Hello Larry

May 12, 1995 By Bruce Bibby

The first time I met Larry Kramer he was screaming. I was on one of those preposterously obvious floats in New York City's annual Gay Pride Parade with my lover at the time, Harvey Fierstein. As we passed under Larry's Fifth Avenue balcony, which was teeming with his ebullient pals, the man who cofounded ACT UP became red-faced as he smiled and shouted: "Haaaaarvey, darling! Harvey! Hello, Bruce! Hello, Harvey! Darling!" My lover and I turned to each other and said in unison, "That is a happy man."

But not everyone is happy to encounter Larry Kramer. With his unrelenting outspokenness on AIDS, Kramer has riled and reviled the best of them, from bombastic former New York Citv Mayor Ed Koch to the prissy politicized Cardinal of New York, John J. O'Connor. Here's what more than a dozen famous folk (some celebs wouldn't even call me back) had to say about the daring and diminutive Kramer, who used to be—big surprise—a Hollywood publicist.

What does Larry Kramer mean to you?

Elizabeth Taylor: "In his own way, Larry has shaken people up to AIDS awareness, whether they like it or not. He says it as it is."

Jesse Helms: "I'm not. going to comment on Kramer. Remember he and that ACT UP put a giant condom on my house."

Ed Koch: "I believe Larry Kramer has been a tremendous answer in the fight against AIDS, getting more public officials to open up more AIDS funding. Even his attitudes and attacks on everybody—including me and people he's worked with such as Mathilde Krim—do not diminish his great contribution."

Gloria Steinem: "Who's Larry Kramer?"

Joseph Zwilling, spokesman for John Cardinal O'Connor: "The Cardinal doesn't participate in those types of interviews."

Harvey Fierstein: "The world is a better place that Larry Kramer is here. He's a unique individual, braver than the ten next-best people I know. He's focused, dedicated and totally out of his mind."

Jeff Getty (ACT UP /Golden Gate): "I'm really disappointed in what he's been saying—he's way too negative. I'm fed up with him—PWAs need more hope and positive thinking. Larry Kramer's an old

man who doesn’t know when to shut up.’’

Roseanne: “I don’t know Larry Kramer.”

Liz Smith: “Larry Kramer is definitely the last angry man. He’s righteous. He’s heroic. He’s irritating. He’s a great figure of the 20th century and I love and admire him very much.”

Paul Rudnick (playwright): “l think Lany Kramer’s a genuine hero—he’ s had a real effect on history. He’s an extraordinary man and a genuine artist.”

Martha Stewart: “He spreads the word—I appreciate that.”

Michael Musto (columnist): “Even when I disagree with him, Larry is a galvanic force who demands to be reckoned with. He’s the man who launched contemporary gay activism as we know it; his sheer volume is equaled by his eloquence and insight. And he knows Barbra Streisand personally.”

Barbra Streisand: "Writers speak for themselves in their writing. So we already know that Larry Kramer is a courageous, talented, passionate and perceptive man and a powerful voice. His play, The Normal Heart, is a universal story about everyone’s right to love. I’m proud that he has entrusted it to us to bring to the screen."

Larry Kramer: [Laughs.] “The gulf between what I think of Larry Kramer and what the world thinks of Larry Kramer always amazes me. Did anybody say anything nice about me?”

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