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## American Veterans for Equal Rights (AVER) Chicago Collection

**Creator:** American Veterans for Equal Rights Chicago  
**Dates:** 1990-2005  
**Quantity:** 0.75 linear feet  
**Acquisition:** Donated by James Darby, February 2006  
**Identification:** PMML Item# 339998, Call# PAPERS 00003, OCLC# 451419723  
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**Language:** English  
**Finding Aid:** Written by Rebecca Redinger, June 2008; Updated by Katie Latham, 2014; Updated by Andrea Martinez, 2018

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### Historical Note

The American Veterans for Equal Rights (AVER), formerly known as the Gay, Lesbian and Bisexual Veterans of America (GLBVA), is a non-profit, chapter-based association of active, reserve and veteran service members whose stated mission is to advance equal rights and equitable treatment for all present and former members of the U.S. Armed Forces. The organization was founded on May 17, 1990 by lesbian activist and former U.S. Army Sgt. Miriam Ben-Shalom, along with the assistance of four gay and one bisexual veteran. The following year, when Ben-Shalom was elected the organization's president, she began traveling the country, creating new chapters and laying the groundwork for a National Constitution and By-laws.

In 1993, GLBVA participated in the largest LGBT (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgendered) demonstration ever held in the United States—the 1993 March on Washington for Lesbian, Gay, and Bi Equal Rights and Liberation. It was there that GLBVA held its first National Convention—an event that was to be held annually. In addition to organizational meetings and the electing of new officers, members of

GLBVA participated in wreath laying ceremonies at Arlington and Congressional Cemeteries, and a White House demonstration in opposition to the Ban against Gay, Lesbian and Bisexual service members openly serving in the military. Thirty people were arrested including three members of GLBVA: Miriam Ben-Shalom, Jim Darby and Don MacIver.

Since 1994, GLBVA has conducted yearly National Convention meetings in various cities across the United States. They have also participated in Joiner Conferences on the Concerts of Veterans and a variety of LGBT veterans events in Washington D.C. In 2001, GLBVA donated \$2,200 to the WWII Memorial in honor veterans, particularly gay veterans, whose service has been overlooked.

At the 2002 National Convention, GLBVA delegates voted to change its name to American Veterans for Equal Rights (AVER), a more suitable acronym. Later that year, AVER was asked to participate in the Library of Congress Veterans History Project—an oral history project set up to record the memories of United States Veterans.

AVER continues to have a strong presence in the LGBT community and actively campaigns to overturn the ban against Gays and Lesbians in the military and “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell” legislation.

## **AVER Chicago**

The Chicago chapter of AVER was founded in June 1992 by James Darby and Bill McGarry. The chapter has become an effective advocate for LGBT veterans in the Chicago area, provided moral, financial, and social support.

AVER Chicago has helped to initiate and plan the City of Chicago’s Annual Salutes to LGBT Veterans, the first of which was held in 2003. Since then, the group has become an important co-sponsor. Every year, members of AVER Chicago march in the city’s Memorial Day Parade as an openly LGBT contingent. They also take part in the Pride Parade, held each summer in Chicago. AVER have been active participants of the parade since 1992, carrying their huge American flag, which has been fondly nicknamed “Gus.”

In 2006 AVER donated copies of its monthly newsletter, *VetPride*, and the national publication, *The Forward Observer* to the Pritzker Military Library, Gerber/Hart Library, and Chicago History Museum to ensure that LGBT veterans will be and remain part of the city’s historical record. In 2007 AVER was inducted into the Chicago Gay and Lesbian Hall of Fame.

## Scope and Content of the Collection

The collection contains newsletters and related documents from the Chicago chapter of the American Veterans for Equal Rights. These publications include *Vet Pride* and *The Forward Observer*. The collection also contains a brief historic overview of the organization, and an accretion folder for recent mailings, etc.

## Arrangement

The collection arrived with a well-ordered arrangement, which the PMML staff have maintained. Folder Two contains the original purple content folders.

