

TAPS

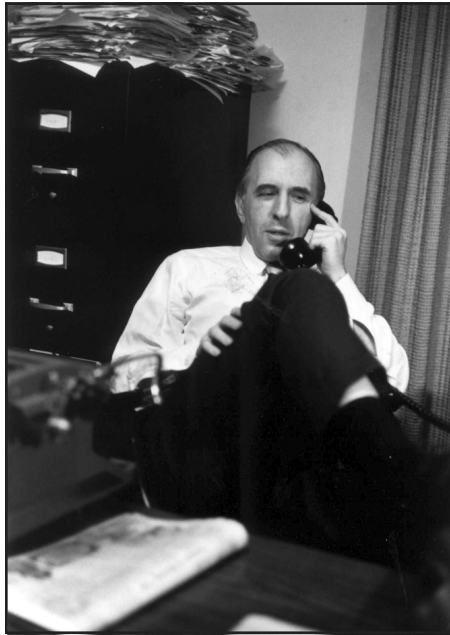


photo: Kay Tobin Lahusen. March 1971

Dr. Frank Kameny PhD
Washington, D.C., U.S. Army

The legendary Dr. Frank Kameny died in his home on October 11, 2011 at the age of 86. Many of us remember meeting Dr. Kameny over the years at a variety of political events. A life member of AVER, Dr. Kameny was the keynote speaker at our 2007 Convention in Cleveland, OH.

Credited with coining the phrase “Gay is Good” Dr. Kameny had a long and tumultuous struggle with the government. He enlisted in the Army three days before his 18th birthday in 1943 at the height of World War II. After his discharge he returned home saying “I didn’t fight in the Army to return to this country as a second-class citizen.”

He started picketing the government in 1956 and continued until his death last year. Dr. Kameny’s papers are now in the Smithsonian Institute in Washington, D.C.

One of Frank’s most memorable moments was recorded in Randy Schiltz’s book *Conduct Unbecoming*. In 1980, as a member of the Gay Activists Alliance, Frank petitioned to lay a wreath at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier in Arlington, VA. “The wreath laying would violate common decency” said a member of the VFW. The Army said “There were no gay soldiers to honor.” Frank was furious, and announced that he would do a wreath laying even if he got shot. Thanks to Dr. Frank Kameny, the first of many wreath-layings for LGBT servicemembers was held on Memorial Day, 1980.



Randy Williamson
Illinois, U.S. Navy

Randy Williamson, longtime member of the Chicago Chapter, died at his home on January 29, 2012 at the age of 62. Randy will always be remembered for his dedication and devotion. For many years, Randy was there for every event, from the Memorial Day Parade and the Pride Parade, from the trips out to Steger, IL to the grave of Allen Schindler, from the Veterans Day Dinners to the BBQ’s at Buck’s Saloon he

was ever-present, from his many photo shots with Mayor Daley and as a member of AVER’s Color Guard. Randy was proud of his Scottish heritage and appeared many times in his khaki kilt.

AVER Chicago and SAGE will be hosting a joint Memorial Ceremony, and his body will be taken to Abraham Lincoln National Cemetery in Elwood, IL where he will receive full military honors.



Dave Guy-Gainer
Texas, U.S. Air Force

Dave Guy-Gainer, former AVER VP and a leading crusader for the repeal of the DADT policy died at his home in Forest Hill, TX on Thursday, February 2, 2012. Guy-Gainer was 63 years old. Dave was a retired Air Force chief master sergeant who came about after leaving the service was a member and a Board member of many civil rights organizations such as Equality Texas and SLDN. Dave traveled throughout the country attending many of AVER’s conventions and conferences. AVER was pleased to have his support and dedication over the years. He is survived by his partner, David Guy.



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October 2011 - Several members of AVER gather at the AVER 2011 National Convention in Albuquerque, NM



October 2011 - AVER President Danny Ingram, Region IV VP Steve Loomis, Vice President Julz Carey, Archivist Patrick Bova, and Region III VP Jim Darby at the OutServe Armed Forces Leadership Summit in Las Vegas, NV

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For the latest information about chapters currently in formation or dormant chapters which are taking steps to reactivate, please see the AVER Local Chapters page at: <http://www.aver.us/chapters.php>

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October 2011 - Empty Table Ceremony at the AVER National Convention in Albuquerque for members who died since the 2009 Convention.

