

Harvey Milk, '51, member of Kappa Beta Fraternity, UAlbany grad and gay activist, received amazing honor from the US Navy



NOTE: Arnold Newman's B'nai Chiam includes an interesting fact about Harvey Milk. Between 1937 and 1949, all the members of KB were Jewish. In the fall of 1949, brothers Harvey Milk, Don Cohen, Howie Rosman and Phil Malafsky (all sophomores living in the KB house at 288 Quail Street), became friendly with a freshman, Robert Barron, '52, who lived around the corner on South Lake Avenue. Barron was not Jewish, but that was not a problem for Harvey Milk, Cohen, Rosman and Malafsky. The following year, Robert Barron accepted a bid and became the first non-Jewish member of KB.

ALBANY, N.Y. (August 1, 2016) – The United States Navy is set to name a ship after gay activist and civil rights icon Harvey Milk. The Military Sealift Command fleet oiler USNS Harvey Milk will be named for the 1951 University at Albany alum who provided hope and encouragement for generations of LGBTQ Americans through his actions and his words.

A Long Island native from a Navy family, Milk came to what was then the New York State College for Teachers in 1947. He served as a sports reporter for the State College News, **was a member of the Jewish fraternity Kappa Beta**, and was active in student government. A mathematics major at UAlbany, Milk graduated in 1951 and was commissioned in the U.S. Navy in 1951. He served as a diving officer in San Diego during the Korean War on the submarine rescue ship Kittiwake until 1955, when he was honorably discharged from the service as a lieutenant junior grade.

Following his service, Milk returned to Long Island to serve as a teacher, before moving to California during the counterculture movement of the late 1960s and early 1970s. Milk became the first openly gay man elected (non-incumbent) to office in a major city in the U.S. when he won a seat on the San Francisco Board of Supervisors in 1977.

Milk encouraged lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) citizens to live their lives openly and to achieve social equality. Milk and San Francisco Mayor George Moscone were shot and killed in 1978 by Dan White, a former city supervisor. When Milk was shot, he was wearing his U.S. Navy diver's belt buckle.



*Gay rights advocate Harvey Milk entered the U.S. Navy shortly after graduating from UAlbany in 1951. The Navy will soon be naming a ship after the civil rights icon.*

Over the past several years, there have been pushes from California politicians to have a ship named for Milk since the 2011 repeal of the Department of Defense's "Don't Ask, Don't Tell." policy.

"We have just reached the point recently where LGBT people can serve openly in the military, and what better message can there be of that than this ship? It's a very fitting tribute to a man whose primary goal was for people to be authentic and not have to wear a mask," said Stuart Milk, Harvey's nephew and co-founder of the [Harvey Milk Foundation](#). Stuart helped organize a years-long letter writing campaign by his organization and others urging the military to name a ship after his uncle.

Stuart Milk also helped UAlbany honor his uncle at the October, [2009 Reaching Higher, Achieving More Alumni Luncheon](#). In August of that year, Harvey Milk became a posthumous winner of the U.S. Presidential Medal of Freedom.

"Harvey was always proud to be a University at Albany alum," said Stuart, noting a famous article that he wrote for the [State College News](#) questioning whether an ROTC chapter on campus was a good idea. "It wasn't that he was against the military -- on the contrary, he enlisted shortly after graduating." But Milk questioned whether a 'College for Teachers' should be the home for such a program. "UAlbany helped my uncle explore what it meant to be principled," said Stuart.

"The naming of a Naval vessel is an amazing honor and serves as a strong reminder of the impact the advocacy of the queer community and allies have had in moving our military away from the days of 'Don't Ask Don't Tell,'" said Ekow King, director of [Intercultural Student Engagement](#) at UAlbany.

"This is a proud moment for our current and future LGBTQ students and alumni who are serving openly," added Courtney D'Allaird, the assistant director and founding coordinator of UAlbany's [Gender & Sexuality Resource Center](#).

The USNS *Harvey Milk* would be the second of the new John Lewis-class of oilers built for the Navy, each named for various civil rights leaders in U.S. history. Other ships planned in the class include the USNS *Earl Warren*, the USNS *Robert F. Kennedy*, the USNS *Lucy Stone* and the USNS *Sojourner Truth*.

Click Here for a Video Tribute to Harvey Milk:

<https://youtu.be/J-qlxgubYfs>