



## *Harvey Milk '47*



Harvey Bernard Milk was born on May 22, 1930 at Woodmere Hospital in Long Island, New York. His official name, derived from his Lithuanian ancestry, was Glimpy Milch. A member of the Bay Shore High School Class of '47, Harvey went on to graduate from Albany State College in 1951 where he majored in mathematics and minored in history. He entered the Navy shortly after he finished college and advanced to the rank of chief petty officer aboard the USS Kitty Hawk, only to be dishonorably discharged when his homosexuality was discovered.

His life travels took him to Dallas, Texas, and back to New York before he finally ended up in California. Like thousands of other Gay people, Harvey migrated to San Francisco in the early 1970's where he began to act as an advocate for local businesses in dealing with the municipal government. His standard opening line when he gave a stump speech was "My name is Harvey Milk and I'm here to recruit you." After this sarcastic allusion to the notion that homosexuals recruited other people into changing their sexual orientation, he would proceed to recruit support for the populist issues to which he dedicated his life. He fought to secure the place for homosexuals in society as equals, not as people who were just tolerated and he professed the importance of Gay people seeking leadership positions in society and not relying on non-Gay friends of the community to act as leaders of the movement.

In 1977, Milk became the first openly Gay person to be elected to San Francisco's City Council, an election that was in stark contrast to the national political scene. Unfortunately, after years of striving to win an election, he would serve only eleven months before being assassinated. The thought of assassination had haunted Milk during his years in public life. He tape recorded several versions of his political will which he labeled "to be read in the event of my assassination." One of the tapes included the following statement: "If a bullet should enter my brain, let that bullet destroy every closet door." Although his life was cut short, the impact of Harvey Milk is still being felt. In 2003, *Time* magazine named Harvey Milk to their list of the *Top 100 Most Important People of the Century*. Also in 2003, New York City created the nation's first public high school for gay students: The Harvey Milk High School.