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DineTogether program brings needed connection to local LGBTQ+ seniors

BY EVE KUCHARSKI
SGN CONTRIBUTING WRITER

Around the world, COVID-19 has contributed to a measurable rise in loneliness. That makes sense, considering that social distancing has been the norm over the past two years. But long before the majority of the population began to grapple with quarantine’s effects, loneliness was a way of life for about one-third of Americans. The most at-risk group for developing loneliness is adults 65 and older, LGBTQ+ elders, who are twice as likely to live alone than their heterosexual counterparts, are especially vulnerable to social isolation.

That’s why the DineTogether program with AgePride was created. It has been connecting LGBTQ+ seniors for free monthly lunch meetups at the Tin Table restaurant and bar since late summer of last year. AgePride, an arm of the Golden Institute at the University of Washington School of Social Work, developed to improve the lives and well-being of older LGBTQ+ adults. Program Manager Laura Culberg said she got the idea for DineTogether’s format because she felt it was important for seniors to have “regularity” in their lives and a consistent social outlet.

“I thought, ‘Wouldn’t it be great to partner with a restaurant?’” Culberg said. “I contacted the [owner of the Tin Table] Halic Kuperman, who is a friend of mine, and said, ‘Would you consider partnering with me to try this out?’ This is a pilot.”

Kuperman came on board, and it wasn’t long before LGBTQ+ seniors had an established monthly space to grab a free lunch and connect face-to-face. And while the invitation prioritizes LGBTQ+ attendees, so long as participants are at least 55 years old and a resident of King County, allies are welcome.

“Socializing is a lot harder as a single person,” Culberg said. “I think it’s harder at any age, but especially when you’re older... it’s super challenging and vulnerable to make plans.”

Health benefits

Culberg emphasized that despite DineTogether’s origins in curbing social isolation, the intent of the monthly luncheons is never to “pathologize anyone.”

“We invited participants to join us, and we’ve explicitly wanted to be just about engagement and not about treatment,” Culberg said. “There’s something wrong with you; you’re sad and lonely; you’re having trouble with your memory and your health,” Culberg said. “It was just about getting out and being engaged.”

While something as small as taking time for a meal with peers might seem inconsequential, there is evidence to show that the health benefits of consistently socializing can be significant. The Golden Institute’s founder and director, Dr. Karen Fredriksson-Golden, said that “about two-thirds of LGBTQ+ adults are pretty severely socially isolated,” and the related health effects can be dire.

“We know that social isolation can lead to very significant health disparities and that people who are isolated are at risk of premature mortality, premature cognitive decline, and many adverse health conditions,” said Fredriksson-Golden. “This idea was to find ways to create connections and engage LGBTQ+ seniors in an opportunity to meet with others and build community. That is why we started the DineTogether program.”
Community input

She added that DineTogether wasn’t created in a vacuum without community input either. Rather, it’s the result of observations from a community-driven study. In addition to being an expert in well-being and longevity in underserved populations, Fredriksen-Goldsen is the principal investigator of the National Health, Aging, and Sexuality/Gender Study, funded through the National Institutes of Health and the National Institute on Aging. It is the first-ever longitudinal study of LGBT+ older adults — meaning that researchers consistently examine the same individuals to detect any changes that might occur over a period of time. Notably, the 11-year effort just gained an extension to 15 years.

“What we noticed is that a lot of LGBT+ caregivers, or older adults, were isolated, and while they may have been well connected in earlier parts of their lives, as their peers also became older or maybe developed their own health conditions or became more limited in their mobility, many of them ended up socially isolated,” Fredriksen-Goldsen said.

“And then with COVID, that situation was exacerbated, because so many couldn’t connect, and people are still fearful to come out and connect.”

Connecting comfortably

That fear of connection may be the reason behind some of the low attendance rates at DineTogether. However, in the case of Thomas Merritt, a regular at the program, whose need for greater social engagement came after his husband died, he makes sure to attend whenever he can.

“It’s a reason to get out, a reason to connect with people. There’s not many people at the luncheon to connect with, but I’m going to keep going and hope that it gets bigger and bigger,” Merritt said. “I like having an excuse to get up and go out, and that gives me a good one. And it’s also geared for my age group.”

When asked if he attends other events marketed to LGBT+ people, Merritt said that he doesn’t feel as comfortable as he used to.

“A friend of mine and I, not too long ago, went over to The Caff. What I realized is that I’m a 70-year-old in a 35-year-old world, and most of us that are in my age group, there’s not much out there for us for socializing and getting together,” Merritt said. “I felt very uncomfortable, among all these 35-year-olds, and I imagine they prefer to have an age group of their own.”

Frank Wielgoszek, the chef at the Tin Table, who serves these monthly luncheons, is also a part of the community. At 64 years old, he said that his experience has been similar to Merritt’s.

“Being a little bit older, I still enjoy being around people,” Wielgoszek said. “Going to bars is not really a part of my life right now, and I don’t feel quite as comfortable going to the Gay bars, because I feel self-conscious a little bit, being an older person, unless I’m hanging out with other people in my age bracket.”

For that reason, Wielgoszek provides just “a little bit more care and love” when preparing the food for this event.

“I’m very protective of my food that I’m giving out, and I give them more than what the group has paid for,” he said. “It’s a pleasure to do that for them.”

Fredriksen-Goldsen added that she too is eager for more people to join the DineTogether program, but said that starting small has been intentional, too, in order to get more feedback about improving the event.

“That’s the process we’re in now: growing the program,” she said. “And that way, the people that participate can help shape it. And people have shared a lot of excitement and have helped more people know about it.”

