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OPERATION: LIFT THE BAN V

AVER 2007 National Convention

18-23 April 2007

AVER would like to thank everyone who attended and/or contributed to making the 2007 National Convention a wonderful experience for all.

If you need a sponsorship proposal letter to present to your business or organization, you may download the [Sponsorship Letter HERE](#). [Adobe PDF]

We "officially" kick off the convention on Thursday 19 April with our Opening Reception, with a special VIP welcome, and plenty of time to meet and greet some of the movers and shakers in the fight to lift the ban on open and honest service for LGBT Americans.

Friday night will feature a Soda Fountain Ice Cream Social followed immediately by the Cleveland Premier showings of two movies: "**Courage Doesn't Ask**" by Zaydoe Films, and "**Tell**" by T.Joe Murray. Both films will not only be enjoying their Cleveland premier, but both directors will also be on site with us for post-screening discussion.

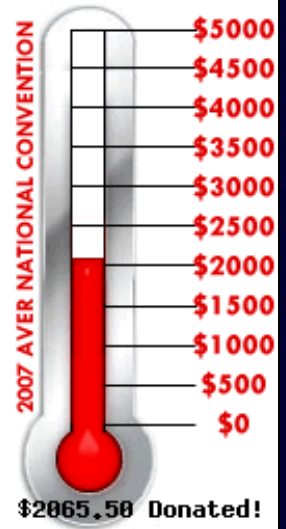
Saturday night will feature an LGBT Military Ball with WWII Era Big Band music. This is a memorial event, so both service members and veterans are authorized to wear Class A, Dress Blue, or Mess Dress uniforms. Attendees not in uniform: Black Tie or Dress Leather. Service members with valid military ID receive a special discount rate. Attendance at AVER events in no way suggests or implies sexual orientation.

Among many prominent speakers, the keynote address for our Military Ball will be given by Gay Rights pioneer and WWII combat Veteran Dr. Franklin Kameny, PhD.

DR. FRANKLIN KAMENY, PhD, a long time partner-in-activism of the late Barbara Gittings, recently donated to the Smithsonian Institution more than 70,000 pages of his personal archives, as well as picket-signs, buttons, and countless other items from his decades of fighting for LGBT Equal Rights. We hope you will take this opportunity to come dine and dance with us, as well as hear from one of the most important gay veterans to ever take up the fight.

An Ordinary Soldier - PFC Franklin Kameny
The Kameny Papers
A Pariah's Triumph - and America's

Some of our other speakers will include:



4 April 2008

In the news:

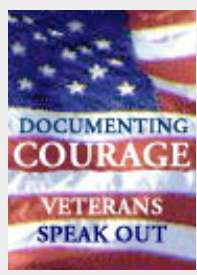
31 Jan 2008
Between the Lines: Military should throw out policy of secrecy

28 Jan 2008
Military's hostile climate victimizes families of gays

25 Jan 2008
Council Bill Would Urge End Of 'Don't Ask, Don't Tell'

15 Jan 2008
Kenneth H. Burns, 81; led gay rights Mattachine Society in the 1950s

09 Jan 2008
Family under fire



JOE ACTON - Friday movie night Q&A

from *Zaydoe Films*: "Courage Doesn't Ask is a movie about honor, duty and service in the military, and the courage it takes to serve, no matter who you are or what you do. The U.S. Government has refused to support Courage citing the Don't Ask, Don't Tell policy against gays serving in the military.

... Part of our cast includes actual gay veterans, which we included in the movie to put a face on the issue. ... By ignoring a gay storyline but identifying the actors as gay veterans, Courage Doesn't Ask stands for the proposition that being gay in combat is as transparent as being black, brown, white, Democrat, Republican. It just doesn't make a damn bit of difference and shouldn't disqualify otherwise honorable service."

T.JOE MURRAY - Friday movie night Q&A

Award winning documentarian, T.Joe Murrary will also be on site with us for a post-screening Q&A discussion, as well as a few of the veterans featured in his film "**TELL**," which has quite literally just finished post-production. "**TELL**" is a feature length documentary about LGBT American veterans spanning from WWII to the current War on Terror.

from the "TELL" website: "TELL" continues the director's tradition of taking a closer look at some of the lesser seen parts of LGBT culture. Conducting interviews with more than 14 LGBT military veterans and their allies, the film is sure to put a human face on the ongoing controversial policy of "don't ask, don't tell" which effects each and every gay, lesbian, bisexual or transgender person who wants to join the military and serve their country.

