

Remembering Harry Hay

MaxZine Weinstein

2002

Harry Hay, Father of the Gay rights movement, died this October at the age of 90. Harry founded the Mattachine Society in 1950, the first gay rights organization in the United States. He was kicked out a few years later because of his Communist Party affiliation. In 1979 he co-founded the Radical Faeries, a loose-knit, anarchistic, back-to-the-land spiritual/radical/irreverent movement. We came to know him and love him through our Friendships developed at faerie gatherings.

Harry's role in the faeries was often fun and light, and other times contentious. For one, he urged faeries to engage in radical politics and became frustrated with the lack of response his call to action often received. Some saw him as a leader of the movement, while others detested the notion of leadership (Harry himself rejected the idea that he should have any more say or inherent knowledge than anyone else). He definitely expressed himself forcefully, and in later years found himself Defending the notion that radical faeries should be gay men, while others were pushing for a broader definition of gender inclusivity.

Harry Hay was a believer and fighter, who stood up for gay rights, workers, indigenous rights, and feminism against tremendous odds. His role in the radical faeries, the larger queer movement and in radical politics are explored in the biography by Stuart Timmons, *The Trouble With Harry Hay: Founder of the Modern Gay Movement* (Alyson Publications, 1990).

—MaxZine, Nov. 2002

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