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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 connected LGBTQ+ seniors for free monthly lunch meetups at the Tin Table restaurant and bar since late summer of last year. AgePRIDE is 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 Colberg 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?’” Colberg said. “I contacted [the owner of the Tin Table] Hallie 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,” Colberg 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

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

“We invited participants to join us, and we very explicitly wanted to be just about engagement and not about, ‘There’s something wrong with you.’ You’re sad and lonely; you’re having trouble with your memory and your health,” Colberg 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 Fredriksen-Goldsen, said that “about two-thirds of LGBTQ+ older 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 Fredriksen-Goldsen. “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.”

Photo by Askar Abayev / Pexels
Community input
She added that DineTogether wasn’t created in a vacuum without community input — rather, it is 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 LGBTQ+ 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 LGBTQ+ seniors 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 LGBTQ+ 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 30-year-olds, and I imagine they prefer to have an age group of their own.”

Frank Wiedigesick, 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,” Wiedigesick 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, Wiedigesick 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
SPECIAL TO THE SGN

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.

Somehow, 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 bad for having those feelings. Nor did I deserve to be cut 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 felt 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 posing as someone you’re not, was morally wrong.

They didn’t want to excommuncate 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 are from the tribe of Ephraim (unless they are black, or brown-skinned), general encouragement 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 gave 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 delight-some 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
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HIV alone didn’t cause the clogged artery in my neck. Smoking with HIV did.

Brian, age 45, California
YESTERYEAR

continued from page 6

“Great wisdom and understanding!”

Their blatant racism smacks you in the face, and 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 were to be born that way, nor other aspects of that disgraceful doctrine’s origins and ramifications.

I felt especially struck by the phrase “great wisdom and understanding,” because ever since I was a young Lutheran boy who started reading the Bible at 8 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 between 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 word 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 walls of the church — in mention of the reason why — confirming that the reason they ultimately did it was because I wouldn’t have it any other way.

Time to move, but where?

At 11 a.m., I explored a warehouse of books and magazines in a distribution facility open to the public. Included were sex magazines and books, and the lavender-colored spine caught my eye: The Gay Insider: New York, written by John Francis Hunter. My eyes were burning with excitement, and I could hardly wait to get home to start reading.

Hunter wrote about all the places to cruise in New York City—bars, baths, discotheques, parks, stores, and so on. I was a gay man, and I was being named the King of Gay People, like the Oscar Wilde Memorial Bookstore. This book was completely new to me, and I was fasci- nation ready to dive into it. I had the idea that I needed to move to New York so I could come out. I wrote to Hunter, and he sent me a magazine, put his autograph on the book, and added a personal note: “Signed and dedicated to Mr. Hunter. Let me know how it goes, and I’ll send you a copy.”

Off to Seattle

I sent a letter to Seattle and a one-way Greyhound ticket. I packed my suitcases, and headed out on my adventure into the unknown near the end of September. I got off the train at Pioneer Square, and made my way to the newly opened Gay Community Center, near Pioneer Square, at 102 Cherry St.

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

Excommunication

But later, as mentioned, I kept asking them to communicate with me. Then I would feel free from the shackles of their strictures that tried to make me and feel guilty about my oppressive thumb, squashing our so-called perverted thoughts and longings into oblivion.

The bishop was so anguished by his persistent requests that he once said, “Are you trying to do, put an old man six feet under?” On that night at the convened bishop’s court, they still didn’t want to do it, and tried to change my mind even at the last minute. The bishop and his two counselors were crying, and said what a fine example of the youth I was, in spite of my perceived character flaw. If only I would repent, God would still accept me, and my blessing would be fulfilled.

Oddly enough, one of the two counselors used some shocking language for a church leader, when he said, “Now let me get this straight when a girl less than you can see into the top of her dress, you don’t want to reach in and feel her booties?”

“No,” I answered, no.

“Yes,” he persisted, there was something not right about him to be talking like that, like he was on the road to apostasy or some.

A few weeks later, he called out to me from across the street downtown, taking a cigar out of his mouth and waving to me with that forbidden stage in hand and a big smile on his face, yelling, “Hey, Martin, buddy, how are you doing?”

I found out after that he had been dropped from the church leadership.

My official paper, brought to my house was to give up that future, all because I wasn’t attracted to women sexually, and instead wanted to be with other guys! How could I turn my back on having great wisdom, understanding, and spiritual power, as well as regular power to do good? How could anyone know what I wanted except God himself, letting me know was in my future through his anointed patriarch, if only I had faith and was obedient!

