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Robert's Rules and Gay Liberation

Shortly after MacIver Wells began his resistance against the police in late 1965, several gay men in Seattle received an invitation to the Roosevelt Hotel downtown. A gay activist from San Francisco, Hal Call, wondered if they would be interested in meeting; he had gotten their names from the subscription list of a national magazine for homosexuals called *One*.

By that time, gay men in most other cities on the West and East Coasts had already created social clubs to meet in homes, rather than bars, and to talk delicately about gaining civil rights protections. The Mattachine Society in Los Angeles was the most famous of the organizations, and, in other places like New York, Philadelphia, and San Francisco, similar groups had affiliated as chapters. They avoided the word "homosexual" in their titles for fear that no one would join otherwise.

The first attempt to start a chapter of Mattachine in Washington State appears to have been made in Tacoma, rather than Seattle. There, in 1959, a gay man named John Eccles began corresponding with Don Lucas, Mattachine's secretary-general in San Francisco, telling Lucas the organization was the "answer for my life's calling," which was to "show the reality of the homosexual problem in our society, to instigate a more understanding and sympathetic attitude in society."[1] Eccles, who was gay but had actually married and was blessed with both a supportive wife and parents, started a small discussion group in his home, with attendance ranging from three to ten. He also began corresponding with Dr. John Marks, the president of the Washington State Psychological Association (WSPA), eventually persuading Marks to let him and Lucas address the WSPA's convention in Tacoma in May 1960. "I make no plea for the homosexual to be honored as a special breed or a third sex," Eccles told the psychologists, "to be the repository of most of the world's artistic talent, or to be permitted any special moral licentiousness. There is . . . as wide a range of temperaments and character among homosexuals as in the population at large." He continued, "It is unfair and unfounded to assume that homosexuals as a whole are inclined to importune, initiate or seduce individuals." He urged the psychologists to support legal reforms and even began collecting names of those who would be helpful. "Our primary job," he concluded, "is not to glorify or apologize for homosexuality, but to understand it and to make it understood."

That would become the cry of gay activists in the 1960s. If homosexuality was a disease, as the American Psychiatric Association said, then homosexuals at least wanted to promote understanding of the disease.

Eccles's efforts in the Northwest ended shortly after 1960, though, when he moved to Los Angeles and became a vice president of Mattachine there.

In Seattle, the start of a civil rights organization languished, partly because the police tolerance system protected socializing in the bars. Thanks to the 1958 injunction MacIver Wells had won, harassment was minimal as long as the police were paid. There were no highly public bar raids such as routinely occurred in other cities, and so there simply did not seem to be as much need to organize.

Among the gay men who received Hal Call's invitation to come to the Roosevelt Hotel and discuss setting up a chapter of Mattachine was Nicholas Heer. He had just arrived in Seattle to assume a new teaching job at the University of Washington, coming from New York where he had already belonged to Mattachine. He had also been active in gay clubs in Philadelphia and Boston, and although new to Seattle, he felt strong enough in his own identity as a homosexual to help fill the obvious local gap. The Roosevelt meeting was held December 3, 1965, according to Heer, who decades later still kept his old appointment books. Three months after the introductory meeting, the men who were still interested gathered at the Reverend Mineo Katagiri's office at St. Mark's Cathedral on Capitol Hill, on March 8, 1966.[2]

That was to be the formal start of gay civil rights organizing in Seattle. It came just eight months before the city council would hold its hearing on whether Jake Heimbigner's license should be renewed.

For the first year, Heer and other gay men met informally in Katagiri's office and at homes on Capitol Hill. Heer's university connections gave the group a distinctly academic feeling. He invited another new U.W. teacher, Martin Gouterman, who in turn eventually called his friend Sheldon Daniels, whom he had known when both were chemistry students at the University of Chicago eight years earlier. By June 1966, both Gouterman and Daniels were teaching chemistry at U.W.

On January 22, 1967, just a few weeks after the story of the police scandal broke in the *Seattle Times,* the informal meetings became distinctly more serious. One member brought out a hardbound gray ledger and began to take minutes. The group voted to rent a post office box and decided to launch a newsletter. Within a week they were pondering how to incorporate, an issue that always led to the dilemma of what words homosexuals should use in public to describe their new organizations. Should the title include the word "homosexual"—since the purpose of the organization, after all, was to promote understanding and tolerance? Or should the name be deliberately vague so that homosexuals themselves would not feel as awkward about joining? They decided not to affiliate with Mattachine. Someone suggested the acronym "HIS," for "Homophiles in Seattle," but then another man pointed out that using "homophile" might be "prejudicial" and scare people away.

Gouterman proposed the eventual solution. He suggested they call themselves

the Dorian Society. It was a coded reference, obscurely historical but symbolically pregnant. The Dorians had been Hellenic warriors who invaded Greece about 1100 B.C., eventually mingling with other Greeks but retaining their own rituals and dialect, moving within many different cultures—much as gay men and women did. One famous sex researcher, Havelock Ellis, had reported that the Dorians considered homosexuality a virtue. The word "Doric" also contained a popular image, its architectural meaning referring to a simple, straightforwardly phallic column, a contrast to the profligate, licentious, and frilly Corinthian style. Buried in the coded name, in other words, was a whole self-identity being offered in contrast to the stereotypes of the red-light district on the mudflat. The name was also dryly humorous. You had to think a bit in order to "get it," Gouterman said. Years later, he remembered why he had made the suggestion. "It had this kind of Greek flavor," he said, emphasizing the word "Greek," glancing down with an impish smile like a professor waiting for a student to get the joke. "And Doric columns were nice too," he added, putting particular emphasis on the word "columns."[3]

Although Nick Heer would be the Dorian Society's first president, he would not be the first public spokesman. Indicative of the state of homosexual men in Seattle at that time, none of the organizers were ready to risk a too-public face. Instead, the Reverend Katagiri would be the friendly heterosexual ally talking to newspapers and eventually, at the public hearing in fall 1966, to city officials. A Japanese American who had moved to Seattle from Honolulu in 1959, Katagiri had been asked by his denomination, the United Church of Christ, to launch a street ministry in Seattle. That had inevitably brought him into contact with the gay men who frequented Pioneer Square.

His defense of gay bars at the city council hearing in November 1966 reflected his meetings with Heer, Gouterman, Daniels, and others. It is easy to see whom he had in mind when he told the council members, "We will need to help the responsible [homosexuals] take over 'power positions' in the gay community and set standards of conduct. It is their hand we must help strengthen. This is not easy because many have responsible jobs and can ill-afford exposure as homosexuals. . . . They feel deeply the fact that they cannot live openly and honestly as homosexuals."

