

RICHARD ADAMS

b. March 9, 1947, Manila, Philippines

d. December 17, 2012, Los Angeles, California

ACTIVIST

“We really felt that people could achieve the life they wanted.”

Richard Adams filed the first U.S. lawsuit to seek federal recognition of same-sex marriage. What should have been the beginning of a happy marriage laid the groundwork for his almost 40-year quest for federally recognized marriage equality.

On April 21, 1975, Adams and his Australian partner, Anthony Sullivan, obtained a marriage license in Boulder, Colorado. They were married before the Colorado Attorney General declared same-sex marriage licenses invalid.

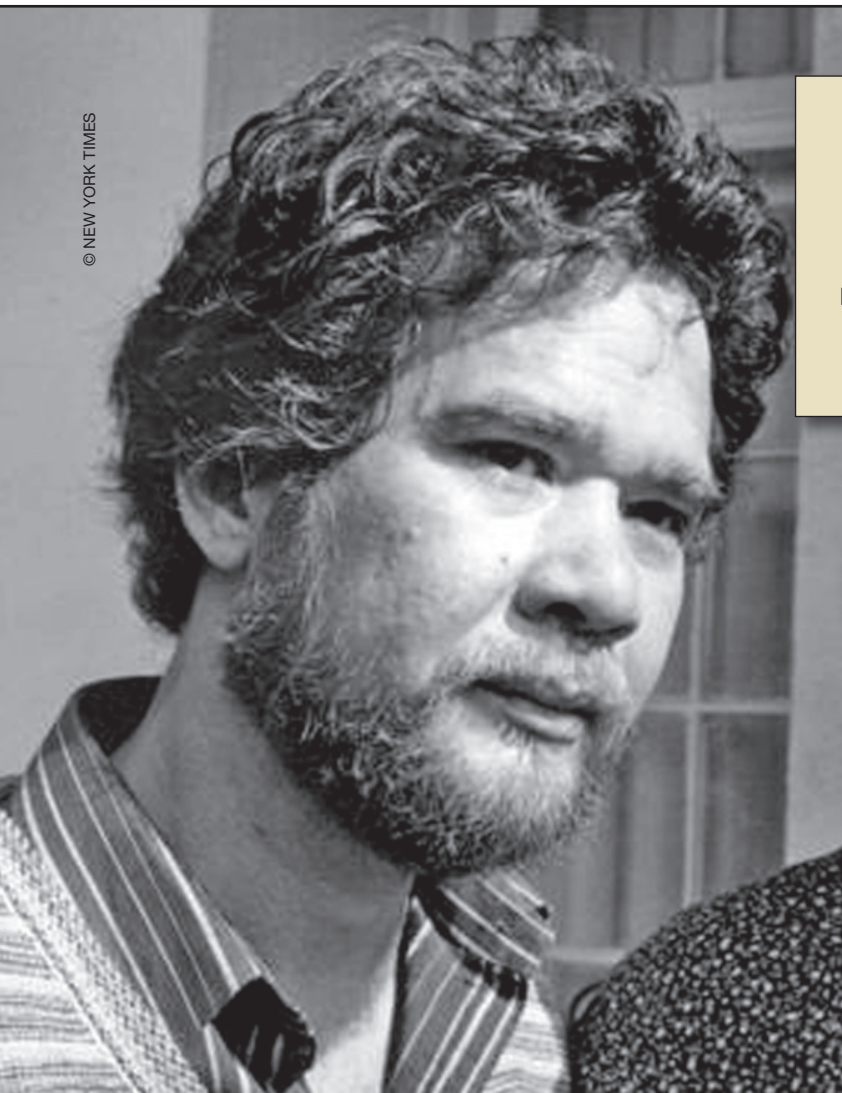
Adams applied to the U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) for Sullivan to receive a permanent residency green card as the spouse of an American citizen. In response, the couple received an INS reply that stated, “You have failed to establish that a bona fide marital relationship can exist between two faggots.”

Adams lodged a formal protest. The INS reissued their denial without the slur. Adams filed a suit in federal court, but the judge upheld the INS. Adams filed a second federal suit claiming that after an eight-year relationship, deportation of Sullivan constituted extreme hardship. The federal district court and U.S. Court of Appeals ruled against Adams.

Subsequently, Sullivan requested permanent residency for Adams in Australia. The Australian government denied the request. In 1985 the couple moved to Britain. Adams left behind his family and friends and a job he had for over 18 years. After one year in Britain, the couple returned to the U.S. and kept a low profile so as not to attract INS attention.

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Subsequent to Adams’s death and after the U.S. Attorney General in 2011 declared the Defense of Marriage Act unconstitutional, Sullivan filed for a green card as Adams’s widower, so he could remain permanently in the United States.



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