Homophile Studies in Theory and Practice

Homophile Studies in Theory and Practice may be this year's best book and is certainly a fitting tribute to One Institute and to Dorr Legg who died in July of 1994. It reiterates his continuing insistence on the necessity of homophile studies which has blossomed from One Institute to many of our finer institutions of higher education and is now traveling to the high school level.

A registered Republican, 90 years of age at his death, Dorr Legg, founder, director, and from 1981 to 1994, dean of One Institute, modestly excerpts from the papers delivered at its convening and articles published by One Magazine to produce not only a guide for gay and lesbian studies but a history of our oldest ongoing homophile institution. He has skillfully woven together documents from over 40 years and demonstrated in passing that scholars there and elsewhere gradually turned the tide in the disciplines theretofore dominated by homophobia. Having edited the pioneer Homosexuals Today in 1956, he taught innovative courses at One, achieving the unofficial status of "dean of the homophiles".
In the wake of World War II homosocialism, the Kinsey's *Sexual Behavior in the Human Male* in 1948 and *Sexual Behavior of the Human Female* in 1953 challenged the homophobic stereotypes of American Freudians, physicians, jurists, clerics, and academics in demeaning homosexuals as sick, untrustworthy, criminal, and sinful.

One Institute went from crisis to crisis in its early years challenging the all pervasive (hegemonic) homophobia on the 1950's and 60's while others were hiding or partying. It resisted ignorance, intolerance, and injustice and attempts to treat and "cure" us.

Before and after the Mattachine Society collapsed in the early 70's, its founder, Harry Hay, and fellow ex-communist Jim Kepner along with Don Slater worked with One. Legg and his associates resumed the work begun by Magnus Hirschfeld whose institute Hitler destroyed in 1933 along with the whole German homosexual emancipation movement. Christopher Isherwood frequented One as did Rudy Gengrich, who had become Harry Hay's lover. One Institute even had Henry Gerber speak, the World War I veteran, who, inspired by the German movement, organized the first American homosexual group in Chicago in 1924.

Perhaps most effective was the married, straight psychologist Evelyn Hooker. With assistance from One she proved that on Rorschach tests and in other accepted measures of mental health and ability most homosexuals were as normal, productive, and
conscientious as straights, in fact, indistinguishable from them. This assertion flew in the face of theories based on examinations of troubled or institutionalized homosexuals about our degeneration or immaturity.

By scholarship, education, and outreach One fostered steady improvement in the way society regarded us, enhancing our emancipation, toleration, and acceptance. In 1953 the Supreme Court of the United States, in the first case it ever considered involving homosexuality, overturned the postal authorities' prohibition on One Magazine which lower courts had defined as pornography. Vern Bullough, the "dean" of gay historians, was long associated with One; John Money, Professor of Medicine at Johns Hopkins who formulated pro-gay biological theories and with Richard Green wrote The Transsexual Syndrome in Homosexual Males in 1974; and the Harry Benjamin International Gender Dysphoria Association which studied transsexuals; were, also, involved in the institute's work. For the fledgling field the two volume Annotated Bibliography of Homosexuality edited by Bullough, Legg, Elcano, and Kepner (1976) was essential (Wayne R. Dynes refined the non-literary sections in Homosexuality: a Research Guide in 1987).

One Institute's first Ph.D., Paul Hardman, published his thesis, Homoaffectionalism: Male Bonding From Gilgamesh To The Present (1993). Board member, Professor Walter Williams of the University of Southern California studied berdache and further undermined the homophobic stereotypes of anthropologists assailed
so ably by Yale Professors Clellan Stearns Ford and Frank A. Beach in *Patterns of Sexual Behavior* (1951). Washington University sociologist and One ally, Laud Humphreys, in *Tearoom Trade* (1970) showed that men enjoying such sex, interviewed months later at home, to which he had followed them from public toilets, denounced sodomy vociferously. John DeCecco’s *Journal of Homosexuality*, our most scholarly publication, has co-operated with One Institute for over two decades.

Whether working behind the scenes for legal reform such as those in the Mattachine Society of which Arthur Warner was the leading lawyer, or the first to demonstrate as Frank Kameny did, or writing like the Kinsey Institute associate, C. A. Tripp, *The Homosexual Matrix* (1975), they assailed and undermined the old homophobic theories.

The efforts of laywers and the intellectual elite had other beneficial results such as Sir John Wolfenden, head of England’s parliamentary committee, advocating decriminalization of sodomy in 1957. The new model penal code of the American Bar Association (1961) also did so, although only Illinois adopted it before Stonewall. Now more than half of the states have done so and the courts have ruled against all sorts of vagrancy, lewd and lascivious, or public indecency statutes.

*Homophile Studies in Theory and Practice* details the wonderful achievements of a group of unsung and very dedicated individuals
and organizations. It is a wonderful and fascinating description of the homosexual movement before Stonewall that is unknown to most. It is a must read for those wishing to understand our movement and a fitting tribute to Dorr Legg who devoted so much of his life and energy to that movement.