



David Mixner addressing Gay and Lesbian Victory Fund supporters in 2011.

Mixner, David (b. 1946)

by Claude J. Summers

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In 2010 when Lt. Dan Choi and Capt. Jim Pietrangeli made headlines by chaining themselves to a fence outside the White House to protest the "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" policy that bans openly gay men and lesbians from military service, they were reprising an identical action by David Mixner in 1993.

The difference is that Mixner was protesting not only the egregious policy, but also what he considered a personal betrayal by President Clinton, the friend whom he had helped propel to the presidency.

Mixner's 1993 act of civil disobedience was not his first, nor would it be his last. He has been jailed more than a dozen times, all as a result of his pursuit of social justice, from expanding civil rights for African Americans to protesting the Vietnam War and helping secure the rights of gay men and lesbians.

Indeed, Mixner is, in the words of Randy Shulman, "one of the great activists of our time." Although he has mostly worked behind the scenes, as an organizer and consultant and campaign manager, he has nevertheless become a highly visible gay man as a result of his outspokenness in behalf of equal rights and his friendships with figures such as Senator Edward Kennedy and President Clinton.

And while he has worked as a political insider, becoming a mainstay of the liberal wing of the Democratic Party, he has always been acutely aware of his outsider status by virtue of his homosexuality. His bestselling memoir is tellingly entitled, *Stranger among Friends*.

Early Life

David Benjamin Mixner was born on August 16, 1946, the third child of a poor family in southern New Jersey. His father worked on a corporate farm and his mother at a glass factory and, later, at a John Deere dealership.

Although the family was poor, they valued education. Animated discussions of current events and politics were not only encouraged by Mixner's parents, but also by his older siblings, Melvin and Patsy.

Mixner early revealed both a sensitivity to injustice and an ambition to make a difference in the world. Even as a child, he vowed to "live the history of my times," desiring at least to be "a tiny footnote" in that chronicle.

In high school in the early 1960s, Mixner became aware of the momentous events that were beginning to reshape the country. He passionately supported the African-American civil rights movement, even sending scarce money to Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

Mixner's commitment to civil rights found encouragement from his sister Patsy, who would herself become an activist on behalf of liberal causes, but was met with consternation from his parents, who were embarrassed by his activities on behalf of African Americans and Mexican farm workers. They forbade him

to travel to Birmingham, Alabama during the summer of 1963, where he hoped to participate in freedom rides and voter registration efforts.

After enrolling at Arizona State University in the fall of 1964, Mixner had freer rein to participate in the civil rights activities, anti-war protests, and organizations in support of city garbage workers, interests that consumed more and more of his time.

At Arizona State, he also fell in love with a fellow student whom he identifies only as Kit. The affair with this beautiful young man released a passion that he had earlier found shameful and bewildering. But only a year into their relationship, Kit was killed in an automobile accident. Since Kit's parents had no idea that their son was gay, Mixner was unable to grieve openly. He decided not to attend his lover's funeral.

Anti-War Activism

Soon after this loss, Mixner decided to transfer to the University of Maryland so he could be near Washington, D. C. and participate more fully in the burgeoning anti-war movement.

Mixner helped organize the 1967 march on the Pentagon, the first large national protest of the Vietnam war, and then became involved in Senator Eugene McCarthy's presidential campaign.

He helped secure McCarthy's wins in several caucuses and then worked to seat an integrated Georgia delegation at the 1968 Democratic National Convention in Chicago. During the protests at the convention, Mixner was beaten by police, sustaining injuries that he has suffered from ever since.

In early 1969, the Democratic party, smarting from the defeat of Vice President Humphrey and believing that the undemocratic procedures on view at the 1968 convention contributed to the defeat, began a process of reform.

Mixner, almost by a fluke, secured an appointment to the party's Delegate Selection Committee. The youngest member of a 28-person committee that included such luminaries as (later Secretary of State) Warren Christopher and Senator Adlai Stevenson III, and that was chaired by Senator George McGovern, Mixner nevertheless made his presence felt. The McGovern Commission, as it became known, was instrumental in making the Democratic Party more democratic and more representative of the broad coalition that it represents.