The collection is organized in three series:

Series One: Organizational Administration

Series Two: Publications

Series Three: Accretions—Miscellaneous Mailings

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## Related Collections

Robert C. Baldrige Collection

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## Key Subjects

This collection is indexed under the following headings in the Library's online catalog. Researchers interested in materials about related topics, persons, or places should search the catalog using these subject headings.

## Names

Ben-Shalom, Miriam

Darby, James

American Veterans for Equal Rights (AVER)

Gay, Lesbian, and Bisexual Veterans of America (GLBVA)  
*VetPride*  
*The Forward Observer*

## Subjects

Civil-military relations-- United States  
Gay rights-- United States  
Soldiers-- United States-- Conduct of life  
United States-- Armed Forces-- Gays-- Government policy  
United States-- Military policy

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## Container List

Box	Folder	Item ID #	Title	Dates
<b>Series One: Organizational Administration</b>				
1	1		Organizational Highlights Timeline	2005
<b>Series Two: Publications</b>				
1	2		American Veterans for Equal Rights, Chicago - VetPride Issue # 1, June 4, 1992 Issue # 2, June 21, 1992 Issue # 3, July 6, 1992 Issue # 4, August 5, 1992 Issue # 5, Septemeber 1, 1992 Agenda, September 17, 1992 Issue # 6, September 21, 1992 Press Release, October, 1992 Agenda, October 15, 1992	1992

Issue # 7, October 19, 1992

Issue # 8, Novemeber 12, 1992

Issue # 9, December 7, 1992

A Personal Message from the National  
President

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American Veterans for Equal Rights,  
Chicago - VetPride

1993

Issue # 10, January 1, 1993

Issue # 11, January 5, 1993

Issue # 13, January 24, 1993

Issue # 14, January 30, 1993

Issue # 15, February 9, 1993

Issue # 16, February 22, 1993

Issue # 17, March 9, 1993

Issue # 18, March 15, 1993

Issue # 19, March 25, 1993

Issue # 20, March 29, 1993

Issue #21, April 5, 1993

Issue #22, April 12, 1993

Issue # 23, April 18, 1993

Issue # 24, May 3, 1993

Issue # 25, May 10, 1993

Agenda, May 6, 1993

Issue # 26, May 18, 1993

Issue # 27, June 9, 1993

Issue # 28, June 17, 1993

Issue # 29, June 29, 1993

Issue # 30, July 6, 1993  
Issue # 31, July 22, 1993  
Issue # 32, July 27, 1993  
Issue # 33, August 18, 1993  
Issue # 34, September 1993  
Special Flier Edition, September 1993  
Issue # 35, October 1993  
Issue # 36, November 1993  
Issue # 37, December 1993

1      4      American Veterans for Equal Rights, Chicago - VetPride      1994

Volume 2, Number 1  
Volume 2, Number 2  
Volume 2, Number 2A  
Volume 2, Number 3  
Volume 2, Number 4  
Volume 2, Number 5  
Volume 2, Number 6  
Volume 2, Number 7  
Volume 2, Number 8  
Volume 2, Number 9  
Volume 2, Number 10  
Volume 2, Number 11

1      5      American Veterans for Equal Rights, Chicago - VetPride      1995

Volume 3, Number 1  
Volume 3, Number 2

Volume 3, Number 3

Volume 3, Number 4

Volume 3, Number 5

Volume 3, Number 6

Volume 3, Number 7

Volume 3, Number 8

Volume 3, Number 9

Volume 3, Number 10

Volume 3, Number 11

Volume 3, Number 12

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American Veterans for Equal Rights,  
Chicago - VetPride

1996

Volume 4, Number 1

Volume 4, Number 2

Volume 4, Number 3

Volume 4, Number 4

Volume 4, Number 5

Volume 4, Number 6

Volume 4, Number 7

Volume 4, Number 8

NS Volume 1, Number 1

NS Volume 1, Number 2

NS Volume 1, Number 3

NS Volume 1, Number 4

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American Veterans for Equal Rights,  
Chicago - VetPride