That became the Dorian Society's first "sound bite"—the core of the first rhetoric intended to persuade the city's heterosexuals to listen to its homosexuals. If gays in Seattle were to forge new public identities, heterosexuals needed to provide the space and support for undertaking the quest. The promised payoff: homosexuals who acted more respectably. The Dorians' constitution and bylaws echoed the message. While they proposed to reform the sodomy law and to promote the "legal, social, psychological, and medical welfare of homosexuals," they also promised "to encourage socially responsible conduct by all members of the homosexual community."

That could be a Faustian bargain—the kind of schizophrenic demand that seemed to have so invaded the image and perhaps even psyche of Frances Farmer

thirty years earlier. It did, after all, leave the definition of respectability to heterosexuals. And what did vaudeville, drag, the underground bars, and the steam baths—not to mention homosexual sex itself—have to do with heterosexual respectability? The Dorian mission, forged by a minister and by academics at the University of Washington, seemed to call for an oddly sanitized image of the local homosexual, far removed from the experiences of mudflat survival.

Doug Wyman, another man who attended the original meeting with Hal Call and then others with Katagiri, remembered some of the first reactions to the formation of the Dorian Society. "The bars were really down on any kind of organization because we were going to rock the boat," he said.[4]

The tension over respectability also appeared in the decision to start Seattle's first publication for homosexuals. Eventually named the *Dorian Columns,* the newsletter was to be "suitable for public reading," according to the minutes of January 22, 1967, but also to contain "news for local people." Since news might well address drag shows, bar events, dances, and even the sodomy arrests that were part of the homosexual experience in Seattle, there was an immediate conflict in the mission. Later minutes about the mimeographed newsletter note: "Decided to keep the tone high at first."

The Dorians also decided to beware of associating too closely with the anti-Vietnam and student movements then beginning in Seattle. When the editors of a new alternative newspaper called the *Helix* asked whether the homosexual organization might want a column, the Dorians pondered and then decided no. The July 1968 minutes noted: "Do we want [a] column in their paper? Dorian does not want to become associated with the 'hippie' movement."

Two other decisions were also critical. On May 5, 1967, Nick Heer raised a question about confidentiality and secrecy: "Should pseudonyms be used in letters and communications?" The proposition was adopted unanimously, and for the next year even the minutes carried only the members' initials. In their public communications, each Dorian used a false name. Heer became "James Macalpine," using his mother's maiden name. Gouterman became "Paul Horton"; Daniels, "Gordon Stark." Although the founders believed the secrecy was necessary to avoid police harassment, the pseudonyms, combined with the rather academic reference to Hellenic Greeks, created an air of closeted elitism for the society.

The other crucial communication decision was about how to conduct the business of the new group. Socializing in bars and participating in vaudeville had produced certain gay rituals of communication, but until the Dorians, homosexuals in Seattle had never really gathered with one another in task-oriented organizations ruled through bylaws. It was really quite a new undertaking. Deciding how to organize internally for actions to be taken publicly would be an important building block in exploring and then projecting a new identity.

The society settled on using *Robert's Rules of Order,* the guide to traditional par-

liamentary procedure for making decisions by presenting and seconding motions, calling the question, and then allowing the majority vote to rule. On the one hand, it was an obvious choice. To gain a respected face, one should mimic the conduct of business in respectable heterosexual organizations. But was it really an appropriate choice? Until then, the primary way homosexuals had communicated with one another had been within an informal oral culture. Rituals of gossip, of challenging the accepted order and accepted styles of dressing, of resisting—these were the communication strengths of those living on the margins of an urban society. Not surprisingly then, even this simple choice of how to conduct business would later become a very serious point of contention.

But, at first, the rules gave the Dorians their best public relations coup.

When the year 1967 opened with the *Seattle Times* story about MacIver Wells and his battle against the police, Wells was never identified by name and never photographed. The *Times* story lacked even the customary silhouette back shot of an anonymous source. Helping to end the payoffs was possibly the biggest civic contribution that homosexuals had yet made to the city, but they received no public credit at the time. And Katagiri was still the voice of the as yet unknown, fledgling Dorian Society.

It was time for a face.

Three months after the *Times* story, the *University of Washington Daily,* which had the third largest circulation of the city's newspapers, began publishing what appear to have been its first stories about homosexuals in Seattle. The five-part series in April and May 1967 broke new ground in two ways. First, the language the student writer Bob Hinz used spoke not of the "homosexual problem," as the earlier *Seattle Times* story had, but of the "problems of the homosexual." That was a small but important shift. Rather than quote health officials who saw the homosexual as some kind of syphilitic urban predator, the *Daily* articles tried to "explain" the homosexual, quoting psychiatrists, ministers, and lawyers. Of course, all the authoritative voices were heterosexual. Only in the very last article did a homosexual explain himself. Still, a local gay man was allowed to speak at length about his personal life.[5]

But he remained unnamed and was photographed only from the rear. Assigned the pseudonym "Jim," he responded only to questions that focused, rather Freudian-style, on his upbringing—presumably in keeping with the idea of the time that all homosexuality could be blamed on badly functioning families. The reporter did not ask questions that might have led "Jim" to criticize discrimination or attack hostile social attitudes toward homosexuals. A sample of the interview:

"Do you recall any single factor that might have caused you to become a homosexual?" the reporter asked. Jim responded, "According to a psychiatrist, it all goes

back to my parents. I have a strong mother who's domineering. On the other hand, my father is a very successful businessman. He was never around and never cared much about me. . . . "

"What are your feelings toward your parents today?"

"I had to leave home last April because I had no freedom whatsoever. I had less freedom [than] when I was 14 years old. What started it was when my parents got phone calls from other parents complaining that I was molesting their children. I wasn't molesting their children, but they'd found out that I was having some sort of relations with some of them. That's when my parents began taking speedometer [*sic*] readings on my car. Wherever I went I had to leave a phone number and they'd call to check on me."

The reporter asked Jim what he did after he left home. "I went into the Marine Corps. . . . When I went down to fill in my draft card, I didn't tell them a thing about my homosexuality. . . . In two weeks I had a nervous breakdown. I told them everything and they put me in the base nut house."

Why had he joined the Marines? the reporter wondered.

