

Take a Wilde RIDE

FROM OSCAR WILDE
TO THE REV. JIMMY
CREECH, A SELECTIVE
HISTORY OF GAY AND
LESBIAN ACTIVISM
BY JOHN GALLAGHER

1895 >> As a result of a public feud with the father of his lover, Lord Alfred "Bosie" Douglas, Oscar Wilde is prosecuted and convicted for "gross indecency between males." Once the most celebrated writer in England, Wilde, who described his love for Douglas as "the noblest form of affection," is sentenced to two years' hard labor.

1897 >> Magnus Hirschfeld, a gay German physician, founds the Scientific



Humanitarian Committee, the first gay rights group ever, to lobby for the repeal of Germany's sodomy law. Although he fails in that effort, Hirschfeld publishes some of the earliest research on homosexuality and influences public opinion with his education efforts.

1907 >> Gertrude Stein meets Alice B. Toklas. In Paris the two women set up a salon that fosters some of the greatest writers of the century, including Hemingway and Fitzgerald, as well as gay artists. Stein declares her love for Toklas in print in *The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas*, published in 1933.

1915 >> In speeches across the country, birth-control advocate Emma Goldman tells audiences that homosexuality is not ab-

normal. Her willingness to tackle the unpopular topic leads gays and lesbians to contact her to tell her about the toll the public stigma has taken on their lives.

1920 >> Roger Baldwin founds the ACLU. Despite criticism from board members, Baldwin includes among the group's goals the repeal of sodomy laws.

1924 >> Henry Gerber forms the Society for Human Rights, the first gay group in the U.S. The group is quickly shut down when the wife of a member complains to police, who arrest Gerber for obscenity.

1928 >> Radclyffe Hall publishes her novel *The Well of Loneliness*, which quickly becomes the defini-

tive statement on lesbianism, despite its downbeat ending.

1942 >> Jim Kepner moves to San Francisco, where he begins collecting gay-themed books that will become the basis of the International Gay and Lesbian Archives. Considered one of the pioneers of gay historical scholarship, Kepner becomes a major figure ▶



in the fledgling Mattachine Society and One Inc.

1947 >> **Tennessee Williams** writes *A Streetcar Named Desire*, which establishes a gay sensibility on Broadway and solidifies his reputation as a playwright. Williams later signs the initial fundraising letter for the Human Rights Campaign Fund.



1948 >> *Sexual Behavior in the Human Male*, by **Alfred Kinsey**, is published, in which the researcher concludes that 37% of American males have had at least one gay sexual experience to the point of orgasm. Five years later Kinsey publishes his report on women, which puts the comparable figure at 13%.

1950 >> **Harry Hay** founds the Mattachine Society, one of the earliest gay groups in the United States. Although Hay eventually breaks with the group because of criticism about his Communist past, he remains active in gay causes even today, helping to form the Radical Faeries and participating in protests and marches.

1953 >> With a grant from

the National Institute of Mental Health, psychologist **Evelyn Hooker** begins to study the psychological adjustment of gay men. A straight woman, Hooker is helped in her research by a gay friend. Her research concludes that there is no psychological difference between heterosexual and homosexual men.



1955 >> **Del Martin** and her partner, **Phyllis Lyon**, along with six other women, form the Daughters of Bilitis, the first national lesbian group in the U.S. Two of the most important leaders for lesbian rights this century, Martin and Lyon have been involved in a range of organizations and have written two books together: *Lesbian/Woman* and *Lesbian Love and Liberation*.

>> **Poet Allen Ginsberg** recites *Howl* at public readings in San Francisco. An early advocate of gay rights, Ginsberg appears on the second night of the Stonewall Inn riots in 1969 to tell the crowd, "Gay is good."

1956 >> **James Baldwin** publishes *Giovanni's Room*, one of the first mainstream novels to explore gay themes openly.

1957 >> **Franklin Kameny**,

an astronomer with the U.S. Army, is fired from his job because he is gay, starting Kameny on a tireless, life-long battle for gay rights. In 1961 Kameny helps found a chapter of the Mattachine Society in Washington, D.C., going so far as to send a copy of the group's newsletter to FBI director J. Edgar Hoover. The first openly gay congressional



candidate (in 1971), Kameny is also a founder of the National Gay Task Force. With his endless organizing and willingness to confront public officials, Kameny has, in the words of *Completely Queer: The Gay and Lesbian Encyclopedia*, "an impact on virtually every facet of the gay rights movement."