Later in 1968 Mixner became one of the principal organizers of the "Moratorium to End the War in Vietnam," one of the most significant national protests of the war. While organizing this major event, Mixner had occasion to meet Bill Clinton, who was then a Rhodes Scholar opposed to the war but ambivalent about how to express his opposition. The two men fashioned a casual but significant friendship that was later to be useful to both of them.

The Moratorium was a resounding success in that it attracted millions of participants at events across the country, and culminated in a march in Washington in which Coretta Scott King movingly pled for an end to the war.

Mixner's efforts on behalf of ending the war in Vietnam did not result in peace, but they did establish Mixner's reputation as a skilled organizer and effective political strategist. In his anti-war activities, Mixner also made valuable friendships and contacts within the liberal wing of the Democratic Party, which were to serve him well when he became a political operative and fundraiser.

During this time in the anti-war movement, Mixner remained publicly closeted even as he explored the

sexual underworld of America's major cities.

Gay Activism

In 1975, Mixner gradually began making friends with other closeted gay men and lesbians, including many who were politically engaged. He began to function as a gay man in a straight world, but also continued to internalize the homophobia he absorbed as a child. Finally, with the help of a therapist, he decided that he had to begin the process of coming out to his friends and colleagues.

The first of these friends with whom he shared his secret was the actress Shirley Maclaine, who immediately showered him with care and affection. She suggested that he spend some time in her house in Los Angeles where he could reassess his life.

Soon afterwards he accepted a job with a political fundraiser in San Francisco and moved to the Castro district, where he became involved in the gay liberation movement. He met Harvey Milk, with whom he would soon collaborate on political campaigns, and he became friends with Gay Games founder Tom Waddell.

In San Francisco, Mixner discovered a positive and thriving gay and lesbian world. In such an atmosphere he realized that he had to come out to his family.

When he told his sister and her husband that he was gay, they were immediately accepting. However, his mother and father were shocked and angry. Eventually, they retreated from their immediate reactions and managed a measure of acceptance, though it took his father 19 years to do so.

In 1976, Mixner, having accepted an invitation to manage Los Angeles Mayor Tom Bradley's reelection campaign, relocated to southern California. In Los Angeles, he soon met the man who was to become his lover and business partner, Peter Scott, a handsome politically savvy businessman.

Through Scott, Mixner became a part of a group that was soon to found the nation's first gay and lesbian political action committee, MECLA, or the Municipal Elections Committee of Los Angeles, which would eventually become a major player in Los Angeles politics and a model for similar political action committees elsewhere.

Even as Scott and Mixner worked out a complicated relationship, the Anita Bryant campaign in Miami in 1976 impinged on Mixner's mental health. Suffering severe depression caused by--or at least exacerbated by--the homophobic campaign in Florida, Mixner experienced a breakdown that threatened his career. When he recovered, he and Scott decided to launch a consulting firm, which they named Mixner/Scott.

The Anita Bryant campaign in Florida soon had its counterpart in California, when a state senator named John Briggs attempted to use her anti-gay crusade to launch himself into the California governorship. He sponsored an initiative to make it illegal for homosexuals to teach in the public schools or for any teacher to speak favorably of homosexuality. The first polls showed that over 75 percent of Californians supported the initiative.

The gay and lesbian communities of California quickly organized to confront this crisis. In northern California, Harvey Milk mobilized a broad coalition to oppose the measure. In southern California, Mixner and Scott and their friends Diane Abbitt and Roberta Bennett formed the New Alliance for Gay Equality (New AGE) to spearhead the campaign against the initiative.

In the course of organizing the campaign, Mixner called upon many of his friends in the Democratic Party

and the anti-war movement for help, using this crisis as an opportunity to come out to them.

One of these was Bill Clinton, who telephoned Mixner to tell him that he and Hillary "will always be your friends and you can count on us."

Another friend who responded to the call for help was Senator George McGovern, who agreed to speak at a fundraiser, becoming the first United States Senator to headline an openly gay and lesbian fundraiser.

Ultimately, New Age was folded into the NO on 6 Campaign, with Harvey Milk running the operations in the north and Mixner and Scott running it in the south.

The campaign in the south was aided immeasurably by the leadership of Reverend Troy Perry, the fundraising of realtor Gayle Wilson, and the grassroots organizing of comedian-activist Ivy Bottini. Mixner himself called forth his contacts in the entertainment industry to raise funds and create awareness of the dangers of the initiative.