"I felt that if I went to Vietnam, I could become a unique person. I wanted either to be killed or come back in a ticker-tape parade. I wanted to be an Audie Murphy [one of World War II's most decorated soldiers] in Vietnam. Then nobody would say that I was a queer."

That was the first homosexual man that any sizable portion of Seattle's newspaper audience met: troubled, confused, dishonest, and trapped within the belief that his homosexuality had been caused by a dysfunctional family.

Still, the *Daily* articles opened some sort of sluice gate of temporary media interest in the city's homosexuals.

A weekend later, in an article titled "It's a Gay, Gay World," the *Seattle Post-Intelligencer* pursued the same themes. Once again psychiatrists were called upon to explain the causes of sexual orientation, and once again the homosexuals remained anonymous and faceless. But at least the previously invisible child was beginning to be heard, if not seen. In the story, two homosexual men were able to discuss more than their psychosis. One quietly asserted, "What I do in my private life is my business and nobody else's. I just want to be left alone." And another argued, "The majority should not discriminate against a minority if that minority is quite helpless to be anything other than what it is. . . . We have not chosen to be outside, and the only crime we commit, as far as I am concerned, is that we fall in love with what the majority decrees is the 'wrong' sex."[6]

Several months later, in August 1967, the new media fascination with the city's homosexuals continued.

The police fight with the gay bars had revealed the U.S. military's policy of putting Seattle taverns off-limits. A *Seattle* magazine reporter realized that of all the West Coast cities, Seattle suddenly had the reputation for being the sexiest and the sleaziest.[7] Nineteen bars had been blacklisted by the military, supposedly more than

in either San Francisco or Los Angeles. Of those nineteen, twelve catered to gays and lesbians. The magazine even published the list, effectively sending a double message. Heterosexuals could cluck disapprovingly; homosexuals suddenly had their first guide. Back over at the University of Washington, for example, one of the students who happened to read the article, Mike Ramey, remembered that it changed his life. Before, he said, he had been closeted and lonely. The article at least confirmed that there were other homosexuals in Seattle and told him exactly where he could go to meet other gay men. Once he started coming out, Ramey would later join the Dorian Society as well as numerous other gay civil rights groups as they formed.

So began a kind of cycle—the slow public coming out and binding together of a new group. Unlike the city's racial minorities, this community and its individual members had largely been invisible to themselves. Gays and lesbians in the city, especially those who disliked or had not found the red-light geography of Pioneer Square, relied significantly on the local media to announce the presence of homosexuals and to educate them about the group.

But still, no faces had been published in any of the initial wave of articles. And no real names.

In the Dorian Society meetings, people like Nick Heer and Martin Gouterman watched the new media coverage with interest. Maybe something was about to change. Maybe they could move the process along. Maybe *Seattle* magazine, with its lighthearted take on the perversities of sex life in Pioneer Square, would be interested in the more serious changes that were happening up on Capitol Hill. After all, the magazine, owned by the KING-TV Broadcasting Company and inspired and overseen by family scion Stimson Bullitt, was still looking for a niche as a smart urban publication that tackled stories the mainstream Seattle press overlooked.

As the summer ended, the Dorians decided to try.

"The meeting seemed remarkably ordinary."

So began Ruth Wolf's story in *Seattle* magazine in November 1967.[8]

Ordinary. Not since the passage of the sodomy law in 1893 had anyone considered anything about Seattle's homosexuals to be "ordinary." Even a plain choice of a word could be a rhetorical triumph. Wolf's article continued: "[The meeting] was being held in the oversize living room of one of those rambling houses which still dot Capitol Hill, and a total of fourteen members were present. The group's president, an associate professor at the U. of W., who is here called 'Ted,' apologized for the relatively poor turnout. 'It's hard,' he explained, 'to get people to a meeting like this when the weather is so nice.'

"The routine was like that at a gathering of Young Republicans. . . . Minutes of the last meeting were read and approved, new members were voted on, old business was discussed. Everything, in short, went according to *Robert's Rules of Order.*

"The men who gathered together on that warm evening were well-educated,

bright and, in the main, articulate. . . . There were no limp wrists, no girlish giggles. Nevertheless, the entire group was composed of practicing homosexuals."

Again the choice of word was important: "nevertheless." Wolf had opened her story with the exact contrast the Dorians wanted to promote: the difference between the profligate, frilly "Corinthian" homosexuals of Pioneer Square and the Doric orderliness of *Robert's Rules.* Her article was full of the language of psychiatry: homosexuality was caused, Freudian-style, by "the family constellation [resulting] from an abnormal relationship with one or both parents." It was, according to "outstanding authorities in the field . . . a disease." However, it was the startling cover of the magazine that everyone would remember. A photograph showed a handsome and serious young man, looking not at all diseased, dressed conservatively in a blazer, vest, and creased pants. He sat in a leather swivel chair. By his side was an attaché case. He pressed his left hand thoughtfully against his chin. He had been photographed from the front so that his face was fully visible and in full light. He was even set against a plain white background; no shadows suggested any hiding. The headline read:

This is Peter Wichern.

He is a local businessman.

He is a homosexual.

For the first time, the Seattle public could see the actual face of an acknowledged homosexual and read his actual name. He looked respectable. Only two visual hints suggested that Wichern was any different from a heterosexual male. The most obvious was that beneath his otherwise ordinary blazer, he wore a bright red vest. The subtler hint was that the camera angled down at him, rather than being set at eye level or aimed upward. It was an angle more typically reserved at the time for photographing women rather than businessmen. It made Wichern seem boyishly unthreatening—another set of dual messages that moved the public conversation about homosexuals in Seattle forward while simultaneously assuring heterosexuals that they did not need to flee the parlor.

Not everyone in the Dorian Society was ready for the change. At a board meeting on October 3, a few weeks after Wolf's visit but still before her article had been published, one member identified only by the initials "PE" argued that since he was "known as a friend of Peter's," his own business would be endangered. Following *Robert's Rules,* he moved that the "Society ask Peter Wichern to remove his name and picture from the article." Stay in the closet, in other words, as "Jim" had. The motion failed, 3-1.

