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# Forgotten Heroes – Remembering David: "DRUMMER" Photographer and Activist David Sparrow



Will Kohler • May 8, 2016

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*Jack Fritscher the founding San Francisco editor-in-chief of the iconic [Drummer Magazine](#) remembers his longtime spouse and partner in life and gay leather and BSMD history David Sparrow.*

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*David Sparrow Fritscher, spouse of "Drummer" editor Jack Fritscher from 1969-1979, shot covers and hundreds of interior pictures from March 1977 to December 31, 1979, when the entire founding San Francisco staff of the 1970s Golden Age of "Drummer" quit for lack of payment by publisher John Embry.*

*On July 4, 1969, David and I met at [Chuck Renslow's](#) Gold Coast where he worked. My honeymoon photos of David in bondage. were published in the coffee-table book "Jack Fritscher's American Men," collected and introduced by Edward Lucie-Smith (Gay Men's Press, London, 1994).*

*For ten years, from 1969 to 1979, we were lovers and creative partners, moving together to San Francisco in 1970. On May 7, 1972, the leather priest Jim Kane married us two Catholics on the roof of 2 Charlton Street in New York, and when we divorced, David rented a Pearl Street apartment owned by landlord Kane who also rented to Society of Janus founder, Cynthia Slater. In the novel, "Some Dance to Remember: A Memoir-Novel of San Francisco, the character "Teddy" is fictively based on David.*

Born in Evansville, Indiana, on May 7, 1945 the freckled strawberry-blond David, 6-1 and 170 pounds, joined the Air Force in 1963 and when he admitted being gay, he was locked in a psychiatric unit for five horrifying days while his "dishonorable" discharge was processed. The experience increased his insight into BDSM. Working together, credited under his name and mine, he and I alternated



snapping single frames on our rolls of film to produce hundreds of "Drummer" photos for interior spreads, and for covers such as: 1) "Drummer" 21, the most perfect issue of "Drummer" (March 1978); 2) "Drummer" 25 featuring future Colt model Ed Dinakos (December 1978); and 3)

"Drummer" 30 showcasing "Mr Drummer" Val Martin and Bob Hyslop arm-wrestling (June 1979). To shoot the cover of "Drummer" 21, I piled David and two of our friends, John Trowbridge and David Wycoff, into my Toyota Land Cruiser, and drove across the Golden Gate Bridge, north to the Marin Headlands bunkers where, later, I also drove Robert Mapplethorpe for his famous piss-and-jockstrap shoot when he asked me the location of our "Drummer" 21 photographs.

In 1970, David and I appeared balling together as two of San Francisco's first leathersex models. The magazine was "Whipcrack" (Vol. No. 1). Our 34 photographs, including the back cover, were shot by the straight Walt Jebe who owned Castro's first gay-friendly camera shop (1963), predating Harvey Milk by nearly ten years. The immigrant Milk, in fact, so envied native San Franciscan Jebe's 19th and Castro Street location—where David worked the dark room and counter for a year—that he opened his Castro Camera a hundred feet away, usurping and destroying the business of Jebe who for years had developed gay rolls of film no one else would print.

On November 28, 1978, David was in City Hall at the moment Dan White assassinated Milk and Moscone, and, during the lock-down, he witnessed the bodies being wheeled out. As editor in chief of "Drummer," I regretted that the SFPD confiscated his film from our camera the way the LAPD had confiscated all the "Drummer" photographs shot at the Slave Auction two years earlier. My latest issue was almost out the door to the printer. I had always wanted to shout, "Stop the presses!" I told publisher Embry that even minus David's newsworthy photos, I needed a couple hours to write a new last page for "Drummer" 26 (January 1979), "Harvey Milk and Gay Courage."

A City Hall insider, David worked as a personnel analyst for the City and County of San Francisco's Civil Service Commission, Public Utility Commission, and Department of Public Health from 1979 to his final illness.

David passed away on February 20, 1992 of AIDS and is buried in Saint Joseph's Cemetery, Evansville Indiana.

Jack Fritscher also holds a Ph.D. is an noted American author, novelist, magazine journalist, photographer, videographer, university professor, and social activist known internationally for his fiction and non-fiction analyses of popular culture. As a pre-Stonewall activist he was an out and founding member of the [American Popular Culture Association](#). You can read more his works and our history at [Jack Fritscher.com](#)

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Will Kohler

Will Kohler is one of America's best known LGBT historians, He is also a a accredited journalist and the owner of Back2Stonewall.com. A longtime gay activist Will fought on the front lines of the AIDS epidemic with ACT-UP and continues fighting today for LGBT acceptance and full equality. Will's work has been referenced on such notable media venues as BBC News, CNN, MSNBC, The Washington Post, The Daily Wall Street Journal, Hollywood Reporter, and Raw Story. Back2Stonewall has been recently added to the Library of Congress' LGBTQ+ Studies Web Archive. Mr. Kohler is available for comment, interviews and lectures on LGBT History. Contact: [Will@Back2Stonewall.com](mailto:Will@Back2Stonewall.com)



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