Proposed National LGBT Veterans Memorial

Some of you may recall that ten years ago, at our AVER convention, we talked about creating a LGBT Veterans Memorial at Congressional Cemetery in Washington, DC. Over the ten years between then and now there were a number of issues that needed to be resolved. One issue was the ownership of a road in the lower part of the cemetery where we were considering putting the Memorial. The second issue had to do with the Cemetery solving a flooding problem in the area in question before plots could be sold there. Thirdly was completion of a comprehensive site plan by the Cemetery. We have been informed that all the issues preventing us from going forward with our plans have finally been resolved. What remains to be done is drawing up an agreement between the Board of Congressional Cemetery and the National LGBT Veterans Memorial Board, a non-profit overseeing the project.

This Memorial project differs from other LGBT Veteran Memorials established in National Cemeteries in several of the States in that service members will be able to place their cremains in an in-ground vault with a stone containing their name, rank, and service along with their dates of birth and death. There will also be a monument to LGBT service members as a testament to our service to our country throughout history.

It is the intent of the board to finalize the agreement with the Congressional Cemetery Board by the end of April. Should everything go as planned, fund raising will begin in earnest this summer. We realize you will have many questions but until we have the final documents signed we have few reliable answers. We are excited by the prospect of creating this Memorial to OUR contribution to our nation’s security and hope you will be also. The Congressional Cemetery has been a focal point of many of our ceremonies over the years and until we can place our own monument on the National Mall, this Memorial will serve as visible evidence of our service. We are counting on your support.

★

Nancy Russell - Monument Committee Chair

Nancy Russell served in the United States Army for 20 years, retiring as a Lieutenant Colonel. In her military career LTC Russell was first a member of the Women’s Army Corps, until its integration in 1978, when she became a member of the Adjutant General Corps. During her twenty year service she commanded two companies and a battalion. She was awarded the Army Commendation Medal and the Meritorious Service Medal with two oak leaf clusters. Nancy was elected three times as the National President of GLBVA/AVER.

***AVER 2011 National
Convention
Albuquerque, NM
6-9 October 2011
★★★★★
OutServe Armed Forces
Leadership Summit
Las Vegas, NV
13-16 October 2011***



Victor Fehrenbach, James Apedaile, Mike Almy, Albuquerque, October 2011



Former Navajo Nation Chairman & USMC Navajo Code Talker WWII Veteran Peter MacDonald, distinguished guest, Albuquerque, October 2011



Danny Ingram presents the US Marine Corp Bicentennial Medal to Marshall Belmaine, Albuquerque, October 2011



Jim Darby, Lori Wilfahrt, Jeff Wilfahrt, and Patrick Bova, Las Vegas, October 2011



USMC Navajo Code Talker WWII veteran Robert Walley Sr. swearing-in James Apedaile, Oct.2011

FROM THE
PRESIDENT'S CORNER

Dear Fellow Vets, Service Members & Allies.

Overcoming DADT

In the spring of 1994, I became one of the first service members to be discharged from the military under "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" following a statement I made in support of presidential candidate Bill Clinton's promise to lift the ban in 1992. I remember being called into the office by my commander in 1993. There were three of us in the office, the commander, who was Latino, the First Sergeant, who was African-American, and me, the gay guy. The commander said to me, "Sergeant Ingram, my granddaddy had to get his ass kicked so that I could serve in the US Army." He then looked over at the First Sergeant and said, "The First Sergeant's daddy had to get his ass kicked so that he could serve in the same US Army as the rest of us." Then he looked at me. "And now, Sergeant Ingram, you are going to get your ass kicked so that your people can someday serve in the US Army along with everyone else."

I got my ass kicked, but almost 20 years later, as National President of American Veterans for Equal Rights, I was invited by the White House to witness President Barack Obama sign the DADT Repeal Law into effect on December 22, 2010. And on September 19th, 2011, the day before the effective date of repeal, I commemorated the last duty day that my people could not serve in the United States military. And sharing the podium with me that evening was retired Colonel Kelly R. Jimenez, my former commanding officer. He ended his comments with these words: "If I were ever in a tough situation and my life was on the line, there is no one I would rather have in my foxhole fighting beside me than Sergeant Ingram." Two old comrades had come full circle.

Change does come to those who work long enough and have right on their side. Often times it comes one human heart at a time. I don't like being told there are things I can't do because I am gay. I don't like being told that I can't serve in the military. I don't like being told that I can't have a life-long relationship with someone I love. And I don't like being told that I can't marry. I stand with the people of California. I share your fight. You are on the front line, but many of us stand behind you. The battle may be long and difficult, but we will win because the destiny of our great nation is on our side, and the dream of America will not be stopped here.

Thank you for all you do to keep the dream alive. I know that I speak for all of AVER's members, men and women who swore an oath to defend our sacred liberty, when I tell you that you do not stand alone, and together we will prevail.