Challenging the marriage law

To digress, 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 Francis discussed the revised marriage law that, interestingly, hadn’t specified gender. So the idea of challenging the law gathered steam.

Tim was the first person to give John the news about his prior that morning and his encouragement to Johnson’s immediate eager-ness to tap taps to stir to the waters.

Johnson, never a man for two years eager to take on a challenge, and Paul Bar-wick went down to the auditor’s office in the King County Administration Building and demanded a marriage license. They were refused.

Michael Boucic, author of “Gay Marriage: The Gay Rights Case” contacted Tim when he was doing research for it, and came to Seattle in 2014 to interview him.

Later, Tim emailed the following to Boucic:

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 civil case and the TV news crews came to the courthouse and the marble hallway and formally denied the license for the cameras, so that the courts could hear it and the political leader, Democracy, would not object, but this was a public ritual to settle all doubts.

In the end, the justices of the Supreme Court in Olympia denied 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 Washington law.

Finally, under our last governor, a vote of the people again changed gay marriage laws. I say again, because it was implied in the Equal Rights Amendment, which was voted in by the Legisla-ture and the people back in 1980, that gay marriage was arguable 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 Boucic:

In those years the Gay movement had two wings, representing two social classes and two kinds of personality. This sociological and ideological split was sometimes severe, a split about policy, strategy, tactics, and style that became almost a feud in some circles at some times. The AIDS crisis finally deflated it, but echoes of it are sometimes visible today, though
Dancing queens

The Dorian Society had only recently changed its name to the Seattle Dorian Society, and in a bold move to be more open, only to change it back to the Dorian Group years later, in the days when Charlie Bradbury 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 infiltrating between various Gay Lib groups in the ’70s, 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 the suspension of same-sex couples from the floor and the dance floor. It was supposed to be largely a surprise, though the GLF had tipped off the owners that it wouldn’t be long before that Gay man 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 Sammy, well before, because he thought it was unfair and too radical to just spring it on him.

The TV was in the parking lot out front, and the bright lights and cameras were ready. I wasn’t old 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 is just as good as straight!” “Hey hey ho ho, the ruling class has got to go!” “Ho-Ho-Who, the ruling class is on the go!” “What do we want? Gay Rights! When do we want them? Now!”

Nikol offered to clean out the offenders almost immediately. Sammy 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. Included in those orgs was the Daughters of Bitontos, whose headquarters were in a head-scratching surprise. There was a guy who had had the opportunity to be a woman, and was now a woman. She said that the only way she could relate to women was to be one herself. She used to work on the bar at Folsom and at Folsom St. In a leather bar on Folsom, I brieﬂy met Paul Lynde. He was wearing sunglasses, sat on a barstool and shrewdly held his head down a bit. I came up to him and said, “Aren’t you Paul Lynde?” He looked startled, and said, “Go on, young fella. I will recognize you!” He seemed afraid at the prospect. I left him a minute later.

On the last day of the bar, we found a loud crack and turned to see a tall guyncleed out in black leather from head to toe. He wore a hat with a shiny black leather, a leather jacket, a harness across his chest. I’m not sure what he thought of my face, or whether I was wearing drag or not. He punched me in the face, and I think he expected me to fight back. So I just stood there, and said it just be quiet.

We also met with some of the activists, like Jim Kepner and Morris Kight. Jim was a collector of Gay materials, which were stacked everywhere in his apartment. He also had a series of cards and posters which were displayed around the room, to show that he had become a regular fixture at the GLF meetings.

After that, we went to the Green Bear, a bar with a lot of drag queens, and then to the Green Mist, another bar with a lot of drag queens. We also went to the Green Bear, a bar with a lot of drag queens, and then to the Green Mist, another bar with a lot of drag queens.

Beginnings of Seattle MCC

As for the beginnings of MCC branch here, Bob Simms, a charismatic Pentecostal who was in the closed to his followers, contacted the Seattle Gay Alliance and spoke with Tim. Bob said that he was going to have his last public appearance in his moving ministry, at a meeting soon to be held near the Green House — although he didn’t announce it as such to the public beforehand — and that, unbeknownst to him, he was going to come to the meeting of Elders later.

We went to that meeting of Pentecostal believers, and watched him in action as he preached and healed. Then he suddenly dramatically announced that he was leaving that ministry, as the Lord had other things in store for him. He then took his jacket off and put it around the shoulders of a boy in his young teens, who was with his parents and who had come up to the stage with him along with others wanting spiritual direction or healing. He made a verbal allusion to how Elijah had passed his mantle on to Elisha, and declared to the very surprised boy and his parents that God had chosen him to be his successor some day.

