

Seattle Gay News
SGN

*Honoring our past,
Fighting for our future*

2026



PRIDE

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radical roots
p. 5*

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DELTA PRESENTS

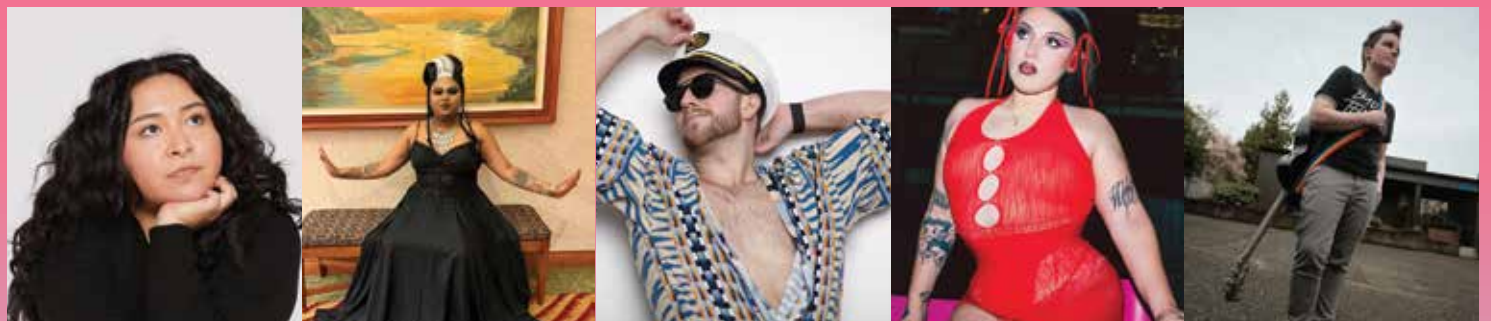
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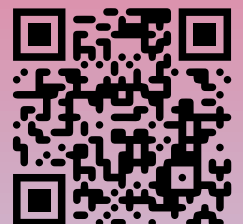
Capitol Hill



ALL AGES. FOUR STAGES
FREE FOR ALL. BEV GARDENS



SAT 6.27



BABIDOLL TREMENDA KWEEN KAYSH ALFONSO TAN DJ NATE
ALEKSA MANILA DRAG STORYTIME DOGGY DRAG SHOW
DONNATELLA HOWE GAYSHA STARR TEEN COURT PAGEANT LADIE CHABLIS
BACON STRIP ALLIE MIRAGE PARADISCO JULIAN FUND GIVEAWAY
ASHLEY PACE PRINCESS WES ToX!c & FRIENDS CEASAR HART SHOWCASE
MOLINA MOLINA XI WUNDERLUNDE DJ TOYA B RAIN COUNTRY DANCE
PNW BLACK PRIDE LATINE SHOWCASE PRIDE ASIA KARAOKE ALL STARS
MUSES AND MOGULS PRESENTS: BLK AND BLUES YOHANA LARA DELA ROSA



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DELTA PRESENTS

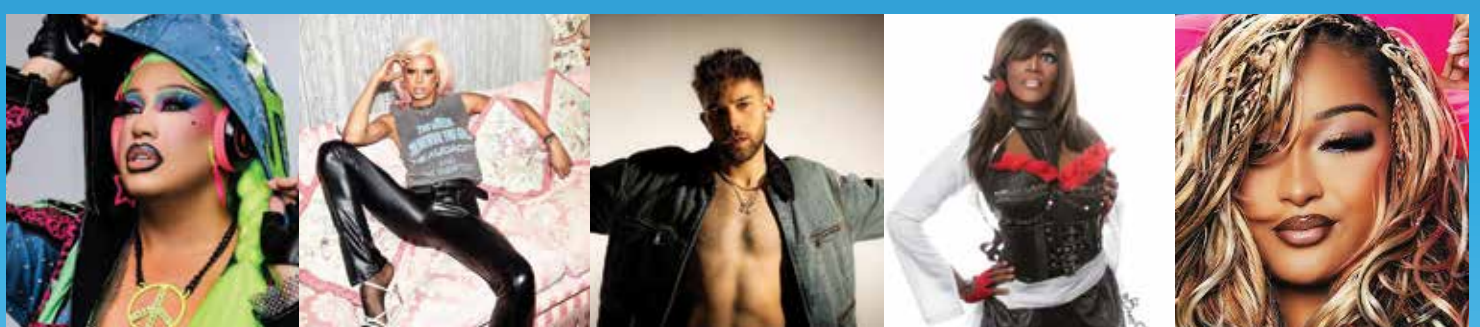
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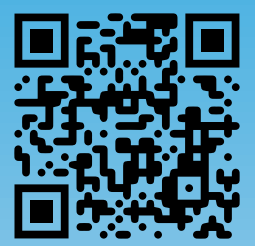


**ALL AGES. THREE STAGES
FREE FOR ALL. BEV GARDENS**



SUN

6.28



**GRANT KNOCHE COCO MONTRESE TAYCE
DEJA SKYE ALEKSA MANILA VE'ONDRE
DOLLY MADISON & QUEEN ANDREW SCOTT POTION COMPANY MAMA TITS
STAY UP LATE SHOW KOURTNI CAPREE DUV SEATTLE QUEER NIGHTLIFE
PERFORMER AUDITION SHOWCASE WITH BRUNO BAEWATCH NOX FALLS
"THE NAUGHTY BODY OF BURLESQUE" MISS TEXAS 1988 PRESENTS BIG TOP ENERGY
WHIM W'HIM SEATTLE LADIES CHOIR ABNER RACHEL WONG AKAZI ORION
MONDAY MOURNING FRAYA LOVE NICOLE ONOSCOPI BOBBI JO BLESSINGS MISS JAXON
CAELA BAILEY KINGS MIKEY MOO LOVO BABY VAN BEEZLY WONDER TWINZ
BEES STACEY STARSTRUCK ROWAN RUTHLESS ANITA SPRITZER TYMIRA**



W SEATTLE





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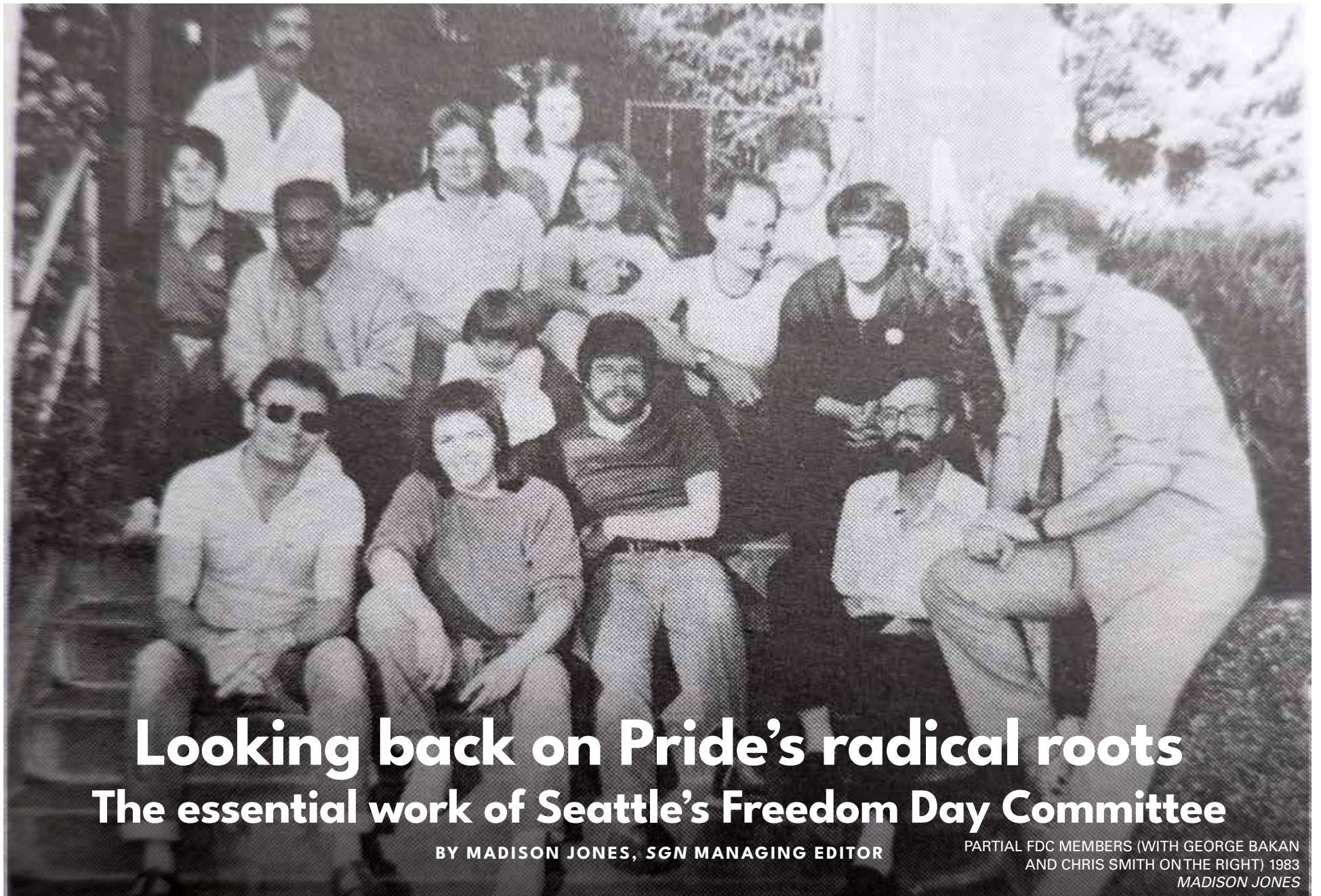
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Looking back on Pride's radical roots

The essential work of Seattle's Freedom Day Committee

BY MADISON JONES, SGN MANAGING EDITOR

PARTIAL FDC MEMBERS (WITH GEORGE BAKAN AND CHRIS SMITH ON THE RIGHT) 1983
MADISON JONES

Pride in Seattle today is mostly known for being a citywide celebration. However, before large corporations saw it as an opportunity to covet rainbow dollars, it was also a means for the LGBTQIA+ community to demand broader societal acceptance, raise awareness about community issues like HIV/AIDS, and advocate for legal protections.

