Gay Warriors and Patriots

by Bradley Osborn  November 2004

The Sacred Band of Thebes fought to the death alongside their same-gender lovers in ancient Greece. Alexander the Great conquered much of the known, civilized world, spreading proto-Hellenism in his wake, while keeping company with his mate Hephaestion. Alan Turing, the man most responsible for cracking the Nazi's Enigma Code and one of the fathers of computer science, was prosecuted for being a homosexual under the charge of 'gross indecency and sexual perversion.' Forced to take female hormones, Turing committed suicide due to the persecution he suffered.

In 1999, Steve May, a Republican legislator from Arizona and an Army reservist 'came out' on the floor of the state House, and faced summary dismissal from the service for his honesty. Last year, Retirees Brigadier General Keith Kerr, Brigadier General Virgil Richard, and Rear Admiral Alan Steinman acknowledged that they were gay, and blasted the military's discriminatory policy toward homosexuals.

Also in 2003, a Government Accounting Office study reported that the Army faced a critical shortage of linguists needed to translate, intercept, and interrogate suspects in the war on terrorism. In the past two years, the Department of Defense has discharged dozens of Arabic-speaking linguists from the Defense Language Institute, simply for being gay.

Gay and lesbian Americans have made enormous contributions to freedom. As members of our armed forces, they are fighting, and dying in Iraq and Afghanistan, but their partners have no spousal benefits, and when bereft, are left to grieve in solitude. The Log Cabin Republicans recently filed a federal lawsuit against the U.S. military to overturn Don't Ask; Don't Tell. God made patriots in many hues.

After beholding purple peaks and undulating amber grasses, Katharine Lee Bates, a lesbian scholar, composed the lyrics to America the Beautiful. The Heartland Men's Chorus, a predominantly gay group, sang at the opening ceremonies of Kansas City's Fourth of July activities this summer. The celebrated, founding document made public on that day 228 years prior contains the following words:

We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty, and the pursuit of Happiness.

One month after those Independence Day ceremonies took place on the south bank of the Missouri, the civil rights of LGBT citizens in the Show Me State were put to a popular vote, and there was a disastrous outcome.

God may have shed divine grace on this land, but we've miles to go before our pursuit of happiness is fully realized.