DineTogether events are held every first Friday of the month from noon to 1 p.m., RSVP at AgePrideCenter@uw.edu. This event is currently in its second session, and plans are being made to partner with other restaurants in other neighborhoods to increase accessibility.
Your story is my story.

A look at Seattle’s yesteryear Gay activism

By Martin Lee

When I told Gay activist Tim Mayhew that I someday wanted to write about the part we had in those early days of the movement, especially him, he told me, “Your story is my story.”

These are some of his accomplishments working for the cause. But the first few pages are about my coming out, and how it led to meeting Tim, one of the two loves of my life. I long for him to still be around.

Coming out

One day near the beginning of fall 1971, I moved to Seattle from Yakima. I left the city in which I had been excommunicated from the Mormon Church, at my instigation and insistence, to be free to be Gay. I had gone to my bishop in the fall of 1969, when I was 16, to tell him that I was Gay and therefore I should be cut off from the church, so he could inform the Stake President as well. I demanded that my free agency, as they called it, no longer be a member be respected.

Somewhat, in spite of their fiery denunciations of homosexuality, which to them was second only to murder in its seriousness, I felt deep down that I wasn’t had for having those feelings. Nor did I deserve to be cast into hell. And I had faith that somehow it would all work out for the best some day. But I had to take that step of liberation first.

I always thought that if you are a member of something, you either obey the rules or you get out. To remain in an organization that castigated your very existence, and doomed you to an eternal abyss after you died, was hypocritical, wishy-washy fence-sitting, and didn’t face the fundamental truth even if they’re wrong, it’s still their rules. To keep being a member — going on a mission, marrying and having children, enjoying the benefits of praise and acceptance for doing what they saw as the only right way — while in the closet, while posting as someone you’re not, was morally wrong.

They didn’t want to excommunicate me, and I went through a long process of trying to persuade them, resulting in a delay between my request and when it was finally granted, on May 18, 1971, not long before I graduated high school. They had tried to get me to change my mind, saying they would find a girl for me. They sent a psychologist who was in the church over from Wenatchee one time to talk to me, and they asked me to reconsider in light of what they called the glorious promises given to me in my patriarchal blessing — contingent of course, on my faith and obedience.

How could I turn my back on those? Why, as various members had said, my name would be in lights some day. I’d rise to become one of the Twelve Apostles! And my bishop said I’d probably run the whole thing some day. A Stake president said that my blessing was a piece of dynamite.

Patriarchal blessing

There’s a certain number of boilerplate statements that everyone gets in their patriarchal blessing, such as that they see from the tribe of Ephraim (unless they are black, or brown-skinned), general encouraging to follow the path of righteousness in order to have the approval of God, and an assurance that you will come forth in the first resurrection. But several people who read mine, as well as some church leaders, said that mine was different. Although I don’t have proof of what was said, since I shredded that paper long ago, among those things said, were the following:

It gives me great joy to lay my hands on your head and give you this blessing. Now know ye this, dear brother, that it was through your faithfulness in the spirit world that entitled you to the favorable conditions you now enjoy. You have been born with a strong, healthy, white, and delightful body, for which you should be very grateful. And inasmuch as you keep it clean and free and wholesome from the sins and vices of this world, with it you will be able to work out your salvation and exaltation in the Kingdom of God.

You will be blessed with the good things of the earth, to sustain you in all your doings in righteousness, and have all that is necessary to have a rich and rewarding life, and the blessings of the Lord will follow you throughout your life and throughout the endless ages of eternity.

The Lord loves you, and you will be honored and respected by all who know you, and you shall have friends beyond number. In times of trouble or strife, use the priesthood which you bear, for the Lord will hear you and will graciously answer your prayers.

Through your faith and obedience, the Lord will bless you with great wisdom, understanding, and spiritual power, and you shall have great power to do good.

see YESTERYEAR page 8
Brian had his HIV under control with medication. But smoking with HIV caused him to have serious health problems, including a stroke, a blood clot in his lungs and surgery on an artery in his neck. Smoking makes living with HIV much worse. You can quit.

CALL 1-800-QUIT-NOW.

HIV alone didn’t cause the clogged artery in my neck. Smoking with HIV did.

Brian, age 45, California
Great wisdom and understanding. Their blatant racism smacks you in the face, and it is what they still believe today, despite their efforts to deceive the public even now about what they really think. Having finally granted the priesthood to Blacks in 1978 does not change their views on why they deserved to be born that way, nor any other aspects of that disgusting doctrine's origins and ramifications.

I felt especially struck by the phrase "great wisdom and understanding," because ever since I was a young L euthen boy who started reading the Bible at 5 or 6, I was fascinated by the story of Solomon in 1 Kings, when God appeared to him in a dream, and asked, "Ask for what I should give you." Then Solomon said, "Give your servant an understanding heart to judge your people, that I might discern good and bad." The Lord was pleased with his answer, and said, "Because you haven't asked for long life, or for riches, or for the lives of your enemies but have asked for understanding to discern judgment, I will give you a wise and an understanding heart. Like there was also the words of Proverbs: "Wisdom is the principal thing, therefore get wisdom, and with all the getting, get understanding." I thought, if only God would ask me the same thing, so I could answer the same way, so I could help others know the right path, and help with their burdens in life. And here were those strikingly similar words, encouraging me to follow the path of righteousness, in order to receive that reward that was precious above many others.

I had never mentioned my yearning to anyone, in or out of the church, and certainly not to the total-stranger patriarch in another town that I met that night only a few minutes before he gave me the blessing. Later that summer, that said it was upon my insistence that my name was removed from the records and roles of the church—a mention of the reasons why—confirming that the reason they ultimately did it was because I wouldn't have it any other way.