From the 1980s to late 1990s, a group of community- and politically minded organizers, called the Freedom Day Committee, were at the heart of making sure Pride even happened every year. Three former members of the FDC sat down with the SGN for this year's "Pride Issue" to share their experiences.

FDC emerges (1981–1985): Chris Smith

Chris Smith joined the FDC in 1981, after moving to the city. He told the SGN how even at the time, there were disagreements on whether Pride should be just a celebration or also a protest/rally.

"There's always been a tension between protesters and the celebrations," he said.

On one end, groups like Radical Women and the Freedom Socialist

Party wanted Pride to mobilize the community on certain issues, while others feared it would hurt the event's business potential.

"The GSBA at the time opposed the committee's way of organizing," Smith said. He also noted how certain Gay men didn't want to include women, or talk about their issues, like abortion. In 1981, the split meant that no march was planned. According to Smith, the Freedom Socialist Party and Radical Women put it together in just five weeks.

"In those days it was small, but it seemed big to us," he said. "It was strong, it was dynamic."

Then in 1982, the opposite occurred: the march was shut down in favor of just a celebration. By 1984, the two opposing sides, unable to agree, ended up having their own separate Prides.

Things began to change around 1985, when the mounting societal stigma that came with the AIDS epidemic led new groups to emerge at the forefront of Seattle's Pride organizing. Smith recounted the time he was Gay-bashed by people who said to him, "You're an AIDS spreader."

"It made me realize the importance of fighting back," he said.

Although the FDC voted to dedicate

the 1985 Pride march to people living with AIDS, there were still some who voted against it. "They didn't want anything that wasn't a celebration," Smith said.

What Smith admired most about Pride organizing then was the way it was structured to engage with community. "The FDC was a real coalition. It wasn't just radicals or the business part. It really represented a broad spectrum of the community," he said. "Because we were democratic, it was majority ruled. Anybody could come, and anybody could vote."

He also appreciated the way the FDC advocated for a more diverse pool of speakers and performers. One example he gave was of Perry Watkins, a Black soldier who was arrested, jailed, and kicked out of the military at 19 years old for having Gay sex. Smith said that the more respectable part of the community didn't want Watkins to speak at Pride because of his unapologetic, flamboyant personality and self-expression.

"He would wear these tiny, tiny shorts and crop tops, but he was such a delightful human being," he said of Watkins.

Smith had positive things to say about his fellow committee members.

Former SGN publisher George Bakan was a cofounder and part of the FDC, and saw the value in Pride as a way to rally the community.

"What I liked about George is he was a political thinker," Smith said. He noted that committee member Will Ross was instrumental in the name change, adding "Bisexual" and "Transgender," in 1992: "he wanted to be inclusive." Another FDC organizer, Patricia (Trish) Throop, he said, "was really good at bringing people together."

Bringing community together (1986–1992): Patricia Throop

Throop told the SGN she joined the FDC in 1986 after moving to Seattle from New Orleans with her partner at the time. She had worked as an event planner most of her career and was looking for ways to get involved with the community. Her first FDC meeting, she recalled, was held in a trailer at Seattle Central College.

"I went to a meeting, and there [were] people like Chris Smith, Su Docekal, and George Bakan," she said. "It was not glamorous in any way, but they really were dedicated people."

Throop said the all-volunteer-led FDC would meet with 10-15 people a



FDC GROUP PHOTO 1991
MADISON JONES



FDC GROUP PHOTO 1992
MADISON JONES



FREEDOM DAY COMMITTEE 1988 BANNER
COME OUT SEATTLE

week for multiple months before Pride in order to put everything together. “We had representatives from different organizations. We were always trying to get people to come and join us,” she said.

Logistics ran the gamut, from working with the Seattle Parks Department to secure Volunteer Park to begging the city to provide services Throop said they didn’t want to give.

“But in the end, they always came through,” she said.

One thing Throop focused on for the FDC was organizing all the vendors. She also noted how she and other FDC members would go around to different Gay bars and other establishments to sell pins to raise money for Pride.

In her last year with the FDC (1995), the march garnered over 100,000 participants, which was the largest event in the state that year, surpassing Seafair.

“We were very proud of that, because the city would give all this attention to Seafair, and cut them all sorts of breaks, whereas they wouldn’t for us.”

The *SGN* asked Throop how the political climate during her time with the FDC affected how people in the community showed up to Pride. She responded that during the AIDS epidemic, there was a lot more fear of persecution.

“Schoolteachers would march with paper bags over their heads,” she said.

Other concerns the FDC had to contend with, she noted, included bomb threats, right-wing counterprotesters, and police harassment. “We had to be really aware that the larger community did not want us around and did not want to see us,” she said.

Throop also touched on the debate about having Pride be just a celebration or also a protest/rally. She said that although she understood why some people wanted to have just a celebration, “everybody on the Freedom Day Committee really felt that it was important that we also talk about the real stuff going on in our community, and not just turn a blind eye to the persecution, AIDS, all these things that our community had to deal with.”

Throop talked about how women

came to play a prominent role in the FDC. Every year, two cochairs were chosen: always one woman and one man. Although men still outnumbered women slightly, she said the women of the FDC still played significant leadership roles in the organization.

“I was chair five or six years out of the ten that I was involved,” she recalled.

Before the AIDS crisis hit Seattle, the relationship between Gay men and Lesbians was not always supportive, Throop explained. But things started to change once the epidemic started to take hold.

“The boys were dying, and it was the women that started rallying together to do blood donations, become nurses or caregivers, and things like that, supporting Gay men in our community,” she said.

Throop pointed to the creation of groups like the Chicken Soup Brigade, recreational teams, and book clubs, which brought about more gender integration going into the late ‘80s and ‘90s.

When it came to Bisexual and Transgender people, inclusivity also was a major topic of debate for Pride organizers during Throop’s time at the FDC.

“There were definitely contingents of people who said, ‘They don’t represent us. They’re not in our community. Pick a side: you’re either straight or gay,’” she explained.

However, Throop said she and the majority of other FDC members ultimately felt that it was important to give other Queer communities visibility and to be accepting.

“If you want in, you’re in our community and we accept you,” she said.

In an FDC vote of 29 to 1 in 1992, Seattle became the first city in the world to add “Bisexual” and “Transgender” to the name of the Pride event. Throop said she felt the change had a large influence on organizers in the rest of the country.

Throop told the *SGN* that the FDC belonged to an international group of Pride organizers that she would attend every year. At the meetings, she said there would be heated discussions

about the pros and cons of including Bisexual and Transgender people.

“I really felt that Seattle jumped on board early, and helped make that cause much more known and accepted,” she said.

As Throop transitioned away from the FDC to focus more on her life and career, Pride moved from Capitol Hill to downtown, where the march still occurs. She reflected on how there were both benefits and downsides to that decision.

“I could see that benefit of having more space,” she said. “Though I was sad that we were leaving the Hill and ... our community.”

Throop added that, today, “the parade is not what I care for anymore” and that she hadn’t attended in the last five years. She cited the inclusion of corporations and the lack of a political agenda as the main reasons.

“It was really not supposed to be a commercial event,” she said. “It was political, and a representation of the communities, organizations, and gatherings.”

Pride expands (1992): Will Ross

Ross moved to Seattle and graduated from the UW Law School in 1989. As a student, he helped run the Gay and Lesbian Medical Association at the UW. In January 1991, he moved to Capitol Hill as a prosecutor and joined the FDC. According to him, he arrived during some internal strife.

“They were literally crucifying their male cochair for making unilateral decisions,” he said.

Ross explained how in the first year, he primarily focused on fundraising, and that by 1992 he had been promoted to the FDC’s financial director. Most of the money he raised for the FDC and Pride came from what he called “bar runs,” during which volunteers would sell T-shirts and pins for \$10 (about \$24.45 today, adjusted for inflation) at bars as well as bookstores and other places.

“I started doing bar runs in ‘91, which is probably one of the reasons why I was so involved with the name change in ‘92,” he said.

By 1992, mounting pressure led to

the inclusion of Bisexual and Transgender people in Seattle’s Pride event. Ross told the *SGN* there had been three to four months of discussions, listening to the testimony of Bisexual and Transgender people, like Princess LaRouge, before the FDC held its vote, which was nearly unanimous.

“Nothing [in the FDC] got approved with that kind of majority, ever, ever, ever!” Ross said.

The FDC’s decision was announced in the March 27, 1992, issue of the *SGN*. Much to Ross’s and the FDC’s chagrin, the name change caused significant backlash in the community.

“A lot of the opposition was coming from the white Gay bar owners on Capitol Hill,” he said.

One of the bars’ manager created a petition and collected over a thousand signatures within two weeks, demanding that the name revert. Ross said the owners came to the next FDC meeting to give an ultimatum to change the name back, or else the Gay bars wouldn’t allow them to fundraise for the event.

“It was going to be a stranglehold on us financially,” he said.

