



THE BANNER OF THE DESERT
THE NEWSLETTER OF PFLAG
PALM SPRINGS/DESERT COMMUNITIES CHAPTER
OUR THIRTY-FIRST YEAR JANUARY, 2011 Volume 31, No. 1

Next meeting: January 16th, 2011
2:30 p.m., Cathedral City Library
33520 Date Palm Drive, Cathedral City, CA

This will be an open forum where you can discuss any PFLAG issue that concerns you. These are always interesting and often helpful meetings. Light refreshments served. [Click here for driving instructions.](#)

Renewal Reminder:

Thanks to all who have renewed their memberships. We value your help. If you have not sent in your yearly PFLAG renewal--it is never too late.

A Message From The Editor -Mike Balasa

Last January my yearly prediction was that nothing would happen in Congress in 2010. As usual I was wrong. With just a few days left of the old year, Congress surprised every one and repealed "Don't ask, don't tell". I also predicted that Proposition 8 would be settled in 2010 with the 9th Circuit Appeal Court upholding Judge Walker's ruling. That is still pending. I also predicted that the "Defense of Marriage Act" would be addressed sometime after 2012. That of course is yet to be seen. At least I have the continued satisfaction of being 100% wrong - my only perfect record.

Using the vast resources of "The Banner" news room and access to many influential individuals who have access to state secrets, I am prepared

to go on record, once again, with a list of predictions.

“Don’t ask, don’t tell” will be implemented by summer with little fanfare and no opposition in Congress. Right wing anti-gay hate groups will of course try to stir up trouble, but the public and elected officials will not be interested in persuing this issue.

The appeals court will rule on Proposition 8, finding that pro-Prop. 8 supporters didn’t have standing, and Judge Walker’s ruling will stand. Equal marriage will then be legal in California but not elsewhere. The Supreme Court is committed to allowing the “marriage” issue to be settled state by state and will not take up the appeal. Several other Eastern states will then legalize same-sex marriage starting a trend that will result in equal marriage in every state within five years. (Similar to what happen in 1972 when the Supreme Court found the ban on inter-racial marriages unconstitutional).

Sometime after the re-election of President Obama in 2012, the Congress will address the issue of equal benefits for same-sex couples. The right to Social Security, inheritance, immigration and tax benefits will be extended to legally married same-sex couples. Hope I’m right!

The Military Is Prepared To End “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell”

The U.S. Department of Defense has already established policies to begin the orderly implementation of allowing gay and lesbian service members to serve openly. One of the arguments voiced by Secretary Gates to Congressional committees was that the military preferred to see Congress repeal “DADT” rather than be mandated by courts to end the practice under court supervision. With a Congressional mandate the military can implement the rules under their time-line and with their policies.

The military at this time will not recognize spouses of partners of gay and lesbian service members. There will not be housing available for the same-sex spouse or civil union partner. There will not be medical or survivor benefits for same-sex couples. In the matter of benefits, the military will follow the federal laws mandated by the “Defense of Marriage Act.” There will not be any separate quarters for gay or lesbian service members. The military is opposed to any action that would divided or isolate any part of the military force.

Some military chaplains have voiced a concern that while they are required to not discriminate on the basis of sexual orientation, their religion is prejudicial to gays and lesbians. This is not a convincing argument to military officials: chaplains already minister to people who don’t share their beliefs - Muslim, Jewish, Hindu and even Atheist service members.

A military member does not have to reveal their sexual orientation if they choose not to. A military spokesperson said that the military will make every effort to encourage full integration and mutual respect, but that some service members may choose to keep their sexual orientation private. The important fact is that no third party can out another service person and end his or her military career.

If military members are opposed to serving with a gay or lesbian person, they will not be able to use that as an excuse for an early discharge or reassignment. Secretary Gates said service members are held to a contract to serve and they are expected to fulfill it. In short, nothing will change for individuals except gays and lesbians will not live in fear of reprisal.

Department of Education Investigating the Tehachapi School District

The U.S. Department of Education launched a probe into the suicide of a Tehachapi student at the request of the boy's mother. The 13 year-old boy, Seth Walsh, committed suicide after years of harassment by his classmates. Seth's mother said that both she and the boy's grandmother complained to school officials about ongoing name calling and threats in the locker room. While federal civil rights laws do not cover sexual orientation, the feds do have the authority to investigate cases where it is evident that some students experience a "hostile environment".