The War in Iraq is Over

As of 15 December 2011, the Iraq War is officially over. As we have for most of this war, the American people will pass this day as if nothing of significance has happened. We are still at war, and the longer of the two wars, the Afghan war, continues. But the ending of the Iraq War has deep meaning to all of us who honor the 4500 American service members who gave their lives there for their country, among them, Major Alan G. Rogers, a member of AVER, and the first publicly known LGBT American to die in combat. Those of you who knew Alan will know what we have lost in a way the rest of us cannot fully experience. You feel the hole in your heart. As the number of Americans who feel that hole in their hearts becomes a smaller and smaller percentage of the population, those of us who know the cost of war must remind our fellow citizens that the price is always measured in the blood of our honored dead. Lives lost, and lives shattered, will always be the cost of taking our great nation to war. We must never forget the reality of making that decision, and it should never be a decision too easily reached. I encourage each of you to take a moment today to be silent and honor the men and women who gave their lives defending our freedom in Iraq. The war in Iraq was a controversial one, and Americans still disagree as to whether or not it was necessary. Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen, Marines, and Coast Guardsmen do not enjoy the luxury of such debates. They go where they are told, always in the defense of our constitution, regardless of the mission. To Alan Rogers, and to each of the honored Iraq dead, I am grateful for the lives which each of you lay down for your country. May your names, and the sacrifices you made, be forever honored by a grateful nation.

Faithfully,

Danny Ingram



FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK

2011 : an incredible year for LGBT veterans

After attending the AVER National Convention in Albuquerque with Ed Zasadil and Larry Simpson, Patrick and I went on to the OutServe Armed Forces Leadership Summit in Las Vegas. We've made a number of connections with OutServe and plan to work together in the future. OutServe is a worldwide organization of active duty LGBT servicemembers. Most of them could not come out until the DADT policy was ended on September 20, 2011, which for our community is a National Holiday.

Since 1991, my partner Patrick and I have been working to do what we could to end the ban. There were times when I felt that it would never happen. But thanks to the hard work of thousands of people and many organizations it finally happened. We can't begin to thank everyone, but we do want to thank our loyal members who were there for the long haul - especially in the lean years when it seemed impossible.

Booing an American Soldier

Just how un-American can you get. During a political debate in late September 2011, just days after the repeal of Don't Ask Don't Tell, an Army Reserve officer who was serving in Afghanistan tried to ask one of the candidates about the Don't Ask, Don't Tell policy. He was booed by the audience. I was astounded. Here is a person who is willing to serve his country and go anywhere they send him, and the audience barely let him get his question out.

No candidate spoke out in his defense. Of the four candidates, two of them, former Speaker Newt Gingrich and former Senator Rick Santorum favor re-instating the old policy. How out-of-step can these candidates be when 80% of Americans favored lifting the ban.

Thank You For Continuing to Serve Your Country

Jim Darby

Managing Editor, *The Forward Observer*



AVER is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender active duty, reserve and veteran service members, dedicated to the fair and equal treatment of all veterans and service members, and to honoring the sacrifices of all who served past and present. Membership in AVER is open to all who support the goals of the organization and does not suggest or imply sexual orientation of any of its members. All membership information is strictly confidential, as directed by the AVER National Constitution, within the limits of applicable laws. Officer and chapter contact information listed in the Forward Observer and on www.aver.us is collected either from chapter-controlled newsletters / web sites or by explicit permission.

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State benefits to LGBT veterans. "It is important, especially with the repeal of Dadt, that our lesbian, gay bisexual and transgender veterans are taken care of and that they receive all the benefits that they deserve for serving our country" said Mario Guerrero, Government Affairs Director for Equality California.

Our Vets Night Out has been moved to the latter part of the month. We are trying to focus more on the camaraderie aspects of Veterans and Service members lives. The first social of the year was held on January 28th at Giovanni's Old World New York Pizzeria, 6200 Folsom Blvd, Sacramento.

SVV meets on the 3rd Monday of every month at 6:30 p.m. at the:

Lavender Library
1414 21st St
Sacramento, CA 95811

President -Ty Redhouse
916 436 7676
[facebook.com/groups/sacvalleyvets](https://www.facebook.com/groups/sacvalleyvets)
sacvalleyvets.com



Cleveland veterans celebrate at NEOAVER's DADT Going Away Party, 19 September 2011



Chicago veterans hail the end of DADT with ILNG LTC Tammy Duckworth, 20 September 2011



SVV's Michael D Williams and Ty Redhouse at press conference for Assemblymember Dr. Richard Pan's LGBT Veteran legislation, 10 Nov. 2011



