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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 increase 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 is an arm of the Goldenen 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, Annie Kupernik, who is a friend of mine, and said, ‘Would you consider partnering with me to try this out? This is a pilot.’" Kupernik 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 combating loneliness, the intent of the monthly lunch events is not 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,’” 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 Goldenen 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.”
Community input
She added that DineTogether wasn’t created in a vacuum without community input either. 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—a 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 Cuff. 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 a age group of their own.”

Frank Wiedensiek, the Chef at the Tin Table, who serves three 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,” Wiedensiek 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, Wiedensiek 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, to no longer be a member be respected.

Somewhere, 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 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 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 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 are from the tribe of Ephraim (unless they are black or brown-skinned), general encouragements 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 shred 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 the 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 alike 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
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 in what they still believe today, despite their efforts to deceive the public even now about what they really think. It was finally granted the priesthood to Blacks in 1978 does not change their views on why they deserved to be born that way, nor any of their other absurdities or 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 5 or 6, I was fascinated by the story of Solomon in I Kings, when God appeared to him in a dream, and said, “Ask for what you 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 the lives of your enemies but have asked for understanding to discern judgment, I will give you a wise and 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 journeying 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 blessings. Later that summer, that said it was upon my insistence that my name was removed from the records and rolls of the church — in 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?

That summer 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. The title was the kind of excitement, and I could hardly wait to get home to start reading it.

Hunter wrote about all the places to cruise in New York, bars, baths, the docks, parks, and what you name it. And he had information about Gay liberation organizations and other practices. He was a practical guide to Gay people, like the Oscar Wilde Memorial Bookstore. This was a completely new world to me, and I was fasci- nated already with the lifestyle of info.

I had the idea that I needed to move to either New York or San Francisco to come out. I wrote Hunter and mailed him a check. Oscar Wilde bookshop, to say, “I’m stuck here in this small town. Should I move to one of these big cities?”

They wrote back, saying that New York was very expensive, and as far as the West Coast, why not make a more practical move to Seattle? They gave me the address of the Seattle Gay Alliance, so I wrote to it, saying that I wanted to move to the big city to be my real self.

I got a letter back from the president of the SGA, who said what I later found out was a pseudonym, to keep crossed. He also enclosed a one-page, orange-colored flyer about the SGA, with the title You’re Not Alone, which gave me the address of the newly opened Gay Community Center, near Pioneer Square, at 102 Cherry Street.

When Hunter wrote another, more comprehensive book called The Gay Reader USA, in the dedication, he said something to my fellow gay person, like a “cruel brother...” and included my name, which I was very surprised to see years later.

Off to Seattle

So, I got a map of Seattle and a one-way Greyhound ticket. I packed up my suitcase and headed out on my adventure into the unknown near the end of September. I got off the train near the airport, and then made my way to Pioneer Square, to the GCC, the goal of my journey.

I arrived downtown from the street level, where a lot of old Seattle had once been, now tucked underground. The door opened, and the sunlight was carried in brightly at the bottom of the stairs; sounds of construction emanated from inside. A young guy who happened to be looking at that entrance below, looking up at me, wondering if I was going downstairs. He was the first Gay man I ever met, as well as the first person I talked to in my new city.

I showed him my letter from the SGA president; he confirmed that he knew him, since he was also on the SGA board, and then he called him from inside to let him know I had arrived. Then he turned the phone over to me. The president asked me if that the stranger I had just met was a decent person that I could trust to stay with. So, I conveyed this to him a few days.

We went to the 107 Club one night (at 107 Occidental Ave S), which was open to 2 a.m. under 21 since they didn’t drink, alcohol. While waiting in line to pay the dollar cover charge, Rod Stewart singing Maggie May was blasting away. It was a large dance floor, and some go-go boys were on a small perch, scantily clad and dancing to the thunderous music. A guy came up to me and asked if I wanted to dance, and after that and lifting my arm, he took me into his place. I told my name, and he said, “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 night at the GCC, so I went with him that September 30, and sat on a stools in the very nautical bar, with its wooden floor and brick

walh. I waited there while they were meeting amongst the signs of the ongoing remodeling. After they were done, I left to go home. I changed my life forever. Tim Mayhew, one of the board members, and education officer of the Seattle Gay Alliance, came up to me, introduced himself, and offered to give me a tour of the city.

I did, and gay I was staying with a staying me to get to him that October 1, and we lived together for the next two years, very close one after I moved, for more than 32 years after that.

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, and stores, and I was wearing the same kind of Tshirt that Paul Barbick had 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 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 meeting before, state Sen. Peter Finance 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 the new law that was about to happen, and his encouragement to John’s immediate eagerness to take on that Burke and start fighting. Paul Barbick went down to the auditor’s office in the King County Administration Building and demanded a marriage license. They were refused.

