

## HARRY HAY GOT UNDER MY WINGS A REMEMBRANCE BY JIM JACKSON

It was 1984 and Gay Pride in Boston. I happened to be in New York City the weekend before and gave Harry and John a ride up to Boston. Harry was due to give a talk at the Pride rally in the Commons on the following Saturday. The ride was my best time ever with them. Harry rode in the back seat and John sat up front next to me. Surprisingly for someone known to be very verbal, Harry chatted a bit about the gay pride movement and then nodded off to sleep. He was in his 70's at the time and was tired traveling from California to NY and the talks he gave in the city. John was very talkative and he gave me lots of information on all things Harry, the gay movement and the faeries, as well as himself and their relationship. This was the first time I heard John say his faerie name was N'John because of his attachment to Harry. Also Harry was known as the Duchess. I wish I had recorded it all. At 75 myself I realize how much I've lost to sketchy memory.

Once in Boston I dropped them off where they were staying. The next day I went back to work finishing an exhibition installation project for the Children's Zoo at Franklin Park in Boston. Putting the last touches on a sculpted cement wall of what was to be the prairie dog exhibit I stepped back admiring what I had done and then stepped back and back some more and then fell into the otter pit. I dropped 4 feet onto solid cement. The empty pit could have been mistaken for a dry swimming pool. I managed to drag myself back up out of the pit and went for help because my right arm was in pretty bad shape. I had landed on it and thought it might be broken. I was taken to an emergency room and x-rayed. My wrist was fractured and I had badly bruised my right leg. I limped out with my arm in a sling.

That must have been a Tuesday or Wednesday because I stayed home in bed for two or three days. Having given the ride to Harry and John, I was determined not to miss the Gay Pride March. By Saturday I felt functional enough to give it a try even though my arm was still in a sling. So, my partner Jay and I went off to join the march. The Boston Faerie Circle was all together with Harry and John marching along at the usual parade pace and, as often happens, a gap occurred behind the faeries and the next contingent who were about a block back. About that time my right leg gave out and started giving me real pain. I was forced to slow my pace and trailed the faerie contingent back into the middle of the gap. I found myself limping all alone right in the middle of the no-man's land of Boylston Street. Shortly thereafter Harry happened to turn around, saw me limping and dropped back. He put his 72 year old left hand under my 40 year old right arm and gave me support. It was an emotionally empowering experience. Me using Harry, a living pioneer of the LGBTQ movement, as a crutch in the middle of a Gay Pride March. I had the star of the show all to myself. As we finished the last few blocks, we went into the rally site where I sat down and he delivered his keynote call to action.

Harry Hay was a sweetie.

Note: Harry Hay's speech is reprinted on page 71 on *Great Speeches on Gay Rights*, edited by James Daley titled "Unity and More in '84." Published by Dover Publications, Mineola, New York, copyright 2010. I found it on an internet search as a sample from the book. It is a fascinating document of our history.