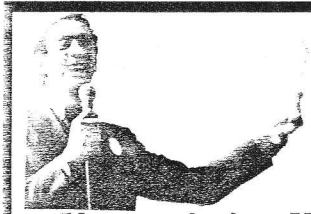


# Special Harvey Milk/Stonewall Anniversary Issue



## GAY VOTE

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### A short history of the Harvey Milk Club

By David Pini



Chris Perry  
(Photo by Rink)

Gay Liberation has proved to be the most tenacious offspring of the sixties. The roots of the Milk Club can be found in the commitment to social and personal change made by its founders in that decade. When Chris Perry, the Club's first president (and former member of Bay Area Gay Liberation) joined with Jim Gordan, Hank Wilson and David Goldman in 1976 to found the San

Francisco Gay Democratic Club it was not only to promote gay rights on every political front, but to further a progressive vision of justice for all peoples.

The election of clubmember Harvey Milk to the Board of Supervisors in 1977 was a milestone of gay empowerment. Harvey eloquently brought home the need for it when he said, "...in San Francisco, three days before Gay Pride Day, a person was killed because he was gay. And that night I walked among the sad and frustrated... as they lit candles on Castro Street and stood in silence, reaching out for some symbolic thing that would give them hope.

"Without hope, not only gays, but the blacks, the seniors, the handicapped, the us'es will give up. And if you elect more gay people, that gives a green light to all who feel disenfranchised."

The candles were lit for Harvey within months. The Club was renamed in his honor days later, and organized the memorial marches, his Castro Street Birthday parties, and the annual Harvey Milk Birthday Dinner, inaugurated by Jane Fonda and Tom Hayden in 1980. The White Night riot was one of the few non-club events that followed the assassination.

Political organization was the most lasting legacy of the Club's first years. For the 1980 election, the Club put together the first gay registered mailing list, mailed out 30,000 slate cards, and handed out 15,000 more, boosting Harry Britt and Tim Wolfred to their first city-wide victories.

The Briggs campaign set a pattern of Club leadership in defeating a seemingly endless series of anti-gay propositions. LaRouche. Kopp. Dannemeyer. The name of the



Harvey Milk with George Moscone following Milk's inauguration. (Photo by Rink)

"...we call democracy"

We enjoy a constitution which in which there is no envy of our neighbors' laws...and this constitution, administered for the many not for the few, we call democracy. Our laws give equal justice to every man in his private disputes; merit, not class, determines a man's reputation, nor is any man's way barred by poverty or obscurity, if he has any contribution to make. Freedom is the keynote of our society in public and in private; we are neither resentful nor offensive if a man does what he likes. But private freedom does not lead to public lawlessness.

We use our wealth, we do not boast about it, and poverty itself is no disgrace, only the failure to fight against it. Our ordinary working man is a shrewd judge in public matters; and we are the only people who call the man who stands aloof from politics not just unambitious, but useless.

Perikles of Athens