Rev. MIKE SCHUENEMEYER - Friday Lunch

Rev. Schuenemeyer is the Minister for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Ministries at the national headquarters of the United Church of Christ (UCC) in Cleveland, OH. The UCC has a 38-year history of outreach to the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender community. The UCC also has a long standing program of reaching out to returning war-time service members and veterans, in the form of counseling, conferences and retreats, in an effort to help service members and veterans digest their experiences and return to "normal life." This year, a secular private retreat will be held in Cleveland, Ohio, specifically for LGBT service members and veterans.

Presentations and Panels will include:

JANET M. BRIGGS, MSN, RN, CNP - Friday 10am

Nurse Practitioner for the Infectious Disease section of Louis Stokes VAMC, Janet M Briggs, received her B.S. in Nursing from The Pennsylvania State University, completed a two-year pilot program for Nurse Practitioner and her M.S. in Nursing at The Frances Payne Bolton School of Nursing at Case Western Reserve University. She holds additional certificates including one in Bioethics from Cleveland State University. Her nursing career has ranged from staffing to administrative positions spanning neonate through geriatrics, from acute care to ambulatory positions. For the last 17 years, she has been privileged to practice in the Infectious Disease section at the Cleveland VA. She has also served as an advisor for clinical case management to the National Minority AIDS Council. Jan is a member of the Northeast Ohio Nurse Practitioner Group, the Bioethics Network of Ohio, Sigma Theta Tau, and the Association of Nurses in AIDS Care.

**09 Jan 2008
Soldier: Policy
on Gays May
Be Shifting**

**02 Jan 2008
Veterans and
PTSD**

**27 Dec 2007
Taking a look
back at 2007**

**16 Dec 2007
Author
chronicled
history of gays
in military**

[*Coming Out Under Fire:
The History of Gay Men &
Women in World War II.*]

**Obit. 11 Dec
2007**

**16 Dec 2007
60 Minutes:
"Don't Ask,
Don't Tell"
[video]**

**14 Dec 2007
(Not) Home
for Christmas**

**01 Dec 2007
Scrap 'don't
ask, don't tell'
gay policy, say
retired US
generals**

**30 Nov 2007
Military vets,
activists
protest 'don't
ask, don't tell'**

**14 Nov 2007
'Don't ask,
don't tell' is
only hurting
military**

[9th Circuit Appeal: re:
MAJ Margaret Witt]

BRUCE HESTLEY - Saturday 4pm

Bruce Hestley is a Vietnam Navy Veteran, and currently serves as one of five Commissioners for the Summit County Veterans Service Commission, as the Treasurer of Vietnam Veterans of America Chapter #900, and as the National Treasurer for TAVA. He is also a lifetime member of the Jewish War Veterans of the USA. Bruce will be addressing VA benefits access, as specific to LGBT issues, as well as how veterans can take advantage of the services offered through their local County based Certified Veterans Service Officers, Veterans Service Commissions, and Certified Veterans Service Officers through Chartered 501(c) (19) organizations.

MARK LaFONTAINE, CPA - Saturday 2pm

Mark LaFontaine earned his Boy Scouts of America Eagle Scout at 16, and then progressed up to assistant scoutmaster. He received a Congressional appointment to the Merchant Marine Academy and later served in the US Coast Guard. After being discharged from the Coast Guard for homosexuality, Mark earned his CPA, then his Masters degree in Taxation. Mark worked for several years as a staff accountant at the Veterans Administration in Oakland Park before opening his own practice in 1999. For standing up for fairness, the Boy Scouts threw Mark out of the National Eagle Scout Association in 2001 – the first Eagle Scout to be banned from the organization. Mark then became a national spokesperson in Scouting for All, which promotes change within the Boy Scouts organization. Continuing his service to veterans, Mark is the national treasurer of AVER, and is president of the Florida Gold Coast chapter.

DENNY MEYER

Editor - thegaymilitarytimes.com, Military Equality Alliance PAO, AVER National PAO, and Chapter President of AVERNY, Denny will be presenting a history of LGBT service in the American military. Denny championed the first ever city-wide resolution against Don't Ask, Don't Tell. He also served as AVERs Region I Vice President until February 2006. As the editor of GMT, Denny has had the opportunity to interview some of the most prominent LGBT American veterans alive today. He will also be setting up appointment times during the convention to interview veterans for his "Profiles In Patriotism" column.

