

# EDYTHE EYDE

b. November 7, 1921

d. December 22, 2015

## GAY PUBLISHING PIONEER

**Edythe Eyde was a gay publishing pioneer who launched the first lesbian publication in the U.S.**

*“I felt that it was a labor from the heart ...”*

In 1947 Edythe Eyde launched the first lesbian publication in the United States, laying the groundwork for gay and lesbian publishing.

Born in San Francisco, Eyde was the only child of a Norwegian immigrant and his wife. She had her first crush on a girl when she was in high school.

In college, Eyde took a secretarial course that led to a job in 1945 at RKO Studios in Los Angeles. A year later, she came out to friends she had met at lesbian bars.

While working at RKO, Eyde conceived the idea for *Vice Versa*, primarily as an arts publication for lesbians featuring fiction, poetry and reviews. Eyde began producing it by making carbon copies at the office. When she discovered it was illegal to distribute lesbian material through the U.S. mail, she delivered *Vice Versa* by hand, urging readers to share it. As the publication's popularity grew, she became well known on the West Coast for her activism.

“I never sold it, I just gave it to my friends,” Eyde said many years later. “I felt that it was a labor from the heart, and I shouldn't get any money for it.”

From 1947 to 1948, Eyde printed a total of nine issues. As demand increased, she could not make enough copies to keep up. When RKO was sold, she found another job and lacked the resources to continue production, ending the publication's brief but influential run.

Throughout her life, Eyde continued her activism and creative work. She joined a West Coast chapter of the early lesbian group Daughters of Bilitis and contributed to its publication, *The Ladder*, using the name Lisa Ben. She also wrote gay-inspired lyrics to popular songs and performed them at gay and lesbian clubs and events.

In 1960 the Daughters of Bilitis released a record of Eyde singing “Frankie and Johnnie” and “Cruising Down the Boulevard.” She performed some of her songs in the short film “*Dyketactics*” (1974) and in the documentaries “*Before Stonewall*” (1984) and “*History Lessons*” (2000).

Eyde was honored as the founder of L.A.'s LGBT community in 1997 and was inducted into the National Lesbian and Gay Journalists Hall of Fame in 2010. When she died at age 94, her death went unnoted.

Original copies of *Vice Versa* can be found at the ONE National Gay & Lesbian Archives in Los Angeles.

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