

GAY PRIDE WEEK



photo by steve rose/Ins

June 18 - 24

"Sheridan Square this weekend looked like something from a William Burroughs novel as the sudden specter of 'gay power' erected its brazen head and spat out a fairy tale the likes of which the area has never seen." *Village Voice*, July 3, 1969.

As we worked to prepare for Gay Pride Week '73 in Atlanta I wondered just how many people were aware of Stonewall, what happened, what it meant. But four years have past, many changes have occurred, the Stonewall Inn has been closed, and many have forgotten or never heard what occurred at Stonewall.

When the New York City Vice Squad raided the Stonewall Inn on June 27, 1969 they had no reason to think that this raid would be any different from the hundreds of other raids on gay bars. For a while it was not any different. The six plainclothes policemen and two plainclothes women released the gay patrons one by one after checking their IDs. Some left quickly as they were released; others milled around outside waiting for friends or just watching. This New York crowd had been through numerous raids and knew they came and went with little effect. The atmosphere was festive, a party that had gotten a little too loud. Then a paddy wagon arrived. Three drag queens, the bartender and the doorman were hauled away. The mood became restive, hostile. The police retreated inside the bar. One policeman was struck beneath the eye with a broken bottle as he raced for the door. More rocks, bottles, coins, names . . . The police located a fire hose and aimed a weak stream of water at the crowd. Lighter fluid was thrown, followed by matches. Forty-five minutes had passed and police and reinforcements and fire trucks arrived simultaneously. It was Saturday morning, the Stonewall was blackened, its insides strewn about.

All day Saturday the curious filed passed the Stonewall, gays and straights. The Mattachine Society issued a leaflet denouncing the harassment, calling for action and protest. The word was retribution and it had already happened. The drag queens and effeminate gays who have always taken the brunt of establishment discrimination and prejudice, had fought back. They had not silently drifted away as usual, they stood up and said "NO MORE." It is hard to say who was more surprised at the unity and strength shown by the gays, the police or the gay community.

Never before had gay people in any unified manner protested such illegal harassment. Individually they had fought lonely battles but on June 28, 1969, in the early hours of Saturday morning, the lonely battlers joined hands and one policeman bled, one homosexual died and America's second largest minority group was roused from a long and restless sleep.

Six months later Atlanta had its first organized meeting for Gay people. In February of 1971, the first officers were elected. In June we organized a Gay Pride March down Peachtree Street with a rally in Piedmont Park. Over one hundred gay brothers and sisters marched as Atlantans stood in amazement. The spirit of unity was high. We were blatant, radical, proud. . . Some gays joined us readily, others were frightened, fearing the loss of job, police harassment, etc.

Those of us who had worked to organize the march were amazed at the response. We saw the gay brothers and sisters reaching out and struggling. What direction could we or should we take. Our first manifesto committed us to the support of minorities struggling for freedom, our officers were socialists, marxists, communists, liberal democrats.

Our potential members had been notoriously non-political, fearful of becoming involved in changing the system from within and fearful of those who sought a frontal attack on the system. The organization attracted the curious, the interested. The early meetings were attended by 75 to 100 people. Slowly, the organizational structure emerged. The curious, satisfied, drifted away. For some it was too radical; for others not radical enough. New words—sexism, and old words with new meaning, gay—political consciousness—evolved and we began to struggle.

Today, three years later, there are four homophile organizations working together on a Gay Pride Week. The Georgia Gay Liberation Front has been joined by the Atlanta Lesbian Feminist Alliance, the Metropolitan Community Church, and the Southeastern Gay Coalition. The events of Stonewall may not be discussed all week by any of them. But each in its own way is echoing the events at Stonewall. No more lonely struggles, no more walking quietly away. We are Gay, we are Proud, each in our own way.

[See Calendar for a schedule of events for the Gay Pride Week Celebration, June 18-24.]

—gay pride week coalition

Still in Closet

Several weeks ago we reported that the *Atlanta Journal* had refused to print announcements for the Atlanta Lesbianfeminist Alliance (ALFA), and that we weren't absolutely sure about the *Atlanta Constitution*. Well, now we are sure. Ms. Carolyn McCullough, the Women's Editor on the *Constitution*, took an ALFA announcement to Mr. Jack Minter, the Managing Editor of the *Constitution*, and he said he would not print it. However, he did say that he would meet with the ALFA representative.

Several days after that, an ALFA member called up both Mr. Minter and his counterpart on the *Journal*, Mr. Derwood McAlister, and asked for an appointment explaining that ALFA and several other groups who were supporting us, wanted to discuss their policy on the printing of ALFA announcements. Both of them, separately, refused to see us. One of their arguments was that they supported the decisions made by the editors of the Women's section. That of course is ridiculous, since we all know by now where substantive policy decisions are made—by the men who run the paper.

So we are making another request, this time to Mr. Reg Murphy, Editor of the *Constitution*, and Mr. Jack Spalding, Editor of the *Journal*, that they meet with us to discuss the matter. We have also written to Mr. Jack Minter, asking for his reasons in refusing to print the ALFA announcement. And we have sent announcements of our June 24th Open House to both Women's Editors, as well as articles about ALFA for them to print during Gay Pride Week.

In the meantime, we are making contacts with individuals and organizations who would like to act with us to pressure the two newspapers. If you disagree with the policy of the two papers, let their editors know (and why don't you let us know at the same time?) Their addresses are: Jack Spalding, *Atlanta Journal*, 72 Marietta St. NW and/or Reg Murphy, *Atlanta Constitution*, same address. Or you might call them. The general number for both papers is 572-5151. Our address is ALFA, 1190 Mansfield Ave. NE, Atlanta; our phone is 524-3192.

Tune in next week for the next thrilling adventure of: As The Closet Opens!

—vicki