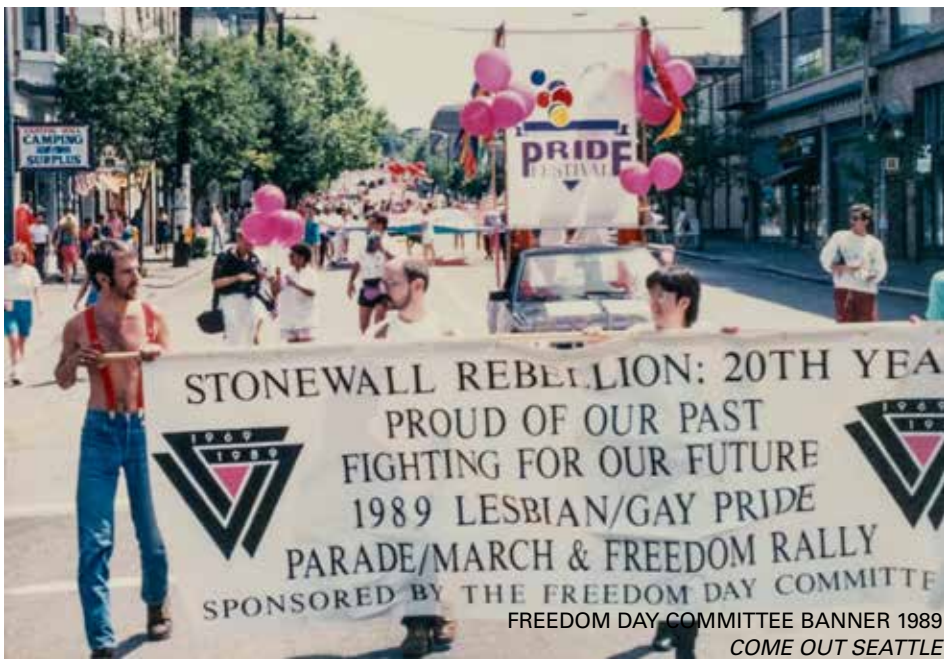
Ross explained how “in 1992, there was still this emphasis [among Gays and some Lesbians] that we didn’t want to rock the boat, that we had to present ourselves as ‘normal’ and ‘acceptable’ to mainstream America,” and that including Transgender people in particular would scare people off.

But some Gay bar owners were more open-minded, like Jim Drew, co-founder of the Timberline Tavern, he said. Although Drew didn’t support the name change, he still was supportive of the event and opposed the others who were threatening the event.

“His involvement with the community got the other bar owners and employees to engage in conversation with us,” Ross said.

Another group he cited as being opposed initially was the drag community, with drag queen Mark Finley being particularly hostile to the name change. “It was really surprising to see how many people in the drag community were so opposed,” Ross said.

The FDC held two community con-



versations, one at the Broadway Market and one at the Broadway Performance Hall. These included a Trans-led educational forum for still-skeptical Gays and Lesbians, which Ross said was well attended.

Another way the FDC convinced people to accept the change was during their bar runs leading up to Pride. For 12-13 weekends in a row, Ross, along with his volunteers, had to sell T-shirts and pins with the new name. That forced people to engage in conversation with them to understand why the change was important.

“Some people understood. They may have not agreed, but they understood and accepted,” he said.

Ross saw the importance of visibility as a vital first step in Bisexual and Transgender people addressing the oppression they faced.

“That was my argument,” he said in reference to speaking with people at the bars. “We have to acknowledge that these people exist. Because we cannot be free if they’re not free.”

When the FDC finally led the 1992 Pride March with a large banner carrying the new name, people’s reactions, according to Ross, were overwhelmingly supportive, with loud applause along the route. At the rally in Volunteer Park, the group featured both Transgender and Bisexual speakers — to which Ross didn’t hear a single complaint. He was amazed that after all the controversy, the holdouts in the community finally ended up supporting it all.

“The bar owners and [other] members never brought up the issue again,” he said.

FDC closes (1998): Will Ross

Ross told the SGN he eventually left the FDC in 1998 to focus on other professional pursuits. But he related how the organization eventually came apart in the late 1990s.

After 1992, he said the city had already started to complain about Pride being too big for Capitol Hill. Another issue was that the FDC was not a formal legal entity, and if it wanted to continue organizing Seattle Pride at a larger scale, it was going to need to transform into something more structured. In 1993, Ross said, he and Jeff Newcomer created a new structure for the FDC, with a board and secretary, to transition the group into becoming a 501(c)(3) nonprofit. In 1994, the changes were voted in.

According to Ross, he and Newcomer were the only two members of the newly created board that were previously part of the FDC, while others, like Dan Savage, Paul Doyle, and Mary Martone, were not. A rift began to emerge between the old and new members. In January 1997, the latter began to discuss creating a full-time, \$40,000-a-year executive director and \$15,000-a-year assistant position. This was a problem for Ross, because, as the financial director in previous years, the fundraising numbers weren’t adding up to do both Pride at Seattle Center (estimated to be \$100,000) and also create these new positions.

“It was one thing to do a \$35,000-40,000 event by selling buttons and T-shirts and getting money from vendors; it’s completely different when you’re talking about another \$60,000,”

he said.

When he asked the board how they planned to raise the money needed, they reportedly told him it would be the job of the newly hired staff to raise enough for their own salary.

“I don’t see how that works,” he responded to them. “Because you have to pay them the moment they walk into the door.”

The proposed changes also upset Smith and the FDC volunteer base. By April, Ross said, the board held an emergency meeting without him knowing. The 501(c)(3) paperwork had been removed, and the board disintegrated, taking all the money away from the rest of the FDC.

“Unbeknownst to us, they took all the money, because it belonged to that organization and not the FDC,” Ross said. “We were left with \$50 in the banking account. They withdrew the 501(c)(3) status application from the feds and state of Washington. And they withdrew all the city permits with the City of Seattle.”

For Ross, there was one board member in particular he continues to have major resentment toward for that decision: “This is why I can’t stand Dan Savage. And then people talk about community. You don’t screw over community because of that.”

For that moment on, it was all hands on deck for the remaining FDC members to turn everything around before June 1997.

“You have less than three months to raise \$50,000 and plan an event that in the past you started planning in January,” he explained.

Ross said friends of his who owned

a coffee shop were able to donate \$1000 to help buy T-shirts and pins, which was instrumental in raising the money.

He also explained how the board that left eventually became the Seattle Pride Committee, and when it was announced in 2006 that the organization was over \$100,000 in debt for holding the event at Seattle Center, he was not surprised.

“They finally did form the nonprofit. But I think the problem with that organization was they did not have people like Jeff and me on the board, that had long-term experience,” he said.

He also cited financial problems as the reason why the FDC also eventually became unable to run the event. As the parade became larger and more costly, sponsorships from corporations, specifically alcohol companies, were an option that members of the FDC were opposed to.

“We were really in opposition to any kind of sponsorship from breweries, since a disproportionate number of people in our community have substance abuse issues. But there was just no way that we could raise money from just Washington Mutual, Nordstrom, and Microsoft,” Ross said.

Ross ended the conversation with the SGN by saying he no longer cared to attend the parade because of the cost community organizations have to pay in order to participate, and that corporations often take up too much space. He also said the lack of a political agenda, like the FDC had for its Pride events, was another reason why.

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& DJ SHAMWOW

COMMUNITY STAGE

Abstract Q's
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Organizing Pride in Seattle from 1981 to 2000

A written history of the Freedom Day Committee

BY CHRIS SMITH, SPECIAL TO THE SGN

1983 FDC POSTER

Editor's note: This article was originally prepared to accompany the Gay Pride poster collection donated to University of Washington Archives in 2024; it is also a modified, updated version of an earlier piece written for the June 18, 1999, SGN.

The Freedom Day Committee (FDC) was a unique, democratic grassroots coalition that organized Seattle's Pride marches and rallies for almost two decades. We were all volunteers, and many of us represented groups or were individual activists committed to bettering life for Queer people. Some of us had roots in the social justice movements of the 1960s, and some were new to advocating for change. In the process, we all came to understand the power and the difficulty of coalition work, where we shared a goal but had different visions of how to reach it.

I focus on and give credit to the Freedom Socialist Party (FSP) and the Stonewall Committee for L/G/B/T/Q Rights, two of the groups to which I belonged, and to Radical Women (RW), for building the FDC's community approach to producing powerful Pride events for almost 20 years. Inadvertently, the FDC also functioned as an informal clearinghouse to help resolve issues facing the Queer community, including a bitter cycle of right-wing legislative attacks and the dire AIDS crisis.

The FSP, the Stonewall Committee, and RW could not have done it alone, but with their leadership and hard work, the Pride events were able to integrate multi-issue ("inter-sectional" in today's terms) politics into the marches and rallies. I urge others to recognize the incredible strength of democratic coalition politics as the need to organize continues.

I used my collection of 27 Seattle Pride posters, which spans 1975 to 2002, as a structure for this article. Occasionally, I pull the posters out from my basement because someone asks to display them. This year it was Bill Ross, a former cochair of the Freedom Day Committee, who was writing an article about the first time "Bisexual" and "Transgender" were added to the name of the event. That was 1992.

The Museum of History and Industry (MOHAI) also asked to display them in an exhibit that commemorated 50 years of LGBTQ+ Pride in Seattle; they were on display from mid-June to August 19, 2024. Now it is time to donate them to the University of Washington Archives.

As I look through the collection, I

am amazed at how the artwork on the posters graphically captures the dynamics of the times and the intense organizing done by unpaid Lesbian, Gay, Bi, Transgender, and Queer people dedicated to commemorating the Stonewall riots of 1969. The annual Pride events are held in June and [in Seattle] usually culminate in a march on the last Sunday of the month.

It is a great story.

1969

I start with the year 1969. Of course, there was no poster for the riot in New York City's Greenwich Village at the seedy Stonewall Inn that erupted when vice cops tried to bust the nothing-left-to-lose drag queens, street kids, and Queers of color. This three-night series of angry demonstrations launched the modern LGBTQ rights movement, which in 46 short years of mass protest pressured the US Supreme Court to legalize same-sex marriage in 2015.

Unfortunately, it is easy to forget the disreputable fighters such as the dyke who threw the first punch, or the drag queens of color who rocked the paddy wagon full of their outrageous sisters, or the young Queers who barricaded the police in the bar and tossed in flaming wads of paper. Instead of slinking away into the night, these misfits teased the cops with suggestive come-ons and proudly fought back. They were responding to centuries of oppression.

The early Gay riots validated the revolutionary axiom that when the most oppressed lead, everyone's status is raised. The Stonewall riots launched the multihued, multigendered Queer rights movement that followed and led the way for much-needed social change.

The upheaval in Greenwich Village occurred as the civil rights, women's, and student antiwar movements were struggling with the question: Who is our enemy? Straight people, men, white people? A capitalist system? And everyone was confronting the sexism, racism, and homophobia that penetrate the very movements we were building.