As the Seattle gay community's first poster boy, Wichern was almost too good to be true—almost too Doric. The son of a minister, he had been a Boy Scout and an assistant scoutmaster. He had worked in the United Christian Youth Movement, earned all A's in school, won a math contest, been a cadet commander in the Civil Air Patrol, and taken first place at the Tri-State Science Fair. At least initially, any problems he had about being gay had all come from heterosexual hostility, not

from any feelings of self-hatred. For example, while he was in college, a psychiatrist "gave me a lecture on how wrong it was to mess around with boys, and how I should force myself to take an interest in girls," Wichern said. "He finally ended up warning that I had better stop what I was doing. Not only was it unhealthy, but it was against the law, and so I'd end up in jail if I didn't mend my ways."

The two fears: psychiatric treatment and the sodomy law.

The two forced Wichern into a marriage engagement while he was in college, but he ended it by telling his fiancée that he "was really a hopeless queer." She reported him to the college dean, who then expelled him. He moved to Seattle and, depressed, pondered suicide, but, after a breakdown that put him in the hospital for eight weeks, he decided to embrace being gay instead of punishing himself for his desires. He planned to start his own electronics firm and was settling into a relationship with another man. "I'm a reasonably happy, useful human being now," he said, "and I plan to go on being one. . . . I accept myself as I am and go on to other things. I want other people, too, to accept me as I am," he said, "and to understand that I, or any other homosexual, can be as decent as anyone else."

A path away from the images and restrictions of the mudflat was being cleared.

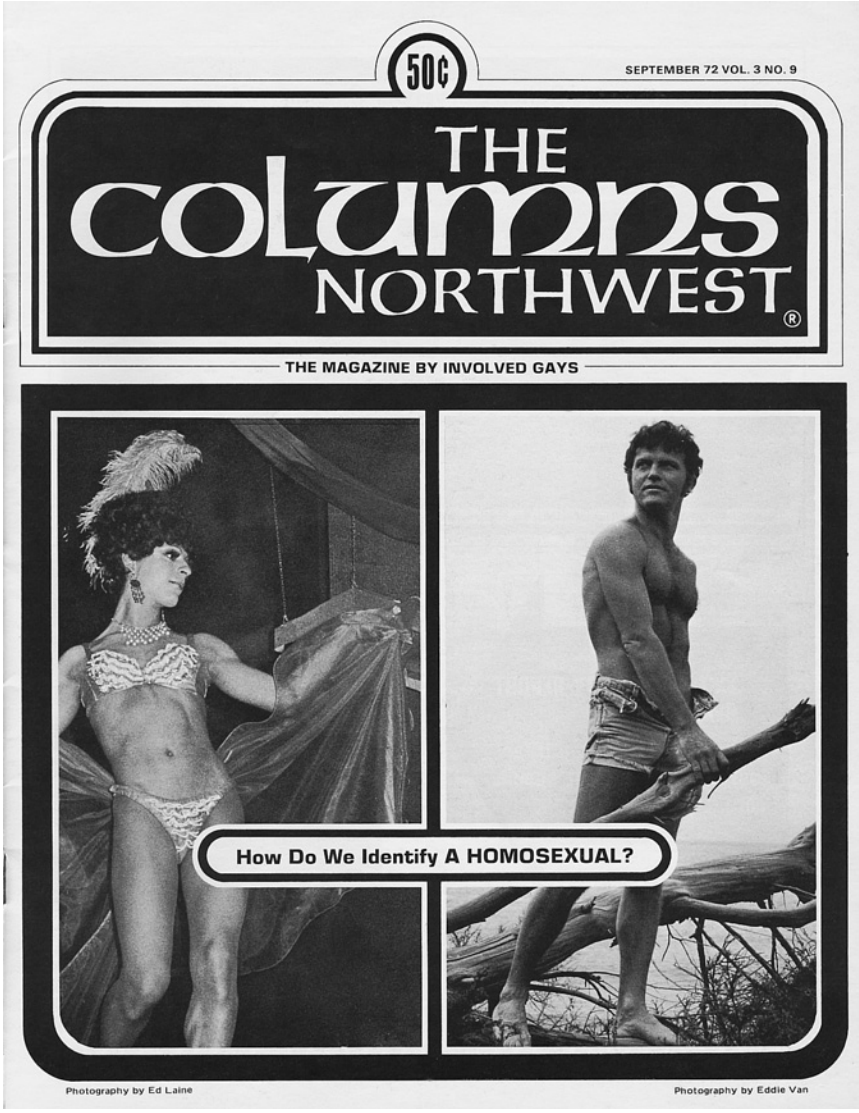
For *Seattle* magazine, the Dorian/Wichern issue helped signal its niche within a new national trend—urbane city magazines that were also brashly investigative and willing to examine under-reported topics. *Seattle* wanted to be a kind of local *New York,* or maybe even *New Yorker.* The Peter Wichern cover would become one of its four top sellers, pushing its newsstand sales toward the one hundred thousand mark. In future months the magazine would publish articles calling for the ouster of the county prosecutor and reporting on concerns of the city's other minority groups, particularly its African Americans. Such articles would also help seal the magazine's doom. Writing three years later, as he announced the magazine's end, editor Peter Bunzel revealed that the article about Seattle's homosexuals, along with subsequent stories about racism in the city, prompted an "intensive letter-writing campaign by right-wing militants" to the magazine's advertisers. "In short order," Bunzel wrote, "we lost a variety of prime accounts." By the end of 1970, the magazine was dead.[9] What would remain, though, would be a willingness in the more important Bullitt-owned medium—KING-TV—to eventually air documentaries about homosexuals in Seattle, particularly during the 1970s and 1980s.

Dorian Society members had to live a paradox. Could homosexuals as a group come out of the closet if individuals could not feel safe doing so?

And there was the problem of that Faustian bargain, too—living up to heterosexual Seattle's expectations of respectability.

The struggle was clearest when the Dorians began to speak in classrooms and churches while simultaneously trying to keep their identities private. Mike Ramey, who was able to join the society once he learned about it from reading the Wichern article, said: "I remember two occasions when we went to Bellevue Community

By the late 1960s, the Dorian Society had laid the groundwork for a new gay visibility in Seattle, first by cooperating with *Seattle* magazine to present the city's first media image of a professional and respectable homosexual, then by launching the *Dorian Columns* as the city's first newsletter devoted to covering lesbian and gay issues. *(Northwest Lesbian and Gay History Museum Project)*



In the late 1960s and early 1970s, the construction of a new image and identity for the homosexual was an important concern of the Dorian Society and other gay activists. Was a gay man to be "like" the respectable Peter Wichern, "like" a drag queen, or "like" a buffed outdoorsman? *(Personal collection, Nick Heer)*

College [in a Seattle suburb]. We insisted of the instructor that we have the class list in advance so we could go there as generic gays from Mars and be sure not to run into any neighbors we knew."

