GEORGE BAKAN
A giant who used the SGN to make Queer history

by Renee Raketti
SGN Contributing Writer

Recently, I had the unenviable task of describing George Bakan, the former publisher of the SGN, to a group of diverse and talented writers here at the newspaper. Despite having a year to consolidate him into a single sound bite, I failed miserably. How do you describe someone who was a force of nature?

see GEORGE BAKAN page 10
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Dear readers,

We don’t celebrate Pride because soulless corporations slap a rainbow on their logo and say it’s that time of year again.

We celebrate because in Greenwich village in 1969, a group of LGBTQ+ activists and allies led by Trans women of color decided enough was enough. The message from the Stonewall Riots was clear. In the face of adversity, together we rise.

We should be proud of who we are and how far we’ve come.

Seattle is a diverse, everchanging city. Our community here is just as nebulous. It’s no secret that things have been tense lately. To call for unity, understanding, and a safe space for education is often the response from privileged white folks like me during times of unrest and disagreement. That’s not what I’m here to do.

People can take the time to educate themselves. The resources are out there. It takes little effort to google any fact or book you need.

The SGN staff and I intend to lead by example. Words have power. I wouldn’t be in this profession if I thought otherwise. But empty platitudes don’t accomplish anything. If you want something done, you do it.

The SGN will continue to be a newspaper for everyone. We are here for you, Seattle’s LGBTQ+ citizens, to bring you the news that matters to all of us.

This Pride, take a moment to reflect on the history that we celebrate. It’s only through understanding the past that we can work toward a better future.

Also, get absolutely blasted if that’s your thing. It’s a party, after all.

Yours amidst the chaos,
A.V. Eichenbaum
SGN Associate Editor
HAPPY PRIDE, SEATTLE! This month we honor the political struggle for ongoing visibility, protection, and celebration of our LGBTQ+ friends, family, neighbors, and community members.

As a progressive labor democrat, organizing has been a throughline in my career. For almost a decade, at the Washington State Labor Council, I fought for political inclusion and leadership of LGBTQ individuals. On Seattle City Council, I continue to stand in solidarity with LGBTQ community members and workers in the fight for housing, dignified workplaces, economic stability, and culturally competent health care for all. Then I ran for Seattle City Council to bring these values to legislation in Seattle’s City Hall.

Together, on the City Council, we’ve built diverse coalitions to pass progressive and impactful policy change. This is what creates healthy, thriving communities—and it is what drives me to run again. With your support, we can bring these policies to City Hall once again to build a stronger, more inclusive Seattle.

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Note from the Editor:
Last week, we printed a collection of images and bios introducing our staff to you, our readership, in a segment called “We Are SGN.” In all the chaos of the last few weeks, we made a mistake. We forgot someone.
Worse, we forgot someone who never misses a deadline.
To correct this unthinkable oversight, we’re shining the spotlight on her now.
-A.V. Fachenhaim, SGN Associate Editor

Kylin Brown
Contributing Writer

Kylin Brown grew up composing whimsical short stories based on real-life wonder, influenced by her boundless imagination and love for PC games. She made her debut as a journalist at the SGN just last fall after a stint writing for her college newspaper, the Whitman Wire.

She was a first-generation college graduate during the early pandemic, earning a BA in sociology and environmental studies from Whitman College. Shortly thereafter, she relocated to the Pike-Pine neighborhood on Capitol Hill and embarked in a year of AmeriCorps service with the educational nonprofit College Success Foundation. More recently she also joined the University of Washington as a paraprofessional during the 2020-21 school year.

Brown hails from a small town northeast of Spokane, named Newport. She also attended Garfield High School, in Seattle’s Central District. She credits her writing abilities to this period of time in the city, where she was first able to pursue AP courses.

Observing rural-urban divides in educational opportunities such as this fueled her desire to pursue work in education equity, while contemporary politics and her rural background inspired her to become a contributing writer at the SGN. As the school year comes to a close, she hopes to commit more time to the craft.

She has dreams of writing a family memoir in coming years, and currently enjoys engaging with the greater Seattle community through journalism.
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HIV alone didn’t cause the clogged artery in my neck. Smoking with HIV did.