Obviously, the Queer community was not immune from these tensions, but if solidarity can be maintained, nothing can stop it. The Stonewall Rebellion, led by those scraggly champions of human rights, found a way.

The FSP, the Stonewall Committee, and RW knew that building on the original militancy of the riots at the Stonewall Inn would be an effective way to organize. Today, that is still

true as the Supreme Court upholds the right to discriminate based on religious disagreement and strips away our right to control our own bodies regarding abortion, and as Transgender people face a barrage of laws trying to erase their reality.

1974

Fifty years ago, the first event to commemorate Pride was organized in Seattle. It was also the first year the *Seattle Gay News*, known as *SGN*, was published. A group of activists, including David Neff, Patrick Haggerty, Cindy Gipple, Sam Deaderick, and Faygele Ben-Miriam, who hung out around the Gay Community Center and the Seattle Counseling Service for Sexual Minorities, put together a weeklong series of Pride events. This culminated in Pioneer Square, at an evening rally and dance with live music featuring Sue Isaacs. It attracted 200 brave souls.

1975



Two Seattle ordinances banning discrimination in employment and housing based on sexual orientation and political ideology had passed — ordinances that RW and FSP organizers helped draft. The Seattle Women's Commission formally petitioned Mayor Wes Uhlman to proclaim June 24-29 Gay Pride Week. The request was ignored until 1977, when Uhlman finally made it official.

The lack of formal recognition by the City, however, did not stop the Lesbian Resource Center and the Gay Community Center from sponsoring a full schedule of Pride events, organized by a variety of community groups. The

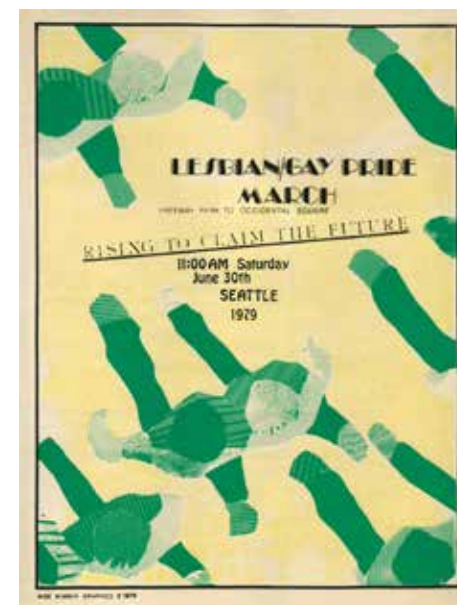
busy 1975 Gay Pride week, organized by the Union of Sexual Minorities and held at the Seattle Center, culminated in a protest of ongoing police harassment of Gay bar owners and patrons.

The official poster was printed with silver lettering on midnight blue velveteen paper, in keeping with the mid-1970s disco look.

1977

The theme was "Gay Pride '77. Equal Rights for All!" The rally featured jazz musician Bea Smith and an array of militant speakers who denounced Anita Bryant's national anti-Gay crusade.

1979



On the national scene, in California, Dan White, a former police officer and now a city supervisor, murdered Gay San Francisco City Supervisor Harvey Milk and Mayor George Moscone. Outraged crowds rioted on Castro Street when White received a meager seven-year sentence for this double homicide.

In Seattle, the Pride March of 1979 celebrated the defeat of Initiative 13, a right-wing attempt by Seattle police officers David Estes and Dennis Falk to revoke inclusion of Queers in Seattle's Fair Employment Practices and Open Housing ordinances, which the FSP and RW had been central to winning.

1979 also marked the groundbreaking Third World Lesbian/Gay Conference in Washington, DC, which preceded the first national Gay March on Washington.

Seattle's poster gives an unusual bird's-eye view of Gay Pride marchers. It was silk-screened in nontraditional pale yellow, green, and black.

This year, Smiley Hilaire, an Indig-enous rabble-rouser, began Dykes on Bikes, and it became tradition that they lead the march.

A theme was somehow chosen to connect the entire event: "Rising to Claim the Future" — and rise we did.

1981



The 1981 march was initiated by the Freedom Socialist Party and Radical Women, which called for a coalition effort to plan the event. Five weeks before Stonewall day, no march was planned, and the FSP and RW felt it would be a real setback for the movement if nothing happened. After all, it was thanks to powerful organizing that Initiative 13 was defeated. We decided to make flyers and hit the Queer bars to see if there was interest in putting together a march. A new group emerged that consisted primarily of brand-new activists and seasoned radicals. We chose the name Stonewall '81 Committee for Lesbian/Gay Rights and managed to gather 28 endorsements for the march. The theme, "Lesbians/Gays Demand Liberation in Every Land, on Every Level! For Solidarity of All the Oppressed against Rightwing Attacks!" was a mouthful, but it reflected the militant politics of the new multiracial coalition.

George Bakan, a newcomer to Seattle, noticed the tremendous energy most Queers felt when they attended their first Pride march. From that point on, George never looked back. He later became a leader in the Freedom Day Committee and the editor of *Seattle Gay News*.

The 300-strong march was a great success despite attempts by a group of conservative Gay men to drown out the speakers by blaring music from their flag-draped "Gay, American, and Proud" float.

The rally was held downtown on the cobblestones of Occidental Park. It coincided with the Native American Longest Walk, traveling through Seattle on their trek to Washington, DC, for redress of long-standing injustices. With the help of Jeanette Allen, a Stonewall member with the Nez Perce tribe, we made arrangements for the exchange of historically important statements of support between the two events.

1982

In 1982, the Greater Seattle Business Association (GSBA), a Gay group that opposed the multi-issue politics of the Stonewall Committee, put on a celebration called "Picnic in the Park." To maintain a respectable veneer and keep social protest out, the GSBA excluded Gay and Lesbian radicals from the planning process. This undemocratic move set off rumors of a boycott. However, rather than sabotage the event by asking people to stay away, the Stonewall '81 Committee

organized the largest and most militant contingent in the march and set the direction for future Seattle Pride events.

The GSBA rally in Volunteer Park featured Armistead Maupin, author of the popular novel *Tales of the City*. No poster was designed this year. Meanwhile, the Stonewall '81 Committee decided to become an ongoing group that tackled civil rights issues throughout the year and changed its name to the Stonewall Committee for Lesbian/Gay Rights.

1983



In 1983 the question of the open political split in the Gay community over the "should it be a march or a parade" debate had to be addressed. The Stonewall Committee put forth the concept of calling for an all-inclusive, democratic coalition to plan Pride festivities encompassing both protest and celebration and reached out to a broad array of Queer activists and organizations. The result was the formation of the Freedom Day Committee, a truly community-based group in which anyone who supported Gay rights could join and vote. Membership spanned the spectrum within Seattle's Lesbian/Gay community, including Radical Women, Tacky Tourists, the Log Cabin Republicans, Aradia Women's Health Center, the United Ebony Council, the Stonewall Committee, the Court of Seattle, and the Freedom Socialist Party.

The long meetings, which drew around 45 people, often continued in the parking lot after the University of Washington security officers closed the meeting room. It is here that the FDC hammered out its first shaky compromise between protest and celebration. Henceforth, both concepts were to be equally represented in the parade and rally, beginning with its name, "Seattle's Lesbian/Gay Pride Parade/March and Freedom Rally."

Another aspect of the truce was deciding how to use the march and rally to further Lesbian/Gay rights. Everyone agreed on the need to expand these rights, but deciding how to express this was one of the most difficult discussions. The Stonewall Committee called for intersectional demands that raised the broad problems of discrimination, poverty, and class. This, we argued, would represent all Queers, not just white Gay men. The other side wanted to delete these demands completely from the event, saying they kept people away from celebrating Pride because they were too angry and too radical.

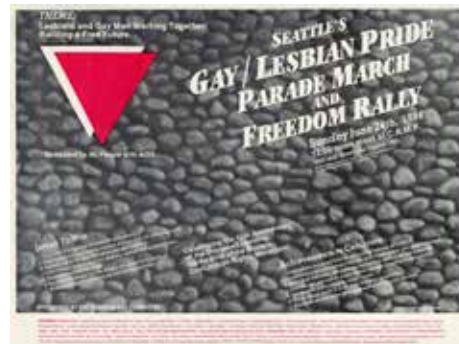
Eventually both sides of the equation were resolved as you can see on the pink and purple poster, designed by the FSP's Doug Barnes. There is a list of issues to win and achievements to celebrate. The Stonewall Committee suggested "Diversity in Action," and it was chosen as the theme for the 1983 event.

The rally featured the outrageous,

African American US Army sergeant Perry Watkins, who was suing the military for readmission after he was thrown out for being Gay. This was also the year HIV took hold, devastating the Seattle Gay community. The grassroots Seattle AIDS Action Committee sponsored the first AIDS vigil, and the respectable Northwest AIDS Foundation applied for corporate status. Groups like the Health Information Network, headed by Kathy Knowles, and the African American-focused Association of People Living with AIDS, under the leadership of Van Nelson and Milton Farquhar, became part of the organizing process for the June Pride event...

The phenomenally successful rally was held in Freeway Park, and the turnout topped everyone's expectations, with crowds overflowing into the surrounding downtown area.

1984



This was the year of the split, as the shaky compromise between protest and celebration unraveled. The single-issue Dorian Group claimed that the 1983 poster reflected too much political content that had nothing to do with Gay rights. They moved to delete the demands for abortion rights, stopping the war in Central America, and stopping violence against Gays, Lesbians, women, and people of color. When they lost the vote, they walked out, formed the Pride Week Committee (PWC), and began organizing a Gay-only parade to be held on Saturday, the day before the FDC's parade/march.

Both sides forged ahead, competing for funds, endorsements, and volunteers while the broader Queer community tried to decide whether to support the PWC or FDC, or both or neither.

