

# KAY LAHUSEN

b. January 5, 1930

## GAY PIONEER

*“Whatever the Founding Fathers envisioned as the rights and privileges of our citizens, we wanted for ourselves.”*

**Kay Lahusen is a gay pioneer and the first openly lesbian American photojournalist.**

Kay Lahusen, also known as Kay Tobin Lahusen and Kay Tobin, is the first openly lesbian photojournalist in America. She was among the first women to chronicle and participate in the early gay rights movement. Her photographs appeared on the covers of some of the first LGBT publications in the nation, including *The Ladder* and *Gay Newsweekly*.

In 1961 Lahusen joined the Daughters of Bilitis (DOB), the first lesbian organization in the United States. Shortly thereafter, she met Barbara Gittings, an activist who started the East Coast Chapter of the DOB and who is regarded as the mother of the LGBT civil rights movement. The pair began a lifelong relationship and became one of the most influential, pioneering lesbian couples in America.

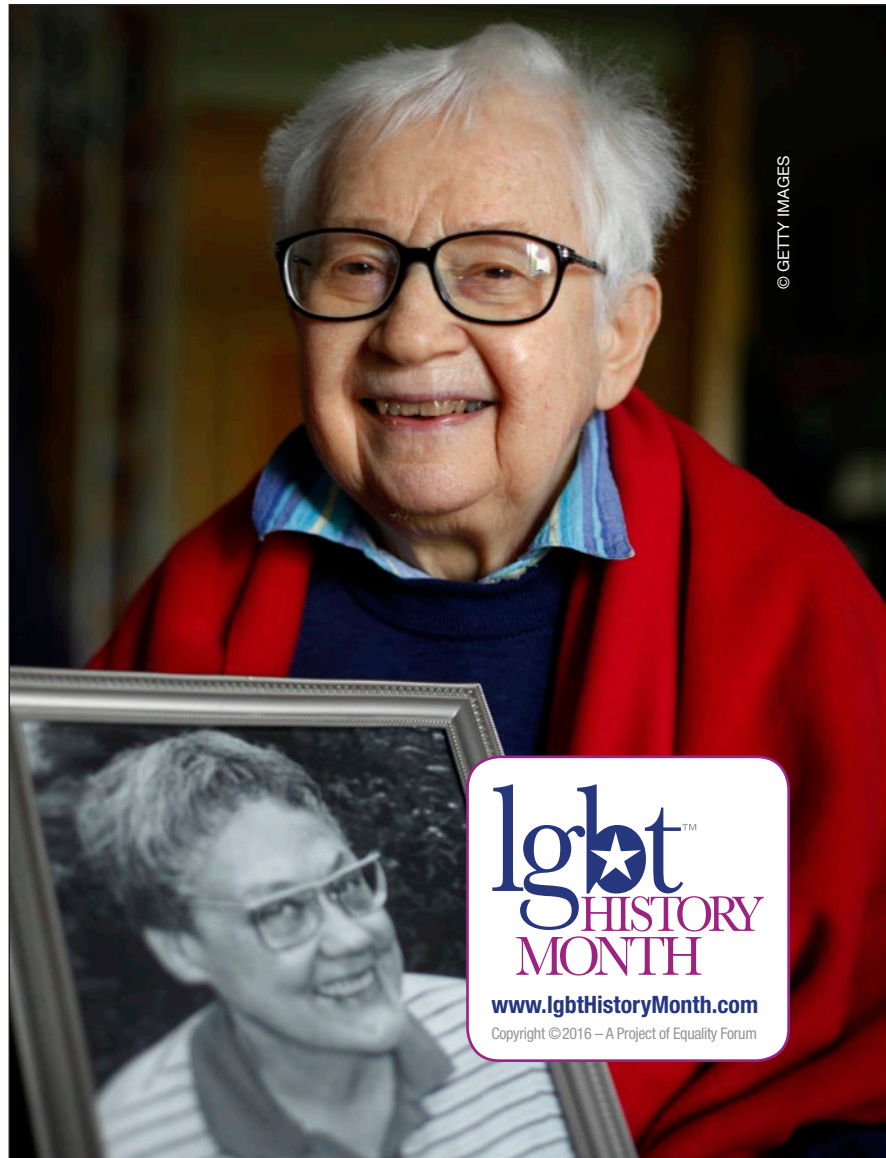
Lahusen initially garnered national attention in 1965, when she photographed and also protested in the first of what became a series of seminal public demonstrations for gay and lesbian equality. Spearheaded by Barbara Gittings and Frank Kameny, these first organized pickets were held in Philadelphia each Fourth of July from 1965 to 1969 in front of Independence Hall. Known as Annual Reminders, the demonstrations paved the way for the Stonewall riot in 1969.

In addition to her work as a photojournalist, Lahusen worked at one of the first gay bookshops in the country, the Oscar Wilde Bookstore in New York City, and with Gittings for the gay caucus of the American Library Association. Lahusen cofounded the Gay Activists Alliance (GAA) and later the Gay Women's Alternative in New York City.

Lahusen collaborated with many Gay Pioneers, including Frank Kameny and Jack Nichols, to publicize LGBT issues and present accurate, positive depictions of gays and lesbians. In 1972 she co-authored “The Gay Crusaders,” the first collection of short biographies of gay activists.

During her lifetime, Lahusen photographed thousands of events and activists of the gay rights movement. Her collection of writings and photos, along with Gittings's writings and papers, is archived at the New York Public Library.

Lahusen and Gittings remained together for 46 years until Gittings's death in 2007. Lahusen lives outside Philadelphia. She plans to be buried alongside Gittings at the Congressional Cemetery in Washington.



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