Sailor-Soldier

COUNCILMAN JOE SANTIAGO - Saturday 10 am

Councilman Joe Santiago was elected to represent Cleveland's Ward 14 on November 8, 2005. He is the First openly gay elected official in the City of Cleveland and the second Hispanic Councilman to be elected to serve the residents of Cleveland. Councilman Santiago served in the Liberation of Kuwait and Operation Desert Storm. He served as an Enlisted Aide to the Chief of Naval Operations at the Pentagon and has traveled throughout the United States and abroad. After the Councilman's ten-year naval career, he returned to his childhood home and became active within his community. He currently serves on the following committees: Employment, Affirmative Action & Training, (Vice Chair), Health & Human Services, Public Safety, Public Service, Public Utilities. Councilman Santiago also serves on the Senior Transportation Committee Cuyahoga County, Community Relations Board. Santiago also represents the City of Cleveland by Serving on The National League of Cities Hispanic Elected Official (HELO) and the Gay Lesbian Bisexual Elected Officials Committee.

TONY SMITH - Friday 2pm & 4pm

USAF Veteran Tony Smith is the Executive Director of Military Community Services Network. His primary passion and focus is to ensure adequate social services are available to the entire LGBT military community. Additionally, he is involved with supporting many LGBT People of Color Community organizations. Tony often works to reach out through education to various LGBT community groups that haven't been as involved with serving the LGBT military community in the past. Thereby increasing the knowledge of the unique needs and challenges faced by the LGBT military community and how these other groups can be more supportive.

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membership
registration.**

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KATHI WESTCOTT, Esq. - Friday 2pm & 4pm

Kathi Westcott has been with SLDN since 1999. As Deputy Director for Law, Ms. Westcott is responsible for coordinating SLDN's legal service and litigation programs which includes serving as the primary attorney for SLDN's legal service clients, managing all requests for legal assistance, and identifying and reporting on trends in the application of "Don't Ask, Don't Tell, Don't Pursue, Don't Harass" in the various services. Ms. Westcott is also responsible for directing SLDN's involvement in challenging the constitutionality of the United States military's sodomy statute in light of the Supreme Court decision in *Lawrence v. Texas*.

FREEDOM TO SERVE ROUNDTABLE PANEL - Friday 2pm

The FTS Roundtable is a coalition that includes members of more than 20 different non-profit organizations working to lift the ban on open and honest service for LGBT Americans. A number of their members will be participating in this panel, presenting legislative updates, as well as grassroots organizing info.

DADT's DRAIN ON FAMILIES - Friday 4pm

This tag-team style presentation will be conducted by Kathi Westcott of Servicemembers Legal Defense Network sldn.org and Tony Smith of the Military Community Services Network mcsnfamilies.org -- the only organization dedicated specifically to the immediate social services needs of LGBT military families.

Anyone wishing to become a Convention sponsor can click on the "thermometer" at the top right to donate online or mail donations to: **NEO AVER / POBox 1895 / Stow, OH 44224**. All Convention sponsors will be listed in the Convention program unless they request to remain anonymous. Sponsors will have the option of placing an ad in the Convention program, in addition to being listed in our sponsors pages. Sponsors will also be listed here on the AVER website, with links where appropriate. For the Sponsorship schedule, please follow the link below.

Anyone wishing to donate to AVER's Silent Auction, for the sake of expedience, please contact Convention Chair, Marie Bohusch, either **by email** or by phone at **330.247.4102**, to arrange pick-up or delivery of donated items. All donations to AVER are fully tax deductible. Donors will be listed in the Summer 2007 issue of AVER's quarterly national journal - **The Forward Observer**, and on the 2007 Convention "In-Kind" donation section of the **AVER Sponsors** page until Oct 2008, with web links where appropriate.

Are you a Leather Veteran? Kick off your Spring vacation with the AVER Convention, nowhere else will you find a nationwide VSO sponsored LGBT Military Ball or so many Out and Proud LGBT Veterans all in one place. Continue your vacation with **CLAW** - the Cleveland Leather Awareness Weekend, winner of the 2006 Pantheon of Leather "Best Large Event" Award, no contests, just Leather Family fun and philanthropy. Both the AVER National Convention and CLAW will be hosted at the **Cleveland Wyndham Playhouse Square**.



AVER is proud to host its second Convention with the Wyndham. Wyndham is a partner of the National Gay & Lesbian Chamber of Commerce (NGLCC).

from the Wyndham Worldwide website: The National Gay & Lesbian Chamber of Commerce is the largest Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender (LGBT) business development and economic advocacy organization in the world. The NGLCC represents the interests of more than 800,000 LGBT businesses and entrepreneurs and is committed to forming a broad-based coalition of LGBT owned and friendly businesses, professionals and students of business for the purpose of promoting economic growth and prosperity of its members. As a funding partner, Wyndham Worldwide was awarded "Corporation of the Year" for its leadership in promoting and recognizing the value of diversity.



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