1958 >> **Barbara Gittings** starts an East Coast chapter of the Daughters of Bilitis in New York City. Gittings goes on to fight employment discrimination against government employees and, along with Franklin Kameny, is instrumental in forcing the American Psychiatric Association to remove homosexuality from its list of disorders in 1974.

1963 >> **Bayard Rustin** helps Martin Luther King Jr. organize the march on

Washington for civil rights. The openly gay Rustin, who has been advising King since 1955, is one of the first leaders to call for a comprehensive movement for civil rights that includes gay rights.

>> Drawing on his own experiences, **John Rechy** publishes his novel *City of Night*. Detailing the sexual underground, the book leads

to a new openness about gay sexuality in books.

1964 >> **David Hockney** moves to California. Always comfortable about letting his sexual orientation be known, the British-born artist regularly speaks out against censorship and antigay legislation.

>> **Jane Rule** publishes *Desert of the Heart*, a novel about lesbian love set on a dude ranch, making her one of the most prominent lesbian leaders in Canada. Rule eventually publishes seven novels and five collections of short stories and essays.

>> **Christopher Isherwood's** novel *A Single Man* appears, in which the British-born writer describes a day in the life of a gay man, minus the despair and angst usually associated with gay novels. Starting in the 1930s, Isherwood writes works with gay themes, including his *Berlin*

Stories and culminating with the autobiographical *Christopher and His Kind* in 1976. In 1999 Isherwood's papers are donated to the Huntington Library in California.

1967 >> **Dick Michaels**, **Bill Rand**, and **Sam Winston** found *The Advocate* in Los Angeles. An offshoot of a newsletter about police harassment, the first issue is printed late at night in the basement of the ABC TV affiliate's offices and is only 12 pages long. Within three years, the magazine goes national as the "Newspaper of America's Homophile Community."

1968 >> *The Naked Civil Servant*, the autobiography of **Quentin Crisp**, is published in England to mixed reviews. Eight years later a film version is broadcast on public television in the United States, drawing enormous attention and launching Crisp on a career as a one-man public arbiter of wit and style.

1969 >> The Gay Liberation Front forms in New York City in the wake of the Stonewall Inn riots. A free-form collective that aligns itself with the leftist movements of the time, GLF finds its strongest voices in **Jim Fouratt** and **Martha Shelley**, who help set the philosophy for the group. >> **Morris Kight** helps launch the Gay Liberation Front in Los Angeles. A veteran of antiwar protests, Kight is inspired to come out by the Stonewall uprising. In 1972 Kight, along with **Don Kilhefner** and **John Vincent** ▶

Platania, help found the Los Angeles Gay Community Services Center.

>> **Judy Grahn** starts a mimeograph press in Oakland that becomes the Women's Press Collective. A participant in early gay rights protests, Grahn emerges as a key lesbian theorist with the publication ten years later of *Another Mother Tongue: Gay Words, Gay Worlds*.
>> Unable to find a publisher, **Isabel Miller** prints 1,000 copies of *Patience and Sarah* and sells the novel on the street and at Daughters of Bilitis meetings.

1970 >> **Marty Robinson, Arthur Evans, Jim Owles**, and others form the Gay Activists Alliance in New York City. With a goal of pushing for a nondiscrimination bill, the group *zaps* (a term Robinson coins) liberal politicians and reigns for several years as the leading gay organization in the city.

>> **Bella Abzug** becomes one of the first politicians to seek the gay vote when she speaks at a Gay Activists Alliance meeting in Manhattan. (In San Francisco, Dianne Feinstein takes a similar stance.) Abzug becomes a proponent of gay rights in Washington, serving as cosponsor of the first federal gay rights bill.

>> An early leader in the modern feminist movement, **Kate Millet** comes out as a bisexual at a Daughters of Bilitis meeting, sparking a debate about lesbian "influence" in the feminist movement.

1971 >> **Merle Miller** publishes an article in *The New York Times Magazine* titled "What It Means to Be a

Homosexual." A prominent journalist and later biographer of presidents Truman and Lyndon Johnson, Miller becomes one of the first major public figures to come out.

>> **Tom Stoddard** writes the first gay rights bill to be introduced in the New York City council. It fails, but Stoddard continues to advocate on legal issues as a lawyer for the New York chapter of the ACLU and later as director of the Lambda Legal Defense and Education Fund.

1972 >> **Jonathan Ned Katz** presents *Coming Out!* a gay political play, at the Gay Activists Alliance Firehouse. Katz goes on to publish *Gay American History*, a major landmark in gay studies, three years later.

>> **John Waters's Pink Flamingos** debuts. The Baltimore-born filmmaker introduces a gay edge to U.S. cinema that includes drag queen Divine and the celebration of bad taste.