11 November 2011 - AVER Bataan color guard with several OutServe members

The dates for the Bataan Chapter meetings vary, but they alternate between Board meetings and General meetings. Most meetings are held on weekends at Steve Loomis' home. More information is available from Steve at:

Steve Loomis, President
Bataan Chapter of AVER
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Albuquerque, NM 87190
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Bataan-AVER@swcp.com

★AVER Region V



AVER Greater Los Angeles is AVER's newest chapter, thanks to the hard work of Apolonio Munoz. AVER-GLA provides Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Veterans, Active Duty and Reserve Service Members in the Greater Los Angeles Region of Southern California (which includes, but is not lim-

ited to the Los Angeles Basin, Riverside County, Orange County and Ventura County) representation, advocacy and involvement in the local community. They promote full equality and non-discriminatory treatment for all veterans and service members, past, present and future. They are working to provide a safe, legal, emotional and social environment for all veterans.

Meetings are held the second Saturday of every month at various locations. Please call or go to the web page for the latest information.

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AVER Greater Los Angeles
P.O. Box 881243
Los Angeles, CA 90009
626.806.5717
aver-gla.org

AVER Palm Springs

The Palm Springs chapter continues rolling along under the great leadership of Mel Tips who founded the Chapter 19 years ago.

Monthly meetings are held at the Golden Rainbow Center on Tahquitz

Canyon Way on the second Friday of every month at 1:00 in the afternoon.

Unlike most other chapters, the Palm Springs vets have a potluck with the main course put together by Mel. Mel, incidentally, was a cook in the Navy for 20 years so he can make all those wonderful delicacies that all sailors remember.

Mel hosted an old fashioned 4th of July event at his palatial home in the desert with 1/4 lb. hot dogs, burgers, potato salad, etc.

Palm Springs Pride Parade will be held the first week in November. The temperature in June is usually over 100 degrees. The Veterans Day Parade will be held one week later, and Mel is already calling for volunteers. 2012 will be the 20th year that PSGV will be marching in the parades. This calls for a special celebration.

Mel Tips
PO Box 5012
Palm springs, CA 92263-5012
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miltips@aol.com



Thanks to Ty Redhouse the Sacramento Valley Veterans Chapter is up and flourishing.

The newly elected Board of SVV is President Ty Redhouse, USAF Vice-President Tina Stidman, USA Secretary Gene Silvestri, USA Treasurer Charlie Peer, USN Member-at-large - Larry Vasquez

SVV has been very active in providing job postings for veterans. We are hoping that our members find these postings to be beneficial.

On November 10 veterans from the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender communities joined Dr. Pan as he introduced a bill which would give

Is Our Future in a Commission for Rights of Military Service?

Steve Loomis, LTC, U.S. Army (Retired)
29 October 2011

American Veterans for Equal Rights is moving into a future that cannot be stopped. The work in our past is done, but our new work will not wait for the slow or unmotivated. The day we long worked for came with the certification made by Admiral Mullen and Secretary Gates to the President of the repeal the of Don't Ask, Don't Tell on 20th of September. As we assembled in Albuquerque for our convention, it signified the end of one fight and the beginning of another.

It was a distinct privilege for our Bataan Chapter to host the 2011 American Veterans for Equal Rights National Convention in Albuquerque. Wonderful opportunities to socialize with old friends and new from across the country as we visited "Old Town" Albuquerque and the always colorful and intriguing Albuquerque Hot Air Balloon Fiesta, the largest such gathering in the world. Months of work prepared this convention to identify new missions and goals for AVER in keeping with the new realities following the repeal of Don't Ask, Don't Tell. LTC Vic Fehrenbach and MAJ Mike Almy were guest speakers and their cases helped provide light on where we are headed. Important presentations were made by several chapters on areas of their success including; Ty Redhouse of Sacramento Valley Veterans on Organizing and Reorganizing a chapter, and Steve Loomis of Bataan Chapter (New Mexico) on an AVER Mission and goals critique, and the New Mexico ACLU on the DADT Separation Pay class action law suit.

When Denny Meyer of AVERNY made a presentation on AVER Public Affairs to the convention from New York, it was the first time this was done by distance instruction via Skype connection. Stephani Patten of Bataan Chapter coordinated to make this and digital presentations possible throughout the convention. This also allowed Denny Meyer, who is multiply disabled, to participate in the full convention from New York and holds great promise for future conventions and meetings.

The future of AVER is tied significantly to new membership and chapters to expand our services and reach. Several visitors and members at large attended from Denver, Austin/San Antonio/Dallas and the San Francisco Bay area where new chapters can be started or restarted.