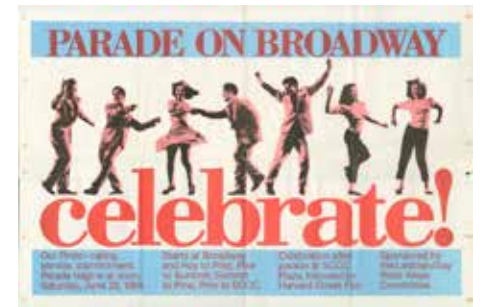
The PWC's theme was "Celebrate Our Pride: Caring, Service, Commitment." Their April 11 press release stated, "The Lesbian/Gay Pride Week Committee is strongly committed to a single-focus event focusing on lesbian/gay pride." They announced that anyone who agreed was welcome to participate in planning the Saturday parade. Their rally featured three Democratic Party heavy hitters: Seattle Mayor Charles Royer, Kathleen Boyle, and Theresa Dority. It was held on the lawn of Seattle Central Community College.

The FDC's theme was "Lesbians/Gay Men Working Together/Building a Free Future," and the event was dedicated to "all people with AIDS." The Sunday Freedom Rally was held in Volunteer Park in Seattle's Gay neighborhood, and featured speeches by Larry Gossett, an African American activist and director of the Central Area Motivational Program (CAMP); George Bakan, editor of the *Seattle Gay News*; B.J. Barela, a Native American Lesbian with Radical Women and an abortion rights activist; Lou Truskoff, of the American Postal Workers Union; Kevin Ono of the Stonewall Committee; and community organizer Patricia Chavez Benavidez.

After the march, the FDC's press release observed, "Supporters of the multi-issue approach claimed victory when the Sunday, June 24 Parade/March and Rally drew thousands."

The Freedom Day Committee continued to grow and organized all events for two more decades, while the Pride Week Committee closed its doors.

Two posters from the 1984 Pride Week Committee, sponsors of the events competing with the FDC.



1985



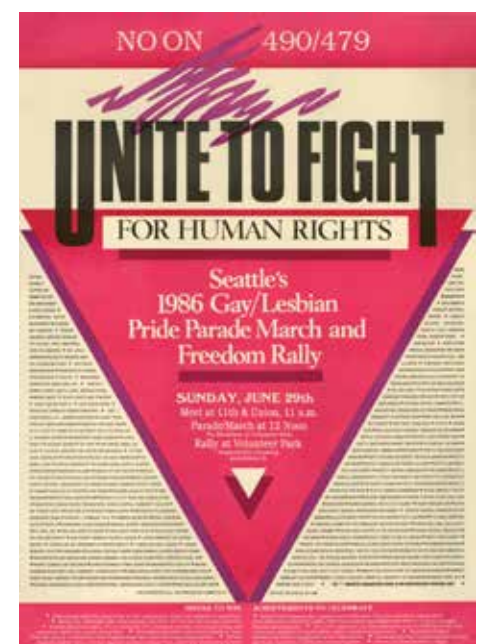
After the split of the previous year, 1985 proved to be one of the most successful parade/marches ever. Over 10,000 people participated giving weight to the theme "Strength through Unity and Pride." One dynamic contingent banner proclaimed, "Teachers with Pride Still Have to Hide" and was carried by marchers with brown paper bags over their heads. The disco boys on the float sponsored by Tugs Tavern tossed free condoms to the crowd.

For the rally, the FDC hosted nationally prominent speakers: Dr. John Bush from Black and White Men Together, Merle Woo from the Freedom Socialist Party, and Nancy Roth, executive director of the DC-based Gay Rights National Lobby. Music filled Volunteer Park with the upbeat sounds of Stanley's Wife and the Fabulous Belle Reeves, and Richard Eastey performed an electrifying modern dance.

This was the year Rock Hudson died of AIDS. Finally, national attention was directed to this horrible disease.

1986

FDC's poster





The community faced three nasty right-wing attacks. Initiative 490 would bar homosexuals from teaching or holding jobs involving children. Referendum 7 was an attempt to delete sexual orientation from King County's Fair Employment Ordinance, and Initiative 479 would deny abortion funding for poor and low-income women in Washington state.

The theme of the parade/march, "Unite to Fight for Human Rights, NO on 490/479!" clearly demonstrated the intensity of the community's response to these battles. All three legislative attacks failed, and the mobilization of the Queer and left community was crucial to their defeat.

Meanwhile, within the FDC, contention raged. Eight weeks before the parade/march, cochairs Larry Leffler and Carol Sterling resigned over the volatile compromise between protest and celebration. They joined forces with yet another new group, called the Pride Festival, and held a nonpolitical community fair at the Broadway Playfield to highlight Lesbian and Gay community groups.

Ruth Balf and Ed Aaron stepped in as new FDC cochairs, and organizing for the annual event fervently continued.

The next obstacle was raised by the City of Seattle, which suddenly denied a permit to start at the usual place on 18th and Cherry in the Black community. Instead, the City wanted the parade to start from 11th and Union. The FDC saw the city's actions as a deliberate attempt to shorten the march and confine it to Capitol Hill, the main Gay neighborhood. In protest, a group of 150 activists marched without a permit from the original site in the African American Central District and met the other marchers at 11th and Union. In a press release, the activists said, "Traditionally [this] had been a show of solidarity between groups of people who know what it's like to be oppressed."

But this did not lessen the impact on the main event. Over 200 organizations endorsed the 1986 FDC parade/march and rally. According to the June 30 *Seattle Times*, attendance numbered between 10,000 and 15,000 people — hugely different from the 300 who marched in 1981.

1987



The 1987 march was somewhat somber, despite the cartoon-like poster designed by the FDC's Vaughn Frick. The AIDS epidemic had profoundly changed the country. Across the nation, the Queer community demanded more health care funding and organized the Second National March on Washington DC for Lesbian/Gay Rights. In 1987 the People of Color Against AIDS Network (POCAAN) began in Seattle, and the confrontational group ACT/UP formed in New York City.

The FDC's 1987 theme was "Unity in Pride, Power, Life and Justice!" The *Seattle Gay News* proclaimed, "Most successful Lesbian/Gay Pride Week ever!"

The rally in Volunteer Park featured the powerful jazz singer Dee Daniels, whose "Somewhere Over the Rainbow" helped express the sadness of so many AIDS deaths while strengthening the spirit to fight on. Bob Rohan, president of the NW AIDS Foundation, spoke against mandatory testing for HIV and against discrimination. This was also the year Cal Anderson was appointed to the Washington House of Representatives, becoming the state's first openly Gay legislator.

1988



The FDC's theme, "Celebrating our Love; Fighting for Our Lives!," caught the tenor of the times. During this year, Gay bashing and AIDS hysteria were at an all-time high in Seattle and across the country. A Washington court ordered the state's first mandatory HIV test for Steve Farmer, who, a year before, had been charged with taking photographs of a 17-year-old male sex worker. Many people in the community were convinced that Farmer was setup. The Stonewall Committee launched a Steve Farmer Defense Committee.

Openly Gay Cal Anderson, who had been appointed, was formally elected to the House of Representatives. Locally, Queer activists promoted self-defense training and demanded respectful treatment and adequate police protection for people living with AIDS. These issues were reflected in the parade/march and rally.

Renee McCoy from the National Coalition of Black Lesbians and Gays and the dynamic Loren Laureano with the National Association of People with AIDS captivated the huge crowd. Meanwhile, the Sisters of Perpetual Indulgence helped everyone empty their pockets and contribute to the community fight-back.

1989

This year's theme, "Stonewall Rebellion 20th Year, 1969-1989," commemorated the anniversary of the riots in New York City that set off the modern Gay rights movement.

ACT/UP Seattle began. In the Northwest, well-organized demonstrators, primarily led by the United Front Against Fascism, vastly outnumbered the neo-Nazi white supremacists attempting to recruit [people] to their violent ideology on Whidbey Island, at the Evergreen State College in



Olympia, and in Coeur d'Alene, Idaho. Efforts by the Queer community were essential in disrupting their efforts.

Gay organizers asked for and gained support from various labor unions and from the King County Labor Council, thanks to the leadership of the FSP's Fred Hyde and other unionists.

At the rally, rousing speeches were delivered by Milton Farquhar, an African American from the Association of People Living with AIDS, Scott Fields from the Stonewall Committee, Judy Vega from POCAAN, Chris Smith from the Freedom Socialist Party, and Cherry Johnson, director of the Lesbian Resource Center.

A mammoth arch of rainbow-colored balloons framed the stage in Volunteer Park, and jazz vocalist Dee Daniels returned to sing "Somewhere Over the Rainbow."

FDC organizers estimated the crowd at 20,000 to 25,000, a testament to the Freedom Day Committee's tenacity.

1990



The overt tension between balloons or picket signs finally began to settle down for the next several years, and the Pride Parade/March and Freedom Rally rolled out smoothly as celebration and protest coexisted more compatibly, perhaps because the movement was still under serious attack despite making rapid progress.

"Gays Celebrate in a Militant Mood" proclaimed the June 25 headline in the *Seattle Post-Intelligencer*. The article attributed the feisty attitude of the parade/march to a failed bombing attempt at Neighbours Nightclub and Lounge, a popular Queer dance club in Seattle's vibrant Capitol Hill.

In 1990, the Lesbian/Gay community was fighting many issues: Jesse Helms' attempt to censor creativity through massive funding cuts to the National Endowment for the Arts; the bitter defeat of human rights protections in Tacoma, following an ugly right-wing

anti-Gay campaign; and attempts by fundamentalists to destroy Seattle's new domestic partners ordinance, which allowed nonmarried partners of city employees to receive the same range of benefits afforded married city employees.

The poster proclaimed, "Unite for Freedom! Lesbian and Gay Rights NOW!"

Police estimated participants at 3,000. The FDC counted the crowd at over 25,000.

1991



In coverage following the 1991 parade/march, the *Seattle Times* wrote, "While some committee members believe the group is inordinately swayed by a feisty far-left faction, the committee certainly reflects the gay community . . ." The *Times* went on to say that FSP administrative assistant Chris Smith's overriding concern is that the event does not lose its political edge. The *Times* added that the Pride march has become the city's second largest behind the Seafair Torchlight Parade. All attendance records were broken as over 50,000 people participated in "Hands Together in Peace and Pride."