Anti-Gay Organizations Labeled Hate Groups

Last month "The Banner" reported the designation of anti-gay organizations as hate groups by the Southern Poverty Law Center. The major anti-gay groups such as American Family Association, Concerned Women of America, Family Research Council and National Organization for Marriage were on the list prepared by the Southern Poverty Law Center. Spokespersons for these organizations are often called upon by reporters and television newscasters for their opinions and comments regarding GLBT civil rights. These organization were designated as hate groups primarily for engaging in lies and slander against GLBT people.

Over the past month some politicians and TV and radio personalities came to the defense of these organizations, but the Southern Poverty Law Center is refusing to reconsider their conclusions.

As a result of the Southern Poverty Law Center's findings, "The Banner" will now use the term "anti-gay hate group" when referring to any of the above mentioned organizations. If any of the above organizations renounce their past practices of lying and slander we will be the first to

rename them “anti-gay right wing fundamentalists”.

Founding President of PFLAG, Adele Starr, Dies

Adele Starr, 91, died peacefully in her sleep at her home in Santa Monica, California, December 13th. She is survived by her husband of 69 years, Lawrence, and five children.

What’s Happening At The Palm Springs Police Department?

The Warm Sands incident continues to boil up as the trial date nears for the men accused of indecent exposure and lewd conduct - charges that could result in a lifetime label of “sex offender” and a need to register with local police. The defense attorneys, Gary Windom and Roger Tansey, filed a motion to dismiss based on “discriminatory prosecution”. In the “Motion to Dismiss” document, the defense presented evidence that the Palm Springs Police Department routinely harassed men in the Warm Sands area, stopping them and telling them to leave the area even when no illicit behavior was evident. They also presented evidence that the police ignored complaints of heterosexual misbehavior. Of the 12 complaints the department received involving sexual harassment and exposure, 10 were about men bothering women. Only two involved gay men. The police have never had a sting operation against straight men even though the Knotts Water Park was an area of frequent complaints. Also, the complaint that resulted in the Warm Sands Sting was about drug dealing near the Motel 6. Evidently a police sergeant was sent to the area to assess the situation. He reported back that he saw no drug dealing but did see lewd conduct around the hotel area in Warm Sands. Why the police decided on a sting operation is still an unanswered question.

The chief denies that there was an illegal meeting with the prosecutor to discuss what charges would be used against the defendants, and he hasn’t been forthcoming about the decision process to initiate a sting operation. The chief has denied using anti-gay slurs; although, there is testimony that the chief was responsible for starting the anti-gay rhetoric at the arrest site. This past week the Warm Sands Neighborhood Association sent a letter to city officials stating that they found Chief Dominguez “less than truthful” in commenting about the sting. In December the Chief issued an apology to the GLBT community. That apology was not received enthusiastically judging by comments made in local blogs. The Chief has conducted sensitivity training for the department this past year, and the city council issued a policy

statement that would prevent any future sting operation directed at the gay community. The trial against the sting victims is still pending.

Family Research Council Isn't Too Happy About The Repeal Of DADT

Leave it to an anti-gay hate group to come up with something stupid I can report here. This is from their web site:

“. . . Sen. Reid may have ignored the leaders of the Marines, Air Force, and Army--but he has no trouble taking orders from Lady Gaga. Moments after the vote, the Majority Leader tweeted the rock star: 'We Did It! #DADT Is A Thing Of The Past.' It's comforting to know that America 's future is in the hands of a Democrat who gets his policy advice from a 24-year-old circus act who wears red meat bikinis.”

An Open Letter to PFLAG From The Former GSA President At The College Of The Desert, Paula Angel

Dear Palm Springs PFLAG,

I would love to apologize for not being present at meetings these past two years. Since the last time I've seen you all, I became part of College of the Desert student government as an External Affairs Officer and joined the Student Senate for California Community Colleges in Sacramento as a regional senator. What I've been working on are resolutions and presenting at breakout session to help out LGBTQ students at our community colleges. My first resolution, the Gender Identity Equality, passed by unanimous vote at one of our general assemblies held at Westin St. Francis in San Francisco back in November of 2009. Recently we passed another resolution to help community colleges be safe zones in regard to the recent suicides that took place a couple of months ago.

Next month I'll be relocating from the desert to the Bay area/San Francisco to continue my studies as a creative writing major, my transition from male to female, and lastly to form my own organization/group called the Rainbow Alliance for California Community Colleges. Our focus will be to form an alliance with all the LGBTQ related groups at community colleges, network, provide training and additional resources to make our campuses safe. This has been a brainchild of mine since 2008, and now after networking these past two years, an organization like this is well needed.