Congressman Martin Heinrich, D-NM, provided a welcome to New Mexico and recognized AVER's important efforts to repeal Don't Ask, Don't Tell. Capping the convention, we swore in our new officers standing before proud WWII Navajo Code Talkers who held the AVER constitution on which our new officers took their oath of office. At the end of our convention we remembered those AVER members who had passed

since our last convention, each with a single bell and taps.

Many of us finally saw the completion of an eighteen year journey when we participated in the first Outserve Leadership Conference which AVER cosponsored, by traveling to Las Vegas, Nevada the following weekend. When I, like many other men and women, began to fight my discharge from the Army, few but those targeted for discharge under DADT dared speak publicly. Bigotry against gays was the order of the day. Young men and women were threatened and Barry Winchell, and Allen Schindler lost their lives because they were perceived to be gay. Many careers were lost by highly professional soldiers, sailors, marines, coast guardsmen and airmen. Slowly the climate changed as good soldiers and veterans began to speak out for the right of gays to serve openly. That made all the difference as the public began to realize gays were among our best soldiers. Key leadership both active and retired spoke of integrity and importance of gays serving openly. Politicians could then make repeal a reality and did.

At the final Outserve banquet, the room was full of young heroes on active duty and many of the mentors and mainstays of our fight to serve openly. One of those mainstays recognized by Outserve for his service from the beginning was AVER's own James Darby of Chicago for his early work to organize and record the history of GLBT members of the military. We can all take great pride in our efforts since before the beginning of DADT.

I am relieved that this fight is behind us and that we can take a well deserved rest. But, can we really rest now?



October 2011 - Aubrey Sarvis and Steve Loomis at the OutServe Armed Forces Leadership Summit, Las Vegas, NV



October 2011 - Mike Almy and Victor Fehrenbach at the AVER 2011 National Convention, Albuquerque, NM

It is essential we remember that “the price of freedom is eternal vigilance”. There are those who would “repeal” the repeal of DADT. That is unlikely to happen, particularly if we man the political watch towers, but we must now work for the continued fair and complete implementation of the repeal. The Defense of Marriage Act must be repealed before our service members have the more complete equality they deserve. Even though we now serve openly alongside our straight comrades, DOMA prevents on post housing for our partners, medical benefits, death benefits, commissary and Exchange privileges just to name a few that our fellow soldiers have by virtue of being in straight marriages. Article 125 of the Uniform Code of Military Justice must be amended to remove consensual heterosexual and homosexual sodomy from its prohibitions. AVER has long publicly spoken for our brothers and sisters in uniform and visited countless members of Congress to petition our rights. We have worked for all veterans for access to Veterans Administration health and benefits programs.

Now, to achieve these additional goals and to protect the critical right to serve openly, we must work closely with all organizations who share our goals. Surely we must, as in the American revolution, “stand together or hang separately”. AVER, Outserve, SLDN, the Palm Center and others all have the same goal of gays openly and equally serving our nation. We have different organizational models of grass roots outreach to vets, grass roots outreach to active duty, political outreach and academic research which have all contributed mightily to our combined success.

It is now essential we coordinate those goals, organizations and capabilities into a concentrated effort to achieve these objectives in an increasingly distracted and even unfriendly Congress. With an umbrella organization or commission, each goal can be identified and approached with coordinated effort more likely to be successful. For example, to repeal DOMA, our organizations from the successful fight to repeal DADT can work closely with Human Rights Campaign and Parents, Family and Friends of Lesbians and Gays and faith organizations among other groups to gain repeal.

Such a “Commission for Rights of Military Service” would coordinate and bring to bear each DADT organization’s considerable capabilities and outreach in a more effective far reaching manner for these new less familiar efforts. Some of our new goals will be as difficult to achieve as the repeal of DADT was and need just as concerted an effort. Even fund raising could be coordinated and extended beyond the often overlapping efforts we make now. It is time to begin talking about this together, rather than separately. A well organized “combined arms” action is more likely to succeed where single arms actions will fail.

The AVER National Convention formally closed one door to a difficult past and proudly opened another to our promising future. Let’s step through that door now! We and our nation will all be better for it.



Lieutenant Colonel Loomis is now retired in Albuquerque, New Mexico. He is the President of the Bataan Chapter of American Veterans for Equal Rights and AVER Region IV Vice President. He is a graduate of the University of New Mexico with a Bachelor’s in Journalism. During his military career he served in the Infantry and Engineer branches and was awarded: Combat Infantry Badge, Bronze Star for Valor, Bronze Star for Service, Purple Heart, Meritorious Service Medal - 4th award, Air Medal, Army Commendation Medal - 2d award, Army Achievement Medal - 2d award, and others.