Time to move, but where? This summer, I explored a warehouse of books and magazines in a distribution facility open to the public. Included were comic magazines and books, and the lavender-colored spine caught my eye. "The Gay Insider: New York," written by John Francis Hunter, was new, exciting, and I could hardly wait to get home to start reading.

Hunter wrote about all the places to cruise in New York: bars, baths, the docks, parks, you name it. And he had information about Gay liberation organizations and other places of interest to Gay people, like the Oscar Wilde Memorial Bookstore. This was an absolutely new world to me, and I was fascinated by the wealth of information.

I had the idea that I needed to move to either New York or San Francisco to come out. I wrote to Hunter, so he and I went to the city, and a few years later I moved to the city, and I was living in the gay community.

They wrote me back, saying that New York was very expensive, and as far as the West Coast, why not make a more practical move to San Francisco? They gave me the address of the Gay Contact service, and I wrote to it, saying that I needed to move to the big city, and I was excited.

I got a letter back from the president of the SGA, who said that I had left a voice message, a pseudo-message, to keep in touch. He enclosed a brochure about the SGA, with a different title: "You're Not Alone," which gave the address of the newly opened Gay Community Center, near the Tenderloin, at 102 Cherry St.

When Hunter wrote another, more comprehensive book called "The Gay Guide USA," in the dedication, he said something to the effect of "To my fellow Gay people, like the gay brothers..." and included my name, which was very surprising to see years later.

Off to San Francisco

So, I got a map of the city and a one-way Greyhound ticket. I packed my suitcase and headed out on my adventure into the unknown near the end of September. I got off the subway train and walked wreaking of my former life, and I said to myself, "This is the end of the road." I was at the beginning of my new life, and I was excited.

The city was so big that I had to turn around and come back to the first of the subway to get to the second level, where a lot of old New York city had been, now tucked under the ground. The doors began to close, and the sunlight was completely bright at the bottom of the stairs; sounds of construction emanated from inside, and the people who happened to be looking at that entrance below, looked up at me out there, wondering if I really was going down the stairs. He was the first Gay man I ever met, as well as the first person to talk in my new city. I showed him my letter from the SGA president; he confirmed that he knew him, and was able to give me directions. I was amazed that the stranger I had just met was a decent person that I could trust to stay with. So, I contact him for a few days.

We went to the 107 Club one night (at 107 Occidental Ave S), which was open to women under 21 since they didn't drink or alcohol. While waiting in line to put the dollar cover charge, Rod Stewart singing "Do You Believe in Me" was blasting away. It was a large dance floor, and some go-go boys were on a small perch, scantily clad and good-natured, and they were set to the thunderous beats. A guy came up and asked me if I wanted to dance, and after that and talking awhile, he asked me to come to his place. I told my friend that I was going to this person's home, where I crashed for another couple of days.

A fateful meeting

The board of the SGA met on Thursday nights at the GCC, so I went with him that September, and sat on a stool in the very music hall, with its wooden floor and brick wall. I waited there while they were meeting among the signs of the ongoing remodeling. After they were done, I left the place and changed my life forever. Tim Mayhew, one of the board members, and education officer of the Seattle Gay Alliance, came over to me, introduced himself, and offered to give me a tour of the city. Tim and I had been staying with friends and driving me over to Tim's place the next morning. I moved in with him that October 1, and we lived together for the next three years, living very close together. I moved in for the more than 32 years after.

He showed me many of the sights that weekend, including the University of Washington, Seattle Center, Pike Place Market, downtown, etc. We held hands at the Woodland Park Zoo, precipitation, parks, stores, and I was wearing the same kind of T-shirt that Paul Barwick had worn when he and John Singer applied for a marriage license 11 or 12 days earlier. It was yellow, with red letters saying "GAY" on it, along with intertwining male and female symbols. There I was, 18 years old, proclaiming to the world that I was out and proud of who I was, not afraid of its opinions.

Challenging the marriage law

To divorce, John Singer spent most of his time in the Gay Liberation Front, which was more radical than the Dorian Society. At one of Dorian's more practical meetings before, state Sen. Pete French discussed the revised marriage law that, interestingly, had never been signed. So the idea of challenging the law gathered steam.

Tim was the first person to give John the news about what had happened, and his encouragement to John's immediate eager- ness to take up that torch and fight for the rights. So John, never one to be a stranger to the rights, was eager to take on a challenge, and Paul Barwick went down to the auditor's office in the King County Administration Building and demanded a marriage license. They were refused.

Michael Boulac, author of "Gay Rights: The American Revolution," contacted Tim when he was doing research for it, and came to Seattle in 2014 to interview him.

Later, Tim emailed the following to Boulac:

Lloyd Ham, who had been County Auditor and State Treasurer, was the elected official responsible for issuing marriage licenses, and he was notified by John that John was bringing a case to the TV news crew to the courthouse. They went out to the marble hallway and formally denied the license for the cameras, so that courts and the public could see what a Democrat, he would not object, but this was a public ritual to settle all doubts.

Finally, on the last day of the justices of the Supreme Court in Olympia declared state law to preserve old custom. Years later, after dozens of cases across the US had used Singer as precedent, the Supreme Court of Hawaii ruled that the Washington court was just wrong under Hawaii law.