Brian, age 45, California
GEORGE BAKAN
continued from cover

George could literally change the climate of a room with his mere presence and move, figuratively speaking, mountains with a single word. The remarkable thing is that he could achieve all this through his sheer force of will and an enduring wit and warmth.

It’s hard to believe that it’s been a year since George’s passing on June 7, 2020. He had left his desk — doing what he does best. He had been making calls to rally support for an LGBTQ+ statement condemning police brutality in the wake of the death of George Floyd, a 46-year-old African American man who was murdered at the hands of former Minneapolis police officer Derek Chauvin.

I came back to the SGN a day later to help his paper in the only way I knew how: by reporting the news. I waited more than a week before sitting at his desk, but it was the only work space available in the cluttered SGN newsroom.

I thought back to all the times George would end our conversations with the same question: “When are you coming back to write for us?” I had left journalism to return to social service because I thought that was my true calling. However, George knew better, and he finally got his wish.

A year later, I am a contributing writer and photographer to five news outlets, including the Capitol Hill Seattle Blog, Unite Seattle magazine, and the Tacoma Weekly.

He “changed my path forever”

George cared deeply for his staff, although a paycheck wasn’t always guaranteed to be on time or in full. The newspaper business is a tricky beast, and he was at the whim of its advertisers and their account receivables department. George was also an avid antique collector and thrift store hunter, which was a major outlet for his personal spending.

“George gave me my first job as a paid writer and, although the pay was minimal, the opportunity it provided was immense,” said Albert Rodriguez via Facebook. “That job opened so many doors for me, and I’m forever grateful.”

Beau Burriola, a former SGN columnist, added that “George was a nurturer in the quality I didn’t know I had” and “helped me find my voice.”

“He wasn’t just an editor, an activist, or a newsman. He was a visionary, a leader, and one of those rare people in my life who changed my path forever.”

This week I spoke with his daughter, Angela Cragin, who inherited her father’s legacy. I can remember the look of wonder on her face as she first surveyed the office. The gravity of all that was overwhelming for her to see, to learn from her father and to hold the fortunes of its staff in her hands. The COVID-19 pandemic and the economic hardship facing all publications at the time must have made the idea of saving the nation’s third oldest LGBTQ+ newspaper an innumerable task.

“It was utterly terrifying,” recalled Cragin. “When I talk to my friends about the last two years, I think I’ve never drank so much, cried so much, or cried so much!” Picture yourself being plucked from your life and dropped off into unknown surroundings, where nobody knows you or do you have knowledge of anything, but are expected to step up to a massive undertaking. It was daunting, to say the least.

“I did not feel like the right person for the job, whatsoever. And, honestly, this thought still looms at times. Nevertheless, once I decided to give it a try, I have literally poured myself into it... although nobody can ever truly fill all those shoes.”

“The smartest person in the room”

George knew who controlled the levers of power and he wasn’t afraid to challenge them to advance issues of importance to him, to his staff, and to his community. A former managing editor, I could remember having to smooth things over from time to time with local community organizations and leaders after George had called to offer a piece of his mind. However, most of them knew that a call with George was part of the job and they were happy to do it.

“George was always the smartest person in the room... even when that room was filled with seances and governors and chiefs of police,” said Mike McNamara, a former SGN staff writer and George’s longtime life partner.

“In 2005, George took me to the inauguration of Gov. Christine Gregoire... Every time I saw everyone, someone would see George and start gushing, ‘Hey, George! They would come over for big hugs, like they were old friends. Those are people like Christine Gregory, Gary Locke, and Laurie Jinkins. It was a showing of the love and respect George had cultivated with the powerful of Washington state.”

After his death, many of these politicians posted memorials to George. Former Seattle Mayor Charles Royer said, “George was very kind and helpful to a brand-new mayor of Seattle.” Likewise, former Mayor Greg Nickels stated he was “an important voice in a time of profound change in how the civil rights of the LGBT community were defined and respected in Seattle and beyond.” Even former Mayor Ed Murray acknowledged that he was not only “a friend of over 30 years” but “generous with his time and advice.” Seattle Mayor Jenny Durkan, a longtime friend, wrote in a statement that he “literally wrote our history in Seattle at the same time he was living it.”