LTC Loomis was the subject of an interview by Morley Safer on CBS 60 Minutes and has led efforts to reach out to numerous members of Congress on national GLBT issues, and funded his own successful GLBT rights effort in Federal Court. He has organized and supported work within New Mexico for GLBT rights, working to improve coordination of allied groups for marriage rights, hate crimes legislation and equal employment and housing rights.

The 2012 OutServe International Leadership Conference is scheduled for October 25-28, 2012, in Orlando, FL. For more information, please see: <http://outserve.org/2012conference>



Soldier of the Year in 1993 before being removed from the military.

On Monday, October 24th, AVER member Lee Reinhart re-enlisted in the U.S. Navy. Lee had served four years in the Navy. He was out for several months and decided to join the Coast Guard. He was removed after three months. Lee was the first servicemember from Illinois to re-enlist. It was a very special ceremony. His entire family was there at the Center on Halsted, and he was sworn in by Cong. Quigley.

AVER celebrated its 29th annual Veterans Day Dinner. One of the highlights earlier in the day was Jean Albright’s remarks at the City of Chicago’s Veterans Day Ceremony at Soldier Field. For the first time ever a gay veteran spoke about the DADT policy.

The Chicago Chapter meets the 1st Thursday of every month at 7:00 p.m. at the Center on Halsted.

Jim Darby, President
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Chicago Gay Veterans color guard



17 March 2012 - AVER-RMC Color Guard in Denver St. Patrick's Day Parade

AVER Region IV

AVER Rocky Mountain

The Rocky Mountain Denver Chapter has been dormant for several years. Former officer John Kelly really revived it with a bang.

John organized a seven member Color Guard to march in this year’s St. Patrick’s Day parade, and they were absolutely fantastic, as you can see by the photos.

Denver has always been an important and integral part of AVER, having hosted two national conventions over the years.

We are hoping that John will share some of his secrets to this amazing rebirth. Could it have anything to do with the free corned beef and cabbage offered to veterans by Charlie’s Bar?

John Kelly
jjkellyii@aol.com

AVER Bataan

The New Mexico Bataan Chapter of AVER in Albuquerque publishes a monthly bulletin, High Desert Signals. Please contact President Steve Loomis for information at swloomis@swcp.com

The Bataan Chapter Color Guard always has a presentation for the Veterans Day Parade and for the Albuquerque Pride Parade.

In the Veterans Day Parade this year the LGBT veterans were joined by several active duty members of OutServe. It was the first Veterans Day following the repeal of DADT and thus the first opportunity for openly gay active duty service members to join a Veterans Day Parade. The combined active duty and veterans and Color Guard marched proudly behind AVER and OutServe banners. This will be the third year that AVER has marched in the parade and again was well received. Members of both organizations were interviewed by ABC and spoke of their pride in being able to march in the parade.



President - Marshall Belmaine
Vice-President - Charles Egan
Treasurer - Richard Crowner
Secretary - Angel Acevedo
FGC meets the second Tuesday of every month at 7:00 p.m. at the Community Center - Pride Campus, 2040 N. Dixie Highway, Wilton Manors. Call 954 537 3582.

Marshall Belmaine
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Ft. Lauderdale, FL 33339
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AVER GA colorguard led by Danny Ingram with Keith Johnson - GA tech volunteer



More than 200 people turned out on September 19 for the Atlanta celebration to mark the end of DADT. AVER Members of AVER joined with Out-Song and the Atlanta Freedom Band to commemorate this special day in our nation's history. It was a great day and many members went on to the OutWrite Bookstore to continuing celebrating. AVER also held a Reveille Ceremony the next morning at 7:00 a.m.

Organizers claim that Atlanta's Veterans Day Parade is the largest in the country. And, as many of you already know, over the years the organizers of Veterans Day Parades have been less-than-welcoming to gay veterans. In some instances gay veterans have actually been kicked out of some parades.

As fate would have it, this year when Atlanta AVER arrived at the reviewing stand there was silence from the podium. AVER was not going to be recognized. Danny Ingram yelled across to his partner carrying the banner to stop. The AVER contingent stopped. Complete silence. Danny put his hand to his ear and stared directly at the announcer. As it became evident that AVER would not be moving until it was recognized, there was some panic on the reviewing stand as the announcer shuffled papers to try and find his papers. He finally announced "American Veterans for Equal Rights - Honoring All Who Served." Danny



managed to mouth a "Thank You" and AVER continued on. Sadly, this is not the first, and probably not the last time that gay veterans have been discriminated against. But we continue to persevere because we are Happy Warriors.