Finally, under our last governor, a vote of the people again confirmed gay marriage. I say "again" because it was not a surprise in the Equal Rights Amendment, which was voted in by the Legislature and the people. The vote on gay marriage was argued explicitly in the official voter's pamphlet. The majority adopted it then. Details were spelled out in statutes that confirmed the whole code to the new ERA in the Constitution. That's why the Supreme Court was wrong.

Working from the inside and outside

Mayhew also wrote the following to Boulac:

In those years the Gay movement had two wings, representing two social classes and two kinds of personality. This sociological and ideological division was sometimes severe, a split about policy, strategy, tactics, and style that because almost a feud in some cases at some times. The AIDS crisis finally defined it, but echoes of it are sometimes visible today, though
the younger generation has other concerns. Sometimes a third or fourth faction arose for free. Particularly in California and New York, they even campaigned to embarrass other public occasions. I tried to convince political centers in the 1960s-J-70 and later to see for myself how they operated and to learn from the early leaders, and then to do my lessons home to Seattle. In Seattle, we were more polite and high-minded than most other cities, as part of the liberal social tradition, so here the different factions did not quarrel but just went off in different directions to pursue their goals. Sometimes they even conceded, but maybe in different aspects of a project. Usually they did not inform or consult each other.

It turned out that this diplomacy was sad and wasteful, if inevitable, so I made my business to work in both camps for years as a kind of expedient. Hitter heads with deeper prejudices got suspicions, but we sometimes exploited the special talents of both groups to help us to victory. From two sides at once. In this way I helped to found about ten of the first dozen gay organizations in the state, some of which have since become venerable and influential among civic leaders beyond the gay community. A few jumped ship in other cities. A couple were “first in the world” ideas.

To help my coming out during my fifth and sixth year at the University of Washington, I led a lively discussion group that drew many new members to the Dorian Society. Professors and doctors in Dorian appointed me, as a newly minted liberal arts graduate, to be the first gay lobbyist to the legislature in 1973, when I had some success. Sun. Pete Francis chaired the Judiciary Committee, and I brought him some outside support for the legislation. Later, in the 1982 session, when the Reagan landslide had put the Republicans in power, I actually got two of them to sponsor the gay-rights bill despite the Moral Majority (remember them?), and get their hardcase crumbs to block anti-gay bills that had been filed. I served without pay, of course. In those days, we all did.

Lobbying and the Dorian Society were the core of the professional-class gay network, however, concentrated in the gay scene, where, at my head-scratching surprise, there was a guy who had had the operation to become a woman, and was now a man. She said that the only way she could relate to women was to be one herself. She asked me on the street out on Capitol Hill and said, “I’m a Lesbian.” I said, “So you will recognize me?” He seemed afraid at the prospect.

I left him a minute later.

Back in the bar, we were all lamps and resolved, while the second had manifested and matched. You can see the gap.

John Singer was of the second kind, a radical secular New York, brash and smooth. He came to the Gay Liberation Front, not the Dorian Society. I was in GLF from the beginning and kept it from being burdened with all the structure of Dorian. GLF had only as a speaker the extraneous boy and a secretary, and they elected me secretary, so I could keep records. The first thing we did was call on the Mayor of Seattle, who so coveted a gi to the Gay Pride Week, another first. We did many things.

From the end of New York, influence and the liberation movement in Seattle, John Singer changed his name and costume. He became Flugel ben Metzinger. He did not wear drag, because it also stereotyped women. You may know that in Yiddish, “fogel” (guy in German) and metal mean how it can be used for a name; “Vogel” (German) and become the slang word for “jewboy.” Miriam is actually his name. He was growing among women. He loved to be in your face.

Some younger people recently have written about the influence, and many of us had been busy for years before he arrived. He does deserve credit for several big splash that made waves across the country. We were saying something of more dedicated energy today.

Dancing queens
The Dorian Society had only recently changed its name to the Seattle Gay and Lesbian, in a bold move to be more open, only to change it back to the Dorian Group years later, in the days when Charlie Brickley emerged on the scene and took command.

Tim was sometimes described as being too conservative for the GLF yet too radical for Dorian and the SGA. I saw the beginnings of intriguing between various Gay Lib groups in the 1970s, which were always debating what the correct political approach should be to gain our rights.

Within a week of arriving in town, I was part of a small protest organized by the GLF in front of the District Tavern, a straight bar in the U District, objecting to its refusal to serve customers of same-sex couples or allow them to dance there. It was supposed to be a largely surprise, though the GLF had tipped off the landlord just before that gay men would get on the floor and start dancing together just like everyone else. But one GLF member had tipped off the owner, a short Black man named Sunny, well before, because he thought it was unfair and too radical to just spring on him and the patrons.

The TV van was in the parking lot out front, and the bright lights and cameras were ready. I wasn’t used enough to get in, but I picked inside briefly, to see the colored lights from the glass-like blocks of the dance floor, like in Saturday Night Fever. I marched around with the dozen or so others near the corner of the parking lot, holding signs and chanting slogans I’d never heard before, like “2-4-6-8, Gay men are just as good as straight!” “Hey hey ho ho, the ruling class has got to go” “Hey hey ho ho, the ruling class has got to go” “Hey ho let’s get together and what do we want? Gay rights! When do we have them? Now!”

I chatted with the officers of the fire department that immediately, Sunny grandstanded to the press about his supposedly liberal heart, but said this was going too far.

A visit to California
In the winter of 1971, Tim and I went down to San Francisco to visit the Gay organizations there, and stayed with a friend of his in Berkeley. Inclusion in those orgs was the Dwellers of Bisexuals, who, where, to my head-scratching surprise, there was a guy who had had the operation to become a woman, and was now a man. She said that the only way she could relate to women was to be one herself. She asked me on the street out on Capitol Hill and said, “I’m a Lesbian.” I said, “So you will recognize me?” He seemed afraid at the prospect.

