



Greater Palm Springs Pride

NEWS RELEASE

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Grand Marshals Announced for 26th Annual Palm Springs Pride Celebration

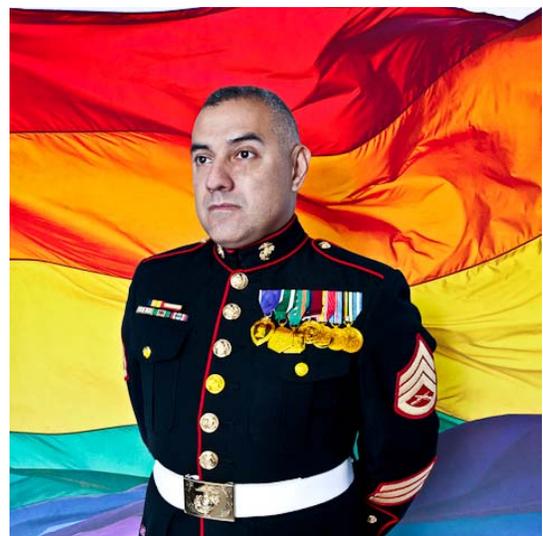
Iraq War Veteran Eric Alva Receives Top Honors

(*Palm Springs, CA – September 17, 2012*) Greater Palm Springs Pride honors an Iraq War Veteran and national spokesman for the repeal of Don't Ask, Don't Tell, an original member of Dykes on Bikes and documentary filmmaker, an early out gay reporter, and local celebrities as grand marshals in the 26th annual Pride Parade, scheduled for 10:00 am, Sunday, November 4th, along Palm Canyon Drive through the heart of Downtown Palm Springs.

Retired Staff Sergeant Eric Alva, the first American soldier wounded in the Iraq War, will be honored as the 2012 grand marshal. Alva is recognized as a LGBT civil rights activist and a national spokesman for the repeal of "Don't Ask, Don't Tell." Community grand marshals will be an original member of Dykes on Bikes, director, producer and historian Glenne McElhinney along with one of the first out gay reporters in the country Hank Plante. Celebrity grand marshals will be television, radio and stage performer Joey English and fashion designer Michael Costello.

"We are looking forward to honoring an American hero who actively spoke out for the repeal of the "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" policy and who was stationed at 29 Palms and attended his first Pride parade in Palm Springs. Eric is an inspiration," stated Ron deHarte, Palm Springs Pride President.

Honored as grand marshal is American hero Staff Sergeant **Eric Fidelis Alva** the first Marine seriously injured in the Iraq War. Retiring after 13 years of military service, Alva went back to college to finish his degree. While at school, he decided to be true to himself and help others, coming out as gay. On February 28, 2007, he joined Congressman Martin Meehan in introducing the Military Readiness "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" policy. With this step, he openly admitted to the military and the world that he is a gay man and one that had served and proudly sacrificed for his country. Alva took a courageous step towards fighting for the rights of LGBT Americans and, in particular, for those who have served and are serving in the military, but are unable to be true to themselves. His goal is to help achieve civil rights for all citizens of the United States.



Eric Alva

After serving in Somalia during Operation Restore Hope, and ten years of being stationed in Japan and California, Alva was called upon to serve in the Iraq War. In January 2003, in the build-up to the war, Alva's unit, the 3rd Battalion 7th Marines, was deployed to the Middle East. His unit was among the first to cross the border of Kuwait into Iraq for the start of Operation Iraqi Freedom. Three hours into the ground war, near the city of Basra, his unit stopped to rest. While stepping out of his vehicle, Alva triggered a landmine. The violent explosion threw him 15 feet from the vehicle, and left him with a broken left leg; a torn open, severely nerve-damaged broken right arm; and a badly injured right leg that was later amputated. He had become the first American wounded in the war and the war's first Purple Heart recipient.



Glenne McElhinney

Community Grand Marshal **Glenne McElhinney**, an original member of the Dykes on Bikes and an award winning director and producer, is helping to remember, record and re-tell the history of California's LGBT Community. Her first film is the Los Angeles history documentary "On These Shoulders We Stand." Produced and directed by Glenne, with a mostly volunteer crew the documentary about the Los Angeles LGBT community premiered at Outfest 2009 in July where it received the Special Programming Award for Freedom.

"On These Shoulders We Stand" was developed based on the stories and histories collected from McElhinney's statewide oral history project called Impact Stories. The project's purpose was to document California's LGBT movement of the 1960's through the 1980's. Gathering stories from the personal accounts of those that lived it, Impact Stories is focused on the period of social change when California's LGBT community set in motion a human rights movement that soon swept the rest of the west coast, the United States and the world. In 2010, Impact Stories History Project was awarded a Monette-Horowitz Trust Fellowship, for the projects work on ending homophobia.

Glenne and the film are currently touring California Schools, screening to students, teachers and parents. She also co-curated the historical exhibit Dykes on Bikes: 30 Years at the Forefront at the San Francisco GLBT Historical Society.

She has worked tirelessly to reach out to young and older Californians. To interest them in their own state's history and to do scholarly research and documentation in an area where very little is being done to preserve California's culture and history.

Community Grand Marshal **Hank Plante** is an Emmy Award-winning reporter who has covered California for three decades for TV stations in San Francisco and Los Angeles. One of the first openly gay TV reporters in the United States, Hank has worked in broadcasting for stations including KPIX TV (CBS 5) in San Francisco and in print journalism, including at The Washington Post.