After it was over, we went backstage to meet Bob, as he had arranged with Tim. We saw the boy with his parents come up to him and ask how and when he knew that his son would follow him in his footsteps. He answered that the designation from God had just come to him suddenly in the moment, and didn’t elaborate. The parents continued to look puzzled and taken aback, with a stare that seemed like they really didn’t believe it, and dissatisfaction with not knowing more about that special moment.

Tim told Bob about Troy Perry’s search, and put them in contact with each other. A few weeks later, we went with Bob for the final meeting with the leaders of the Pentecostal church he belonged to, on Queen’s Anne Hill. He told them he was Gay and didn’t see it as incompatible with scripture, having also been bolstered by his talk with Troy. They were horrified, telling him to repent, then started speaking in tongues, heads bowed in a prayer circle. Bob said that if this was how they felt, he would leave for good; then wiped the dust off his feet, as mentioned in the Bible, shuffling his shoes back and forth a few times on the carpet. Their chanting voices grew only louder, speaking gibberish as far as I could tell, as the three of us left.
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 he 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 retreat. So the search continued, resulting in regular meetings at the United Methodist Church, at 10th and 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, stag- ing its schedule with the other church. Bob would open his sermons with the same phrase, "As the Lord is my shepperd, he knows I'm Gay!"

When Bob tried to organize a chapter of the church up 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 I fainted on my foot double quickly and never really took hold. While we were in a restaurant afterwards, though the waiters 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 Council chambers, where he interviewed members in person in their offices. Some were very liberal and sympathetic ones, like John Miller, Jennette Williams, and Phillys Lamphere.

Others, like Tim Hall, were bristly 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 Bill 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 conduct interviews, like one that was held at Northwest 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 Hemphill, a young attorney running for Congress, standing at his booth with his Vogue magazine-looking wife. He kept looking at the questionnaire, seemingly hesitant to answer, hemming and hawing, saying a few blandishments that were vaguely liberal but not wholeheartedly liberal.

His wife kept herself turned away a bit, not looking at us directly in the eye. "I'm not sure," she said, "and I'm not sure how to answer." I said, "I'm not sure how to answer, but that's what's helped me to realize," and Tim nodded, "and I'm not sure how to answer, but that's what's helped me to realize."

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 finish high school. We encouraged him to stay calm and hopeful, and talked him down on that cold and dark, rainy night. The phone rang, "I'm not sure how to answer, but that's what's helped me to realize."

Sometimes hecklers called to yell "faggot" and hang up. What sounded like schoolkids asked if this was where all the Queers were, then laughed their heads off, sounding prissy like they had the house booked up to a loudspeaker for the rest of the group, as 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 Norfolk! Wagner'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 Greek Row, headed up by a Hellenic rabbi. His name became into play at one of the Franklin High School engagements, when a couple of Jewish students testily challenged our right to be there. When Tim told them that not all Jewish people felt the same, that there was a diverse range of opinions in their community, and cited this rabbi's name, they knew who he was and said that they didn't accept that.

We also talked to a sensitivity training session of the police, in downtown Seattle. The uniformed cops were quite tactful back at us, while we recounted the history of some of the outrageous way 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 be there weren't any women officers (the room) was trying to be open minded. Others glared at us, looking like they had hst to bust with a homophobic remark, but truthfully polite enough, or duty bound, not to.

One of the officers asked us why so many people called themselves "queer" rather than "Gay." We said, they were trying to be open minded. Others asked us what we were there for to reason with them. They were more satisfied 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 see 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, asking and laughing as we talked about cooking and recipes, their suspicions stores and snarky questions having dissolved by then.

On one occasion, Tim organized and headed up a speaking engagement at the meeting hall of St. John the Divine, a church in Seattle. He started with a general introduction about Gay people and their rights, for the audience. He then said there was a gay person to answer their questions at each one of those tables. The table who were given one per table, then stood up to identify themselves and say that they could discuss anything with the attendees further.

Northwest Gay Review

Tim was the editor of the monthly Northwest Gay Review, started by Lanny Swerdlov in Portland, OR, in 1974 and covering the Gay news in Seattle, Portland, etc., until Lanny turned the paper over to some others in 1977. The three of us would take places to our readers around to the bars and organizations.

One time, Lanny wanted to test whether the Canadian border police would allow us in, answering the question "Are we looking for anything that you're bringing up?" 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, bit brusquely and clearly taken aback, they said we could not go through. We turned around and went back to Seattle.