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We also met with some of the activists, like Jim Kepner and Morris Knight. Jim was a collector of Gay materials, which were stacked everywhere in his apartment.

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Back in the bar, we were all lamps and resolved, while the second had manifested and matched. You can see the gap.
In his search for a place for his fledgling MCC church to meet, Bob contacted the manager of the Broadway Theater, at the corner of Broadway and John St. (now a drugstore), to ask if they could hold Sunday services there. The manager said yes. But before they could have the first meeting there, he suddenly changed his mind.

The manager was Gay himself and generally sympathetic, but his mixed feelings and fear of community reprisal gave him cold feet. So Bob organized a picket line, and I watched from the sidelines as the small group marched on the sidewalk, chanting about how unfair it was. Bob handed out flyers, and as one attractive young man walked by, Bob turned around and said loudly, "You're cute, honey!"

The guy turned his head back, with a look of shock and disgust, as he kept walking.

The manager didn't relent. So the search continued, resulting in regular meetings at the United Methodist Church, at 16th and E. John St., near what was Group Health Hospital (now Kaiser Permanente). The MCC shared the chapel and other meeting rooms in that old stone building, staggering its schedule with the other church. Bob would open his sermons with the same phrase: "Troy Perry said: "The Lord is my shepherd, and I know my Gay!"

When Bob tried to organize a chapter of the church in Vancouver, B.C., I went with him and his boyfriend one time, to the Gay bar that was offering to hold meetings there. I think it failed not lastly quickly and never really took hold. While we were in a restaurant afterwards, the waiter asked him what he wanted, he joked, "As a homosexual, I demand a bowl of fruit!"

Electoral politics

In the early '70s, Tim developed a questionnaire for candidates running for public office, asking what their stance on Gay rights was. When the Seattle Municipal Elections Committee (SEAMEC) was organized in 1975, it used his questionnaire word for word, as well as its rating system and layout.

I went with Tim to the City Council chambers, where he interviewed members in person in their offices. Some were very liberal and sympathetic ones, like John Miller, Jeannette Williams, and Phyllis Lapine. Others, like Tim Hill, were briefly and quite the opposite. Some others, like Sam Smith, were friendly but noncommittal, substituting glad-handing and smiles for substantive discussion and really grappling with the issue.

Some candidates responded by mail, but Bruce Chapman was one who didn't. We went to his home on Capitol Hill one night, and sat on the sidewalk, while Tim interviewed him on his porch. He was elected to the City Council, and a few years later became secretary of state.

We also went to candidate fairs, like one that was held at North Seattle Community College, going from table to table where they had their meet-and-greets, brochures, buttons, etc., with a questionnaire in hand for each of them. One of those was John Hennepalm, a young attorney running for Congress, standing at his booth with his Vogue model-looking wife. He kept looking at the questionnaire, seemingly hesitant to answer, hemming and hawing, saying a few blandishments that were vaguely liberal enough but not wholeheartedly sympathetic. His wife kept herself turned away a bit, not looking at us directly in the eye. He didn't heed her and stumbled on, ending up with a vaguely friendly note, in contrast to his snarling wife.

Tim was the first designated Gay lobbyist to Olympia, beginning in January 1973 through part of May. He had very humble funds that the SGA raised, barely enough to cover the ferry costs of taking the bus to and from the capital, unlike the exorbitant subscriptions of later Gay lobbyists years after, which ranged from $500,000 to $500,000 and even higher. One person who gave the rare amount of $100 was angry that his donation didn't result in full Gay rights being won nearly right away.

Peter Fentis was especially sympathetic to our cause and sought Tim's testimony a number of times for committee hearings in Olympia and public meetings in Seattle.

While Tim was lobbying, I lived with two Gay doctors near Lake Washington, cleaning house, doing yardwork, and some of the cooking for them and their parties, in exchange for my room and board and a small salary; Tim's base was with a friend in Seattle, who was kind enough not to charge him rent to share his apartment.

Answering the phone

When Tim's assignment was over, we moved to an apartment a couple blocks from Broadway. Since the SGA couldn't afford an official office, our personal phone was also its contact phone number. Tim had the number 322-6909 for years before that, and it became the listed number for the Seattle Gay Alliance, with no references afterward.

We answered the phone all hours of the day and night when we were home after work on different shifts. Visitors and natives wanted to know where and when the organization meetings were, or where the bars and other Gay spots were. High school teachers wanted panels to come talk to their students. Lonely and dejected men and women who were grieving with accepting their gayness wanted a shoulder to cry on.

One time a kid called from a phone booth in West Seattle, saying he felt like committing suicide, because his parents were hostile about him being Gay and threatened to kick him out of the house. Before he could giveTim his high school, we encouraged him to stay calm and hopeful, and told him down on that cold and dark, rainy night. The phone number didn't mean anything, but that's what we helped him to realize. He sounded cheery up, and hopefully he held on till he was out on his own, away from the self-righteous grip of his despising parents.

Sometimes hecklers called to yell "faggot" and hang up. What sounded like schoolkids asked if this was where all the Queens were, then laughed their heads off, sounding like they had the house booked up to a loudspeaker for the rest of the group, as it echoed in the room.

Speaking engagements

Tim arranged speaking engagements for those high school classrooms, including Franklin High off Rainier Ave, Lincoln High in the Wallingford area, and West Seattle High. Sometimes there were three or four people to talk to the students, other times it was just Tim and me.