Michael Bouglou, an attorney of Roberts Preceding: When Gay Marriage Was Legalized, contacted Tim when he was doing research for it, and came to Seattle in 2014 to interview him.

Later, Tim emailed the following to Bouglou:

Lloyd Ham, who had been County Auditor and State Treasurer, was the elected official responsible for issuing licenses, he was notified by John that John was bringing a test case and the TV news crew was there. The court clerk was at the marble hallway and formally denied the license for the cameras, so that the courts would not be involved. John, who was not a Democrat, he would not object, but this was a public ritual to settle all doubts.

The justices of the Supreme Court in Olympia defeated 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 confirmed gay marriage. I say again because it was implied 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 Bouglou:

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 became almost a feud in some circles 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 them. Particularly in California and New York, they even campaigned to embarrass each other in public occasionally. I thought that the center political in 1968–74 and later to see for myself how they operated and to learn from the early leaders, and then to look to the lessons home to Seattle.

In Seattle, we were more polite and high-minded than most other cities, as part of the local cultural tradition, so the different factions didn’t quarrel but just went off in different directions to pursue their dreams. Sometimes they even converged, but maybe in different aspects of a project. Usually they did not inform or consult each other.

I thought that this dignity was sad and wasteful, if inevitable, so I made it my business to work in both camps for years as a kind of middleman. Both parties had deeper prejudices got suspicions, but we sometimes exploited the special talents of both groups to the benefit of all.

Later, in the 1981 session, when the then Raske group 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 got their hardnosed caucus leader to block anti-gay bills. I believe I was effective. I served without pay. In those days, we all did.

Lobbying and the Dorian Society were the hub of the professional-class gay community, the gay-filled, house-owning, stock-holding, snooty people who had begun meeting in secret in the 1940s and were the new gay liberation and in 1947, in DC, to discuss Gay rights, to dream of the far future, after they were safe. A difference in color was considered a jewel. Others were gay, some neurotics or castaways, some artists, some hustlers, some whiners, some students: impoverished, impatient, angry at injustice, energetic, to push through the years for socialism, people of color, and women, and their own glorious coming out as people both men and women. They could be seen as being not all homosexuals. They were all gay. They were all gay.

The first campaign and resolved, the second had manifestos and marches. You can see the gap. John Singer was of the second kind, a radical secular New York Jew, brash and smart. He came to the Gay Liberation Front, not the Dorian Society. I was in GLF from the beginning and kept it from being bored with all the structure of Dorian. GLF had only a spreader-the-crater boy and a secretary, and so I joined it. I worked there, so I could keep records. The first thing we did was call on the Mayor of Seattle, who was also the police chief.

I often went to San Francisco to visit the gay organizations there, and stayed with a friend of his in Berkeley. In those years he was the Distinguished Daughter of Bimbo–Tip–and, to my head-scratching surprise, there was a guy who had had the operation to become a woman, and was a woman. She said that the only way she could relate to women was to be one herself.

I was looking enough in the bar on the corner of 10th and Folson St. In a leather bar on Folson, I briefly met Paul Lynde. He was wearing sunglasses, sat on a barstool and sharply

Tim Mayhow, c. 1971
Photo courtesy of Martin Lee
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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 106 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 he knows I'm Gay!

When Bob tried to organize his 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 it flustered the quietly and never really took hold. While we were in a restaurant afterwards, the waiter asked him what he wanted, he asked, "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 chamber, where he interviewed members in person in their offices. Some were very liberal and sympathetic ones, like John Miller, Jeannette Williams, and Philly Lamphere. Others, like Tim Hill, 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 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 Hennemuller, a young attorney running for Congress, standing at his booth with his Vague model-looking wife. He kept looking at the questionnaire, seemingly hesitant to answer, hemming and hawing, saying a few blandishments that were vague enough but not wholeheartedly liberal enough but not wholeheartedly liberal enough. His wife kept herself turned away a bit, not looking at us directly in the eye. He didn't heed her and stumbled on, on 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 commuting costs of taking the bus to and from the capital, unlike the enormous salaries of later Gay lobbyists years after, which ranged from $60,000 to $80,000 and even higher. One person who gave the rare amount of $100 was upset that his donation didn't result in full Gay rights being won shortly after.

Peter Feinschmidt 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 to not 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 office, our personal phone was also its contact phone number. Tim had the number 323-6909 for years before that, and it became the listed number for the Seattle Gay Alliance, with his references recorded.

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 struggling 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 quite finish high school. We encouraged him to stay calm and hopeful, and talked him down on that cold and dark, rainy night. The phone ring didn't have a reason, yet but that's what we helped him to realize. He sounded cheering up, and hopefully he held on till he was out on his own, away from the self-righteous grip of his deranging parents.