1973 >> **Barbara Grier** and her partner, **Donna McBride**, along with **Anyda Marchant** and **Muriel Crawford**, form Naiad Press in order to publish lesbian literature.

>> **Joan Nestle**, a member of the Gay Activists Alliance, develops the concept for the Lesbian Herstory Archives, which open in her apartment in New York City three years later.

>> **Rita Mae Brown's Rubyfruit Jungle** is published by a small feminist press, but sales are so strong that Bantam buys the rights to publish the paperback version, which becomes a best-seller.

>> Lawyer **William**

Thom helps found Lambda Legal Defense Fund (later Lambda Legal Defense and Education Fund).

>> **Bruce Voeller** and a handful of other activists, including **Ron Gold** and **Greg Dawson**, found the National Gay Task Force.

Howard Brown, head of New York City's Health Services Administration, becomes the group's first director.

>> **Jill Johnston** writes *Lesbian Nation*, a groundbreaking book about lesbian feminism.

>> Poet **Adrienne Rich** wins the National Book Award for *Diving Into the Wreck*.

senator elected two years earlier, comes out. Spear, who announces his retirement in 1999, becomes the driving force behind the passage of the state's gay rights law.

>> **Patricia Nell Warren** publishes *The Front Runner*, a best-selling novel about the relationship between a coach and a runner.

1975 >> **Leonard Matlovich** sues the Air Force for discharging him because he is gay, and the Army begins to pursue discharge proceedings against openly gay sergeant **Perry Watkins**. Five years later a federal

Derek Jarman debuts his feature film *Sebastiane*, about the saint of that name with whom, in Jarman's version, Emperor Diocletian was in love. Jarman becomes one of the most influential voices in queer cinema.

1977 >> **Patricia Ireland** leads her chapter of the National Organization for Women in the fight against Anita Bryant's antigay campaign in Dade County, Fla. After her election as president of the national group in 1991, Ireland reveals in an interview



MARPLETHORPE



>> Upset that women are being overlooked in the movement, **Jean O'Leary** helps found Lesbian Feminist Liberation, a separatists group. She goes on, three years later, to become cochair of NGTF and is among those present in 1977 at the first meeting of gay activists in the White House, with presidential liaison **Midge Costanza**.

1974 >> **Elaine Noble** is elected to the Massachusetts state legislature, making her the first elected openly gay or lesbian statewide official in the nation. A month later, **Allan Spear**, a Minnesota state

judge orders the Air Force to reinstate Matlovich. The Air Force offers the former sergeant a \$160,000 settlement instead, which Matlovich accepts. Watkins eventually wins his battle as well. The rulings pave the way for other successful challenges to the military policy, including one by sailor **Keith Meinhold** in the 1990s.

>> **Dave Kopay** comes out in a newspaper interview in the *Washington Star*. The former NFL running back becomes the first professional team sports athlete to come out.

1976 >> British filmmaker

with *The Advocate* that she has a female companion.

>> **Harvey Milk** is elected to the San Francisco board of supervisors, becoming its first openly gay member. With his motto "You have to give them hope," Milk comes to symbolize the growing political clout of gays across the country. One year later he is assassinated by former supervisor Dan White.

>> **Robert Mapplethorpe** opens an exhibition of his homoerotic photos in Manhattan. In 1989, the year of his death from AIDS com-

plications, Mapplethorpe becomes the center of controversy when an exhibit of his work in Washington, D.C., is canceled because it contains sexually explicit photos, prompting a public debate about art and censorship.

>> **Michael Denny** serves as a founding editor of *Christopher Street*, a gay literary magazine. The first openly gay book editor in New York City, Denny loses his job at Macmillan as a result and moves to St. Martin's, where he publishes a range of gay authors, including Randy Shilts, whose books are rejected elsewhere.

1980 >> With financial backing from Republican **Dallas Coors** and *Advocate* publisher **David Goodstein**, among others, **Steve Endean**, **Jim Foster**, and **Larry Bye** help launch the Human Rights Campaign Fund.

>> **Tom Waddell**, a physician and former Olympic athlete, forms San Francisco Arts and Athletics with the intention of beginning the first Gay Games. The first Games are held in San Francisco in 1982.

>> **The Sisters of Perpetual Indulgence** is formed in San Francisco. A combination of street theater and political statement, the nuns raise awareness (and sometimes hackles) of gay and AIDS issues.

1981 >> **Adele Starr** founds Parents and Friends of Lesbians and Gays and becomes the group's first president.