Tim also organized some speaking engagements in Nelson's Winger's sexuality class at the University of Washington, where the panel was as many as half a dozen. Other engagements included medical students at the UW who wanted to understand their future Gay patients better, and a Jewish group on Creek Road, head up by a Haredi rabbi. His name came into play at one of the Franklin High School engagements, when a couple of Jewish students tried challenging our right to be there. When Tim told them that not all Jewish people felt the same, that there was a divergence of opinions in their community, and cited this rabbi's name, they knew who he was and said that they didn't accept him.

We also talked to a sensitivity training session of the police, in downtown Seattle. The uniformed cops were seated back at us, while we recounted the history of some of the outrageous ways Gay people had suffered at the hands of the police and how relations would be vastly improved if they were truly accepting of us. One or two ventured a remark that sounded like he there weren't any women officers in the room, but the rest was trying to be open minded. Officers glared at us, looking like they whispered to shout out with a homophobe remark, but not the daily polite enough, or duty bound, not to.

One of the officers asked us why so many people called the police, when they were never even here. We presented to them. We tried our best to assure them that not all Gay people, or any other part of the population, called them that. But that the given the bad treatment Gay people, let alone others, often got from police, it was no wonder that some people called the police.

Another time, Tim and I went to a Renton PTSA meeting, requested by one of the teachers. They first fired off some unlightened questions as us, but after all, that's what we were there for to reason with them. They became more mellow when they could see, as they said, that we weren't wearing dresses or wanted to be women, and weren't child molesters, wanting to use their kids. I remember the audience being just women; I don't think any fathers were there. Some of them clustered around me when it was over, smiling and laughing, as we talked about cooking and recipes, their suspicions stoked and snarky questions having dissipated by then.

On one occasion, Tim organized and headed up a speaking engagement at the meeting hall of St. John's Episcopal Church in Seattle. He started with a general introduction about Gay people and their rights, for the audience included a middle-aged woman and said there was a Gay person to answer their questions at each one of those tables. The Gay who were seated at each were per table, then stood up to identify themselves and say that they could discuss this with the attendees with further.

Northwest Gay Review

Tim was the secretary of the monthly Northwest Gay Review, started by Lanny Swedlow in Petaluma, Calif, in 1974 and covering the Gay news in Western Washington, Oregon, etc., until Lanny turned the paper over to some others in 1977. The three of us would take places around to the bars and organizations.

One time, Lanny wanted to test whether the Canadian border police would allow us in, answering the question of whether anything you're bringing in is by openly declaring the newspapers. They had us pull off to the side, and then took us and the papers into their office. After questioning us, they briskly and clearly taken back, and we said we could not follow them. We turned around and went back to Seattle.

In addition to Tim's editor duties, he raised ad revenue and other advertisers to a small extent, but Lanny and others were primarily involved with that task. In 1974 or so, Tim said such a bar owner was Jack, of the new Boren Street Disco, which had been the old Stom of Norway Hall. We described the vast space featuring a wooden floor and impressive architecture. It was completely empty, with just a little table or two on one side, a strong contrast to later days, when it would be packed with dancing revelers as this discus, then later an acid disco. Jack told us that when the king of Norway came to officiate at a ceremony handing over the Olympic torch, what it would become was that it would be a place for young people to gather and socialize, and be thought that was a great idea.

Tim sold him this fledgling bar, while he served us a nonalcoholic tropical drink of fruit juices, complete with 50s paper umbrellas.
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YESTEREYEAR
continued from page 12

Conflict and progress
With Anita Bryant’s prominence opposing Gay rights, and Initiative 13, filed by a couple of police officers, raised its ugly head again in the little town of Oxnard, I talked to some of the women who had a table with anti-Gay signs in front of Frederick & Nelson on Colorado (now Macy’s) on several occasions.

They were largely Mormons, aligned with the conservatives of other churches. Other pro-Gay people came along while we were trying to reason with them, to add their support to the right’s stubborn clinging to their beliefs, as expected. Many other Gay folks went downtown numerous times to talk to these hardline true believers. No surrender from any of them, they didn’t yield. It’s like any seeds were planted to eventually change some of their minds, we’ll never know.

That November was the Democratic convention that same year, in Spokane. And we came face to face with more of Anita Bryant’s supporters, demonstrating in front of the building the convention was held in. They hurled Bible verses condemning Gay sex at us, and warned us that we’d go to hell if we didn’t repent. Staying calm in such a situation tested our patience, but overall, all of us were peaceful, though tired, and didn’t escalate into anything bad.

Tim was one of the delegates to the Democratic convention. In 1980, he held a New York. He worked on the platform committee, and was part of the Gay caucus that organized for Gay representation. He was a fervent, a first for a Gay Black man in a major political party. When Meld gave his speech on the floor, he was quite moved, his most stirring comments were these: “Would you ask me how I’d like to compare the upper struggle for a pension for lesbian and Gay rights? I can compare and do compare, I know what it means to be called a nigger. I know what it means to be a bitter, I can sum up the difference in one word: none.”

We continued to see many changes in the Gay community and among the activists and leadership shaping it. This recounting of mine is just some of the highlights of those earlier days, to add to these sources:

Photos inside the Gay Community Center. Courtesy of washingtoncnd.com orbcscark.org:80/4444/vx23464
Tim’s position statement on homosexual liberties, presented for the ACLU, 12/14/71: https://digitalcollections.lib.washington.edu/digitalcollection/pioneerclub/d25884
Gary Atkins, author of Gay Seattle: Stories of Exile and Belonging (2000), has now covered more info of Tim’s activism that wasn’t included originally. See particularly: 11.21.19, “Gay activism- Avery.com site updates”
My archived history at the UW, including many of Tim’s letters, and a poster from 1980 of Tim and me during our years together: https://digitalcollections.lib.washington.edu/digitalcollection/pioneerclub/290616/rec1
Maxwell Timothy Mayhew, born January 1, 1941, died on April 30, 2017, of heart problems. I was devastated losing him, and will always love him.

