James Hormel, first U.S. ambassador to have come out as gay, dies at 88
SAN FRANCISCO — James Hormel, the first U.S. ambassador to have come out as gay, and a philanthropist who funded organizations to fight AIDS and promote human rights, has died. He was 88.

Hormel died Friday at a San Francisco hospital with his husband, Michael, at his side and while listening to his favorite Beethoven concerto, the San Francisco Chronicle reported.

Sen. Dianne Feinstein (D-Calif.) praised Hormel as a civil rights pioneer who lived “an extraordinary life.”

“I will miss his kind heart and generous spirit. It’s those qualities that made him such an inspirational figure and beloved part of our city,” she said.
Clinton used executive privilege to appoint him during the congressional recess.

“The process was very long and strenuous, arduous, insulting, full of misleading statements, full of lies, full of deceit, full of antagonism,” Hormel said during a West Hollywood bookshop visit in 2012 to promote his memoir, “Fit to Serve.”

He never received confirmation through a Senate floor vote but “ultimately a great deal was achieved,” he told the audience. “Ultimately, regulations were changed in the State Department. Ultimately, other openly gay individuals were appointed without the rancor that went into my case.”

U.S. Secretary of Transportation Pete Buttigieg, who is gay, has said that as a teenager he was inspired by Hormel’s confirmation fight.

“I can remember watching the news,” he said after his nomination by President Biden. “And I learned something about some of the limits that exist in this country when it comes to who is allowed to belong. But just as important, I saw how those limits could be challenged.”

Hormel held the ambassadorship from June 1999 through 2000.

Clinton and his wife, former Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, said they were deeply saddened by Hormel’s death.

“Jim devoted his life to advancing the rights and dignity of all people, and in his trailblazing service in the diplomatic corps, he represented the United States with honor and brought us closer to living out the meaning of a more perfect union,” the Clintons said in a statement.

U.S. House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, who officiated at Hormel’s wedding to his husband, said...
“When the AIDS epidemic descended upon San Francisco, he called on our conscience and rallied the city to help our neighbors suffering from the ferocious disease,” Pelosi said in a statement. “His work served as a model for national policy to defeat HIV/AIDS and improve the lives of all affected.”

Hormel was an heir to the Hormel Foods fortune. Born in Austin, Minn., Hormel married his college sweetheart, Alice McElroy Parker, and had five children before divorcing in 1965. He moved to San Francisco in 1977.

He was a former dean of students at the University of Chicago law school, where he received a degree.

Hormel cofounded the Human Rights Campaign and helped fund many activities geared to arts, education and human rights, including a gay and lesbian center at the San Francisco Public Library; the National AIDS Memorial Grove; the American Foundation for AIDS Research; and the American Conservatory Theater.

In addition to his husband, Hormel is survived by five children, 14 grandchildren and seven great-grandchildren.
OBITUARIES

Ed Asner dies at 91, played gruff but lovable Lou Grant on 'Mary Tyler Moore Show'
Aug. 29, 2021

Jacques Rogge, IOC president for 12 years, dies at 79
Aug. 29, 2021

Dennis Caplinger, Grammy winner who played with Eric Clapton and J.J. Cale, dies
Aug. 26, 2021

Hissene Habre, onetime brutal ruler of Chad, dies of COVID-19
Aug. 25, 2021

James Hormel dies: Gay U.S. ambassador remembered as... https://www.latimes.com/obituaries/story/2021-08-14/jam...
James Hormel dies: Gay U.S. ambassador remembered as... https://www.latimes.com/obituaries/story/2021-08-14/jam...
Honor a loved one, place an obituary notice

MORE OBITUARIES

MUSIC
Rolling Stones drummer Charlie Watts, the band's 'secret essence,' dies at 80
Aug. 24, 2021

CALIFORNIA
James Flanigan, longtime Times business columnist, dies at 85
Aug. 22, 2021

WORLD & NATION
Nashville radio host who regretted vaccine skepticism dies of COVID-19
Aug. 22, 2021

James Hormel dies: Gay U.S. ambassador remembered as... https://www.latimes.com/obituaries/story/2021-08-14/jam...
MUSIC
Don Everly, of harmonizing rock ‘n’ roll pioneers the Everly Brothers, dies at 84
Aug. 22, 2021

MUSIC
Country singer-songwriter Tom T. Hall dies at 85; wrote ‘Harper Valley P.T.A.’
Aug. 20, 2021

OBITUARIES
James W. Loewen, who challenged history lessons with ‘Lies My Teacher Told Me,’ dies
Aug. 20, 2021

James Hormel dies: Gay U.S. ambassador remembered as... https://www.latimes.com/obituaries/story/2021-08-14/jam...