AVER Georgia - Atlanta
President - Danny Ingram
P.O. Box 2115, Decatur, GA 30031
404.429.1316



News about the "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" policy this year has dominated many of the events in Chicago.

Last May several members of AVER donated items for the Chicago History Museum's Out in Chicago exhibit. Jim Darby donated his 1952 Navy uniform which is displayed in a glass case. travis donated his hat and dress and also was filmed for a video presentation. The exhibit covers 50 years of LGBT history in Chicago and closes in March.

On Tuesday, July 26th, at noon Chicago members of AVER held the 9th annual Salute to LGBT Veterans in Daley Plaza. Five LGBT veterans were the speakers, The event is sponsored by the Chicago Commission on Human Relations, and the Commissioner, Mona Noriega read a Declaration from the Mayor. The event included a Color Guard, America, the Beautiful, sung by AVER member travis, the placing of our traditional pink triangle wreath at the Eternal Flame, and Echo Taps.

On Monday, September 20 AVER held a patriotic Ceremony at the Center on Halsted to mark the end of the DADT policy. The three veteran speakers were Jean Albright, USAF, Ret, Jim Darby, USN and Jose Zuniga, USA,



GLASS founders. Photo: Courtesy Ann Foster.

Illinois naval base starts first gay and lesbian support group

by TJ Chernick

Sailors at the Naval Station Great Lakes formed GLASS, or Gay, Lesbian, and Supporting Sailors, earlier this month, making it the first-ever LGBT support group created on a military base in U.S. history.

The group, which aims to foster a military base free of prejudice, bigotry, harassment and violence, was developed on the heels of the official repeal of the military's discriminatory policy against out LGBT service members, Don't Ask, Don't Tell. GLASS's mission is to garner support from other sailors and provide a safe space to educate and discuss matters of sexual orientation. It also serves as a model for similar groups to start across the country.

Despite the termination of major discriminatory policy in the military, gay and lesbian service members often continue to encounter hurdles. One such hurdle is the issue of benefits for domestic and married same-sex partners. As same-sex marriage is not federally recognized, many service men and women are denied partner benefits, such as health insurance. Petty Officer of the U.S. Navy, Ann Foster, one of the GLASS founders, was talking with an openly-gay fellow sailor who mentioned her partner and children.

"We started talking about how, normally, if they were married they would have support," Foster said. "One night we were all talking about how it would be great to talk to someone who was in the military, who has dealt with it."

After careful consideration, Foster determined that starting a group where these issues could be addressed was something she could do herself. She had searched around to see if there was a group like it, but there wasn't. Foster said. "After Christmas I decided that if I wanted to do it now was the time."

Along with two other sailors, Petty Officer Liz Greenwood, Seaman Beau Briscoe; and their Captain, Peter Litner, Foster and her crew created GLASS. Although, at first, some of the Sailors were concerned with how leadership would take the proposal for a new group with such a delicate purpose, the response was surprising.

“Our leadership has been so supportive,” said Foster. “We expected so much more pushback, but because our command has been such a great umbrella, if there were those who may not have supported, our command was there to say “we are here to support them.”

Since the group’s inception, they’ve held two meetings and have found support among sailors throughout the base.

“Unreal is the best word that comes to mind,” said Greenwood, a co-founder. “We’ve been so floored by the positive responses; people want to know how that can help, not only the gay community, but the straight as well.”

However, with the positive traction GLASS has attained, the creation of an LGBT support group within a military base does not come without challenge.

“The biggest hurdles to overcome were the common legal issues,” said Briscoe. “Any group within the military must develop bylaws and charters, Greenwood took that upon herself to develop.”

In addition to creating bylaws and charters, the sailors were required to present the idea in front of their peers over the course of a week. After receiving their support, GLASS held its first meeting in January and a little over a month later the Great Lakes Chapter boasts bi-weekly meetings attended by an average of 20-30 sailors. They have also garnered 400 Facebook likes and a barrage of positive reviews from other state bases.

“Sailors in Japan and Hawaii have been sending messages like, ‘Thank you so much,’ “ said Foster. “Some retired sailors have also given support wishing they would have served today, but now they can say I’m gay and I served.”

Both Foster and Briscoe have been transferred from Great Lakes, but with bylaws and charters in hand, they plan on taking GLASS to different areas around the country to feed the growing demand for gay and lesbian support in the U.S. Navy.