>> **Keith Haring** begins sketching his artwork on ad boards: in New York City



HARING



LORDE



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subway stations. Within a few years he is heralded as one of the leading young artists of his time. Before his death from AIDS complications in 1990, he becomes an AIDS activist, contributing artwork to fund ACT UP's mission.

>> **Vito Russo** publishes *The Celluloid Closet*, a history of gay themes in film. A member of the Gay Activists Alliance in the early 1970s, Russo influences the way gays view themselves in movies and the way movies view gays.

>> **Harvey Fierstein's Torch Song Trilogy** debuts, eventually running for more than 1,000 performances on Broadway and introducing theatergoers to a world in which gay people make and keep commitments to one another instead of despairing over their homosexuality.

>> Tennis champion **Billie**

Jean King is outed when Marilyn Barnett brings a palimony suit against her. Although King at first denies that she had a relationship with Barnett, she eventually admits to it. With time, she emerges as an eloquent supporter of gays and lesbians in professional sports and as a backer of the Gay Games.

>> **Mathilde Krim**, a researcher at Memorial Sloan-Kettering Cancer Center in New York City, begins working on the first case of AIDS. She is spurred on to speak out about the disease and to call for further research. Two years later the American Foundation for AIDS Research is formed, with Krim as its chairwoman.

1982 >> **Michael Hardwick** is arrested by Atlanta police in his own home for

having sex with another man. He appeals his case all the way to the U.S. Supreme Court, which upholds Georgia's sodomy law in a 5-4 vote.

>> Poet **Audre Lorde** publishes her autobiography, *Zami: A New Spelling of My Name*, in which she describes her emerging sense of herself as a lesbian. Until her death from cancer in 1992, Lorde is one of the most celebrated lesbian writers in the country.

1983 >> **Gerry Studds**, serving his tenth year in Congress, comes out as a gay man after the House Ethics Committee recommends that he be reprimanded for having sex with a male page. The first openly gay member of Congress, Studds goes on to take a leading role concerning gay and AIDS issues.

>> **Karen Thompson** begins the battle to win custody of her lover of four years, Sharon Kowalski, who is left a quadriplegic with brain damage after a car accident. After Kowalski's father, Donald, forbids Thompson to visit his daughter, Thompson begins a lengthy court battle that culminates with her being named Kowalski's legal guardian in 1991.

1984 >> **Virginia Uribe** begins Project 10, a program to support gay and lesbian students, in a Los Angeles high school. The project eventually spreads to the entire Los Angeles school district.

>> In his presidential campaign, the Rev. **Jesse Jackson** calls for a "rainbow coalition," which includes gays and lesbians.

>> **Susie Bright** starts *On*

Our Backs, a lesbian erotic magazine.

1985 >> **Michael Callen** helps found the People With AIDS Coalition in New York City. Callen, who was diagnosed with AIDS three years earlier, becomes a key figure in the battle to fight (and survive) AIDS. Besides his AIDS activism, Callen is a member of the a cappella group the Flirtations. He dies of AIDS complications in 1993.

>> **Martin Delaney** co-founds Project Inform, a San Francisco-based group dedicated to speeding development of HIV drugs.

>> **Cleve Jones**, a San Francisco activist, comes up with the idea of a giant quilt to honor those who have died of AIDS complications. The idea comes to fruition two years later when Jones launches the Names Project.

1987 >> **Randy Shilts** publishes *And the Band Played On*, a damning account of the political apathy that attended the start of the AIDS epidemic. A reporter for the *San Francisco Chronicle* and a former correspondent for *The Advocate*, Shilts is hailed by his peers for his investigative skills. In 1993, the year before his death, Shilts publishes *Conduct Unbecoming*, a history of gays in the military.

1988 >> **Paul Monette** publishes two books about the AIDS epidemic, *Borrowed Time: An AIDS Memoir* and *Love Alone: Eighteen Elegies for Rog*. Although Monette had written popular novels with gay characters ▶

prior to this, the appearance of the two books, along with his National Book Award-winning *Becoming a Man: Half a Life Story* (1992), marks him as one of the most eloquent chroniclers of the devastation caused by AIDS.

>> **Torie Osborn** takes over as head of the Los Angeles Gay and Lesbian Community Services Center. A veteran activist who worked to defeat the Briggs initiative to ban gay teachers in California in 1978, Osborn goes on to head the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force.

1989 >> **Gabriel Rotello** cofounds *OutWeek*, a gay magazine, in New York City, with **Sarah Pettit** coming aboard as arts editor and **Michelangelo Signorile** as columnist. With its brash, cutting-edge attitude, the magazine soon ignites a national debate about the merits of outing closeted gays.