“He was an advocate in the truest sense, and was never afraid to give you his honest opinion — whether you asked for it or not. He could be brash, but you never doubted that underneath it all was an enormous heart filled with relentless compassion for Seattle and the LGBTQ community,” said Durkan. “I am so grateful to George for everything he did throughout his life to pass on this history to the younger generation. He built community, and he worked tirelessly to make our entire city more just, fair, and equitable.”

Cragin, who lives in the Tri-Cities, had not been prepared to receive such an overwhelming number of condolences from so many notable Washingtonians. “When he would boast about knowing the mayor or the SPD police chief, I took it with a grain of salt.” she said. “The joke was on me, because he actually really did know these people. We even received a letter of condolence from [Sen. Maria] Cantwell. His contributions and accomplishments truly were impactful and I was so illuminated through his death.”

As his daughter soon discovered, George was always active and engaged in a wide variety of issues that he believed in. King County Councilmember Jeanne Kohl-Welles said she had talked to him “shortly before COVID struck” and that he wanted to talk about homelessness in the LGBTQ community.

“It felt surprising, yet satisfying, to hear about all of George’s accomplishments and contributions,” said Cragin. “There is a piece of me that has always worried about my father: his health, his well-being, his financial security, and his place in the Seattle community. After he passed, the ocean of commentaries, calls, and news stories ambushed me. I always knew he was important, which is not what I was afraid to share with anyone.”

A community builder:

“He said ‘yes. Every time.”

George seemed to have his fingers in every LGBTQ+ project, initiative, and organization. That included everything happening in his beloved Capitol Hill neighborhoo.

“Every time I asked George for help with a Gay City event, he said ‘yes. Every time,” said Bruce Mueter, a former program manager at Gay City.

Before the EQUALUX -- Taste of GRSA event, George called the mayor’s office and asked that the day he be declared “EQUALUX Day in Seattle.” He was successful.

George also gave away many ads to local nonprofits and was a frequent guest at their events. “Because of his coverage over the years of the Superior Court of Seattle and other nonprofits and their purposes,” said Gaysha Starr, a contributing writer for the SGN, celebrity drag queen, and former Empress of Seattle. “I am in debt to him and the SGN, as they were my media sponsor for my campaign for Empress of Seattle in 1999, running my ads and content during the campaign for four weeks and through my reign. ‘We would randomly chat, and he would say, ‘You know, Gaysha, this organization could use your help.’ He was the one who directed me toward working with GLSEN and PFLAG.”

PFLAG (Parents and Friends of Lesbians and Gays) parent Jeanne Hill said George would publish “many of the stories I told about an encounter with PPLAG” and SouthSence, such as when she would get arrested at church conferences across the United States. “I held the paper with the title facing outward as I walked, and I will continue to work to preserve and expand Gay rights,” she said.

George was honored in 2013 with a night at Neighbours, which was held in his honor for his lifetime and continued achievements of leadership and community service.

An activist in the truest sense:

Local journalist Greg Parshall wrote that George “deserves to be considered in the pantheon of great local civil rights leaders like Rob Santos and Roberto Maestas...” Starr agreed, stating that he “gave the pages of his paper to help fight causes, such as HIV/AIDS awareness, equal rights for our community, marriage equality, helping elect out members of our community into office, championing small businesses on Capitol Hill, and condemning police brutality.”

As the confidant of Eastern Washington, George had an impact. Jeffrey Aaron Robinson said George’s passing was “devastating on a personal level,” especially because of his “unique role in helping to start the Tri-Cities LGBTQ+ movement in the mid-1970s through an activist group he founded, named Oasis.”

“Met George in 1981. He was one of the pillars of the LGBTQ+ community in the Tri-Cities,” said Darie Flatten. “I had the pleasure of working with him until he moved to Seattle. He has been one of the great hearts in our community.”
George could literally change the climate of a room with his mere presence and move, figuratively speaking, mountains with a single phone call. The remarkable thing is that he could achieve all this through his sheer force of will and an endearing wit and warmth.

