

STORMÉ DELARVERIE

b. December 24, 1920, New Orleans, Louisiana

d. May 24, 2014, Brooklyn, New York

STONEWALL ACTIVIST

“It was a rebellion, it was an uprising, it was a civil rights disobedience—it wasn’t no damn riot.”

**At the Stonewall Riot
on June 27, 1969,
DeLarverie threw the
first punch.**

Stormé DeLarverie was a Stonewall veteran and the sole female performer for the Jewel Box Review, a traveling drag show that toured the country from 1939 into the 1960s. At that time, cross-dressing was considered a criminal offense in most municipalities. The review included 24 drag queens and Stormé (pronounced “Stormy”), the only drag king.

When DeLarverie wasn’t traveling with the troupe, she lived at the Hotel Chelsea in Manhattan and worked security at Henrietta Hudson, a well-known lesbian bar in the West Village. Constantly vigilant, DeLarverie thought of the bar patrons as her “babies” and patrolled the streets as their defender.

At the Stonewall Riot on June 27, 1969, DeLarverie threw the first punch. As the story goes, the New York City police raided the Stonewall Inn, a bar in Greenwich Village frequented by gay men, lesbians, and drag kings and queens. The police raids were habitual. That night DeLarverie saw three officers ganging up on one young man and sprang to the victim’s defense. One of the policemen shouted, “Move, Faggot!” mistaking DeLarverie for a man. The officer shoved DeLarverie, who retaliated with a punch to the face. The officer dropped to the ground, bleeding; thus began the Stonewall Riot.

DeLarverie preferred the word “rebellion” when it came to describing the events at Stonewall. She felt the term “riot” connoted chaos and criminality.

In 2003 filmmaker Sam Bassett produced a documentary about DeLarverie. When she died at the age of 93, hundreds of admirers attended her West Village funeral service.



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