African American Sgt. First Class Perry Watkins opened the rally with an announcement of his victory against the US Army, which had dishonorably thrown him out for being Gay. Journalist Sandy Nelson, with the Freedom Socialist Party, spoke about her lawsuit against the *Tacoma News Tribune*, which removed her from her reporting job because of her off-duty activism in support of Gay rights. Musicians Laura Love and Lisa Koch energized the crowd with an angry song about death and destruction from AIDS.

1992



The words Bisexual and Transgender were added to the official name of the annual event. This could have been a [divisive] issue, but the FDC called a Queer community meeting,

and 300 people showed up. In keeping with the FDC's commitment to diversity, the organizers proposed the name change, and it was vigorously debated. When the vote was taken adding the two words "bisexual" and "transgender," it passed with a large majority.

Marchers paraded under the 1992 theme "Honoring Our Past, Reaching for Our Future! Equal Rights and Liberation!"

Two new contingents in the parade/march drew unusual attention: a Seattle fire truck decked out with Lesbian firefighters, and the humorous and very handsome group of "Women Often Mistaken for Men in Public Restrooms."

The rally featured powerful speeches from three prominent Lesbians: Urvashi Vaid, director of the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force; Merle Woo, fired from her teaching position at UC Berkeley for her outspoken support for Lesbian/Gay rights and her radical Freedom Socialist Party politics; and US Col Margarethe Cammermeyer, recently drummed out of the National Guard for being a Lesbian. Local politicians Cal Anderson and City [Councilmember] Sherry Harris joined them on the rally stage. A Gay Filipino dance troupe entertained with a flamboyant version of a traditional wedding dance.

The *Seattle Gay News* estimated the crowd at 60,000. The Seattle Police Department claimed it was 35,000.

1993



On April 25, one million people descended on Washington, DC, for the third National March on Washington for Lesbian Gay Rights. Closer to home, the right-wing Oregon Citizens Alliance (OCA), headed by Lon Mabon, threatened to extend its rapidly growing anti-Gay ballot box campaign to Washington state. But the Lesbian/Gay movement met the challenge head-on.

In response to the OCA's plans, the newly formed group Hands Off Washington indicated its intention to stop them at the state's southern border. The group Bigot Busters, originated by the Portland Radical Women chapter, started organizing to ask voters not to sign the OCA's discriminatory petitions.

The Freedom Day Committee, with Patrica (Trish) Throop as an even-handed and hardworking cochair, announced it is "A Simple Matter of Justice," and marchers danced, some with picket signs, down Broadway.

Washington Gov. Mike Lowry addressed the rally and declared, "If one person's civil rights are abused, then everyone's civil rights are endangered." Chris Smith with the Freedom Socialist Party called for the release of Steve Farmer, imprisoned for seven years and fighting for his life, suffering from AIDS. Tony award-winning actor Harvey Fierstein joined the Seat-

tle Men's Chorus to assure the crowd that everyone was loved.

A record 70,000 people attended the event. The police estimate was 15,000.

1994

Two right-wing initiatives, 608 and 610, dominated the political landscape during 1994, drawing many people into the fight. Bigot Busters [an offshoot of Queer Nation/Seattle] and Hands Off Washington succeeded in preventing both anti-Gay measures from gathering enough signatures to qualify for the general election.

At the same time, Seattle held its most successful event ever, with an attendance comparable to the previous year. For the first time, the march included Seattle Police Chief Norm Stamper, whose presence launched a storm of criticism from right-wing bigots.

1995



After the successful defeat of the two initiatives from the previous year, the Queer community was immediately hit with two new nearly identical anti-Gay initiatives: 166 and 167. "We're not at the height of anger as last year, it's impossible to maintain at that level," said Ray Carter, the FDC cochair. But the fight went on, and again both ballot measures [failed to qualify for the ballot].

Over 160 contingents joined the parade/march, including many groups from across Washington. State Sen. Cal Anderson, seriously ill with AIDS, was named grand marshal. He died shortly after. The event was dedicated to well-known *Seattle Gay News* photographer Cookie Andrews-Hunt, a feminist, Lesbian, and founder of the Women's Coalition to Stop the Green River Murders, who died in April. Chicago Rose emceed the rally, resplendent in her satin, lace, and peacock feather-studded gown. Speakers featured youth from Lambert House and Rev. Dr. Robert Jeffrey, Sr. of the African American New Hope Baptist Church, who stressed the importance of solidarity between Gay people and the Black community.

The FDC estimated the crowd at over 75,000; the cops claimed it was 40,000.

1996

Whether or not to allow the North American Man/Boy Love Association (NAMBLA) to march at Pride seriously divided the community. The FDC broke with tradition and banned NAMBLA. Stonewall argued the uncomfortable position that the march should include any and all pro-Queer advocates.

Nevertheless, the march and rally continued to be tremendously successful, drawing still larger numbers. The grand marshal for 1996 was the organization Parents and Friends of Lesbians and Gays (PFLAG). Speakers

pressed for AIDS funding, affirmative action, Transgender acceptance, immigrant rights, and an end to racism. State Reps. Velma Veloria and Ed Murray spoke, as did Seattle City Councilmember Tina Podlodowski.

1997



Controversy exploded following the 1996 event, when local sex columnist Dan Savage declared in *The Stranger*, a trendy weekly newspaper, that the FDC's parade/march and rally were boring. He called for Pride Day to be completely overhauled. Savage said the event contained too much political content, and once again, the compromise between protest and celebration erupted. Savage pulled together a group that joined the FDC, made a motion to discard the open, grassroots operation, and established a private board of directors by outvoting the veteran organizers. Although they won the vote, they accomplished nothing further as the months went by. When the community demanded accountability, most of Savage's board resigned and disappeared eight weeks before the 1997 parade and rally were to take place.

Former FDC members jumped in to pull it together. The theme "Jobs and Freedom, Everyone Needs Them: Yes on Initiative 677," focused on the pro-Queer ballot measure to prohibit discrimination based on sexual orientation in employment and in labor unions. Unfortunately, this fight for statewide fair employment protection was lost at the ballot box.

Thus far the careful integration of protest and celebration worked again for Seattle's Queer community, and the event rolled out as expected.

This was also the first year a Trans Pride March and Rally sponsored by T-People was held on the Seattle Central College lawn.

1998

The struggle over how to produce the Pride March for 1998 was a continuation of the previous year's attempt to privatize the popular community event. A new group, Pacific Northwest Pride, Inc. (PNWP), drew a few members away from the FDC, and they secretly applied at the beginning of January for city permits for the June march and rally. Matters came to a head in March, when the FDC discovered that another group had applied for the permits they had routinely gotten since 1983.

The years-long tension came down to three simmering differences: (1) whether the organizing committee of the Pride march and rally should take political positions and use the event to promote these positions; (2) whether the committee should operate as an open coalition with decisions made by majority vote at open meetings, or be run by a self-selected board of directors in closed sessions; (3) whether or not financial records should be printed in the *Seattle Gay News* after each year's march and rally, a practice that the FDC established early on

in order to be accountable for the contributions they collected. Credit goes to Rick McKinnon, who was the FDC's trustworthy treasurer for years, for helping to maintain this open-books policy.

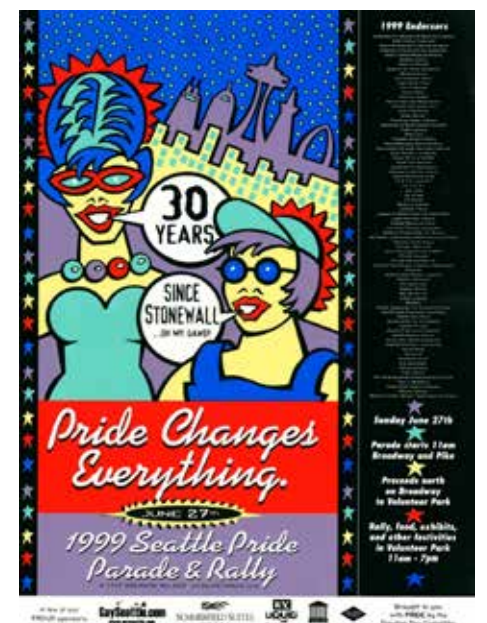
The FDC launched a petition drive that gathered over 600 signatures in support of assigning the city permits to the FDC and maintaining its open, accountable model. However, as the deadline drew closer, organizers on both sides were unable to work out a solution and by default left it to the city to decide. The Seattle Special Events Committee voted unanimously on May 13 to grant the permits to the FDC, and once again the stalled planning moved into high gear.

On the political horizon, the fight for marriage equality, which seemed a long shot, was gaining momentum. At the same time, an anti-affirmative action initiative, I-200, loomed over the state. The FDC chose the theme "Pride + Action = Power! Yes to Gay Marriage, Save Affirmative Action, NO on I-200."

Another parade/march and rally drew huge numbers, but the simmering tensions were wearing down the veteran organizers, who sensed the tide was turning and often felt their time would be better spent on political issues that resulted in more than one spectacular day. Furthermore, key FDC organizers had been hit hard by the AIDS epidemic, the city was pushing the event toward Seattle Center rather than Volunteer Park, and the lure of accepting corporate contributions in exchange for advertising had its effect.

1999

The last poster put out by the Freedom Day Committee



Seattle made international headlines this year by shutting down the World Trade Organization's meeting, held in a town where social justice and protest run deep. It was also the 30th anniversary of the Stonewall riots.

The Freedom Day Committee broke with tradition and voted to charge an entry fee, to be paid by businesses that advertised themselves in the parade/march. Up to this point, joining the march was free for any group. "We don't want to charge people for supporting Queer rights," argued Chris Smith, the lone vote against the policy change.

The poster carried the theme "Pride Changes Everything" and was produced with unapproved modifications that called it a parade rather than a parade/march and dropped the lists of issues to win and achievements to celebrate. For the FDC, the times they were a changin'.