He also devoted his paper and its staff to reporting on the new threat human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) and acquired immune deficiency syndrome (AIDS). In an age before the internet, the SGN was the only source for accurate and culturally relevant information for Seattle’s LGBTQ+ community.

As hundreds began to die from complications related to AIDS, George used the paper to fight the stigma of a positive diagnosis and to publish the names of those who had been lost. The paper had been the first to publish the story of an individual who had been diagnosed with the virus while the Reagan administration and much of society remained silent on the growing epidemic.

The SGN, he said, was a “force locally in getting services and help for the young men stricken with AIDS.”

Julie Shaffer, a former contributing writer at the SGN, said that he “wanted me to call him after the stay-at-home-to-discuss... and [he] involved in his newest idea of an AIDS memorial wall.”

“I would interview individuals about their experiences during the AIDS epidemic, she said. “He also wanted me to speak at the ceremony.”

Grace Kim wrote about a similar experience. “George was active in the Gay/Queer community till the end,” she said. “He attended community meetings for the Capitol Hill transit-oriented development and AIDS Memorial Pathway.”

The AIDS Memorial Pathway that George championed will be dedicated during a ceremony at the Capitol Hill Light Rail Station at noon this Saturday, June 26. George’s name will appear on a plaque recognizing the individuals and organizations that brought the pathway to completion.

March on Washington co-chair

George was the regional co-chair for the 1987 and 1993 National Marches on Washington, D.C. He fought for inclusion of the Bisexual and Transgender communities.
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Funk-hop with an inspiring message of dialogue, inclusivity, and unity

by Carter Hemion
SGN Contributing Writer

Seattle's own funk-hop band has made a name for themselves in the community by promoting inclusivity and love. They use their music to facilitate dialogue, having performed at various Seattle-area venues, outdoor concerts, and last summer's protests in the area. A singer and songwriter, Marshall Hugh and freestyle rapper I Am ChAml discussed the Marshall Law Band, what they stand for, and the music they create together.

Band beginnings

Hugh started making music at Carnegie Mellon University, where he was initially an animal studying history and public policy. While there, he started rapping at college parties, and then made the commitment to pursue it. When he left school to be a rapper, his parents told him he had to move out, which Hugh says "was a rude awakening, but one that I was so rooted in that I made the decision to move out with my best friend." He started working as a soccer coach, and met a lot of new people, including Marly Thordso, now the band's saxophonist. About a year after meeting, Thordso texted Hugh an invite to jam with his band. The Marshall Law Band began with Hugh, Thordso, Evan Robertson, Josh Richlin, Zack Olson, and their first drummer (later replaced with current drummer Matt). After about four months, they began playing Mo' Jam Mondays in Fremont, where Hugh met I Am ChAml for the first time.

"I heard somebody rapping on the microphone for the first time and I said, 'Whoa, that person might be better than me!'" said Hugh. "And I looked over... and I saw [her]. She's been showing up at any Marshall Law Band gig she can, including...

out our DooMan Room with us.

The band works with other vocalists too, including Nobi and Dan Gregory.

"If you're in MC, if you're a person, especially a person of color or person in a marginalized community, you have space on this stage with the Marshall Law Band to say whatever message you got.

Activism and mission

The Marshall Law Band has played at protests, including at what would then develop into CHOP, where they wanted to share a "message of love, unity, and overcoming the chains we have been shackled with over generations and generations... which brought the healing and the reconnection out to pre-CHOP. For that art boom to occur and that love to be in that space.

I Am ChAml committed to joining the Marshall Law Band there. She says people "could find peace and solace in the music," because it was a different form of leadership and a break from some stress. I Am ChAml adds that together they could "bring people together through music and send messages of love and positivity and equality and... we can use words to heal, to unite to express, to change. I don't know how much more peaceful you can get. I don't know how much more of an impact can be made, because music is everywhere.

"The whole mission has been unity and bringing community together," Hugh said.