>> **Lesléa Newman's** *Heather Has Two Mommies*, a book about lesbian parenting, is published. Along with **Michael Willhoite's** *Daddy's Roommate*, it quickly becomes a lightning rod for conservative attack and a subject of praise among the growing numbers of gay parents.

1990 >> **Mandy Carter** organizes gay and lesbian voters in North Carolina in an attempt to defeat Republican senator Jesse Helms. Carter goes on to become field program consultant for the Black Gay and Lesbian Leadership Forum.

>> **Marlon Riggs** shows *Tongues Untied*, a documentary about what it means to be gay and black in the U.S.

>> At the age of 67, **Marvin Liebman**, founder of such conservative groups as Young Americans for Freedom, comes out in an open letter to his friend William F. Buckley.

>> **Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick** publishes *Epistemology of the Closet*, establishing her as one of the preeminent voices in the field of queer studies.

1991 >> **Historian Martin Duberman** establishes the Center for Lesbian and Gay Studies at the City University of New York. A leading intellectual in the movement, Duberman was among the founding members of such groups as Lambda Legal Defense and the National Gay Task Force.

>> Tennis great **Martina Navratilova** comes out in an interview on national television. She becomes a spokeswoman for gay rights, tackling the Pentagon's ban on gays in the military and homophobia in professional sports.

1992 >> **k.d. lang** comes out in a cover story in *The Advocate*. >> **David Mixner**, an openly gay political consultant, heads the effort to shore up gay support for Democrat Bill Clinton, helping to raise millions for the presidential candidate.

After Clinton disappoints gays and lesbians by failing to lift the Pentagon ban on gays in the military, Mixner, an activist for two decades, is arrested in a civil disobedience action outside the White House.

> **Donna Red Wing**, director of the Lesbian Community Project, and other activists in Oregon successfully beat back a ballot measure that would

ban nondiscrimination protections for gay people.

>> **Bob Hattoy**, an openly gay political consultant with AIDS, speaks at the Democratic National Convention. After the election, Hattoy is appointed assistant White House personnel director.

1993 >> **Roberta Achtenberg**, a member of the San Francisco board of supervisors, is approved to serve as assistant secretary of Housing and Urban Development after a grueling Senate debate during which Sen. Jesse Helms of North Carolina calls her a "damned lesbian." Achtenberg's appointment makes her the highest-ranking openly gay person to serve in an administration up until that time.

>> **Dorothy Hajdys-Holman** moves the crowd at the gay march on Washington with a speech about her son, **Allen Schindler**, a sailor who was beaten to death by two shipmates in October 1992. Hajdys-Holman goes on to speak at rallies and lobby legislators for an end to the ban on gay service personnel.

>> **Jamie Nabozny** drops out of school in Ashland, Wis., after suffering years of mental and physical abuse at the hands of classmates because he is gay. Because administrators refused to help him after he complained, Nabozny sues the district. In 1996 the district pays him \$900,000 in damages after a federal jury rules that school officials "intentionally discriminated" against Nabozny because he is gay.



1994 >> Olympic gold medal diver **Greg Louganis** comes out at the Gay Games in New York City. The following year he reveals in his autobiography that he is also HIV-positive.

>> **Pedro Zamora** appears as a cast member on the MTV show *The Real World*. HIV-positive since age 17, the openly gay Zamora raises national awareness for AIDS and gay issues. He dies at the end of the year, at the age of 24, of complications from the disease.

1996 >> **Cocounsels Dan Foley** and **Evan Wolfson** win a landmark decision from a Hawaii court when it holds that gay couples can be married. The case, currently pending an appeal before the state supreme court, was brought by three couples: **Joe Melillo** and **Pat Lagon**, **Ninia Baehr** and **Genora Dancel**, and **Tammy Rodrigues** and **Antoinette Pregil**.

1998 >> **Tammy Baldwin** is elected to Congress, the first openly gay or lesbian candidate ever to win a first-time election to the House of Representatives.

>> **Paul Fuller**, an antiques dealer in Waldoboro, Maine, walks across the state to encourage opposition to a ballot measure to ban gay rights; the measure is passed by voters.

>> **The Rev. Jimmy Creech** is cleared of charges in a Methodist Church trial that he violated church doctrine by marrying a gay couple. Despite the victory, however, Creech loses his job as pastor of an Omaha church. ■

LANG: DAVID JENSEN; CREECH: AP/WIDE WORLD PHOTOS; ZAMORA: KEN PROBST/MTV NETWORKS