Some Hearthelmers called to yell "faggot!" and hang up. What sounded like schoolkids asked if this was the place where all the Queers were, then laughed their heads off, surrendering before they had the house hooked up to a loudspeaker for the rest of the group, as it echoed in the room.

Speaking engagements

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

Tim also organized some speaking engagements in Northfield, Washington's suburbs, 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 religious rabbi. His name came into play at one of the Franklin High School engagements, where a couple of Jewish students testify challenged our right to be there. When Tim told them that not all Jewish people felt the same, that there was a diverse collection of communities in their city, 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 chatted with 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 at least there weren't any women officers, but the room was trying to be open minded. Officers glared at us, looking like they had aubt to burst out with a homophobic remark, but they were clearly not polite enough, or duty bound, to not.

One of the officers asked us why so many people called them 'faggots' and not Gay. We presented a list of questions, some unfeignedly terrible questions at us, but after all, that's what we were there for to reason with them. They became more muffled 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 in 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 suspicious stares and snarky questions having dissolved.

On one occasion, Tim organized and headed up a speaking engagement at the meeting hall of St. Matthews United Methodist Church, in West Seattle. He started with a general introduction about Gay people and their rights, and for the audience reaction when I said there was a Gay person to answer their questions at each one of those tables. The Gay who were sitting at the table per table, then stood up to identify themselves and say that they could discuss everything with the attendees further.

 Northwest Gay Review

Tim was the co-founder of the monthly Northwest Gay Review, started by Lanny Swardlow in Portland, OR, in 1974 and covering the Gay news in Oregon, Washington, and California, until Lanny turned the paper over to some others in 1977. The three of us would take places among the bars and organizations.

One time, Lanny wanted to test whether the Canadian border police would allow us in, answering the question of what you're being brought 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, asked us if we could not. Also we turned around and went back to Seattle.

At the announcement of Tim's editor duties, he raised a revenue for the Gay Review and other advertisers to a small extent, but Lanny and others were primarily involved with that task back then. Business was several such bar owner was Jack, of the new Boren Street Disco, which had been the old Stons of Norway Hall. We could see the vast space featuring a wooden floor and impressive architecture. It was completely empty, with just a little table or two and a few chairs. A strong contrast to later days, when it would be packed with dancing revelers as this disco, then later another, and so on.

Jack told us that when the king of Norwegio came to office at a ceremony handing over the crown, he had a problem with what it would become is that it would be a place for young people to gather and socialize, and be thought that was a problem with the police, but we were all right there.
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Conflict and progress

When Antonia Bunting's book on opposing Gay rights, and Initiative 13, filed by a couple of police officers, raised its ugly head again, little Tim and I found ourselves at the center of a wave of anti-Gay sentiments. We were battling to keep the momentum going, and it was tough. We had some of the women who had a table with anti-Gay signs in front of Frederick & Nelson, and the Bon Marche (now Macy's) on several occasions.

They were largely Mormons, aligned with fundamentalists of other churches. Other pro-Gay people came along while we were trying to reason with them, to add their support to the struggle, and to bring some of the realities to bear. Many other Gay folks went downtown numerous times to talk to these hardcore true believers. No amount of cajoling, or any of the arguments, could startle the few who opposed it, when they had any seeds planted to eventually change some of their minds, we'd never know.

The Democratic convention that same year, in Spokane. We came to face to face with more of Antonia Bunting'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 be killed if we didn't repent. Staying calm in such a situation was our fate, but still, we'd be killed if we didn't repent. Staying calm in such a situation tested our patience, but overall, all we got was a peaceful, though tense, rally, and didn't escalate into anything bad.

Tim was one of the delegates to the Democratic convention. In 1980, he held a seat in New York. He worked on the platform committee, and was part of the Gay caucus in the Senate. At that time, he was vice president of the student senate, not a student yet. He was an active participant in a Gay organization, and his most stirring comments were:

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

We continued to see many changes in the Gay rights movement, and the activist 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; photos by the Save Gay Seattle, obics urged/aark @ https://www.savegayseattle.com

Transcript of Tim's testimony (written and legal) in the Gay Civil Rights on housing discrimination, 10/16/72: https://www.seattle.gov/cityarchives/exhibits-analyses/builders/1972-02-10-lgm sexual orientation and housing discrimination


My archived history at the UW, including most of the fight of 1980, and a few of Tim and me during our years together: https://digitalcollections.lib.washington.edu/digitalcollection/pioneeredit1/2968/recl

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:

1 Some of their follow-up email correspondence follows:

S0014 Dear Tim,

I just had 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 gentleman, very knowledgeable, and intelligent and are just astonishing. So until there are the thousands of papers that constitute the Tim Mayhew Collection at UW — with so many of them dated 1972 in your own unreadable handwriting. Those papers are treasured very much, I owe you for saving them and you for giving them away.