Hugh hopes that the Marshall Law Band's music inspires listeners to be their best selves, allowing "your soul to heal and your well to fill in hopes that will spill out into your own community.

I Am ChAml says that she uses her platform and lived experiences to inspire people. She uses her voice to remind people that life will get better and bring light to experiences with oppression. Music is her way of connecting with others, and she works to ensure that listeners remember that they are not alone by sharing songs that resonate with them.

As a whole, Hugh's goal is "breaking the Pacific Northwest pod," and he is proud to be a part of Seattle's music and activism scene.

Recent projects

Earlier this year, the Marshall Law Band released 12th & Pine, an album, documentary, and graphic novel. The album came out of the band's heavy emotions following the protests at CHOP. Hugh said, "Protest music has been a part of our spirit.

More recently, the band has been working hard on their newest album, It's Gonna Get Better, on which they collaborated with other artists. It is scheduled for release in the fall. Their new music, including the song Get Better, focuses on finding common ground and facilitating spaces for dialogue.

The band worked on the songs on a suburban to Hawaii, where they experienced more positive energy. The album, said Hugh, will "incorporate the spirit of what we're going through but also have that Hawaiian sun and feel to it."

The band recently took part in a concert on a float on the streets of Tukwila, where they interacted with people who had Confederate flags and unity toward the Black Lives Matter movement. Hugh said to them, "People of all different colors, sexual orientations, and beliefs are here to let you know that we love you, and you're going to unite, and it's going to get better.

He said that he is proud to bring music about love and unity, and to say Black lives do matter, even in uncomfortable places.

I Am ChAml added that "sometimes we do ourselves a disservice by not being open to that dialogue and not coming together to even speak up for what we feel and how we feel." She added that receptiveness to having dialogue is important, so that everyone can learn from each other's experiences.

Upcoming performances

On June 20 at 8 p.m., the Marshall Law Band will play at Capitol Hill Pride with I Am ChAml and other featured musicians. Hugh hopes that "anytime we're in those spaces, that anyone who looks like us, who may identify like us, or who doesn't and feels like they don't have a group or a safe group of their own will come to the front of the stage, especially if you're a performer. Come grab the mic, come ask for a chance to speak, come do something that can allow other Black and Brown people to feel loved and appreciated in that space, and let's change what Pride means from this Pride forward, and let's find some commonalities.

"This is going to be a defining moment in Seattle history, and let's make sure that however it shakes out, there's growth and there's unity and there's healing on the other end, because that's our intention and that will always be our intention."

Hugh is also "really, really excited" to announce a headline Neuromn performance on July 17. After that, the Marshall Law Band will play at the Neptune Theatre on July 24 with Kassa Overall and Breaks and Swoons. Then, on July 25, the band will appear at Woodland Park Zoo's Zoo Tunes with the Delvon Lamarr Organ Trio.

More regularly, the band plays at every week at Pecos Fridays behind the LTD Bar and Grill.

The Marshall Law Band's music can be found on any major streaming service, as well as www.marshalllawband.info, www.youtube.com/music/marshalllawband, and marshalllawbandcamp.com. Follow the band on Facebook, Instagram, or Twitter @marshalllawband.

Photos courtesy of the artists

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June 25, 2021
Father Rich’s Thoughts on the Vatican Statement on Same-Sex Couples

On certain days, following certain statements from the Vatican, I have wondered if there is a secret, hidden office in the basement of St. Peter’s where a group of bishops meets on a regular basis and comes up with outrageous statements just to see how many people will get “vaticunitis” over certain bad human issues. Monday, March 19th, was just such a day.

At precisely the same time when somebulletin bishops and bishops’ conferences were discussing how the Catholic Church could extend an invitation to same-sex relationships in some-sex relationships, the official statement in charge of “protecting” the faith issued a certain ban on same-sex relationships that would never now or ever be possible.

To be sure, the Catholic Church has an extraordinary history of moral teaching, and part of what is most extraordinary about it has been its ability to continue evolving as new situations have arisen. But, quite frankly, it has also had such an overwhelming record of failure in sexuality that its advice is best ignored. Nothing in all of the created order was ever meant to be so close to the good and bad that the most fundamental of our sexual matters is vague (I’m not making this up). The world of the Church’s teaching on sexual morality is, and is still based by a majority of our church leaders today.