In addition to Tim's editor duties, he raised ad revenue for the paper and other advertisers to a small extent, but Lanny and others were primarily involved with that task. By 1974 or so, each such bar owner was Jack of the new Boren Street Discos, which had been the old Stans of Norway Hall. We then covered the vast space featuring a wooden floor and impressive architecture. It was completely empty, with just a little table or two and a strong contrast to later days, when it would be packed with dancing revelers as this discus, then later another.

Jack told us that when the king of Norway came to visit at a ceremony in a large industry and you could see what it was going to be a place for young people to gather and socialize, and be thought that was a wonderful thing. Tim sold him on the idea of fledgling bar, while he served us a nanolarchanical tropical drink of fruit juices, complete with spicy paper umbrellas.
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Conflict and progress
With Anita Bryant to prominence opposing Gay rights, and Initiative 15, filed by a couple of police officers, raised its ugly head and could have been the little that Timitm and I talked about, some of the women who had a table with anti-Gay signs in front of Frederick & Nelson on 5th Street (now Macy’s) on several occasions.

They were largely Mormons, aligned with fundamentalist churches. Other pro-Gay people came along while we were trying to reason with them, to add their support to the right wing, to bring the struggle to their beliefs, as expected. Many other Gay folks went downtown numerous times to talk to these hardcore true believers. No surname to any of them, they didn’t yield. If you speak in any seeds were planted to eventually change some of their minds, we’ll never know.

The year before, the Democratic convention that 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 the speakers were peaceful, though menacing, and didn’t escalate into anything bad.

Tim was one of the delegates to the Democratic convention in Seattle in 1980, held in New York. He worked on the platform committee, and was part of the Gay caucus that urged Vice President Walter Mondale, a historic first for a Gay Black man in a major political party. When Mcg gave his speech about the campaign, and his most stirring comments were:

"Would you ask me how I’d dare to compare the right to same-sex marriage struggle for Lesbian and Gay rights? I can’t, and I compare it, and I compare them, I know what it means to be called a nigger. I know what it means to be a Jew, and I can sum up the difference in one word: none."

We continued to see many changes in the tides of the movement, and 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, housed at 114 Fourth Ave. west.
observcszk.org/a844434x32456

Script of Tim’s testimony (written and delivered to Seattle City Council on housing discrimination, 10/16/72): https://www.seattle.gov/cityarchives/exhibits/1174/1174 apps/1174_app_nationallandmarks/Seattle/gay/sexual-orientation-and-housing-discrimination

Mcg’s collection of Gay materials, 1964-93: https://obscurszk.org/a844307x79001

Mcg’s position statement on homosexual liberation, presented for the ACLU, 12/14/71: https://digitalcollections.lib.washington.edu/digitalcollection/pioneerfile/id/25984


My archived history at the UW, including more of Tim’s and Mcg’s stories, and of Tim and Mcg during our years together: https://digitalcollections.lib.washington.edu/digitalcollection/pioneerfile/id/29896/rec/1

Maxwell Timothy Mayhew, born Jan 1, 1941, died on April 30, 2017, of heart problems. I was devastated losing him, and will always love him.

Endnotes:
1 Some of their follow-up email correspondence follows:
2 June 4, 1984
Dear Tim,
I had just a postal address for you in my files in New York; also, I was wrong! So now I must thank you by email, and the much too long a wait after the fast, for the time we spoke together during my first visit to Seattle. Your memory, vocabulary, and intelligence, and intellect are just astounding. So too are the thousands of papers that constitute the Tim Mayhew Collection at UW — with so many of them dated (!) in your own unmiss-
takable handwriting. Those papers are trea-
tures and I will look for saving them and thank you for giving them away.

Sincerely,
Michael
June 19, 1984
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 the documents.

You said you were focused on the origins of the marriage movement. That was a very remote concern 40-45 years ago, but the legis-

late reform in which I had a hand and that became Washington constitutional and state law in 1972, even people argued in favor of gender-neutral marriage, among other things.

The State of Washington threw out the earlier legislature's legislation, as a new state Supreme Court before the US Supreme Court did, but it was never mentioned on television. I think most probably it failed because it was too extreme, not the old laws were, because those laws were never mentioned, either. Married women couldn’t own property until 1971.

Tim

Tim Mayhew to Michael Boscue 8/26/84
As for Singer vs. Hara, I am the direct cause of that. As I came back from lobbying the legislative session that passed, I told friend John Singer that nobody had yet tried to sue on the new marriage law, and what it pro-
bided. I wanted to be the first to take the step that it was to the limit of possible, so he grabbed his friend Paul Barwick and went ahead. They were correspondents of the campaign, and their relationship was involved, which is appropri-
ate for a civil property contract.

