

“Lots of women buy just as many wigs and makeup things as I do. They just don’t wear them all at the same time.”

Dolly Parton

C N Y

TEA TIME WITH KAY SERA

by Richard Egan

From the archival files of Kay Sera, we find and present as condensed "the lost interview" with Empress VIII Billie Ann Miller.

KAY SERA: DEAR ONES! I've been away ever so long (forgive me), but I've learned that if I ever go looking for my heart's desire again, I don't have to look any further than my own back yard! Well. With that said, allow me to carry on by presenting to you H.M.I.S.M. Empress VIII Billie Ann Miller. Dear Billie Ann, how did you...when did you...You look marvelous!

BILLIE ANN: Thank you doll. I did my first drag at a friend's party in Brooklyn- I figured what the heck, I'll give it a shot. As a youngster I always wanted to do fashion design- I loved it. So I whipped up an outfit of some kind, and did the hair. I figured I wasn't going to be the best looking, but I got along pretty damned good, let me tell you. Eventually, some of us began going to Phil Black's parties in Harlem and the costumes got wilder and wilder. But Fire Island is where it really took off for me.

KAY SERA: You have a home on the Island?

BILLIE ANN: Yes, since 1965, and of course there was a lot of drag at the parties there. But at these parties, and back in Brooklyn, it was just for fun. But by 1970, I began to be active in the Island community.

KAY SERA: So you set out to raise funds- this would have been before the HIV era- for what kinds of causes?

BILLIE ANN: Oh, there were so many. We performed for the benefit of the Dunes Fund; for the Doctor's Fund, to keep a resident on call in the community for the summer; the Ambulance Fund; the Coast Guard, who always came to our aid when we needed them! Eventually I became treasurer for the Arts Project of Cherry Grove. I've been on board with the Arts Project for over twenty years. I love it.

KAY SERA: With the dawn of the eighties, how did the focus of your fundraising change?

BILLIE ANN: Well, we became involved in the efforts of GMHC in the early eighties, and I co-chaired the Ice Palace fundraisers that brought in \$35,000 for GMHC. Three or four years later I co-chaired with Terry Warren the PWA benefit.

KAY SERA: Along with Emperor Ron, you ruled with serenity and dignity, and set an example for us all to follow. A bit like one's Mum, perhaps.

BILLIE ANN: Many of the girls in the Court come to me for advice, and I get a lot of questions from the younger ones, like on dressing, and deportment. I feel great warmth for them all. When you take your responsibilities seriously, it's gratifying to be emulated. I've got many, many years on a lot of the girls, and I'm proud to give advice and counsel. Remember, I did my share way long before it was fashionable, and I'm still in there pitching- and I'll keep going as long as I can!



The Court Circular

The Official Newsletter
of the Imperial Court of New York



New York, NY 10003

STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

To raise funds for Gay & Lesbian Community and social service organizations; to provide a safe, social environment for people with the same interest as those of the corporation; to create and promote positive Community awareness of the ideals of the Imperial Court System.

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The Executive Board of the Imperial Court of New York meets on the third Thursday of each month.

The General Membership meets on the first Wednesday of each month at The Center, 208 West 13th St. at 8:00pm.

FRIENDS FOR LIFE BENEFIT

by Zondra Foxx

Would you believe it? The court ventured into the land of strip malls, that is to say New Jersey, for its very first official fund-raiser across the river. The theme was "A Night at the Movies" with performances of/to movie music at which the Court rose to the occasion. A



massive contingent arrived to perform, show off, report, help and just enjoy. The operation had