Sincerely, Michael

6/6/14

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 my papers.

You said you were focused on the origins of the marriage movement. That was a very remote concern 40–45 years ago, but the legislation reforms in which I had a hand and that became Washington constitutional and state law, took place in 1972, even prior to the gender-neutral marriage, among other things.

The State of Washington threw out the current legal legacy laws over a general objection before the US Supreme Court did, but it was never mentioned on television. I think most abolished. Laws were not generally known of the old laws were, because those laws were never mentioned, either. Married women could own property until 1971.

Tim

Tim Mayhew to Michael Bouscuen 8/26/14

As for Singer v. Harris, I am the direct cause of that. As I came back from lobbying the legislative session that passed, I told a friend John Singer that nobody had yet tried to use the new marriage law, and what it could mean. He wanted to be the first, so I made sure that it was pushed to the limit, so he grabbed his friend Paul Barkwell and went ahead. They were comrades of the campaign, although no romance was involved, which is appropriate for a civil property contract.

2 Below is further correspondence:

Michael Bouscuen to Tim Mayhew 8/26/14

Your letter of August 26, 2014 is related to the case Singer v. Harris that I am the direct cause of that. As I came back from lobbying the legislative session that passed, I told a friend John Singer that nobody had yet tried to use the new marriage law, and what it could mean. He wanted to be the first, so I made sure that it was pushed to the limit, so he grabbed his friend Paul Barkwell and went ahead. They were comrades of the campaign, although no romance was involved, which is appropriate for a civil property contract.

3 Below is further correspondence:

Martin Lee to Michael Bouscuen 8/27/14

I'm Martin Lee, Tim's best friend of nearly 45 years. Tim forwarded your questions to me, both. And his response to me this morning. I'm not being too presumptuous to add a few observations of my own, I'd like to point to:

As for Pugliese, and trying to pinpoint the genesis of the whole struggle for equality in marriage: I met him and Paul Barkwell quite early on after coming to town. I sometimes visited the collective they had on Capitol Hill, on Maloney Avenue, down the street a few blocks from the Seattle Counseling Service for Sexual Minorities. I was with them on visits to Paul Tim and other political meetings, in marches for gay rights, as well as some for women's rights in downtown Seattle in the form of "the changing of the guard at state, women must decide their fate" still resound in my memory, and a wide spectre of the Gay Movement.

And although I wasn't witness to Tim telling John Singer for the first time about the new marriage law, he applied it in the early days after Tim had given him the news, pondering strategy after the marriage license rejection, ramifications, etc. Which quickly became woven together with Paul Frace, whom I met and saw in action as he expertly 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 controversy nature of gay rights in other settings than marriage.

So, a flat statement that it was not an easy thing for them to do, which is not to say it wasn't done, but speaking to their own experience and vision.

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 Frace had given him at the Dorian meeting, if they were not aware of all the factors.

(From a later note)

If I was ever now at all that John went to a Dorian meeting choo, 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 from more 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] doesn't change what actually happened. Pete Frace's definitely disseminated the information at that meeting, but that is the single 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's true.

4 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, but still, a brush was given on the walk off Campus Park in the U District, near some of the dorms, rang with hateful words like "faggot" and if you're seen, you're going to be killed. All the men were raped. Therefore.

Those were also the days when Martin Lee's meetings were held in a small house, converted to an office space, in the U District on the upper Ave, near Clown Park. They were trying out a new concept at the time: providing on-site day care for those women-only meetings. Women were welcomed to bring their daughters, and their sons were forbidden—babies and those of all other ages—since they had a penis and testes, 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 combatting hatred, they were guilty of uneducated 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 (mileecame@outlook.com), Version: 6/14/22

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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 one of the most famous names in Seattle drag scene. His performances at Seattle Center to hosting “Return of the Nighthawks” Tuesdays at Neighbooru — he’d appeared on stand-up comedians or fire jugglers at a “Brady Bunch” look-alike contest — was a great time. I packed 750 people into Neighbooru. 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, 2009. The Strangest described him as “omnipresent and impossible to miss,” among other things — disappearing again, and resurfacing again just last year.

“I’ve toured everywhere, from Florida to Washington to Texas to Vancouver, 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 Real Gay Guy, a DJ in San Diego, something we’d discussed in the past. He’s also written for the SGN and off for years, including a chat with RuPaul, and most recently, a touching memorial to the late-political cartoonist and SGN fixture Ken Campbell. He wrote a regular column in the 1980s 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. The regal capes 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 fabulous? 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 everyone. 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, oblivious 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 horrible time for me. I didn’t take any crap from anyone. 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 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 (1-4 p.m. on Saturday, June 25) as part of the festivities. Where he’ll be next is anyone’s guess. Seattle’s ever-changing 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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