1997

NS Volume 1, Number 5

NS Volume 1, Number 6  
NS Volume 1, Number 7  
NS Volume 1, Number 8  
NS Volume 1, Number 9  
NS Volume 1, Number 10  
NS Volume 1, Number 11  
NS Volume 1, Number 12  
NS Volume 2, Number 1  
NS Volume 2, Number 2  
NS Volume 2, Number 3

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American Veterans for Equal Rights,  
Chicago - VetPride

1998

NS Volume 2, Number 4  
NS Volume 2, Number 5  
NS Volume 2, Number 6  
NS Volume 2, Number 7  
NS Volume 2, Number 8  
NS Volume 2, Number 9  
NS Volume 2, Number 10  
NS Volume 2, Number 11  
NS Volume 2, Number 12  
NS Volume 3, Number 1  
NS Volume 3, Number 2  
NS Volume 3, Number 3  
NS Volume 3, Number 4

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American Veterans for Equal Rights,  
Chicago - VetPride

1999



NS Volume 3, Number 5  
NS Volume 3, Number 6  
NS Volume 3, Number 7  
NS Volume 3, Number 8  
NS Volume 3, Number 9  
NS Volume 3, Number 10  
NS Volume 3, Number 11  
NS Volume 3, Number 12  
NS Volume 4, Number 1  
NS Volume 4, Number 2  
NS Volume 4, Number 3  
NS Volume 4, Number 4

<b>1</b>	<b>10</b>	American Veterans for Equal Rights, Chicago - VetPride	Issues #110-121, January-December, 2000
<b>1</b>	<b>11</b>	American Veterans for Equal Rights, Chicago - VetPride	Issues #122-133, January-December, 2001
<b>1</b>	<b>12</b>	American Veterans for Equal Rights, Chicago - VetPride	Issues #134-145, January-December, 2002
<b>1</b>	<b>13</b>	American Veterans for Equal Rights, Chicago - VetPride	Issues #146-157, January-December, 2003
<b>1</b>	<b>14</b>	American Veterans for Equal Rights, Chicago - VetPride	Issues #158-169, January-December, 2004
<b>1</b>	<b>15</b>	American Veterans for Equal Rights, Chicago - VetPride	Issues #170-181, January-December, 2005
<b>1</b>	<b>16</b>	The Forward Observer 1991-1995	

March/April, 1991  
May/June, 1991  
January/February, 1991  
January 1992  
February, 1992  
March/April, 1992  
May/June, 1992  
July/August/September, 1992  
October/November/December, 1992  
April, 1993  
January, 1994  
March, 1994  
June, 1994  
August, 1994  
January, 1995  
Spring, 1995  
Summer, 1995  
Winter, 1995-96  
The Forward Observer 1996-2000  
Summer, 1996  
Winter, 1996-97  
Spring/Summer, 1997  
Spring, 1998  
Summer, 1998  
Autumn, 1998  
Winter, 1998

January, 1999

April, 1999

August, 1999

Autumn, 1999

Spring, 2000

Summer, 2000

Autumn, 2000

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The Forward Observer 2001-2005

Spring, 2001

Summer, 2001

August, 2001

February, 2002

May, 2002

August, 2002

November, 2002

February, 2003

May, 2003

August, 2003

November, 2003

February, 2004

May, 2004

May, 2004, vol.2, issue 1

September, 2004

April, 2005

September, 2005

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VetPride - Aver Newsletter

November, 2007, v.12, no. 1

July, 2006, v.10, no.9

June, 2006, v. 10, no.8

May, 2006, v.10, no.7

April 2006, v. 10, no.6

March 2006, v.10, no.5

February, 2006, v.10, no.4

August, 2005, v.8, no.11

September, 2005, v.8, no.12

**Series Three: Accretions -  
Miscellaneous Mailings**

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Accretions - Miscellaneous Mailings