At one speaking engagement, Nick Heer encountered one of his own graduate students. Fortunately, Heer recalled, "He was very mature about it."[10]

Ken Hoole, who became Dorian president after Heer, panicked when he found his real name, rather than his pseudonym, listed in the syllabus for a class he was addressing at Portland State University. His letter to the professor reveals how carefully, and how futilely, Dorians tried to control their own individual disclosures while promoting more visibility for homosexuals as a group:

> I noted with some degree of alarm that the list of lecturers for your course again shows my real name rather than my pseudonym. This would not concern me except for two things: (1) although my mother knows everything, she is terribly uptight about anyone else who knows our family being aware; a family who lived almost next door to us at home in Montana for many years recently moved to Portland and their youngest child is now probably of college age. (2) I have recently learned that a Hoole family lives in Eugene, Oregon. The father is a fundamentalist-oriented minister and would possibly be upset at the connection of his family name with someone speaking on the topic of homosexuality. I am hoping to meet these people to see if we may be related but have not yet had a chance to do so.[11]

The threat of retaliation was, in fact, very real. James Gaylord, a high school teacher in Tacoma, joined the Dorian Society in 1970 just to socialize in private. He never participated as a public speaker or assumed any other public role, but when his principal discovered accidentally in 1972 that Gaylord was a Dorian member, the principal fired him. Although Gaylord had a record as an outstanding teacher, and there was no proof in the court record that he was actually a homosexual or had engaged in any homosexual acts, the Washington State Supreme Court would eventually uphold the dismissal. It was enough, the court said, that Gaylord simply associated with homosexuals. The U.S. Supreme Court refused to hear his appeal.[12]

It was often a strain to educate heterosexuals about homosexuality. At Portland State, students wrote seventeen pages of questions for the Dorian Society members, including these:

"Did you ever hear the old saying: 'Hey homo, take a bromo and wake up feeling yourself?'"

"Did you indulge in a lot of masturbation while growing up?"

"Are you sexually impotent with females?"

"Does your lover use a dildo on you?"[13]

Patiently, the Dorians steadily worked at their outreach. By 1969 they were receiving invitations to speak at high schools, the first being Seattle's Franklin High.

They ranged deep into the suburbs and rural areas. They addressed church congregations. They spoke at a coffeehouse in Tacoma with city council members. They collected toys for the children at a local hospital.

They also joined other community organizers in Seattle who were trying to increase racial harmony and avoid the riots occurring in Eastern cities. One such effort, called an "Urban Plunge," was sponsored by churches and took groups of middle-class whites into the city's minority subcultures for a weekend. A typical agenda, like one from April 1969, included "experiencing First Avenue" for forty-five minutes on a Friday night, then a "homosexual confrontation" for ninety minutes at the Mocambo, followed by two hours of visiting the gay hangouts at the Submarine Room in the basement of the Smith Tower, the Golden Horseshoe, and the Stage Door Tavern. The next day, it was off to the Central District to try to understand the black community.

Sheldon Daniels hired on as an Urban Plunge facilitator, in charge of showing groups of twenty or thirty people around. "The main event," he said, "was to split the group up and take them to various gay bars in the Pioneer Square area—the Golden Horseshoe and others—and let them experience what a gay bar was like. Most of it was positive. Women seemed to find it much easier to deal with than men. In fact, the women would dance with some of the people they met there."

Doug Wyman, another Dorian member who participated in the Plunges, said, "I was just fascinated by the idea of being able to expose straight people to someone who was gay." The Plunge organizers even went so far as to simulate gay bars for those Plungers who were under eighteen, taking them into the banquet room of the Mocambo cocktail lounge where they could safely be served soft drinks while gay men re-created the atmosphere of bars like the Horseshoe and the 614.

Not everyone in the Dorian Society liked the idea.

Marty Gouterman went to the Plunge twice but then stopped. "I was very uncomfortable," he said. "I felt like I was on exhibit, like I was an animal at the zoo."

Nick Heer refused to participate. "I didn't even like the idea."

Even Sheldon Daniels was tiring by 1969. "After a while I came to the conclusion that I had become so enamored of portraying myself as a regular guy to these straights that I was losing touch with myself. So I quit."[14]

The Dorians would eventually leave an impressive list of firsts. Most of them addressed communication processes that homosexuals in Seattle needed if they were to successfully speak in a new voice to themselves and to heterosexuals. From the Dorians, for example, came the first speakers' bureau, the first regularly published gay newsletter, and even the first drag balls to be held in very public locations, such as the Arena at Seattle Center, the site of the 1962 World's Fair.

The newsletter, begun as a mimeograph by 1968 and eventually named the *Dorian Columns,* reached not only members but also gays and lesbians who had

not yet joined any public network. As the city's first newsletter for homosexuals, *Columns* reinforced the idea that gays were more than just a group of scattered individuals who talked to each other in bars. Through the medium of print, gay men and women could report their own news, create leaders who regularly spoke, and form a record of political concerns worthy of discussion—even if few of those concerns commanded the citywide agenda. The other decision, to begin sponsoring very public drag balls outside of the gay bars, at first seems unusual for a group seeking respectability. But it was a logical outgrowth of the Dorians' attempt to provide more acceptable alternatives to the bars, while still building on the traditional importance of drag and vaudeville within gay life.

The "political firsts" are easy to forget, though, in the face of another more lasting communication legacy: the creation of the city's first counseling service run by gays for gays. The need was obvious. As long as the professional psychology and psychiatry associations still considered homosexuality a disease, gay men and women wanted a safer place to talk about their identity, about coming out, about homosexual relationships, about surviving on the streets if they were kicked out by their parents, about sexual diseases, about depression and alienation. While work went on to change the designation, gays could begin to counsel one another.

The first indication of the Dorian interest in such a direct form of service came in the minutes of a meeting on December 19, 1967, just a few weeks after the article about Peter Wichern appeared. On that day, a health worker from the city's Crisis Clinic met with the Dorian members to talk about phone calls he was receiving from lonely people, who he suspected were homosexuals. He told the members he thought the clinic workers handling the calls "miss the homosexual aspects of the crisis." Another public health official attended the same meeting to ask advice on how to better educate homosexuals about venereal disease. He calculated that 25 percent of those visiting the city's public health clinics for treatment were homosexuals, many of whom did not want to visit their own personal doctors for illnesses such as gonorrhea.