But perhaps the most significant element in the campaign's success was securing former Governor Ronald Reagan's opposition to the Briggs Initiative.

In a secret meeting with Reagan, who was contemplating a run for the presidency and may have wanted to project a more moderate image, Mixner and Scott made their case against the initiative. A few weeks later the former governor called for the defeat of Proposition 6, echoing the very words Mixner and Scott had used in their meeting. This endorsement prompted a decided shift in the polls. The initiative in November 1978 was defeated by more than a million votes.

In the years following the decisive defeat of the Briggs initiative, Mixner and Scott flourished both personally and professionally. Mixner/Scott became a successful firm, relocating from a West Hollywood apartment to two floors of an office building in Beverly Hills.

The couple bought a beautiful house in Palm Springs where they spent weekends, often entertaining movers and shakers in the political world. They also hosted a reception for Arkansas Governor Bill Clinton with guests from both the straight and gay and lesbian communities.

The gay community became an increasingly significant part of the Democratic coalition in California: politicians who had previously shunned the community now competed for its votes and financial support. In appreciation of the community's support, California Governor Jerry Brown appointed openly gay men and lesbians to visible positions.

AIDS Activism

Then came AIDS. In the early 1980s, the nightmare of the AIDS pandemic quickly made itself manifest among Mixner's circle of friends and acquaintances, affecting even the rich and powerful, such as lawyer, banker, and bathhouse owner Sheldon Andelson, who had been appointed to the Board of Regents of the University of California. Mixner would ultimately see more than 300 of his acquaintances succumb to the pandemic.

In the midst of the AIDS crisis, Mixner and Scott decided to dissolve their firm. Scott became chair of AIDS Project-Los Angeles, the city's largest AIDS service provider.

In order to escape his obsession with the havoc wreaked by AIDS on his friends and his fear of having contracted the virus himself, Mixner threw himself into the peace movement, focusing on nuclear disarmament.

He organized a walk across America for nuclear disarmament, one that would leave Los Angeles in March of 1986 and arrive in Washington in November. Unfortunately, the Great Peace March became a fiasco. Although some determined marchers actually made it to Washington, Mixner was left with massive debt and a profound sense of failure. For the following six years, he devoted himself to paying off the money he owed as a result of the ill-fated project.

Mixner regained his composure after this defeat by refocusing on AIDS and politics. He threw himself into organizing the campaign against a right-wing initiative, Proposition 64, that would have made it mandatory to quarantine people with AIDS.

Unlike the NO on 6 campaign, the battle against Proposition 64 proved easy. The proposition was defeated by a margin of over 70% of the vote.

But the victory did not compensate for the news in June 1986 that Peter Scott had contracted AIDS.

In addition to caring for Scott and building a small consulting practice to support them, Mixner embarked on a successful attempt to create a California alternative to the slow and bureaucratic Federal Drug Administration in order to speed research and drug trials to fight AIDS.

Meanwhile, all around him, friends and colleagues were dying, and President Reagan barely acknowledged the disease that had already killed thousands of Americans. After a period in which he responded to the AIDS drugs that were finally beginning to appear, Scott began a steady decline.

In November 1988, a frail Scott insisted that Mixner accompany him to the polls to vote against George H. W. Bush, who was running for what he promised would be "Reagan's third term." Apologizing for not simply casting an absentee ballot, Scott told Mixner, "if it's the last act of my life, I want to vote against the people who I believe killed me."

On May 13, 1989, Peter Scott died, leaving Mixner bereft, angry, and burned out.

The Clinton Campaign

In September 1991, Bill Clinton called Mixner to ask him to support his quest for the presidency. At the time most gay men and lesbians, and nearly all the national organizations, were supporting Senator Paul Tsongas of Massachusetts, who had an excellent record on gay and lesbian rights and had sponsored a gay and lesbian civil rights bill in the Senate.

Mixner told Clinton, who as Governor of Arkansas had a very sparse record on glbtq issues, that he could earn the support of gay and lesbian voters only if he took tough stands on issues of concern to the community.

Mixner agreed to prepare a position paper on gay and lesbian issues and Clinton asked to meet with community leaders on his next visit to Los Angeles.

