

# ARMISTEAD MAUPIN

b. May 13, 1944, Washington, D.C.

## AUTHOR

*“Being gay has taught me tolerance, compassion and humility.”*

**Maupin chafes at the term “gay writer”; his goal is to explore the human condition and LGBT characters in the context of the world at large.**

Armistead Maupin ranks among the most celebrated authors of the LGBT experience.

To many in Maupin’s hometown of Raleigh, North Carolina—including Maupin’s one-time employer, the segregationist Senator Jesse Helms—homosexuality was even more blasphemous than racial integration. Maupin recounted about Helms, “Homosexuality, he told me, was the most heinous sin a man could commit. I nodded dutifully and kept my mouth shut.”

San Francisco, however, was a very different story. The city inspired Maupin to give voice to the unspeakable. In 1974 he debuted the first chapter of his seminal work, “Tales of the City.” Originally published serially in a neighborhood newspaper, “Tales of the City” was picked up by the San Francisco Chronicle, where it was syndicated and gained an avid nationwide following.

Maupin was among the first to feature open LGBT literary characters in affirming roles. “Tales of the City” revolves around a group of tenants of 28 Barbary Lane. The tenants strive to forge a family in spite of rejection, loneliness and confusion. As the AIDS epidemic emerged in the 1980s, Maupin introduced one of the first HIV-positive characters who had an otherwise full life.

Despite his watershed inclusion of LGBT personalities, Maupin feels conflicted about being labeled a gay writer. His goal has been to include LGBT characters and their humanity in the broader framework of society. Because he dared to speak the unspeakable, his fictional family provided a voice and inspiration to those who never thought they would belong.



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