Three weeks later, the discussion moved to helping gay teenagers. The Dorians wondered about setting up a coffeehouse, but, the minutes note, the group "dares not sponsor officially at this time." The risk of being accused of child molestation or corruption was too high.

In July 1968, a board member identified as "Larry" reported that he had just met with Dr. Robert Deisher, a physician and medical educator at the University of Washington. Deisher had worked at the university since 1949 and had already earned something akin to legendary status among Seattle's medical community. Elf-like, with a rounded kindly face, he was the perfect image of the consoling pediatrician. He had made his trademark the launching of innovative approaches to treating teenagers, creating a special adolescent clinic where he assembled teams of doctors, nutritionists, social workers, and nurses to solve problems that resisted treatment solely by medicine—problems like young gay boys catching vene-

real diseases while hustling on city streets because they had no emotional support at home and no other way to earn a living. To Deisher, it wasn't good enough to simply prescribe penicillin.[15]

Someone had told him he should talk to "Miss Dee" at the Double Header, a legendary bartender who dressed in drag, wore a bouffant, and had been caring for the street kids who showed up at the Casino and Madame Peabody's for years. Word got out that Deisher was interested; so many gay kids or their parents started calling his hospital office that finally one of his colleagues joked that he ought to start a counseling service. Another, a medical specialist in transsexual operations, sent over a brochure from a Louisiana organization, the Erickson Foundation, that was working specifically to help transsexuals.

"Larry" reported that Deisher wanted to ask for a grant to see how gay youth could be helped. Two weeks later, the Dorians discussed joining Deisher's effort. Some worried that outside funding could subject the group to unwelcome scrutiny, but they decided to risk it.

It was a significant turning point—choosing to engage in direct services to gay youth. Within two months, Deisher contacted the Erickson Foundation, and it agreed to provide thirty-six hundred dollars to fund Deisher's research and a space from which he could work. The Dorians raised one thousand dollars from an auction and promised to pay another hundred dollars a month in rent.

The question was where to locate. No one could expect gay teenagers living on the streets to feel comfortable traveling across town to the University of Washington. While a storefront on the mudflat was a possibility, it and the downtown streets represented the very aspects of gay life that the Dorians and Deisher wanted to help the youths escape.

Finally they settled on renting a place that would feel like a home. Deisher asked Pat Gandy, a research assistant who had been helping him with the gay teens, to find one, and the two eventually chose a battered old house located at 320 Malden Avenue East on Capitol Hill. The new program would be named the Dorian Counseling Service for Homosexuals, although quite quickly the name would evolve into the more inclusive Seattle Counseling Service for Sexual Minorities. The home would be known as the "Dorian House." It would be the first public gay institution on Capitol Hill, and the first in the city that was neither bar nor bathhouse.

By summer 1969, everything was in place. The Dorians now had a bricks-and-mortar expression of who they were and who they could be: homosexuals caring for homosexuals, including the next generation of gay youth. Also, an imaginative and public shift away from the mudflat had begun, and with it, the gay community's public rhetoric and its own image of itself. On Thursday night, June 26, 1969, the Dorians gathered at the house on Malden Avenue to celebrate. The minutes of the meeting note simply: "Champagne to celebrate our first meeting in Dorian House. Intermission to drink champagne. Urban Plunge tomorrow night." The Dorian members felt buoyed and successful.

Two days later, the end of the Dorian Society would be written in a New York City bar three thousand miles away.

"I don't think we had a sense of it being important," Nick Heer will tell you.

It took a while to even discover the details. Heer remembers learning the most from the New York Mattachine's newsletter, which did not arrive in the mail until weeks later. The budding national gay newspaper the *Advocate* did not report on the story unfolding in Greenwich Village that weekend of June 28 and 29 until its September issue.

Only gradually did the impact sink in. Homosexuals in New York had resisted a bar raid, locking the police inside, setting the Stonewall tavern on fire, blocking traffic, and hurling concrete blocks. "Gay power" would soon become a national slogan.

With the Stonewall riot, the rhetoric of "understand us" would be replaced by the rhetoric of resistance. As far as the new "gay liberationists" were concerned, any "problems of the homosexual" were not due to psychoses or malfunctioning families, but to heterosexual prejudice and discrimination. It was time for homosexuals to stop adapting to society, they believed, and start adapting society to homosexuals.

Robert's Rules of Order would no longer be the road to respectability. Instead, respectability would be seen as one of the obstacles.

The minutes of the Dorian meetings throughout that summer of 1969 say nothing about Stonewall. On July 17, immediately after the riots, the members were more concerned with spending an evening at the new Dorian House listening to LP recordings of the play *Boys in the Band,* a tale of gay men gathering for a party—at the time, a breakthrough in the presentation of gay friendships. "Much merriment was provoked by the first act," the minutes say, "while looks of stark self-analysis and abject anxiety could be seen among the members during the harrowing concluding act."

By fall, the impact of the Stonewall riots could not be ignored. Officially, the Dorian Society was focused on launching a Christmas Ball at the Seattle Center Arena, but the tensions over visibility and over a policy of education versus political action had heightened. These tensions were evident in the society's minutes:

> November 13, 1969: Arthur is here to organize a political group. Aim to get [Brock] Adams or [Mayor Wes] Uhlman at a dinner. Purpose to bring us to attention of politicos so as to wield influence. [Sheldon Daniel resigns from the board]. His effort was for education and he is burned out.
>
> December 11, 1969: Randy came to talk. He has been a member for a year and has done some speaking for us. He is working on the ball. He thinks we have not been active enough in keeping the gay people informed of what we do. We need to draw

more on the membership for activities. He feels communication is poor. Randy feels that people do not join because they are afraid to declare themselves. Other people feel that we are rocking the boat and this may cause trouble and for this reason do not believe in our purpose. Randy feels we are very disorganized from his work on the ball. . . . Questions raised by Dave B: 1) "Who speaks for the Society?" 2) "We do not involve the members." 3) "We are very haphazard." Nick H gets very emotional. Marty says that we have institutionalized an active board and an inactive membership and should consider reorganizing if this is a problem.

December 23, 1969: Curtis D has resigned in a huff. Roger A says he resigned for personal reasons and because of his personal reaction to the board meetings. . . . It seems Dorian [would have] more direction with something like the chapter system. More reports and better communication. Discussion rages on—wow!

Suddenly, with calls for gay liberation spreading rapidly through the country, it seemed odd to have a passive membership that left most of the work to those few who could risk being more visible. Yet that was the way Dorian had been organized since its beginning.

