Three Questions for Lee Callahan: 'Becoming A Volunteer Was Long at the Top of My List'

Lee Callahan has been a volunteer at The GLBT History Museum for nearly three years. In November 2013, he joined the board of the GLBT Historical Society -- while continuing to lend a hand at the museum. A Bay Area native who works as a freelance translator and editor, Callahan has lived in Alaska, the Netherlands and Japan. He recently took a few minutes to give us an insider's view of the role of volunteers at the Historical Society -- and to talk about the contributions of transgender people to the leadership of the institution.

How did you first get involved with the GLBT Historical Society?

I'd known about the GLBT Historical Society for many years, and becoming a volunteer there was long at the top of my list of things that I wanted do to get more involved with my community. When I moved back to the Bay Area a few years ago, I went to the gallery space, then still located downtown, and was very impressed with an exhibition there about Lou Sullivan, a historian, gay trans man and Historical Society member who died in 1991. So when the society opened The GLBT History Museum in the Castro in 2011, I started volunteering there, at first just working the front desk and helping out at events.

What do you find rewarding about volunteering at the museum?

I really enjoy meeting the people who come to the museum and talking with them about our history! We have visitors from all over the world, and locals often share their knowledge about the Bay Area's "vast queer past." Plus I've been able to
meet people who have played spectacular roles in our history: José Sarria, Phyllis Lyon, Cleve Jones and Susan Stryker, for example. Also, after volunteering for a while, I got trained as a docent, so now I give group tours, too, which is fun. And in the summer of 2012, I helped organize a two-part panel discussion about transgender filmmaking, which went really well.

**How has transgender leadership helped the society fulfill its mission?**

Some of the most active members of the society have been transgender, including organizer and author Lou Sullivan, an early board member; historian and filmmaker Susan Stryker, a former executive director; and longtime trans activist Felicia Elizondo, who curated our current exhibit about transgender performer Vicki Marlane. As someone who identifies as both gay and trans, I'm really proud to be part of this organization. The Historical Society belongs to trans people just as it belongs to all members of the GLBT community and those who support us -- and as my experience shows, it offers all of us an opportunity to play vital roles in preserving, interpreting and sharing our history.

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**Why Meet a Challenge When You Can Beat It?**

**Donors Soar Past $17,000 Fundraising Goal**

Late last year, the City of San Francisco issued a challenge to the GLBT Historical Society in the form of a $17,000 matching grant to support The GLBT History Museum. To qualify, the society was required to raise an equal amount from new donations or increased gifts from past donors. The results are now in -- and they're spectacular.

"Our amazing members and friends didn't just meet the funding challenge from the City -- they beat it," said Paul Boneberg, executive director of the Historical Society. "Nearly 300 people donated more $50,000 to our the year-end campaign - including more than $20,000 from new donors or increased gifts . This is exactly the kind of generous support that makes it possible for the museum and archives to grow and thrive."

Qualifying for the grant was just one step in the Historical Society's 2014 fundraising plan. "With all-new exhibitions and other exciting projects in the works, we'll be counting on the community throughout the year," Boneberg noted. The GLBT Historical Society is a 501(c)3 nonprofit; all donations are tax deductible. To make a contribution, visit the society's [online donation page](#).

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**Historical Society Joins Weekend Expo For San Francisco History Buffs March 1-2**

The GLBT Historical Society will join more than 40 other San Francisco historical, cultural and preservation organizations at the annual San Francisco History Expo, set for Saturday, March 1, 11 a.m. to 5 p.m., and Sunday, March 2, 11 a.m. to 4 p.m., at San Francisco's historic Old Mint building at 5th and Mission.

Sponsored by the San Francisco Museum and Historical Society, the expo is open to the public with a sliding-scale admission of $5.00. Participating organizations will display mini-museums from their diverse collections. In addition, special presentations and films on local history

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**IN THE ARCHIVES**

The GLBT Historical Society is home to one of the world's largest gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender archival collections.

**The Periodicals Collection** includes numerous pre-Stonewall GLBT magazines. *Tangents*, a monthly based in Los Angeles, ran this saucy "I Love You" cover on its February 1967 issue.

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**ON THE WEB**

For in-depth information on the GLBT Historical Society
EXHIBITIONS & PROGRAMS

The GLBT History Museum

Location: 4127 18th St., San Francisco, CA 94114
Phone: 415-621-1107
Website: www.glbthistorymuseum.org

Admission: $5.00 general; $3.00 with California student ID. Free for members. Free to all visitors on the first Wednesday of each month (courtesy of the Bob Ross Foundation).

Hours
Monday & Wednesday - Saturday: 11:00 a.m. - 7:00 p.m.
Sunday: Noon - 5:00 p.m.
Tuesday: Closed

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Museum Program to Feature Best-Selling Memoirist

Author Talk
This Is How You Say Goodbye: A Daughter's Memoir
Thursday, February 13
7:00 - 9:00 p.m.

Journalist and Northern California native Victoria Loustalot will read from and discuss her best-selling memoir, This Is How You Say Goodbye (St. Martin's Press). The book explores her childhood with a charismatic yet troubled father who spent nearly 40 years terrified to be himself and who contracted AIDS in the early 1990s, near the end of the generation of American gay men for whom the illness was a death sentence.

Some 15 years after her father's death, Loustalot traveled to the places they had once planned to visit -- Stockholm, Angkor Wat and Paris. Every year, her understanding of him had continued to evolve, yet she felt trapped beneath the unanswered questions he left behind. This Is How You Say Goodbye tells the moving story of how she made peace with the memory of her father.
Admission: $5.00 (general); $3.00 (California students); free for GLBT Historical Society members.

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On Sunday, March 1, from 3:00 to 4:00 p.m., the Historical Society will present "Lost and Found: Searching for LGBT Historic Sites in San Francisco." Donna Graves, a public historian, and Gerard Koskovich, a curator at The GLBT History Museum, will survey queer historic places that San Francisco has lost and will discuss the ways a new City-funded study cosponsored by the society will help identify the numerous sites of LGBT history that still exist.

For more details, visit the San Francisco History Expo website.

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RESEARCH HOURS

Holiday Schedule: For year-end holiday closures and hours, check the GLBT Historical Society website.

Weekdays: By Appointment & Subject to Availability
Members: Wednesday - Friday: 11:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m.
Nonmembers: Friday: 11:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m.

Saturdays: No Appointment Needed
Open to members and nonmembers 1:00 p.m. - 5:00 p.m. the first and third Saturday of every month; no appointment needed. Hours subject to change; before visiting, check the GLBT Historical Society website.