

Gay and Lesbian Activists Alliance

Tribute to Frank Kameny
by GLAA President Rick Rosendall
LGBT Veterans Day Observance
Congressional Cemetery
Wednesday, November 11, 2015

[*Impromptu preface:* Good morning. I prayed to the Goddess for sunshine. I think she smiled on my request because last night the Gay and Lesbian Activists Alliance signed on to the NARAL letter asking the Justice Department to investigate the clinic bombings as acts of domestic terrorism. So thanks for the sunshine.]

Frank Kameny considered nothing sacred. Challenging orthodoxy was his life's work. Yet we stand on what many consider sacred ground. There is no great conflict. Honoring the dead can simply involve recognizing that our every step touches the stuff of those who preceded us. Frank confronted the mystery of the universe with the tools and habits of a scientist, which stood him in good stead after intolerance cut short his career as an astronomer.

His biographer David Carter will shortly remind us of Frank's exhortations to embrace and celebrate who we are and demand our full and equal rights as citizens.

We will touch with pride the headstone to which Frank was entitled as a veteran. He resented having to lie to fight for his country in World War II. But thanks to his long and pioneering service on the domestic front afterwards, no one has to tell that lie again. His historic role is suggested by the footstone bearing the affirmation for which he wanted to be remembered: "Gay Is Good."

The magnitude of Frank's contributions compelled some of us to help preserve his papers in our great national library whose collection was begun by the man who wrote the most liberating words in history, that all men are created equal. Our long struggle to make our country live up to that creed is ongoing. A new generation has taken up the standard that Leonard and Frank and countless others left behind.

My first visit here was in 1988 for Leonard's burial, after my colleagues and I in the Gay Men's Chorus sang for him and followed his caisson. We knew Leonard from his volunteer work for the chorus. Frank spoke here that day. Whether these warriors are honored in polished granite or a simple soldier's headstone, their service will shine for all who pass here.

After Frank's death, Charles Francis and I revived the Mattachine Society of Washington, which Frank had allowed to lapse. The new Mattachine's mission is archive activism. It works to rescue the LGBT history that mainstream historians erased. The legacy of Frank and our other forebears will not be forgotten. We and generations unborn will make sure of it.

The legal dispute that made these past four years such a long goodbye has finally been resolved in time for Armistice Day. Now, Frank, the respect you earned is memorialized by the nation for whose values you fought. We commit you to the ages.