On a lighter note, Rev. Jerry Falwell ridiculously outed children's TV character Tinky Winky, the purple-toting violet Teletubby despised by Christian fundamentalists. The FDC, however,

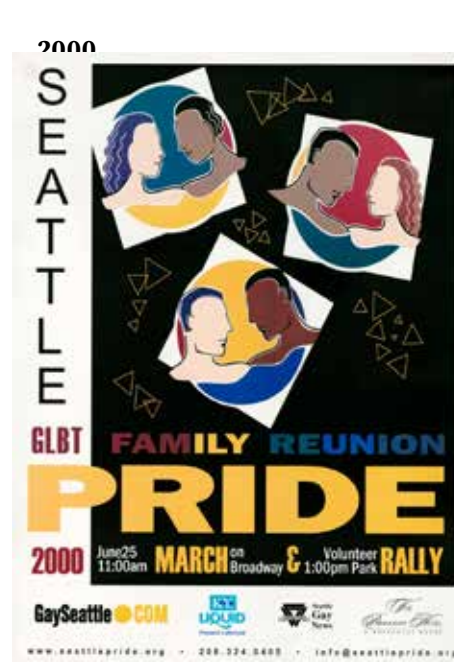
warmly welcomed Tinky Winky look-alikes with some real love at Seattle's Pride.

The rally emcees were Gaysha Starr and Mark Findley. Speakers were Tamara Turner, Radical Women member and author of *Gay Resistance: the Hidden History*; lavender cowboy Patrick Haggerty from the Seattle Liberation Front; Luma Nichol from the United Front Against Fascism; Richard Markishtum, a [Two Spirit] Makah tribal member; Tina Podlodowski, Seattle City Councilmember; Washington state Rep. Ed Murray; and Jackie Rahimi, a Latina singer and civil and immigrant rights activist.

Conservatizing trends in the national Queer movement were mirrored in Seattle. The Freedom Day Committee continued for a short time but was replaced by a corporate model

that ceased to be a coalition. Today, the planning process for Seattle Pride activities is done by a self-appointed board of directors and bankrolled by corporations. But youthful and radically-minded activists keep pushing the fight for Queer rights forward in other arenas.

The FDC taught a generation of activists and organizers the effectiveness and snags of coalition work. It functioned best when conducted democratically and in a spirit that accounted for everyone's concerns and adopted a program based on the working-class ethic of joining together to confront and win against bigotry and discrimination. If we believe that an injury to one is an injury to all, we will defend each other, and no one will be left behind. There is true celebration in these acts of solidarity.





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Freedom Day Committee, ACT UP, and the AIDS March on Washington

Wayne Turner shares his story of activism and Pride

BY MADISON JONES, SGN MANAGING EDITOR

WAYNETURNER (CENTER) AT SPOKANE'S FIRST PRIDE MARCH IN 1992
DAN PELLE/THE SPOKESMAN REVIEW

Before Wayne Turner became a public interest attorney for HIV issues and Medicaid advocacy in Washington, DC, and taught LGBTQ+ health law and policy at Georgetown Law School, he was hard at work as a Queer and AIDS rights activist in Seattle.

Turner was deeply involved in the Seattle chapter of ACT UP from 1989 to 1993. He also was part of the Freedom Day Committee, along with his partner Steve Michael; together they helped to put on the Lesbian/Gay/Bisexual/Transgender Freedom Day March and Rally in 1992.

Turner and Michael moved to Washington, DC, in 1993 to advocate more closely for AIDS awareness and policy, with Michael even founding the DC chapter of ACT UP (he later died of AIDS-related health complications in 1998).

The *SGN* contacted Turner to share his experiences during that time, and reflect on how they inform what the LGBTQIA+ community is dealing with today.

Coming to Seattle

Turner, who got involved with the Freedom Day Committee's Pride organizing in 1992, reflected on the time he spent with the organization, and how it left a lasting impression.

"I just think it really stands out as an entity," he said. "For people who aren't familiar with it, it was a very community-based, kind of grassroots 'everybody is welcome to be involved' kind of organizing group."

He said that former *SGN* publisher George Bakan, a cofounder of the

FDC, was "certainly something of a mentor for me, and I just learned a lot and was really happy to be engaged."

What stood out to him especially was the way in which Seattle's Pride organizing at the time hadn't been co-opted by corporations, like other US cities on the East Coast.

"My experience in Seattle was very different," he said. "It was about organizing, and it was about participation in this democratic, you know, time-consuming and tedious but also such an important process."

Turner said he felt that charging people for attending or to march in the parade was antithetical to the spirit of what Pride organizing was supposed to be. He also highlighted how Seattle was the first champion in including "Bisexual" and "Transgender" in its name and events despite community pushback.

"Seattle really was a pioneer, and just like a real champion, on the forefront of making Pride an inclusive event," he said.

Asked if he saw parallels between the struggles LGBTQIA+ people faced then and face now, Turner said he felt there was a familiar scapegoating between how Gay men were stigmatized during the AIDS epidemic and how Transgender people are now being framed politically.

"The attacks on the Trans community.. are just like so egregious," he said. "We are stronger together... That's what the other side wants us to do [divide us] — that's how they win, is when they pit us against each other or throw communities under the bus."

AIDS activism

Turner told the *SGN* that as a twentysomething Gay man, HIV/AIDS was (and still is) the cause of his generation and lifetime. At the time, he was looking for the best way to support his community, so he gravitated toward ACT UP Seattle as a means to tackle the broader stigma and policy failures facing people living with the disease.

He explained how it was a complicated time: issues like clinical trials, broader political activism, treatment, and healthcare advocacy all impacted and intersected with each other. Women's rights was another issue he cited, since "the definition of AIDS didn't include cervical cancers at that time."

Turner first met his partner Steve Michael during a 1991 trip Seattle ACT UP made to an AIDS conference and march in Washington, DC. He said they chatted on the plane, then dated for a little bit. They were also participants in the "Be a Star" program, in which Gay men would get tested for HIV every six months. According to Turner, that is when they found out that Michael had tested positive.

"It's just like, holy fuck," he said, remembering his reaction to the news. "All right, I guess it was hoping too much that two men can fall in love and live happily ever after in the '90s."

Turner said that after that, they really began their roller coaster journey as AIDS activists. Michael's test results coincided with the 1992 presidential election year, so the couple soon got involved with the ACT UP Presidential Project, "thanks to George [Bakan]. I was working in a

restaurant downtown waiting tables, and I came home from my shift. Steve and I shared this tiny studio apartment in Belltown with a Murphy bed. And Steve had two plane tickets."

The two men went off to help organize an AIDS march in New Hampshire during its presidential primary, then in Sioux Falls, South Dakota. But it was during the primaries in Washington when former *SGN* reporter Tom Flint took a photograph of then-candidate Bill Clinton signing Michael's AIDS sign.

"And Clinton knew who we were, because we were all over the news in South Dakota," Turner said.

Turner and Michael were also organizers for the AIDS March on Washington during that time. As part of their outreach, Turner, Michael, Flint, and Bakan all went to support Spokane's first pride March in 1992. Turner said their involvement was in part to hold Clinton accountable for supporting AIDS policy if elected.

"We all shared, like, a Motel Six room, and just, like, slept on the floor," he said.

He described what the scene was like that day, as around a thousand people took to the streets and marched through the city: "People were blown away that so many people showed up."

Afterward, he said, they all went to a Gay bar. "They had the TV on. We're watching the news coverage, and it was the lead story," he recalled.

Moving to DC

After the 1992 election, Turner and Michael moved to Washington, DC.



The two decided to make the move to hold Clinton accountable for his campaign promise to establish a Manhattan Project for AIDS.

“Steve and I packed up and drove across the country in our 1969 Cadillac ambulance, and it broke down twice,” he said.

Turner explained what the couple’s plan were at that time: “We would be in DC for a couple years, and then move back to Seattle. Because once there was a cure for AIDS and health-care for everybody, then we could just go on with the rest of our lives. But it didn’t work out that way.”

Michael founded the DC chapter of ACT UP. He also ran for president as the AIDS Cure Party’s candidate in 1996, alongside Ann Northrop. Turner and Michael were also arrested for demonstrating against the Defense of Marriage Act in front of the White House in September 1996, as part of the “DOMA Eight.”

“We carried our signs and chanted and denounced the president for signing the most anti-Gay federal legislation in history,” Turner said. “Follow-

ing the customary three warnings, we were each arrested, handcuffed, placed in the police wagon, and taken to Park Police headquarters.”

In 1998, Michael’s health suddenly deteriorated. As Turner explained, “He was asymptomatic for much of that time, which was nice, and then kind of got sick like boom, boom, boom, one thing after another.”

Michael spent three weeks in the ICU of Washington Hospital Center before his health took a turn for the worse. That is when Turner decided to disconnect him from his life support. Michael died on May 25, 1998.

Turner wrote an article about his experiences during Michael’s passing under DOMA, and how when he received the death certificate and autopsy, it said his relationship to the deceased was “friend.”

“Friend. In our seven years together, it seemed like Steve and I lived three lifetimes,” Turner said. “I was with him when we found out he was HIV positive, and I held him as he took his last breath. Yet in the eyes of the law, I was just a friend. Fuck that.”

Part of Michael’s last wishes was to hold a political, open casket funeral, with his body in front of the White House on Pennsylvania Ave. Turner explained the process he went through to organize the event, and how he had to obtain permits from both the DC police and Secret Service.

“I said, well, either we can do this the nice way or the nasty way. Give Steve his one last photo op, so we can have our solemn ceremony, or I will throw his body over the White House fence. And you know I will.”

Law enforcement officials granted the permits. On the day of the ceremony, “they inspected the coffin to make sure there were no bombs.”

The ceremony was held on Thursday, June 4, 1998 at 12:30 p.m. Turner said they walked his casket through the streets of DC before making it to the White House.

Continuing the fight

Turner ended his conversation with the SGN discussing his thoughts on AIDS and Pride organizing of the past, and how the community is still deal-

ing with similar issues now.

“My partner used to say, ‘assimilation is not liberation,’ which I think continues to be an apt phrase for today.”

One thing he was critical of was the corporatization of Pride, and how corporations have recently shown themselves to be “fair-weather friends” that will “show up when it’s time to market, and then disappear when you’re being pepper-sprayed or targeted or vilified.”