The debates spread to conflict over the contents of the group's newsletter—where the editors, in the wake of Stonewall, began publishing more explicit pictures of partially and even completely nude men:

March 12, 1970: Mike H objected to cover for the "Our Love Needs Care" [issue]. Andy J was not pleased with cover either. Sales of the issue were up. Peter suggests equal time for girls on cover. A letter [arrived] calling the cover gross with three sets of initials. Dave B says that if it sells, it is good. The [male] figure [on the cover] did not appeal to Clark. Peter says it puts across a bad image. We are making efforts to get more girls involved in The Columns. Roger A feels sales should not be the only matter. Ken H feels we need to keep a respected image . . . Ken raises question as to whether cover should be reviewed by Executive Review Committee. Peter moves: entire magazine be reviewed before it appears. Roger A says that it is very difficult to be so hamstrung. MH and MG say we get a better magazine by giving the editorial board a free hand. . . . Dave B moves that the Executive Review Committee be abolished; Mike H wants to retain what [we] have. DB's proposal is defeated.

The lack of women in the Dorian Society also became a wound. One woman, Carol King, was trying to recruit others but having little success. Even the minutes reflect part of the problem, the constant reference to the "girls" rather than to women: "April 9, 1970: Carol feels we are not doing anything and this is a cause for resignations. She feels we talk about things but do not accomplish them. Carol feels she has been overlooked for the membership committee. Nick feels there just is not enough time for everyone to do everything because of other obligations.

Chuck T feels that one should ask what they can do for the society. Marty G argues that a voluntary organization has limitations. We are the only group to stand up for the gay community."

"May 14, 1970: Carol reported that more girls would join if there was a subgroup for girls. Marty suggested that we have a girls committee. We now have about 12 female members according to Ward. Marty suggests that Carol as membership chairman call together the girls and ask them if they would like a girls committee."

The old methods of screening members, which had required reviews and the assignment of fake names, suddenly was out of place:

"June 11, 1970: Ward thinks our system of accepting members is archaic. He thinks we do not have to screen members. He moves that we accept members automatically but that names of new members be reported to the board. Motion seconded and carried."

Even the counseling service and Dorian began to have difficulties being housemates. Closeted Dorian members did not like sharing the same parlor with openly gay teenagers. Closeted teenagers did not enjoy associating with older, openly gay Dorian members. The volunteer counselors, themselves often younger than the Dorian Society members, did not like answering questions about the society. Conflicts arose about who was in charge—Deisher, the society, or the counselors themselves.

Finally, the board members went on a retreat to try to settle some of the issues, particularly the thorny one embedded in the society's bylaws—that Dorian stood for encouraging only socially responsible behavior by gays.

"August 15–16, 1970: Roger questions phrase in Article 2 Sec 2 of bylaws: ' . . . encourage socially responsible conduct by members of the homosexual community.' This is a matter of subjective interpretation. Discussion pro and con, most feeling that Dorian cannot be the arbiter of values for individuals. Can we put down in writing when we might or might not want to defend or help a member in trouble with the law? How do we stand regarding offenses or arrests? . . .

"Do we need to re-word our goals? How can we implement the concept: 'Gay is Good'? [a favored slogan of the new, post-Stonewall gay activists who wanted to move beyond urging tolerance from heterosexuals]. Being gay is really an acceptable life style. This needs to be communicated to society."

By June 1970, a chapter of a new national organization, the Gay Liberation Front (GLF), had formed in Seattle. The GLF would urge confrontation instead of classroom visits, as well as the assembly of political coalitions with other minorities more accustomed to public demonstrations. Popular among GLFers at the time was an eighteen-point program developed in Philadelphia. Among other things, it called for the "right to be gay," "the right to change sex," the abolition of the nuclear family, "non-sexist child development," "the right to dress as one wishes,"

the release and payment of reparations to "gay prisoners," and the end of "domination of one by another." Since the GLF often drew young students as members, it could afford to be more open as homosexuals than could the employed Dorian members. They also used drugs more openly, and some GLFers even talked about bombing stores that were hostile to public displays of gay affection. The pressure on the Dorian Society to calculate a new course was building.

Paul Barwick was perhaps typical of the GLFers in his disdain for the Dorian members. He had served in the army's military police in Vietnam where he had learned to deflect attacks on his homosexuality by meeting hostility with direct confrontation. "I stood up for myself," he said years later in an interview. "If you stand up for yourself, people will back down, right? . . . I didn't get to be a faggot this old by being a sissy. . . . The more you stand up, the better off you are."

"We looked down on the Dorian Society as a bunch of closet cases who were afraid to push." In retrospect, he would add, "Pushy jerks is what we were. I was so much better because I was wearing a big Gay Power T-shirt, and they wouldn't be caught dead in anything but a three-piece suit."[16]

Barwick and two other men, Robert Perry and John Singer, rented their own house one block away from the Dorian House, at 422 Malden, and began to use it as the GLF base for launching their own in-your-face projects. Singer played an especially noteworthy role; later, he would become better known among Seattle gays as Faygele benMiriam, a name he chose to emphasize both his Jewish and his gay identity. Faygele, he would point out, was a woman's name in Yiddish as well as a derogatory term for "faggot." He had been born in a working-class family in New York and had inherited from his parents a passion for civil rights—serving, for example, as a VISTA volunteer in St. Louis in 1965. Growing up, he would later say in an interview, "life was political. The dinner table was always filled with all manner of political conversation."[17] A cousin was a political writer who would sometimes invite the likes of author Alex Haley to talk about racism. During the Vietnam War, Singer had been drafted into the army, even though he had already come out as gay in 1962 and even though he filed for conscientious objector status. After his discharge in 1969, the year of the Stonewall riot, he had enrolled in City College in New York. The excitement of the subsequent gay organizing "filled up my life," he once recalled. He brought that to Seattle when he moved to the city in early 1970.

"Ours was the group that would walk on Broadway holding hands," he recalled. "It just wasn't done. What was fun was to have two of us holding hands and someone else twenty feet behind just to listen to some of the comments, or occasionally react to some of the comments. That's where you're being open making it possible for others to be open."

Sometimes he dressed to outrage, not as a performing drag queen, but as what came to be known as "gender-fucking." "What was the thing about me being in a dress?" he said. "If I was that outrageous, it let other people be not quite as out-

rageous but to be much more expressive of who they were without crossing the line."