Just before that visit took place, West Hollywood erupted into riots when Republican Governor Pete Wilson, after having indicated that he would sign a historic civil rights bill prohibiting discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation in employment and accommodations, instead vetoed the bill. For two weeks, the Los Angeles gay and lesbian community vented their rage in demonstrations organized by ACT UP/Los Angeles.

Accompanied by Mixner to the meeting he had arranged with activists, Clinton was confronted by a group of people who were reeling from the devastation of AIDS and who were angry at the indignities and

discrimination they had experienced.

At this meeting, Clinton made a number of promises, including his determination to issue executive orders prohibiting discrimination in federal employment and permitting gay men and lesbians to serve in the military. He also promised to enlist the resources of the federal government to find a cure for AIDS.

A skeptical Diane Abbitt pointed out that Wilson had made similar promises only to betray them once he was elected. She asked Clinton why they should trust him to keep his word. The candidate responded, "You'll have to watch my actions but you won't be disappointed. I won't be in the closet on this issue. I promise you that."

As the campaign for the nomination continued, Clinton made a point of emphasizing his support for gay rights at every opportunity. The promises he had given in the private meeting with gay and lesbian activists became public positions, and he quickly began to attract support from the glbtq community.

Clinton's eagerness to win support from the community was in marked contrast to the previous presidential campaign, when Democratic nominee Michael Dukakis was so fearful of being connected with the gay and lesbian community that he turned down Mixner's offer to raise one million dollars.

In January 1992, Mixner was asked to join the Clinton campaign's national executive committee and to help mobilize the gay and lesbian community. While at first he encountered a "Tsongas wall" of activists who thought the Massachusetts senator had earned the community's support through his years of hard work, he gradually was able to gain Clinton the backing of gay and lesbian leaders such as Roberta Achtenberg, then a San Francisco city supervisor, and many grassroots activists. He was also able to raise impressive amounts of money for his friend's campaign.

Gradually, the gay and lesbian community moved away from Tsongas toward Clinton. Although the Arkansas governor had evinced little support for gay and lesbian rights in the past, he impressed the community with his empathy and warmth.

At a pivotal meeting with gay and lesbian leaders in Los Angeles, after rehearsing his promises to end discrimination, Clinton told them, "I want you to have the opportunity to just be people, and live up to your fullest potential. This is my commitment. I could do no less and still hold my head up."

At a critical moment in the campaign for the nomination, with Clinton in a tough battle in the New York primary, Mixner pressed him to meet with a group of AIDS activists. At the meeting, he made several commitments, including one to reform the drug trial approval process and to engage in a Manhattan Project to find an AIDS cure.

These promises contributed to his victory in New York, which was followed soon by an overwhelming victory in California, which cinched his nomination.

Glbq votes and glbtq money were essential to his success.

Clinton's triumphant nominating convention featured a number of openly gay speakers, including Robert Hattoy, who identified himself as "a gay man with AIDS," and added: "If there is any honor in having this disease it is the honor of being part of the gay and lesbian community in America."

During the general election campaign, gay and lesbian voters surged to support Clinton, particularly after Pat Robertson and Pat Buchanan electrified the Republican National Convention with homophobic attacks and a declaration of a "religious war for the soul of America."

In response to the Republican attacks, Mixner launched a massive voter registration drive and increased fundraising efforts targeting gay men and lesbians. By late September of 1992, Mixner and his associates had raised for the Clinton campaign more than one million "gay and lesbian" dollars in California and more than three and one-half million nationally.

With Clinton's victory, there was rejoicing in glbtq communities across the country and very high expectations. As Mixner observed, "We had earned our way to the table and deserved to be treated as full partners." After 12 years of Republican rule, during which gay and lesbian issues, including the AIDS catastrophe, were neglected, the hope was that these concerns would now be forcefully addressed and the dream of equal rights would become a reality.

During the period after the election and before the inauguration, Mixner worked hard to make certain that gay men and lesbians would be represented in the new administration. He announced that he would not seek a position for himself, but he advocated for other appointees, including especially Roberta Achtenberg and Robert Hattoy, who were to receive the highest appointments in the new administration.

When Achtenberg was thinking of turning down the position of Assistant Secretary for Fair Housing in the Department of Housing and Urban Development, Mixner insisted that she accept it. "'Listen,' I told her, 'this is a major appointment. The highest ever offered to a gay or lesbian in the history of the United States. We have to start somewhere.'"

Clinton's Betrayal

More than 40 gay men and lesbians received appointments in the administration, spread through almost every department and agency in the government and in the White House itself.

The inaugural celebrations of the new President included gay and lesbian balls, and also a "Salute to David Mixner" evening sponsored by the Gay and Lesbian Victory Fund in which Senator Edward Kennedy extolled him as someone who "has won a high place in the annals of a movement to free a whole segment of our people from oppression. He has touched history, and in the process contributed to changing the lives of millions."

But despite these victories, Mixner quickly became aware that gay and lesbian issues were not deemed a high priority by the mostly young White House staffers. He became angry when he realized that when glbtq issues did come to the fore, the staffers did not consult with him or other community leaders.

The failure to consult gay men and lesbians who knew firsthand how volatile attitudes toward homosexuality could be exploited by homophobes led to the first disaster of the Clinton administration, the attempt to end the ban on gay men and lesbians in the military.

Despite Mixner's attempts to advise the President how to go about implementing the promised executive order, he was refused access at crucial moments, especially by gatekeepers such as George Stephanopoulos and Rahm Emanuel. The result was a disaster in which homophobic senators like Sam Nunn and head of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Colin Powell in effect rolled the new Commander-in-Chief.

Clinton's failure to exert appropriate leadership, especially with Powell, assured the imposition of the "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" policy, which was ultimately presented as a compromise, but which was implemented in a way that made the conditions for gay and lesbian servicemembers even worse than they had been.

Mixner soon discovered that the Clinton administration was filled with "fair-weather friends" who were

happy to take gay money and votes, but who were nevertheless contemptuous of gay people and unsympathetic to the cause. Even getting permits for the 1993 March on Washington, which was scheduled in the midst of the "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" controversy, proved difficult because of the arrogance of Rahm Emanuel.

When Clinton announced that he was willing to consider segregation of gay and lesbian troops, Mixner felt that he had been betrayed by the president he had helped elect. Livid, he accepted an invitation to appear on the ABC news program *Nightline* to denounce the President's position even though he knew that doing so would change his relationship with the Clinton White House forever and would also negatively affect his consulting business.

Having been rendered persona non grata at the White House because of his appearance on *Nightline*, Mixner was pointedly excluded from the historic meeting Clinton arranged with lesbian and gay leaders on April 16, 1993 in advance of the March on Washington. At this meeting, Clinton reiterated his promise that he intended to sign an executive order lifting the ban on gay and lesbian servicemembers.

Despite this promise, and despite strong objections from Vice President Gore, Clinton on July 19, 1993, announced the "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" policy. The new policy, with the backing of the President and Democratic Congressional leaders, was soon codified into law so as to make it impossible to be altered by an executive order by Clinton or any other President, thus making, as Mixner bitterly realized, "our path to freedom all the harder."

Devastated by the President's betrayal and failure of leadership, Mixner denounced the policy and volunteered to participate in an act of civil disobedience in order to protest it. On the morning of July 30, 1993, he joined a small march to Lafayette Park across from the White House. Then he crossed the street, where he was arrested.

Although Mixner and Clinton attempted to heal the rift between them, and Mixner was later to praise Clinton for many of his initiatives, such as the AIDS legislation named for Ryan White, which dramatically increased funding for the care of people with AIDS, and the executive order that banned discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation in every federal agency except the military, the close relationship the two enjoyed for a while was never recaptured.

In his autobiography, *My Life* (2004), Clinton mentions neither the Defense of Marriage Act nor David Mixner's name. Nor does he acknowledge the crucial help he received from the glbtq community in his quest for the presidency.

Despite this snub, Mixner is more generous than Clinton, consistently describing him as a great president.

Post Clinton Years

Although Mixner retreated from the limelight after his public rift with Clinton, he has remained active in the Democratic Party and in the quest for equal rights. He has been actively involved as a consultant and strategist in many campaigns, and was an active participant in the successful fight against George Bush's proposed constitutional amendment to ban same-sex marriage.

In 1996, Mixner published his autobiography, *Stranger among Friends*. The memoir is valuable not only for its insights into the Clinton campaign and the "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" debacle, but also for its history of the gay and lesbian rights movement in Los Angeles from the 1970s through the early 1990s, particularly its emergence as a major factor in local politics.