GLASS is a peer-to-peer group for gay, lesbian, bisexual and supportive sailors at Great Lakes Naval Station in Great Lakes, IL. We are committed to providing support for our fellow sailors through advocacy, education and outreach. To find out more about the group or how to start a chapter visit <http://www.facebook.com/GLASSgreatlakes>



AVER Veterans Affairs Report

AVER Veterans Affairs receives a steady stream of inquires about benefits and discrimination from lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender veterans across America by e-mail and phone. Where legal advice is needed, we have been able to refer our vets to an attorney who has volunteered to provide consultation to our LGBT vets with claims issues. (actual representation on a claim, as opposed to a brief advice consultation, requires a fee which is generally a percentage of a claim award). This summer we may have a second attorney joining the volunteer team.

AVER Veterans Affairs also liaisons with the Department of Veterans Affairs, following up on developments regarding equal benefits, discrimination issues, and policy changes. Last Summer, the Department issued a landmark Directive regarding the proper, dignified, and respectful treatment of transgender veterans, after a ten year advocacy effort led by TAVA, with AVER and national transgender rights organizations. However, there has yet to be a similar Directive regarding the treatment of lesbian, gay, and bisexual veterans. In March 2012 AVER Veterans Affairs followed up with contacts in VA headquarters to inquire about and advocate an LGB veterans directive. We were informed that there is a VA working group regarding LGBT issues. Further inquiry revealed that most of the group’s current discussion is regarding LGBT VA employees, not veterans. While we applaud any progress, we made it clear that we expect the VA to be responsive and responsible following the repeal of DADT last year, to be fully inclusive on the rights, benefits, and non-discrimination issues for our veterans. We received a telephone message from the Department of Veterans Affairs VSO Liaison, but have, at this writing, been unable to get a call back from him for several weeks.

AVER Veterans Affairs has also begun to work with Active Duty and Reserve personnel. In March we received a request from a reserve officer about to take command of a new unit, asking us to refer qualified LGBT reservists to possibly fill some of the positions in his unit. We were able to make two referrals.

AVER Veterans Affairs welcomes AVER Member Volunteers with skills and or experience in VSO work, peer counseling, and familiarity with VA issues. Contact Denny Meyer at vetsaffairs@aver.us



A man who wears many hats, Denny Meyer is one of the most hardworking and dedicated members of AVER. Denny serves as President of the AVER New York Chapter, Region I VP, AVER National Public Affairs Officer, and VP of Veterans Affairs. In his spare time Denny conducts interviews for and edits GayMilitarySignal.com. AVER is extremely grateful and proud of all the work that Denny does for America’s veterans.

Chapter Reports

★AVER Region I



The New York chapter of AVER meets at the LGBT Community Center in Manhattan, 208 W 13th St, just west of 7th Ave.

AVERNY had a fabulous Pride Parade season last summer, marching proudly in the Queens Pride Parade and the Heritage of Pride Parade in Manhattan with our biggest contingent ever. We also joined in the alternative, fully inclusive, St. Patrick’s Day Parade in Astoria, Queens. The Veterans Day Parade is usually the largest parade of the year and goes down 5th Avenue in Manhattan.

AVERNY had its annual booth at the GLBT EXPO, held March 17-18 at the Javits Convention Center in New York City, with hundreds of LGBT vets visiting our table.

AVER New York (AVERNY)
PO Box 150160
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President - Denny Meyer
Voice: 718.849.5665



AVERNY in the 2011 NYC Pride Parade



24 March 2012 - Cleveland Rally for Marriage & Full Equality - photo by Quixote Creations

We thank AVER National for endorsing this important event.

NEOAVER’s home bar is Twist Social Club at 11633 Clifton Blvd, Cleveland, OH 44102

Marie Ann Bohusch
qcws@neoaver.org



NEOAVER and BRAVER were represented at the Cleveland Rally for Marriage & Full Equality on Saturday 24 March 2012. One of the speakers at the rally was Army Reserve Captain Steve Snyder-Hill, plaintiff in McLaughlin v. Panetta, the lawsuit brought by SLDN challenging DOMA. Immediately following the rally, more than 200 same-gender couples were married at the Galleria in protest of Ohio’s constitutional amendment that bans same-gender marriage. Over 3500 people were counted in attendance throughout the day, including local and national news media.



Lee Reinhart, former Chicagoan, had a job transfer to Columbus, Ohio. Before the dust settled in Columbus, Lee was busy getting the word out to veterans to help get an AVER Chapter off the ground. Lee has four members, and is looking for at least one more.

Lee served in both the U.S. Navy and the U.S. Coast Guard. The Coast Guard did not like him and asked him to leave. Lee was determined, and when the ban was lifted on September 20, 2011, Lee re-enlisted in Chicago. It was a great event with family, many members of AVER, U.S. Congressmen and a boatload of Navy brass for the ceremony at the Center on Halsted.

Lee Reinhart
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