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"My Cousin Was On The U.S.S. Arizona, I'm Enlisting In The Navy Today" - University of Arizona College Student on December 7, 1941



1940 Movie 'Arizona'
Filmed At Old Tucson Studios

As Tucson entered the 1940's, it was still a somewhat sleepy backwater town of 36,818 people within the city's 7.8 square mile limits with some horses and wagons being seen on the streets as they were becoming quickly replaced by automobiles. Out at the University of Arizona (which originally started named the Arizona College of Mines) the original building of Old Main had sat empty and some roof timbers had fallen down forcing it to be condemned by authorities due to disrepair from a period of neglect and lack of use. It was scheduled for demolition as soon as the funds became available.



Sunday 7:30AM December 7, 1941 USS Arizona

Suddenly, on the morning of December 7, 1941 with the attack on Pearl Harbor and sinking of the USS Arizona and many other ships, Old Main, Bear Down Gymnasium, Tucson, and the entire world was changed forever as hundreds of thousands of young men (many just teenage boys 14-17 lying about their age) soon passed through very rushed military training at the quickly remodeled Old Main that was pressed into service as a military training center along with Bear Down Gymnasium which was turned into an all-male barracks and military training center as World War 2 had just landed on Tucson's front door step!



1942 Bear Down Gymnasium
University of Arizona Tucson

Soon war materials related factories and businesses began opening up around Tucson. For Tucson's Gay's and Lesbian's it meant jobs, jobs, and more jobs working at home in the Old Pueblo. For the able bodied men it meant being shipped out at the train station downtown to military training camps all over the United States, and being sent up to the front to fight. Often during the initial processing the inductees were suddenly asked, Are You A Homosexual? To which everyone would of course say NO and move on to the next processing station. At the time Gays & Lesbians only had their GAYDAR to operate with and would form into small groups to safely share their secret stories with.



1940 Telephone Newspaper
Ad Tucson

In Washington D.C. the First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt lived her Bisexual Life, married to the President Franklin Roosevelt, but had her four (4) yearlong love and relationship affair with Associated Press journalist Lorena 'Hick' Hickock who had originally been assigned to cover the White House. First Lady Eleanor was a champion for human rights & freedoms and always pushed hard for them. Curiously, her husband Franklin Delanor Roosevelt had an affair with Eleanor's secretary in 1918, and after that Eleanor refused to and never had any further sexual contact with her husband for the rest of her life.

Over in both the European and Asian Theatre's of World War 2 the fighting had been already been raging along prior to the United States entering it. In 1940 German troops marched into France, then into its capital of Paris and took over the country making it a part of Germany. German officials had worked out a system of identification for its undesirables & enemies of the state.



1940 Gays In Germany

Thus was born the Pink Triangle as an identifier of Gays and could include both Gay's & Lesbians in both in Germany and the growing list of the many countries it was rapidly taking over and making a part of its Nazi Empire (a.k.a. Third Reich - 3rd Rein in English). In Germany all Gays were sent to prison or the concentration camps (the first Death Camp was setup on March 10, 1933) as the lowest form of prisoner and they were automatically scheduled for extermination regardless when or if the execution was ever carried out.



1940 Nazi German Death Camp Identity Symbols

In Tucson Gays, Lesbians, and a wide variety of Hipsters still discretely met at times in dark hotel bars or cafes at Hotel Congress, Pioneer Hotel, Santa Rita Hotel, the Red Light Districts until they were shut down, and the first Gay Bar (but with a mixed crowd including many Bisexuals) called the Town House Bar located downtown at 34 S. Scott Avenue which soon started attracting a growing and regular Gay crowd.



1949 Santa Rita Hotel
Tucson

The city's Gay movers and shakers of the time were Ray Birmingham, Terry Cohen, Tom Garnish, and George Rederus who regularly hosted private outdoor outings around the Tucson area and many events at their own homes mostly on weekends as Sunday Clothing Optional Pool Parties, BBQ's, and Potluck Dinners which usually included fun games-dancing-contests and Stand Up Drag or other performances.

Also on Sundays there was always a standing dinner invitation to all Gays to meet at El Torero Restaurant at 231 E. 26th Street where one could be their Gay Self without any worries. Additionally, the Red Light Districts of Tucson and any city for that matter had always provided places where Gays-Lesbians could blend in and often secretly own-operate some of the establishments and bars there.



