

JIM KEPNER

b. August 19, 1923

d. November 15, 1997

JOURNALIST AND LGBT HISTORIAN

"I always had an innate sense that what I was doing was important."

Jim Kepner was a pioneering journalist who helped research and chronicle the American gay rights movement.

Jim Kepner was a pioneering journalist who helped chronicle the modern American gay rights movement. His research led to the creation of the ONE National Gay & Lesbian Archives, the oldest LGBT history collection in the United States.

Kepner was abandoned as an infant in Galveston, Texas, and reportedly found under a bush, then adopted. By the time he was a teenager, he was already researching homosexuality, often mail-ordering gay publications and literature. A voracious reader, he studied the lives of famous gay men like Michelangelo and Walt Whitman.

In the 1940s, along with other artists and writers, Kepner joined the Communist Party. He wrote a column for the Communist newspaper, *The Daily Worker*, but was expelled

from the party because of his homosexuality. Kepner went on to open Books on Telegraph Hill in San Francisco.

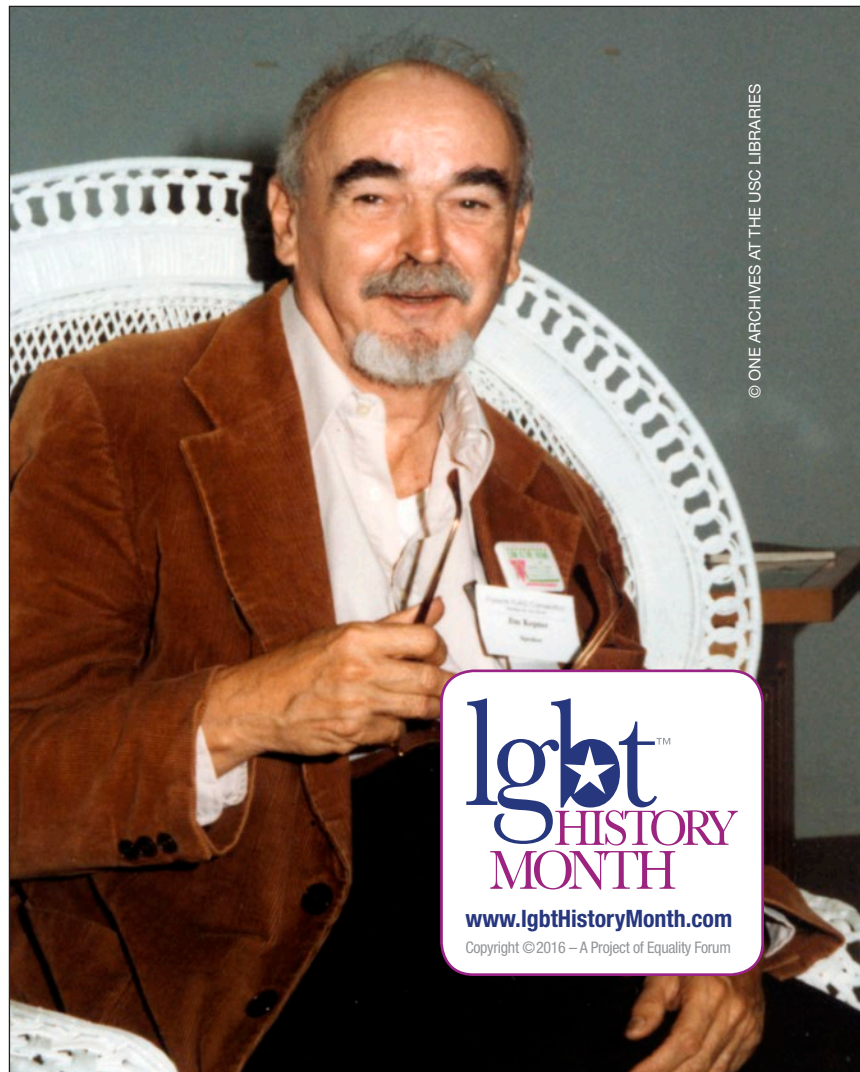
Kepner later joined the Mattachine Society, one of the earliest gay rights organizations in the country. He also began writing for *One*, the first gay magazine with regular circulation published in the United States. When a Los Angeles postmaster refused to deliver the magazine by mail, the case went to the Supreme Court. The magazine won its case and continued publishing to a growing base of subscribers. The ruling also opened opportunities for other LGBT publications to enter the marketplace.

Kepner was an important force behind *One*, as both a writer and an organizer. He created a research journal and events related to the magazine, turning him into one of the leading chroniclers of the modern gay rights movement. In 1956 he established the One Institute, which researched gay culture through the ages and around the world.

In 1966 Kepner launched *Pursuit & Symposium*, a homophile magazine. He also contributed to *The Los Angeles Advocate*, which later became *The Advocate*, the leading national LGBT magazine.

Throughout his life, Kepner collected records, souvenirs and other materials related to LGBT history. His collection, eventually the largest compendium of LGBT-related materials in the world, is housed at the University of Southern California; it contains more than two million artifacts and reference materials.

Kepner died at 74 from complications after surgery.



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