Below is further correspondence:

2014
Tim Mcg to Michael Boscue 8/26/84
News in most hands comes out wrong. I don’t have before me the article you mention, but I believe that I have been telling you the truth. I have been very careful to say so not least because of my linguistic education and working with translations. Twice I have been a paper editor and tossed back a lot of sloppy reporting and writing for rework. Sometimes I have been at a news scene and was the only TV reporter, so I could describe what is happening before the camera.

Ancient Greek literature shows how dif-
erent the rhetorical conventions were for dif-

frent versions of the same events and people. You can see the same in modern his-

tory and newspapers, even in social science and movies. As I am literate in many European languages, I can see how profes-
sional translators accidentally twist things or leave things out. Students hearing the same lecture write different notes. Witnesses disag-


agree, hearsay is inadmissible. You can see these phenomena for yourself in your two professions, as lawyer and teacher.

I was indeed the first person to tell John Singer about the new law because he was sur-

prised and excited. Naturally, discus-
sions would have been going on elsewhere, but I doubt that he 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 Boscue 7/21/14
I’m Martin Lee, Tim’s best friend of nearly 43 years. Tim forwarded your ques-
tion 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:

As for Flugger, and trying to pinpoint the genealogy of the whole struggle for equality in marriage: I met him and Paul Barwick 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 Trans and others in political meetings, in marches for gay rights, as well as for some women’s rights in downtown Seattle in the early 70s of “Not the choice of the state, women must decide their fate” still resonant in my memory], and a wide spectr-

um of other events.

And although I wasn’t witness to Tim telling John Singer for the first time about the marriage law, I was there at the news conference after Tim had given him the news, pondering strategy after the marriage license receipt, ramifi-
cations, etc. Which quickly became woven together with Pete Francis, whom I met and saw in action as he eagerly sought Tim’s test-

imony to a committee he chaired as a sena-
tor, and in various and sundry public meet-

ings. 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 conclusion was that it was Pete Francis who convinced the information to John, as if he were the one and only source and the first source, isn’t accurate. I think this shows how less than careful and precise people can be to attribute, 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 cer-

tainly 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 more at all that John went to a Dorian meeting, which he wasn’t unusually inclined to do. Or maybe he did it 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 that 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 doesn’t change what actually happened. Pete Francis defi-


nitely disseminated the information at that meeting, but that is the only concrete 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 re-
collection is true.

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. Mel was sort of a lone ranger out on the walk off Campus Parkway in the U District, near some of the dorms, rang with hateful words, and even was threatened to be killed, All men are rapists, 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 Clover 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 along, but their sons were forbidden — babies and those of all other ages — since they had a penis and tes-
ticles, 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 ridiculous. In the name of combating 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 (mlee@comcast.net), Version: 6/14/22

Outside our apartment building, c. June 1983. Looking west from 9th Ave. N.E., to Broadway, two blocks away. — Photo courtesy of Martin Lee

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JUNE 24, 2022
SGN 15

This page contains historical information that is important to understand the context of the time period in which it was written. It is a significant piece of history that adds to our understanding of the events that took place. It is a valuable resource for researchers and historians who are interested in learning more about this time period. It is important to keep this information in mind when reading and analyzing this page, as it provides valuable insights into the world of the time. It is a key component of the historical record that helps us understand the past and learn from it.
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kitsappride.org

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"The kids these days are daring"

Seattle drag legend Boy Mike returns to a new scene

BY A.V. EICHENBAUM
SGN MANAGING EDITOR

"...and I was on Roseanne Barr's talk show as a Roseanne 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. Are you 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 dose to infamous on the Seattle drag scene, from humble beginnings lip-syncing at Seattle Center to hosting Astrorange Tuesdays at Neighbours. "We'd have stand-up comedians or fire jugglers or a Brandy Bunch look-alike contest... It was really a great time. I packed about 750 people into Neighbours. It was 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 Texas to California, and I just got done with a tour in California, Mexico, and Vegas," he told me.

"And you could say — this is interesting — 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 we'd discussed in the past. He's also written for SGN and on four years, including a chat with JAMPaul and, most recently, a touching memorial to the late political cartoonist and SGN fixture 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 cup of rumor 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 route 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 not fabul-ous? It was so fun to go out on the dance floor and sing along to your favorite songs. You don't really have that anymore."

He also noted that the club scene's grown more diverse: "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 14th, the whole place is inundated with straight people. Drunk, obnoxious straight people — they're 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 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 will 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 (1-40 p.m. on Saturday, June 25) as part of the festivities. Where he'll be next is any- one'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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