I would love to thank PFLAG-PS for the help you guys have given all the GSA's, especially, the one at COD throughout these years, and being a great group. And now I would love to leave off by wishing you all Happy Holiday tidings and a fabulous New Year and let's continue the fight for

equality.

Amour Et Bonheur,
Paula Angel, Student Senate for California Community Colleges.

(Editor's comment: Thank you Paula—we wish you continued success.)

Gay Disabled Vet, Tom Swann, Reports On His Witness Of The Signing Of The DADT Repeal

(Editors note: I abridged Tom's letter to fit available space)

I arrived in Washington DC about 10:00 PM EST and checked into the hotel in Crystal City, Virginia. On Wednesday December 22 at 6:30 AM, Bill Kibler and I joined a line of people waiting to enter the Department of the Interior office building. It was cold but everyone was so excited we hardly noticed it. While standing in line, David Mixner, the former gay senior political adviser to President Clinton arrived in a taxi cab. He gave me a great big hug and remarked, "We have been working on this for a long time haven't we"? Later Frank Kameny arrived to attend the ceremony. Kameny advised late SGT. Leonard Matlovich when he "came out" to the Air Force in 1975. He is featured in my book and I gave him an award in 2000. I have been to his home and interviewed him. He was happy to see me. I shook hands with the Mother of slain gay Army soldier Barry Winchell and reminded her she attended a memorial ceremony we held in Desert Memorial Park in Cathedral City. Around 7:30 AM someone made a decision that David Mixner, Barry Winchell's mother, Frank Kameny, Tom Carpenter of SLDN, a 91 year old major contributor to SLDN from Richmond VA whose name I don't know, Bill Kibler and I should be in the front of the line and allowed into the building where it was warm. David Mixner asked me to go ahead of him into the building. Tom Carpenter remarked that our small group represented some very important history about the issue of gays in the military. This led to people taking photographs of us. I told David Mixner he was in chapter one of my book and he was grateful to receive a copy. I also gave a copy of my book to Frank Kameny, President Obama and Army Lt. Dan Choi. The Los Angeles Times estimated the crowd to be about 500 people. I sat in the fourth row. The ceremony audience was a homecoming so to speak for activists from across the country. I saw some people that I have not seen in person for many years. They included Miriam Ben Shalom, Tom Carpenter, Mixner, Kameny, Eric Alva, Zoe Dunning, Greta Cammermeyer, Winchell's mother,

Aaron Belkin, Dixon Osborne and others.

Congressional leaders such as Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid and House Speaker Nancy Pelosi stood on stage. I shook hands with Senators Lieberman and Cohen as well as House Member Rep. Barney Frank. I wanted to shake hands with GOP Senator Olympia Snow but the opportunity did not present itself. I also shook hands with Navy Admiral Mullens who is the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. I thanked Mullens for his service to our country. Greta Cammermeyer led the pledge of allegiance. A Jewish Rabbi gave an invocation. Vice President Joe Biden introduced President Obama. From my distance of about 20 feet I could see Obama move his arm and turn his head.

I am proud to say I have shaken hands with Presidents Nixon, Ford and Carter. I presented an award to President Gerald Ford. I also witnessed President Ford sign a letter I drafted. I have been in the same room or mall to protest or hear every other President since Richard Nixon. Now I was hearing in person for the first time Barack Obama.

PFLAG MEMBERSHIP AND RENEWAL APPLICATION

Will you help us continue our work? Your membership supports our local Palm Springs/Desert Communities PFLAG chapter and includes membership in National PFLAG. Help us continue our website, information line, monthly newsletter, speaker's bureau and outreach to youth and families. Your support makes it possible for us to purchase information booklets for teachers and counselors in local schools.

PFLAG MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ **ZIP** _____

Phone No. _____

E-Mail _____

Check One: Yearly Dues

Family Membership \$50 _____ **Individual \$40** _____

Make check payable to PFLAG and mail to :

PFLAG
611 S. Palm Canyon Drive 7-262
Palm Springs, CA 92264

PFLAG INFORMATION LINE: (760) 202-4430

EMAIL: INFO@PSPFLAG.ORG

WEBSITE: WWW.PSPFLAG.ORG

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Co-presidents: Mike and Carol Balasa

Vice-president: (currently unfilled)

Secretary: Sly Zelnys

Treasurer: Stuart Lynn

Directors:

Christine Hammond

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