Hank Plante

His awards have included several local and national Emmys, as well as the prestigious George Foster Peabody Award -- broadcasting's equivalent to the Pulitzer Prize -- as part of CBS 5's "AIDS Lifeline" reporting team. He has also been awarded the Pioneer Award at the GLAAD Media Awards, and the James R. Harrison Award from the San Francisco AIDS Foundation. He was also named "Reporter of the

Year” by the Associated Press (APTRA’S “Chris Harris Award”). Hank was inducted into the Emmy Silver Circle by the National Television Academy, which honors individuals who have made a significant contribution to broadcasting. In addition, his work has been singled out for praise by The New York Times and other media.

Hank’s community service has included work with the Human Rights Campaign, the Lambda Legal Defense Fund, GLAAD, Project Open Hand, and the San Francisco AIDS Foundation.

Hank lives in Palm Springs with his husband, Roger Groth, who is an artist.



Miss Joey English

Celebrity Grand Marshal **Miss Joey English** brings her considerable talents to the desert after years of performing in nightclubs, theaters and on television across the United States, Canada, Mexico, and Asia.

Highlights of her career include twenty-seven years of singing for such stars as George Burns, Bob Hope, Milton Berle and Rodney Dangerfield. Her impressive songbook includes a collection written for her by legendary lyricist Sammy Cahn, who called this church going lady a “singer’s singer”.

Joey has appeared numerous times on such classic programs as *The Dinah Shore Show*, *The Merv Griffin Show*, and *The Mike Douglas Show*. Miss English has had a summer replacement television show for the Smothers Brothers. She has sung the National Anthem at many national sporting events.

A published writer, a sought-after speaker and the emcee of most of the premier events in the Coachella Valley, the “Voice of the Desert”, who can “do it all” is in her 16th year of producing her own television and radio programs, (airing four hours of original programming each week on Saturdays from 2:00-6:00 pm on KNEWS 970/1140/1250 AM, 94.3 FM and streaming on the Internet at www.knewsradio.com); as well as starring in regional productions of *Senior Class*, *Sordid Lives*, *Steel Magnolias* and many others both at the Annenberg Theater and the Palm Canyon Theater in Palm Springs.

A mother of three children, a “G.J.” (“Grandma Joey”) of four and a confirmed “chocoholic“, Joey lives the majority of the year in the Mesa Area of Palm Springs and summers on Flathead Lake in Montana.

Celebrity Grand Marshal **Michael Costello** is an American Couture Fashion Designer of Greek and Italian descent. Also the first ever American Rom (gypsy) fashion designer. He is twenty-nine years old and a father of two. He was featured on Project Runway season eight as 4th place finalist as well as Project Runway All-Stars season one finalist. Michael showed his collection at Mercedes Benz Fashion Week in 2010.

Michael is already ahead of the game and has something above most designers in his category because he was born with his talent and never went to school to learn how to drape or sew. When he was only fourteen, Michael made his first couture collection with Lipstick Productions of Los Angeles, a fashion show production company, earning him a fashion review and listing in Vogue Magazine’s article, “Los Angeles’ Hidden Talent” and a write up from editor-in-chief of Glue Magazine, Laurie Pike. Michael has been designing



Michael Costello

since the age of four and at age fifteen, he opened his first boutique in Palm Springs, California and, being self taught, was told he was qualified to attend the Fashion Institute of Design & Merchandising. He was offered a teaching job instead by guidance counselor Bon-Marie, on how to drape and sew naturally. He opted to take a one year internship with Bob Mackie instead!

After his year-long internship, Michael, then 16, took a job designing clothes for Clare's Collection, famous for their red carpet and pageant gowns. Michael felt right at home designing and hasn't slowed his role since.

Michael has been asked to do many charity fashion shows such as Pennies for Homeless with special guests Freddy Prince, Jr. and Sarah Michelle Geller, raising more than \$250,000 for the event. Other charity events include: Project Ethos, Sheknows.com, The Teresa A Mike Foundation, benefiting young underprivileged children, and The Desert Cancer Foundation, the Desert AIDS Project and many more in the Coachella Valley including the Go Red for Women Foundation that landed him a spot in Macy's where his gowns were featured for two months to help raise awareness for the charity.

About the Pride Parade:

This year's pride parade will begin at 10:00 am on Sunday, November 4th. Step-off for more than 125 groups and 5,000 participants will take place E. Ramon Rd. and travels north on Palm Canyon Drive to Tachevah Dr. Seven reviewing stands will be positioned along the mile and a half parade route including the Deaf Pride reviewing stand with ASL interpretation at Amado and N. Palm Canyon Dr.

For information regarding Palm Springs Pride and Pride Week 2012 events, please visit our website at www.pspride.org. Follow us on Facebook at www.facebook.com/PalmSpringsPride.

About Greater Palm Springs Pride:

Greater Palm Springs Pride (pspride.org) is a 501(c)(3) non-profit community enhancement organization founded to promote the public education and public awareness of individual rights and civil liberties of the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender community and to promote the history, diversity and future prosperity of the Greater Palm Springs LGBT community.

This year's Pride celebration theme is: "Long May it Wave!" For information about upcoming events and volunteer opportunities visit the web site at: PSPride.org. The 2012 Palm Springs Pride Celebration is October 29 - November 4.

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