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**LITIGIOUS LARRY: IS A LAWSUIT HARASSMENT?
SOCIAL JUSTICE PIONEER,
BUT NOT OLD GUARD**

Larry began his pioneering activism in the LA politics of gay liberation in the early 1960s working in personal good company with gay rights pioneer Morris Kight, director of the Gay Community Services Center; W. Dorr Legg aka Marvin Cutler, author of the 1956 handbook, *Homosexuals Today*, and founder of ONE, Inc; Jim Kepner, *Drummer* reviewer-columnist and core contributor to the ONE Archives; the Reverend Troy Perry, founder of the Metropolitan Community Church; and super-attorney Albert Gordon, the *Drummer* Slave Auction defense attorney, who was the litigious Larry's favorite among all the many attorneys he consulted to protect his interests over the years, because he loved lawyers more than he hated them. And he supported them. In 1972, he received a letter of gratitude from attorney Vincent Bugliosi, the prosecutor of Charles Manson and the author of *Helter-Skelter*, for donating big bucks to his campaign for LA District Attorney.

By academic popular-culture standards, *The Leatherman's Handbook*, self-published when Larry was 42 in 1972, is a unique and valuable time-capsule study written by a military and university-credentialed participant. Following his father who was a spy, Larry was a second-generation collector of intelligence spying on gay life and customs with his questionnaire seeking the most private personal data. Ten years later in 1982 to write *The Leatherman's Handbook II*, the LA author repeated internationally for the sequel what he had done nationally for the original. He sent out 6,000 sex questionnaires to his mailing list and received 1,238 responses from individuals (1149 white; 19 Black; plus "others")

and from members of groups like the Chicago Hellfire Club and the Gay Men's S-M Activists (GMSMA) of New York.

He was encouraged by the pop success of Dale Brittenhouse's *The Lesbian Handbook* (1966) and Angelo d'Arcangelo's *The Homosexual Handbook* (1968) which he made a point to praise. Even though his queries and conclusions were mostly based on the pre-Stonewall leather culture of leather males, leatherfolk of all genders—ranging from female leatherbois to FTM reviewers—have for years, according to a diversity of fan letters in his files and responses at live conferences, read, enjoyed, learned, and adapted to themselves the basic tropes and codes of the leather lifestyle from his tutorial writing.

The second *Handbook* was immediately famous because of the first. It received positive reviews from influencers and reviewers like Pat Califa, who, later transitioning to Patrick Califa, wrote in *The Advocate*, October 27, 1983:

Townsend is warm, straightforward, and personal... which makes it easier for the reader to deal with any difference he or she might have with the author's politics or view of S&M technique....Townsend need not have mentioned women at all, since this is a book for gay leathermen. However, he does...As a leatherwoman, I should be grateful, but it's a little discouraging when my brothers seem to know more about straight women than they know about us female queers.

Especially when the gay press was young and desperate for bespoke material in the 1970s, editors relied on Larry as a sturdy and steady content provider. They exploited his famous boldfaced name, as had Embry, to attract readers by publishing dozens of his political and advice columns, and by headlining generous reviews of his books. His fan base included grateful magazine and newspaper professionals who took the time to send him press clippings of his reviews and columns, and to write letters to pay their respects because he was dependable in delivering good copy to them on time. Even something simple as a note dashed off by Ann Fleming, the features editor at *OUT* magazine, owned by

The Advocate conglomerate, kept him motivated: “Contributing writer Ken Bowling really enjoyed your work.” Larry would have had a fit in 2018 when Adam Levin, the owner of Pride Media, the parent company of *The Advocate* and *OUT*, was denounced by the Human Rights Campaign for donating cash to anti-LGBTQ Republican state senators.

Only perverse reactionaries would disrespect him as old guard, or fault the time capsule of his *Handbook* for voicing a vintage 1972 point of view and not a latter-day politically-correct perspective. His years of monthly magazine columns prove he kept on trend with evolving times and issues.