I don’t know who first called the heresy statement, “Love is love,” but it seems to have spread like wildfire across the world.

Perhaps this latest statement from the Vatican is the worst of all. It is the most extreme and the most damaging to the Church. The Vatican now states that the Church should not only be silent about same-sex relationships, but it should actively work to prevent them. This is a direct contradiction to the Church’s own teachings on love and compassion. It is a clear violation of the Church’s own principles on justice and equality.

The bottom line is that the Church should be working to create a more inclusive and welcoming environment for all people, regardless of their sexual orientation. This means respecting and valuing everyone, regardless of their gender identity or sexual expression.

We must stand with our LGBTQ+ sisters and brothers and work to create a world where everyone is treated with dignity and respect. This is not only the right thing to do, but it is also in the best interests of the Church. As Pope Francis has said, “We are all children of God and we are all called to love one another.”

For more information about St. Patrick’s LGBTQ+ Circle of parishioners contact John Dunn – dunn570@aol.com
All are welcome at St. Patrick Church

by Jan Thomas
St. Patrick Catholic Church
LGBTQ Accompaniment Circle

I am a straight woman. Having grown up in a Catholic environment in the '50s and '60s, all relationships and all marriages I knew about were straight. I never knew there was any other kind.

It was only in adulthood that I came across anti-homosexual literature from Catholic and other Christian sources. This literature expressed that men and women were made by God to be attracted to the opposite sex, and not to the same sex. So, it must be sinful for a person to choose a relationship like that.

My change of heart occurred one day in the mid-'80s. I was waiting alone in a building near the Catholic cathedral in Spokane. But someone I suspected came in. He was the director of youth ministries for the Spokane archdiocese — at least, he had been. He had recently resigned, because he had come out as Gay.

And he talked to me. Simply and kindly, he told me that he did not choose to be Gay, that he had been Gay from birth. I believed him. From that point on I understood that same-sex attraction was inherent and natural. Since then, forming friendships with many Gay people has cemented my acceptance and support for them.

At St. Patrick Church, we openly welcome Gay and Trans people. Many of us witnessed the wedding of two female parishioners. Not long ago we also took part in learning sessions based on Fr. James Martin’s book, Building a Bridge. Gay people shared their testimonies, and straight people shared their own experiences.

It is important for me to worship where all are accepted. I am grateful to the people of St. Pat’s, both straight and Gay, for building a community where all are free to be who God created them to be.

St. Patrick Catholic Church is at 2702 Broadway Ave. E. in Seattle, at E. Edger, in Eastlake. All are welcome on Sundays at 10:30 in person for Mass. More information at www.sipatrickseattle.org.
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Valley has been recognized as a Leader in Healthcare Equality by the Human Rights Campaign Foundation year after year since 2011. As a community-based hospital with over 50 primary, urgent and specialty care clinics across South King County, Valley is committed to empowering gender and sexual minorities, including individuals identifying as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer/questioning (LGBTQ+) to live the healthiest lives possible. Our caregiver teams provide responsive, compassionate care in a welcoming environment that respects the visitation and healthcare decision-making rights of LGBTQ+ patients and their partners, children and others they define as family.

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LEADER LGBTQ HEALTHCARE EQUALITY
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SWEDISH PROUDLY SUPPORTS THE LGBTQIA+ COMMUNITY.

Swedish invites the LGBTQIA+ community to share with us your experiences to help us learn by completing our 2021 Community Health Needs Assessment Survey. You can scan the QR code to the right with your phone. The first 50 participants will receive a $20 Amazon gift card as a thank-you for their time and participation. The survey will be open until July 31st.

LOOKING FOR ANOTHER CHANCE TO BE INVOLVED?

Swedish is currently seeking current and former patients interested in joining the LGBTQIA+ patient advisory/listening sessions. For more information and to sign up, please contact Peter.Mann-king@swedish.org.
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