He also highlighted the difficulties — but also necessity — of actively organizing the community with event planning, flyers, and other methods over social media.

“But that is what Pride is for. For everyone to come together in a physical space, and see other people,” he said.

“They don’t just come from the neighborhood; they come from the Tri-Cities, and Idaho, and Montana. People are finding their way to, like, this little Emerald City to find their tribe and community.”

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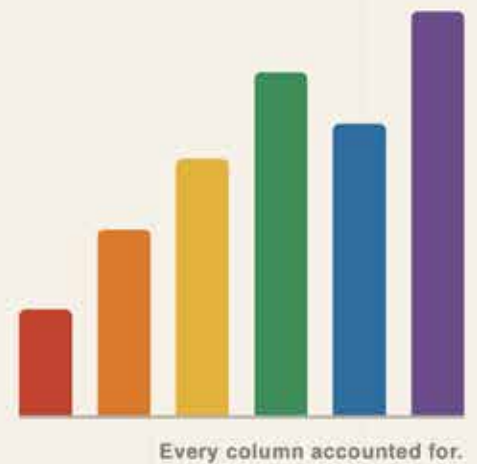
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W SEATTLE



‘When Pride marched on the Hill’

Come Out Seattle reveals its Pride archive

BY MADISON JONES, SGN MANAGING EDITOR

SEATTLE PRIDE 1986 ON BROADWAY & PINE
COME OUT SEATTLE

Nathan Benedict and husband Steve Nyman have been part of Seattle’s LGBTQIA+ community for over four decades. They are both owners of Union on Capitol Hill, founded in 2018; before that, they owned Thumpers from 1985 to 2006.

The two men started Come Out Seattle (www.comeoutseattle.org) as a historical preservation project to collect photographs and information on local Queer history. Its Pride Archive is a digitized collection of photographs taken during Seattle’s Pride marches and rallies from 1986 to 1992.

Benedict spoke to the SGN about the project, as well as what Pride was like during that time.

Coming to Seattle

Benedict came out as Gay in 1981 but didn’t move to Seattle until around 1983–84. Before the early 1980s, Benedict said, Occidental Park was the center of the Queer community, as every-

thing was based in the Pioneer Square area.

Crescent Lounge was the first Gay bar on Capitol Hill, he said, opened by Shirley Maser in 1974. By 1986, there were 13 Gay-identified bars on the Hill and 29 total in Seattle.

That is the first year in the Pride Archive, but Benedict said the year marks a significant milestone for the community. “It was the first time the march took over all of Broadway Avenue.”

In the first photo in the collection, people can be seen lining up near on Union Street, where Benedict and Nyman’s Union bar currently is. Several photos also show people campaigning for Harvey Muggy, who was one of the first openly Gay men to run for state office in Washington.

“He really created the Gay branch of the Democratic Party in Seattle,” Benedict said.

Although he lost his race in 1986,

Muggy worked behind the scenes to help get Cal Anderson elected to statewide office years later. (Photos of Anderson and his campaigners can also be found in the collection.) Benedict said that Muggy and his partner went on to own Crescent Lounge. Muggy died in 1992 from AIDS, and when Lothian died in 2004, they gave \$1.3 million to Lifelong AIDS Alliance, the largest gift up to that time.

Pride and AIDS

Benedict described how in 1986 and 1987 new groups started to emerge in response to the growing AIDS epidemic, such as the Chicken Soup Brigade. One group he pointed out was In Touch.

“In Touch started because nobody would touch people with AIDS. So they would go around and give people massages,” he said.

Benedict added that, by 1986, he knew a few bar owners that were

already dying of the illness.

“Personally, AIDS had a massively profound effect on people,” he added. “It was an unbelievably weird, scary, and sad time.”

The stigma of the disease, and a general lack of knowledge about its spread, meant that the broader population treated those they regarded as Gay with open hostility. Benedict told a story of working at Thumpers one day, when he met a man that clearly seemed sick and ended up throwing up on the table. He cleaned up the mess and offered the man water and a towel. Then, “a couple days later, the person came back, and he said it was amazing to be treated with dignity as someone who was profoundly sick.”

Another example Benedict gave was of Smiles, the first Gay dentistry practice in Seattle, started by Fred Rowe DDS (he also regularly advertised in the SGN). Benedict said AIDS had “a profound effect on his business. Nobody wanted to share a space where people with AIDS were.”

During his recollection, Benedict began to tear up while sharing these difficult memories.

“It was really hard to visually experience it. When your friends got sick, all of the people we knew, gorgeous men, would go back home to die,” he said.

Pride’s evolution

Benedict said that throughout all the years he’s been a part of Pride, there was always an argument about where to hold it and what to call it. In the 1980s it was called the “Gay and Lesbian Parade and Rally” until 1992, when the Freedom Day Committee voted to add “Bisexual” and “Transgender.” The change initially evoked a strong negative reaction among white Gay men and non-butch Lesbians, worried about respectability politics and the movement not being per-



HARVEY MUGGY CAMPAIGNERS AT SEATTLE PRIDE 1986
COME OUT SEATTLE

ceived as “normal” by the public.

One of the struggles for Queer and Trans people in the 1980s and 1990s was finding spaces that would accept them, Benedict said. Ingersoll Gender Center members would come in to Thumpers to have their weekly meetings, because it was one of the only places that allowed them entry. He recalled that the leader of the group once told him, “Thank you so much for letting us in. You can’t believe how many places won’t let us have dinner.”

As Gay business owners, Nyman and Benedict had also advocated keeping Pride in the neighborhood when discussions about moving it downtown began in the mid-1990s. He said the earnings of Gay businesses on the Hill benefited greatly from Pride; the move downtown hurt them.

His thought was: “Go ahead and cut out the most important day of the year for us.”

He said he was glad when PrideFest started on Capitol Hill in 2007.

Thumpers closed in 2006, because the world had changed, Benedict said. It had gotten to a point in Seattle where Gay, Lesbian, or Transgender events could be held in most places, and the

attitude at the time, according to him, had become: “We don’t need gay bars anymore.”

Preserving Gay history

Benedict shared with the SGN some of the unique challenges of trying to preserve LGBTQIA+ history. He talked about how most Queer people, until very recently, did not have immediate biological families.

“By the time most LGBT people die, they usually don’t have any people to inherit the stories,” he said. “For Gay people, when you came out, your whole life changed.”

He noted that this phenomenon has started to change over recent decades as Queer people and couples have been able to have children, either through adoption or IVF procedures.

Another element that has defined how people record their life stories is the internet. Benedict said although he feels that it changed the way LGBTQIA+ people connected with one another, and that it was “absolutely profound,” it still is not able to provide Queer and Trans people with a sense of community.

“If there is not a way to have a con-



CAL ANDERSON AT SEATTLE PRIDE 1990
COME OUT SEATTLE

tinuity with history, you don’t have a sense of belonging. The internet is not where you can find that,” he explained. “The lack of a feeling of belonging in a community is a real problem in the United States.”

Lastly, he shared that the community response to the Pride Archive and Come Out Seattle’s launch so far has been very positive: “With the

[Pride photo] display last year, we’re so surprised how many people, including young people, were interested in the photos.”

Benedict said that he and Nyman plan to have the display again this year, from now to Sept 15, in the back hallway of Union Seattle, 1009 E. Union St., Monday to Friday 4 p.m. to 2 a.m., and weekends from noon to 2 a.m.



LOS HOMBRES 1986
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My first Pride experience

BY STEVE NYMAN, 80, THE INSIDE PASSAGE, THUMPER'S, AND UNION COFOUNDER AND CO-OWNER

My first Seattle Pride experience was the first unofficial parade in 1977.

I came out while living on Hood Canal in the mid-1970s. My first boyfriend, who was also a Gay virgin, and I didn't think there were many other "guys into guys" in our area. One night, his therapist took us on a tour of Gay Seattle. First stop: The Mocambo at Second and Yesler. I was *astounded* at how many guys were there!

In 1975, I applied for a job as a waiter at "The Mo," and two days later was hired as a bartender. The night before my first shift, my mom and I studied a bartending guide to learn the current drinks. Little did I know that my first shift was a packed Sunday brunch, and the favorite drink was a Ramos Fizz, which I had not learned! By the middle of my shift, David Burget (who later became one of my best friends) told me I was the worst bartender he had ever seen! Two years later, I was voted Seattle's Best Bartender at the annual "Nelly Awards," which always followed the sold-out, res-

ervation-only Academy Awards party.

In 1977, I joined the unofficial march from Occidental Park to Westlake Park with a moderate number of people. We were all scared of what would happen — but were amazed to find the streets lined with people cheering and more people hanging out of windows.

At Westlake, the weather was sunny and hot, so all the guys took off their shirts. The women in the crowd demanded we put our shirts back on since they could not take off theirs, which all the guys did!

While working at "The Mo," I decided my lifetime goal was to own a great Gay bar. With my life partner Nathan Benedict, Tom Rantz (at The Inside Passage), and Greg Scheaffer (at Union), I have been very fortunate to have owned three of them!

I have always believed Pride celebrations should be free and open to all, and all these years later, I am proud to have cocreated Union Pride, which welcomes everyone and is a free event!



MELODY JONES AT SEATTLE PRIDE 1977



SGN seeking back-issue collections

The SGN and former staff member Rick McKinnon are seeking collections or accumulations (large or small) of back issues of the *Seattle Gay News* to help complete the existing "as-complete-as-possible" sets of the paper, as well as possibly to help complete a couple more.

If you have any original copies of *Gay Community Center News* (the newsletter of the Seattle Gay Community Center, 1974-76) and/or *Seattle Gay News* from 1976 to as recently as 2022 (as well as extra copies of December 2024) that you would like to donate to

this project (or if have any questions), please get in touch with any of the people below.

Thank you!

Rick McKinnon
RNMck@hotmail.com

Madison Jones, Managing Editor
editor@sgn.org

Renee Raketty, Publisher
publisher@sgn.org
SGN phone: 206-319-4440

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