Most stirring, however, the book intertwines a history of human rights activism with the deeply personal story of Mixner's growth as a gay man and as a leader of a beleaguered community.

In 2000, Mixner served as executive producer of Mustapha Khan's documentary film, *House on Fire*, about the HIV epidemic in the African-American community.

In 2001, he and Dennis Bailey compiled a book entitled *Brave Journeys: Profiles in Gay and Lesbian Courage*, in which they introduce eight people who exemplified courage in the face of homophobia. The subjects include San Francisco lesbian activists Del Martin and Phyllis Lyon; Boston politician Elaine Noble; British actor Sir Ian McKellen; San Francisco-based politician Roberta Achtenberg; U. S. Air Force pilot Tracy Thorne; and Texas activist Dianne Hardy-Garcia.

An ardent supporter of the Holocaust Museum in Washington, D. C., Mixner has helped raise more than a million dollars for the institution. Fittingly, it was there that he discovered a true story of gay and lesbian resistance fighters in The Netherlands during World War II.

That story became the basis for a screenplay that he co-authored with Richard Burns, *The Dunes of Nuveen*. The script won the MTV Best New Screenplay award at the 2001 Los Angeles gay and lesbian film festival. Although the script has received stage readings featuring Chad Allen and Judith Light, it has not yet been filmed.

With Dennis Bailey, Mixner has co-authored another film script, *Fire in the Soul*, and a play, *Jacob's Ladder*, a historical drama that received a stage reading in New York in 2008.

In 2003, Mixner supported Representative Richard Gephardt's quest for the 2004 Democratic Party presidential nomination, and served as co-chair of his national campaign committee.

In 2006, Mixner relocated from Los Angeles to Turkey Hollow in rural Sullivan County, New York. In 2009, he moved to the Hell's Kitchen neighborhood in New York City.

In 2008, he endorsed John Edwards in the race for the Democratic presidential nomination and ultimately supported President Obama.

Mixner remains a major force in glbtq political engagement through his influential blog, www.DavidMixner.com.

In May 2009, Mixner, frustrated by the failure of President Obama to fulfill his promises to the glbtq community, including the repeal of the "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" policy, used his blog to call for a March on Washington to underline the lack of equal rights for glbtq Americans. Cleve Jones soon seconded the call, and then young activists across the country responded as well.

Hastily organized in only six weeks, initially without the support of the major gay rights organizations, the National Equality March attracted approximately 250,000 participants. Its focus was on the need for grassroots activism. This focus expressed a lack of faith in the gay and lesbian political establishment and the Democratic Party, which was seen as more interested in raising money from the glbtq constituency than in enacting laws that would promote equal rights.

Mixner captured the frustration he shared with the other marchers in these words: "When people tell me to be patient, when people tell me, oh lord, not now. All I can think about is how many more tears must be shed so some politicians in a back room can figure out when it's convenient to join us and to fight for freedom."

Later Mixner, one of the most successful fundraisers in the history of the Democratic Party, credited with

having raised more than 15 million dollars over the years, joined other bloggers in urging gay men and lesbians not to contribute to the Democratic Party until action has been taken on glbtq issues, including the repeal of "Don't Ask, Don't Tell."

In addition to writing his own blog, Mixner also contributes to several other publications, including the *Huffington Post*, where among many other postings he wrote, on the occasion of Lady Bird Johnson's death in 2007, a moving reminiscence of a 1994 visit to the LBJ ranch.

Now a revered elder of the glbtq movement for equality, Mixner has received dozens of awards and recognitions for his distinguished contributions to public life, including a GLAAD media award and Arizona Equality's Barry Goldwater Award. But perhaps the most appropriate recognition he has received is the Point Foundation's Legend Award, which "is presented to an individual who has, through the course of their lifetime, achieved greatness in their professional career and unapologetically supported the LGBT community."

At the ceremony in April 2010, Mixner received kudos from British Prime Minister Gordon Brown and his wife Sarah and from his friend actress Judith Light, and was presented the award by Victoria Reggie Kennedy, the widow of Senator Edward Kennedy, who remarked, "My husband was honored to be in the fight with him."

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