Endnotes:
1Some of their follow-up email correspondence follows:
2/0/14 Dear Tim,
I have a postal address for you in my files in New York. Also, I was wrong! So now I must thank you by email, and much too long after the fact, for the time we spent together during my first visit to Seattle. You are a good memory, and I am grateful, and Intellect are just astonishing. So too are the thousands of papers that constitute the Tim Mayhew Collection at UW — with so many of them dated (!) in your own unmissable handwriting. Those papers are treasure to me and treasured by you as well. For saving them and giving you for saving them.
Sincerely,
Michael
6/0/14 Michael,
It was a pleasure to meet you. I will be happy to try to answer from memory any questions that may come up after you have read our documents.
You said you were focused on the origins of the marriage movement. That was a very specific recent focus of mine, if not a complete erroneous one. I don’t quote contemporary reform in which I had a hand and that became Washington constitutional and statutory law in 1972, even predecessors of gender-neutral marriage, among other things.
The State of Washington threw out the existing legal provision (entered by a judge before the US Supreme Court did, but it was never mentioned on television. I think most probably it’s related to marriage being based on the old laws were, because those laws were never mentioned, either. Married women couldn’t own property until 1977.

—Tim
Tim Mayhew to Michael Boccali 8/26/14
As for Singer vs. Hara, I am the direct cause of that. As I came back from lobbying the legislature session that passed it, I called friend John Singer that nobody had yet tried to use the new marriage law, and what it probably intended. He wanted to be the first person to make sure that it was pushed to the limit, so he grabbed his friend Paul Barkley and went ahead. They were commodities of the campaign, and no romance was involved, which is appropriate for a civil property contract.

Below is further correspondence:
Michael Boccali to Tim Mayhew, 8/26/14
News in most hands comes out wrong. I have the same questions about your letter, and what you wrote in your email: “As for Singer vs. Hara, I am the direct cause of that. As I came back from lobbying the legislature session that passed it, I called friend John Singer that nobody had yet tried to use the new marriage law, and what it probably intended. He wanted to be the first person to make sure that it was pushed to the limit, so he grabbed his friend Paul Barkley and went ahead. They were commodities of the campaign, and no romance was involved, which is appropriate for a civil property contract.”

I was indeed the first person to tell John Singer about the new law because he was surprised and excited. Naturally, discussions would have been going on elsewhere, but I doubt that I heard them or talked to those people, at least until he began organizing his own effort. I did not help on his case, so I do not know who prepared it.

Below is further correspondence:
Martin Lee to Michael Boccali, 8/27/14
I’m Martin Lee, Tim’s best friend of nearly 45 years. Tim forwarded your question below, and his response, to me this morning. If I’m not being too presumptuous to add a few observations of my own, I’d like to do so:

As for Fuglee, and trying to pinpoint the genesis of the whole struggle for equality in marriage: I met him and Paul Barkley quite early on after coming to town. I sometimes visited the collective they had on Capitol Hill, on Malden Avenue E. down the street a few blocks from the Seattle Counseling Service for Sexual Minorities. [I was with them when they had a chat with and others in political meetings, in marches for gay rights, as well as for some women’s rights in downtown Seattle in the months of “Not the church, the state, women must decide their fate” still resonated in my memory], and a wide spectrums of talks.

And although I wasn’t witness to Tim telling John Singer for the first time about the marriage law, I do know that Tim gave John a scene a little after that, I heard John and Paul talking with him one day at the collective, following up on the developments after Tim gave him the news, pondering strategy after the marriage license rejection, ramifications, etc. Which quickly became woven together with Pete Francis, whom I met and saw in action as he eagerly sought Tim’s testimony to a committee he chaired as a senator, and in various and sundry public meetings. He hoped Tim would be the spark to an otherwise dull proceeding, as he put it, despite the controversial nature of gay rights in other respects than marriage.

So, a flat-out statement that it was Pete Francis who conveyed the information to John, as he were the one and source is, I’m sure, accurate. I think this shows how less than careful and precise people can be to attributing, or failing to correctly attribute altogether, things to many people and events, their exact sequence, etc., so that the resulting story has a ring of truth but is misleading or wrong.

Because Pete’s important work was certainly in the mix early on, one might come to the conclusion Atkins reported, that Singer acted on the idea that Pete Francis had given him at the Dorian meeting, if they were not aware of all the factors.

(From a later note)
If I was even now at all that John went to a Dorian meeting, which he wasn’t actually inclined to do. Or maybe he did on that rare occasion, after hearing the news from Tim and already deciding to go ahead with the test case, to hear more from the senator. Given how people can easily confuse events and make assumptions, or are just plain mistaken, and repeat a story enough to where it gains the upper hand over the truth, it[3] doesn’t change what actually happened. Pete Francis definitely disseminated the information at that meeting, but that is the only core statement we can safely assert is true. Maybe since it was news for those attending that meeting, and it wasn’t long after that John and Paul went to apply, they assumed that was the way John got the news too. Which became that he went to that same meeting. In any case, Tim’s recollection thus.