Kitty Fouche' soloing as Shelley Winters from "The Poseidon Adventure" (complete with water sprayers for effect) and, together with Fred Frick (and a dummy, not yet a Court member,) in "Dirty Dancing" (shave those 'pits, girl!). LaDiva broke wine glasses with her bel canto vocalizing while Philomena was a Charleston dancing Carol Channing, and Bella did "Sunset Boulevard", not a segment, but the whole thing! Of course HMISM Empress X Ran-Dee and HMISM Emperor VI Steven were on-stage, singly and then as part of a "Grease" extravaganza with Fred and Anne Tique. ICPR Gianna was ravishing in yellow beads and feathers, her recalcitrant boa chop-

ping at her heels. Big Blanche cohosted with Emperor Steven and received, on her knees, an honorary title, Countess of Fort Lee while Empress Ran-Dee assisted. Now Blanche will never bad rap the Court again! (Joke, joke.) Fabulous Fakes Scott Cooper as a luscious Marilyn Monroe and Kevin Jackson as Diana Ross made the evening even more glam. Court members in drag included Billy Little, Lady Susan and Lady Ramona Kimona (two new members) and your authoress; while others attending were Dom Tolipani as ticket taker with Ronny Cichowski, ICPR Tom DeConza, Wolfgang Busch, Gary Cosgrove (organizer), Damian Ross, Joe Doyle, and others too numerous to mention. The turnout was sizable and enthusiastic with many tips filling the buckets up front. {Official count of proceeds was \$1,001.} When last seen, Steven was stuffing a large wad of bills (the night's proceeds) into his jacket (and heading for Newark Airport!). *JK*

FROM THE SECRETARY'S DESK

by Tori Adore

The Board of Directors is hard at work, preparing for our Eleventh Annual Night of A Thousand Gowns on Saturday, March 22, 1997, at the Imperial Ball Room of the New York Hilton Hotel. The events during Coronation Week leading to the Ball provide us with many social, fun-filled opportunities to see each other and our out-of-town guests. Court Sponsored events are:

Wednesday, March 19 --The Prince & Princess Show, 10:30 PM at Pieces, (8 Christopher Street), hosted by the Imperial Crown Prince Royal Tom and the Imperial Crown Princess Royale Gianna, benefiting Lifebeat/Hearts & Voices. Princes and Princesses of the Court are to be featured performers at this benefit.

Thursday, March 20--State Dinner at Lower Lips Restaurant (2 Bank Street), 7:30 PM cost \$25 + 1 drink inclusive. Hosted by Emperor VI Steven and Empress X Ran-Dee, in honor of our founder, the Empress I Jose, the Widow Norton. This will be a lovely quiet dinner that will provide us with the opportunity to pay our respects to Empress I Jose.

Friday, March 21--The Out-of-Town Show at the Web (40 E 58th St.), cocktails at 7, show at 8 PM. A fund-raiser/food drive for the Momentum Project, bring a can of food and \$5 suggested donation; without can \$8; tipping encouraged. The event is for out-of-

town courts to strut their stuff and perform in New York. Emceeing the evening are the lovely Baroness Leeza Monet, reigning Miss New York City 1996 and Count Robert, Brother to Emperor VI Steven.

Saturday March 22--The Night of a Thousand Gowns XI. You will be hearing lots more about this event. For the first time, tickets are chargeable through CircuitTix, call 800-429-3433. However, if you wish to qualify for the discount offered to members of the ICNY (whereby if you sell 9 or more tickets you receive one ticket free), you must pay by check.

Sunday, March 23--Victory Brunch at noon in the Hilton Hotel, cost \$25, to salute the new monarchs. This is a non-drag event.

Sunday, March 23 Evening--Tough Drag Show, time and venue t.b.d., hosted by the newly crowned Emperor and the Dowager performing in female drag. You can not miss this event!

There will be plenty to do, see and be seen! And I know that the members of the Court will be hard at work to make our ball the most spectacular series of events in the history of the Imperial Court! 

IMPERIAL PRESENCE AT AWARDS

by Zondra Foxx

If possibly one should think that doing drag is easy, the events of November 23 will most readily disabuse that notion. A small, but stalwart, IC contingent made its way to the Roxy for the HOP (Heritage of Pride, organizers of NYC's Gay Pride Parade) awards and then later to perform at a Court Night arranged by club promoter Lee Chappell. At the HOP awards HMISM Empress X Ran-Dee and HMISM Emperor VI Steven in full regalia presented an award to Cafe con Leche for music in the '96 Pride Parade. The awards went on forever. Once over, a long interval ensued until 1 AM when it was showtime!

Oh girl! