

Thomas Eugene Horn



Tom Horn was born and raised in New Mexico. He attended undergraduate school at the University of New Mexico. When graduate deferments were eliminated during the Vietnam War, he enlisted in the National Guard. Tom enrolled at UCLA Law School in 1968 and obtained his law degree in 1971.

After graduation, Tom was admitted to the bar in California and New Mexico. Then married to a woman, Tom and his wife moved back to New Mexico where he practiced law for several years. They divorced in 1972.

Tom became the legal director of the ACLU of New Mexico from 1972 to 1976. Although he was not out as a gay man in his professional life, he was able to engage in advocacy for gay rights and sexual civil liberties in his role with the ACLU. For example, he challenged the constitutionality of the state's sodomy law on the ground that it was unconstitutionally overbroad in that it prohibited private sexual conduct between consenting adults. In *State v. Armstrong*, 85 N.M. 234 (N.M. Ct. App. 1973), the majority of judges declined to address the issue on the ground that his client lacked standing to raise the issue. A lengthy and well-reasoned dissent concluded otherwise. The dissent was later cited favorably in judicial opinions in other states.

In 1976, Tom moved to San Francisco. He wanted to live his life as an openly gay man in a supportive environment. It was also an exciting time for gay politics in San Francisco. Harvey Milk was stirring things up. Tom, who came from a political family in New Mexico, wanted to be part of the gay rights action. Tom would attend rallies and walk precincts for candidates who supported gay rights.

Much of Tom's law practice in the late 1970s involved gay clients. He defended men who were being separated from the military due to their sexual orientation. He also engaged in criminal defense, representing men who had been arrested for lewd conduct by undercover vice officers.

In the late 1970s, Tom associated with gay and lesbian lawyers who would gather on occasion to socialize and discuss legal issues affecting the gay and lesbian community. Tom recalls that at the first such meeting he attended, Mayor George Moscone spoke to the lawyers. After two years of operating as an informal group, the lawyers created a formal bar association in 1980. They called it Bay Area Lawyers for Individual Freedom.

In 1981, Tom found his way into mainstream and high-level San Francisco politics in a big way. A vacancy was occurring on the board of trustees of the city-operated War Memorial and Performing Arts Center. Trustees were appointees of the mayor who at that time was Dianne Feinstein. This entity operates the War Memorial Opera House, Veterans Building, and Louise M. Davies Symphony Hall. The board at that time consisted of heterosexual upper-class residents of San Francisco. The mayor decided to shake things up by appointing an openly-gay trustee. She appointed Tom. Tom has served on the board for more than four decades, often as its president which he is today.

After serving as legal counsel to the Bay Area Reporter for several years, Tom took over management of the publication in 2003 when its publisher, Bob Ross, died. Tom remained in that role until 2011. Founded in 1971, the Bay Area Reporter has been an influential and well-read gay newspaper, focusing heavily on California news but reporting on current events throughout the nation.

Bob Ross left his \$11 million estate to the Bob Ross Foundation that supports a broad range of LGBT health and social services as well as local arts and cultural organizations. Tom, who directs the foundation, used some of the money to fund a project by the GLBT Historical Society to digitize all issues of the newspaper from 1971 forward. This online archives was helpful in finding information for the bibliographies written for the *Birds of a Feather* commemoration.

On a personal note, Tom met his current husband, Caesar Alexzander, in 1984 shortly after he had been discharged from the army for confiding in an army psychiatrist that he felt gay tendencies. He returned to the home of his birth, San Francisco, joined the Ironworkers Union and worked for many years as an iron worker. They were married in 2018 by then Lt. Governor Gavin Newsome at San Francisco City Hall.

One of Tom's passions outside of the law has been France and things French. He returned to school at age 40 to learn French. He has served on numerous French non-profit boards and was named by then Mayor Gavin Newsom as Chair of the San Francisco Paris Sister City Committee. He has been decorated four times by the French Republic, including la Légion d'honneur, France's highest decoration. In 2009, Tom was named Honorary Consul of Monaco by HSH Prince Albert II.

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