1943 Cadillac Magazine
Advertisement Tucson

Around Tucson and elsewhere in the U.S. with America's entrance into World War 2 on December 7th, 1941, a very sharp and monumental change happened in Lesbian culture. Suddenly there was a critical need for all able bodied men to leave their jobs for service in the military and the demand for labor in Tucson's war parts factories and other operations, many of which were located south of the city in Pima County where later Tucson's International Airport would be located, immediately thrust all available women into the workforce often including high school teenagers. The abrupt absence of men quickly increased females bonding leading to relationships and intimacy at the Tucson home front.



1943 Around Town

The same happened to the hundreds of thousands of women who had enlisted in the military, which at first during the time was very lenient toward Lesbianism because they badly needed servicewomen. Ironically, when the war ended and women were no longer needed for the war effort, military Lesbians were systematically found out, discharged, and then shipped back to the nearest American port where they had to make it back home on their own. This huge shipment of Lesbians to large urban areas such as Los Angeles, New York, San Francisco, Seattle, and even the small Tucson largely contributed to the growth of Lesbian Culture in the cities around the United States.



1942 Navy Trainees World War 2
University of Arizona
Bear Down Gym Barracks

During the early 1940's Tucson saw a very large influx of military men and women from all around the U.S. who brought with them big city desires. Tucson's two Red Light Districts were still in full swing, but repeated demands by military officials to shut them all down fell on deaf ears at first with city officials during a time when Henry O. Jaastad served as Mayor and Harold C. Wheeler served as Police Chief until finally the military threatened to make the entire city of Tucson "Off Limits" to ALL military personnel and ALL military commodities buyers.



1942 Around Town

Understanding that if not one of the thousands of military men and women then stationed in Tucson would not be allowed to leave their bases, and the military purchasing agents-buyers would not be allowed to purchase any needed supplies in Tucson, and its resulting economic loss the city would face as it was literally just barely crawling out of the Great Depression was too much for the city council, prominent businessmen, and other local government officials so the red light districts along with their underground Gay-Lesbian owned or friendly establishments disappeared almost overnight. To insure compliance armed soldiers patrolled the areas 24 hours a day until the United States Army Generals overseeing things were sure there was nothing still operating.



1943 Rationing Book

On the federal level in the United States by 1944, a new U.S. Military Policy Directive decreed that All Homosexuals were to be committed to military hospitals, examined by psychiatrists and discharged under Regulation 615-360, section 8, which soon led to the term "He/She is a Section 8."



1942 Old Main Building At University
Of Arizona World War 2 Wartime Restoration
Tucson, Arizona

During this time period many in the military who had at times openly been involved in same sex activities, had relationships, had been frequenting suspected or known bars-establishments went deep underground and became even less trusting of those outside their circle of friends they already knew in order to escape the purges that would destroy their military (and often into their civilian) records for life.



1945 Nagasaki & Hiroshima
Japan

From the end of World War 2 in 1945 with the surrender of Japan and then Germany, there was great pressure in the remaining 1940's on everyone to have mainstream nuclear families which pushed many Gays and Lesbians to try marriage with opposite sex partners, and even well-known Homosexual Figures in the United States joined in. For the Bisexuals of the era that transition was far smoother.



1947 Anti Communist &
Anti-Homosexual Literature in Tucson

At times the fear of communism was joined with the fear of homosexuals often for political gain. Both actual and merely suspected Gays and Lesbians were fired from their government jobs as the seeds for a full scale witch hunt began to germinate. One popular element of this fear were the cheap dime store pulp fiction novels, written about the always sensational racy escapades of seemingly endless wildly neurotic and crazed fictional Gays and Lesbians. In 1947 Gay film maker Kenneth Anger's Homosexual film 'Fire Works' was released during a time when Homosexuality was illegal in the United States.



1946 Mt. Lemmon Tucson

Still, in Tucson in 1949 as the decade of the 1940's came to an end with a population of 44,548 inside the 9.5 square mile city limits, it could be a place that often afforded those of Hipster Alternate Lifestyles some respite and the ability to find their own niche in The Old Pueblo regardless of how they did things any place else.

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