

*Before Stonewall: Activists for Gay and Lesbian Rights*,  
edited by Vern Bullough, Haworth Press, 2002.

This book explores the lives of the founding mothers and fathers of the homosexual rights movement and comments about the organizations and publications they founded. Executed in biographical form, it provides a short history of the movement to gain civil/equal rights for homosexual citizens.

The short biographies of over 40 men and women who founded our movement, starting mainly in 1950, prove how much hard work these heroes and heroines did long before the media and public learned of it from Stonewall in 1969. Anyone interested in learning about the people and groups that paved the way for Stonewall must consult it. Just like it is important to know that there was a black civil rights movement before the march in Selma, and Martin Luther King, it is crucial that historians and scholars become aware of these figures.

Before Stonewall there were dozens of homosexual organizations and publications. Laws had already started to change, because hundreds of homosexual men and women were devoting their lives to changing attitudes and laws about homosexuality. This book tells their stories, often in their words, and with a commentary by Bullough, the foremost historian of homosexuality and other "deviant" forms of sexuality, that explains their differences and successes and failures. None are as famous as Harry Hay, but certainly others may have been as important as he was. History seems to have jumped from the small beginning with the founding of the Mattachine Society in 1950 and the first women's group, the Daughters of Bilitis in 1955. Thus it ignores the largest organization and publication, ONE, Inc. and ONE Magazine. The reason for this lack of balance is hard to understand. But *Before Stonewall* corrects this error.

The book is divided into chronological parts. The first is coverage of those before 1950, including Prime Stevenson (Xavier Mayne), Alfred Kinsey, Henry Gerber, Lisa Ben and moves on to the era of organizations and activists (out) such as Mattachine founders Harry Hay, Dale Jennings, ONE founders Dorr Legg, Don Slater, the "new" Mattachine people such as Hal Call, and the founders of the women's group, the Daughters of Bilitis, Del Martin and Phyllis Lyon, then it moves on to Other voices, such as Jack Nichols, Frank Kameny, Barbara Grier, Barbara Gittings, Randolph Wicker, etc.

It covers splits in organizations, such as the first one (Mattachine) and ONE, and it does not try to say who was right or wrong or answer why some versions differ from others in the biographies. It lets those people speak for themselves.

*Before Stonewall* reminds the reader of the 21st century that not many early leaders were "out" and that they faced opposition from the law, politicians, religious leaders and even the professions, such as psychiatry, which was used in court cases against homosexuals. It took a certain type of person who, often using pseudonyms, was willing to take risks to speak out against the anti-gay laws and views of the 50s and 60s.

The editor, Vern Bullough, says, "Although there was no single leader in the gay and lesbian community who achieved the fame and reputation of Martin Luther King, there were a large number of activists who put their careers and reputations, not to mention their bodies, on the line.

"It was a motley crew of radicals and reformers, drawn together by the cause in spite of personality and philosophical differences."

It is their stories that are told in this book and can inspire those who seek to make our world better today and perhaps today's activists can learn from this history.

- a revision by William A. Percy of "Thoughts About a Review of *Before Stonewall*."