

Reviews by Amos Lassen

Books, Movies and Judaica and Random Thoughts About Whatever

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“TWO PLAYS: THE SNOW QUEEN, NOVEMBER DOOR” BY DAVID PRATT— TWO PLAYS, TWO ACTORS, ONE FINE PLAYWRIGHT

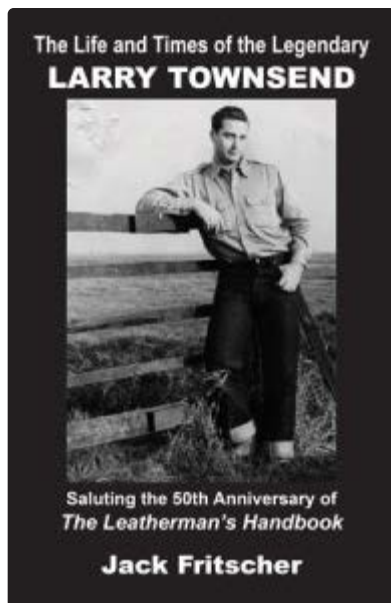
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“The Life and Times of the Legendary Larry Townsend” by Jack Fritscher— Remembering Larry Townsend

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Fritscher, Jack. “The Life and Times of the Legendary Larry Townsend”, Palm Drive Publishing, 2021.

Remembering Larry Townsend

Amos Lassen

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It has been fifty years since Larry Townsend published "The Leatherman's Handbook" that became a text that showed us how to use S&M as empowering therapy against PTSD. Now Jack Fritscher has written a tribute to the man who changed the lives of many. Townsend was an activist who dared to put on paper a lifestyle that was different and in doing so, he also acted against the homophobia of the times. Before Stonewall, Townsend wrote 80 books and helped to bring about gay publishing as he wrote about our culture and politics. He created a persona while living a private life and was able to lead the battle for other writers as he rallied against the censorship that saw consensual sadomasochism as pornography and he took on a way to deal PTSD that homophobia brought about. In his exploration of the gay leather scene from within, he opened the eyes of many. Since I am not a member of the leather or S&M scene, I knew little about it aside of what I have read here I must admit that Townsend's "The Leatherman's Handbook" has a special place in my library as part of our history. Fritscher's book fills in the gaps and illuminates that history.

The importance of Townsend's "Handbook" cannot be overstated. It has influenced and educated gay culture internationally and represents gay diversity. Fritscher shows us just how widespread that influence was while at the same time giving us a look into the man himself. For Townsend to challenge censorship and mainstream life when he did was a major event and he offered ways to challenge homophobia which was raging when the book was published. What many do not realize is that there was a "politically-correct" gay establishment that attempted to dictate behavior and it was necessary to bring the leather aspect into that establishment. This is what Townsend did.

Fritscher is the perfect person to bring Townsend's story to us. Not only were the two men close friends, they both worked to tear down the walls of constraint. I found myself turning pages as quickly as I could and I smiled and wept as I read. We take a trip back in time when gay life was very different than it is today. As we explore the gay S&M leather scene through Fritscher's wonderful prose, we read a candid memoir of lives that are now gone but should never be forgotten.

Through memories, anecdotes, Townsend's own writing and Fritscher's explanations, we see the impact that Townsend had on our world. For those of you who do not know Fritscher, it is time to learn about him.

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[July 2021](#)

[June 2021](#)

[May 2021](#)

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[February 2021](#)

[January 2021](#)

[December 2020](#)

[November 2020](#)

[October 2020](#)

[September 2020](#)

[August 2020](#)

[July 2020](#)

[June 2020](#)

[May 2020](#)

He was the editor of "Drummer magazine" and is the author of twenty books and was a muse to Robert Mapplethorpe. Personally, I rank his importance to our community right up there next to Townsend and the other men who heralded a new age of gay life. Jack Fritscher knew Townsend for many years and we feel his love for the man on every page.

Over the years, Jack Fritscher and I have corresponded about our mutual interest for the late and great Tennessee Williams and I have treasured that. I am so glad that he is the one to bring Townsend back to us in a way that we feel that we have found a friend and a major influencer of how we live.

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- [September 2019](#)
- [August 2019](#)
- [July 2019](#)
- [June 2019](#)
- [May 2019](#)
- [April 2019](#)
- [March 2019](#)
- [February 2019](#)
- [January 2019](#)
- [December 2018](#)
- [November 2018](#)
- [October 2018](#)
- [September 2018](#)
- [August 2018](#)
- [July 2018](#)
- [June 2018](#)
- [May 2018](#)
- [April 2018](#)
- [March 2018](#)
- [February 2018](#)
- [January 2018](#)
- [December 2017](#)
- [November 2017](#)
- [October 2017](#)
- [September 2017](#)
- [August 2017](#)
- [July 2017](#)
- [June 2017](#)
- [May 2017](#)
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- [March 2017](#)
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[September 2016](#)

[August 2016](#)

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[February 2016](#)

[January 2016](#)

[December 2015](#)

[November 2015](#)

[October 2015](#)

[September 2015](#)

[August 2015](#)

[July 2015](#)

[June 2015](#)

[May 2015](#)

[April 2015](#)

[March 2015](#)

[February 2015](#)

[January 2015](#)

[December 2014](#)

[November 2014](#)

[October 2014](#)

[September 2014](#)

[August 2014](#)

[July 2014](#)

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[March 2012](#)

[February 2012](#)

[January 2012](#)

[December 2011](#)

[November 2011](#)

[October 2011](#)

[September 2011](#)

[August 2011](#)

[July 2011](#)

[June 2011](#)

[May 2011](#)

[April 2011](#)

[March 2011](#)

[February 2011](#)

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[erotica](#)

[Film](#)

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[*GLBT Film*](#)

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[*biography*](#)

[*GLBT non-fiction*](#)

[*GLBT poetry*](#)

[*GLBT short stories*](#)

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[*Hurricane Katrina*](#)

[*Israel*](#)

[*Jewish and Gay— Books*](#)

[*Jewish and Gay— Movies*](#)

[*Judaica*](#)

[*LGBT at Sundance 2015*](#)

[*opinion*](#)

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