unit was in Norway for an exercise but there was a basic issue the service hadn’t worked out. Where should Rodriguez sleep? Norwegian servicemembers share coed dorms but the U.S. Navy segregates its sailors by gender. For Rodriguez, who identifies as nonbinary transgender, the Navy policy meant sleeping in what was little more than a “broom closet” separate from everyone else in a unit a floor away. Rodriguez was the only U.S. sailor on the deployment who didn’t fit into the Navy’s traditional gender divide. “They’re able to interact with each other; I’m basically just in this isolation,” After a week, Rodriguez was moved to the same floor as everyone else but was still secluded in a different room. “It made me feel shitty having to be separated from my guys,” Rodriguez said. The U.S. military has made strides in recent years to be more inclusive for different genders, gender identities, and sexualities. The “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell” policy, which banned open service by GLB troops, was repealed just over a decade ago. All combat jobs were later opened to women in late 2015, and transgender servicemembers have been able to serve openly since last year. Nonbinary service is a frontier the military hasn’t grappled with yet. That could change soon, as the Pentagon has been researching how it could allow nonbinary troops to serve more openly. In the interim, nonbinary members describe feeling isolated, living double lives, and being misunderstood because of current policies, even as they said fellow troops respect and accept them in one-on-one interactions.

Nonbinary refers to someone who identifies as neither exclusively male nor female, often using “they” and “them” as pronouns and marking “X” as their gender on forms with that option. Some nonbinary people also identify as transgender and get medical treatment, so they look more masculine or feminine than they were born, but not all nonbinary people identify as transgender and not all transgender identify as nonbinary. There is no official ban on nonbinary Americans serving in the military like there were for gay or transgender troops. However, there’s no official recognition that nonbinary troops exist or guidance on how they should adhere to gendered policies causing issues like the one Rodriguez described with sleeping arrangements. This ambiguity has also caused some nonbinary servicemembers to feel like they must “wear a mask.” Off duty, nonbinary servicemembers like Army Captain Johnny Grady will wear dresses and heels, paint their nails, and experiment with makeup “despite the fact that I am not terribly good with it.” “I have a tremendous amount of anxiety around showing up where I know there’s going to be people that I know in the military,” Grady said, explaining they limit explicitly discussing their gender identity. Opening up service to transgender troops has provided some flexibility in working with nonbinary troops. Taken from: “I’m Pretty Much Leading a Double Life: Nonbinary Troops and the Pentagon’s Next Frontier” by Rebecca Kheel, February 11, 2022, <https://www.military.com>.

All AVER meetings at the Center on Halsted postponed until further notice

Remember that we meet up every month on **First Thursdays** via Zoom, so come join us to say hi and share gossip. Everyone is welcome to attend our monthly Board meetings at 7pm. Check the [averchicago.org](https://www.averchicago.org) website for the link (click on the highlighted “Zoom” link near the bottom of the webpage) to get to the Zoom meeting. To call in: 312-626-6799 with meeting ID 488-863-384 and passcode 328090.

In Memorium: Jeff Howe

Jeffrey Michael Howe, 49, of Elk Grove Village, and more recently Chicago, passed away on January 8, 2022. Jeff was an Army veteran who served two tours in Iraq, was outed by an online profile, and discharged under “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell” in 2005. He was a tall, quiet, and friendly man who loved to take his dog Woody to the beach. He is survived by his parents Larry and Christine Howe, and his siblings Michael Howe and Kathryn Balogi. He was active in seeking the repeal of DADT through support of Servicemembers Legal Defense Network and AVER.

In 2005, the Chicago Chapter of AVER gave him the *Happy Warrior Award* at the Annual Veterans Day dinner: “Greetings to you Army Specialist Jeff Howe. As a frontline artilleryman during two tours of duty in Iraq you faced many dangers that could have ended your military career, as well as your life. You answered the call after the 9/11 terrorist attacks, leaving a comfortable job in civilian life, and joining the U.S. Army. Your desire to help your country exceeded your concern about the military’s gay ban. During your second tour of duty in Iraq, the Army discovered that you were gay. Instead of appreciating your dedication and service to this country, they sent you home and discharged you. Your country has wronged you like it has wronged thousands of other GLBT servicemembers. Your courage and perseverance warrants recognition and remembrance. We salute you and we honor you.” He once commented that “No matter what, everybody that’s over there—gay, lesbian, bisexual, white, Black—deserves respect and the thanks of everybody in America for going over there, whether or not you agree with the war or the Administration. Every person over there is a hero.” Jeff you will be missed. Thank you for your dedication to this country and your support of organizations to help repeal DADT.

In Memorium: John Paul Stokes

John was a kind, quiet, reserved, and generous man, and passed away on January 7, 2022. He attended T.L. Handy High School in Bay City, Michigan and graduated in 1961, and then attended Michigan State University, joined ROTC, and graduated with a degree in Electrical Engineering in 1965. On August 2, 1965, he reported to active duty as a 2nd Lt., U.S. Army, at the Aberdeen Proving Ground, MD, retiring as a Lt. Col. in 1986. He joined with GLBVA around 1992 and served as newsletter editor in the Chicago Chapter for several years. He coined the term “VetPride” used on our masthead. He would print out the newsletters and then Jim Darby, Pat Bova, Ed Kassing, and he would collate, fold, and stuff envelopes for mailing at the back bar of the Lucky Horseshoe. He is buried at the Abraham Lincoln National Cemetery in Elwood, IL. Thank you for your service to this country, and to the support of GLBVA and AVER.

In Memorium: Joe Tom Easley

Joe Tom was a Texas native and graduate of Texas A&M, and passed away on February 13, 2022 near his home in Miami Beach with his husband of 39 years, Peter Freiberg, at his side. Joe Tom was drafted into the Vietnam War and joined Naval Intelligence. Within a year, he was outed by a friend and discharged honorably. He then attended the University of Texas Law School and became a prominent antiwar activist, joining Ralph Nader’s group. Later he joined SLDN and Lambda Legal to fight for LGBT rights; he chaired the boards of both organizations and supported many other civil rights projects. Thank you for your service to this country.

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