Singer tried going to meetings of the Dorian Society, "but I was radical," so he veered to helping set up the GLF instead. At one of the Dorian meetings, however, a seed was planted. A young lawyer and legislator named Peter Francis talked about the state's marriage law being rewritten. The new wording said only that marriage was a contract between two people eighteen years or older. There was no mention of gender. That gave Singer an idea.

The Dorian minutes again: "October 22, 1970: The GLF had an encounter with Dorian. We have a GLF confrontation committee of Lee, Ken, Jack, Mike. There were five GLF people and a fruitful meeting was held. They wanted to squelch rumors: they have banned pot at their meetings. They want to work with Dorian and bars. . . . They are holding a dance. They have been banned at Golden Horseshoe. So have we. They are thinking of picketing the Shoe. The spokesman for GLF was John T; also Randy was there. They have a ten-point manifesto. Graham attended ten meetings or so: GLF did talk of bombing stores that banned Gay people. They have [held a] love-in in Volunteer Park."

At one point, the Dorian board tried to incorporate some of the new gay liberation thinking, but the effort only increased the strain.

> January 14, 1971: Sheldon spoke to nominate a GLFer to the board to improve communication. MG seconded move as did Jack A. Allen T was questioning. Ed D spoke against nomination suggesting we allow observer. Nick H suggests a conflict of interest. Allen T feels communication necessary but does not like Sheldon's plan. Allen favors a delegation. Nick H gets passionate about conflict of interest. Bob D feels observer is not enough. Roger A suggests we choose a Dorian member who goes to Gay Lib. Jack A suggests we-they is bad. . . . Sheldon's last word: We should be able to meet other gay people on equal terms if we want to be treated on equal terms by society.

> February 11, 1971: [Bob Deisher reported on the formation of a student chapter of GLF that did not seem as leftist as the adult Seattle GLF]: Student group formed about three months ago. Association with Seattle GLF severed after about two meetings. Better structure than Seattle GLF. Should be close to them because they are a moving group and they approve of us. Bob D suggests a joint dance. . . . Harold: Their affiliation with radical left? Bob D: No ties with Seattle GLF. Jerry N: Anything with radical front is automatically associated with radicals. Church: Doesn't see where this will interfere with our image.

Meanwhile, projects began to spin away. The editors of *Columns* decided to make it independent. Deisher moved the counseling service toward its own incorpora-

tion as a separate group. The dances, including the one eventually held with the student GLF chapter, lost money. Dorian was even about to lose the sponsorship of the drag contests. By November 1971, the minutes were reporting with some weariness that the consensus of the board members was to allow a new group formed by gay bar owners, the Queen City Business Guild, to take the "whole shebang." Drag contests would move back to the mudflat and back to the bars.

Two years after the Stonewall riots, the Dorians' turmoil came to an end. On June 24, 1971, the few remaining members voted to kill the society. Its time had passed.

Those Dorian Society members who still had a taste for gay organizing would eventually help create a new group called the Seattle Gay Alliance (SGA), the idea being to start an umbrella organization that included not only the old Dorians but the young GLFers and lesbians who had also begun to form their own political groups. During the summer of 1971, the new alliance endorsed its first action. It would not be a high school outreach, or a church meeting, or a collection of toys. Instead, the SGA voted to picket a coffee shop named the Last Exit on Brooklyn, a student hangout on Brooklyn Avenue near the University of Washington. The shop, according to the SGA, had been allowing "straight public displays of affection" while prohibiting embraces between gay men. It was time for promoting confrontation, not just promoting understanding.

A few months later, in September 1971, Singer acted on the idea Pete Francis had given him at the Dorian meeting. He and Barwick decided to get married. Well, not really. Singer was twenty-six at the time; Barwick, twenty-four. Unlike gays and lesbians in later decades, who would fight for the actual right to marry, neither Singer nor Barwick particularly believed in it. "We would just as soon abolish marriage," Singer said later. Barwick added, during an interview in 2000, that "in the 1970s, you weren't couples and lovers. We were collective. We weren't a pair. We weren't partners. [But] we were as close as anybody in that [GLF] house."

They wanted to make a point about having the same rights as heterosexuals. Singer enjoyed pointing out to the clerk at the marriage license office that the state law simply said that individuals had to be over the age of eighteen to marry, making no reference to the two needing to be a man and a woman. That was what he had learned from Francis.

Their friend Robert Perry, also a GLF member, alerted the media so that television cameras and newspaper reporters were on the scene when the clerk refused the license. Norm Maleng, a deputy prosecutor for civil cases who would later become the county's chief prosecutor, had given the order not to issue a license. Reporters took the incident lightly; one asked which was the bride. "We don't believe in role playing" Singer answered. "We're two people. We happen to be genital males, but two human beings who happen to be in love and want to get married." Then he launched into an explanation of how both he and Barwick could receive more

GI benefits and tax benefits if they were able to marry. Standing alongside, Barwick wore a T-shirt with the word "Gay" printed boldly on it so that, he said, "there wouldn't be any doubt."[18]

It was more than just a media stunt. Singer and Barwick pursued the case for almost three years, filing a lawsuit that was ultimately settled by the Washington State Court of Appeals in 1974, which ruled that the denial was neither discriminatory on the basis of gender nor unconstitutional. To do so, though, the court had to narrowly interpret the definition of "marriage" as an institution meant primarily to promote procreation.[19]

"If marriage is for procreation," Singer would said later, "if someone is beyond the point of procreation, how can you let them marry? Or if someone doesn't procreate after ten years, are you going to annul it?" He felt satisfied that the absurdity of the law's logic had been demonstrated: "We accomplished a lot of what we wanted to do."

Just a few months after Singer and Barwick's attempt to get a marriage license, it was Robert Perry's turn to make a statement—his and D. Carl Harder's, another GLF member. The two set off for Lynnwood, a suburb north of Seattle, aimed for the Rollaway Roller Rink. When the "couples only" skate time began, the two men casually skated onto the rink together, holding hands. Told to stop, they refused. According to news reports in the *Advocate,* the rink's management then called the police, who forced them from the floor, handcuffed them, and took them away to be booked for disorderly conduct. A judge later released them without bail and eventually the charges were dropped. But a week later, some twenty gay men were back at the rink for another protest. This time, several of them dressed in drag and joined other men to skate as "mixed" couples, challenging the rink's management to find a way to prove the "women" were not really women.[20]

The time for discretion had ended.