That was a coming together moment for Gay men and Lesbians, and even though Mel had no chance of actually becoming the nominee, since Walter Mondale was again running with Jimmy Carter. It was different from the tensions with feminists and Lesbians separatists that flared up sometimes in the “70s. It helped to give the campi walk from Campus Parkway in the U District, near some of the dorms, rang with hateful chants and they’d try to be killed, all men were raped. Therefore....”

Those were also the days when some Martin Lee’s meetings were held in a small house, converted to an office space, in the U District on the upper Ave, near Clowen Park. They were trying out a new concept at the time: providing on-site daycare for those women-only meetings. Women were welcome to bring their daughters, and their sons were forbidden— babies and those of all other ages — since they had a penis and testicles, and therefore were the oppressor. They were also so sensitive about the use of the word “girl” they would refer to girls as “baby women”, but boys weren’t called “baby men.” They naturally didn’t like how some men for so long had called women “girls” to disempower them, making them sound immature and not up to the same rigorous tasks as men. But their categorical demarcations of all males and the use of the term “girls” was ridiculing. In the name of combatting hatred, they were guilty of unjustified hate themselves. If only they had been reasonable and distinguished between sexist oppression — which they had every right to disdain and fight against — and those who were innocent.

This essay was submitted by Martin Lee (melccannell@aol.com), Version: 6/14/22.
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WE ♥ YOU!
"The kids these days are daring"

Seattle drag legend Boy Mike returns to a new scene

BY A.V. EICHERNBAUM
SGN MANAGING EDITOR

...and I was on Rosieann Barn’s talk show as a Rosieann look-alike. I did a music video with Boy George, and I used to be a cast member of An Evening at La Cage in Las Vegas. Am I familiar with that show?"

Mike Siler — better known as Boy Mike — had started talking before I'd finished setting up my recorder. His enthusiasm was infectious. The passion with which he discussed his craft was undeniable, and I was struggling to keep up.

In the '80s and early '90s, Boy Mike was known as one of the Seattle drag scene's most popular performers, standing out in a sea of talent at Seattle Center's annual Rewind Tuesdays at Neighbours. We'd have standout performances from fire jugglers at a Betsy Ross look-alike contest... It was really a great time. I packed about 300 people into Neighbours, and it was much more popular than their Saturday nights.

Then he vanished from the Pacific Northwest. For decades, he was a fixture in San Diego, before returning to Seattle in 2008, when The Stranger described him as "omnipresent and impossible to miss," among other things — disappearing again, and returning again just last year.

"I've toured everywhere, from Florida to Washington to Toronto to Vancouver, and I just got done with a tour in California, Mexico, and Vegas," he told me.

"And you could say... that I had my own drag queen radio show on the number one station in San Diego, for four years, and it was very successful and very funny."

Mike explained to me that three nights a week, he was on a radio show with The New Guy, a DJ in San Diego, something he'd discussed in the past. He's also written for the SGN and SGN's Fitness Director Ken Campbell. He wrote a regular column in the '80s called "Boy Mike's Fab Gab," which he recently reintroduced to the world via the sometimes-quarterly magazine Online Seattle.

There's no denying that Boy Mike has an impressive résumé. A regal cape of rumors trails in his wake, and his wild, tampon-tossing performances are legendary. When he called to tell me he was returning to the stage at Julia's on Broadway, I wanted to know one thing:

In his absence, how has the Seattle scene changed?

In response, he recounted his old routine through Seattle's clubs: The Monastery, City Beat, then Club Broadway and The Underground. It was a carefree time. It was the '80s, the '90s, the music was great. I mean, how can you say that '80s music was fabulous? It was so fun to go out on the dance floor and sing along to your favorite songs. You don't really know that anymore.

He also noted that the club scene's changed. "It's much more mixed. My club night, I promoted to straight, Bisexual, Gay, drag queens, Trans, whatever. I welcomed everybody... I think it's a great mix."

We used to dress up in full makeup and [dress] like celebrities. The kids these days are daring," he added. "Like, Nonbinary? That's a new thing. They didn't even really talk about Bisexuals back in the '80s."

Considering the boldness with which Mike has approached drug, life, and comedy, "daring" might be one of the highest compliments he could pay to today's youth. Looking back, Boy Mike lamented the loss of all-night Seattle businesses besides clubs. "We'd stay up and drink coffee and eat donuts all night, and then we'd sleep all day at the Gay youth center called the Orion Center: It was just so much fun! It's not fun for me to go out anymore."

So what happened? Mike boils it down to too many straight people on Capitol Hill. "Over on Elkah, the whole place is invaded with straight people. Drunk, obnoxious straight people — they've kind of taken over that area. That [area] used to have the Wildrose, and that's about it."

Boy Mike has a lot of nostalgia for his glory days. When he looks back at his youth, however, it's not all roses. "High school was a terrible time for me. I didn't take any crap from anyone, and I had a sharp tongue on me — sort of like Boy George — and it got me into a lot of trouble, but I stayed true to myself. I didn't have the option to come out... I never had the luxury of a closet to hide in."

With that experience, though, came some wisdom. Mike had this to say to the next generation of kids in the LGBTQ+ community.

"Maybe they're still in the closet, or maybe they're getting a lot of drama thrown their way... You've got to remember you'll make it through this, and it's a temporary event in your life. Soon, the pain and sorrow will be over, and you can come to Seattle any time you want and be fabulous. We love you."

You can catch Boy Mike performing during PrideFest at Julia's on Broadway (1:30 p.m. on Saturday, June 25) as part of the festivities. Where he'll be next is anyone's guess. Seattle's very own drag queen cryptid still has stories to be told. We'll all just have to wait and see what comes next.
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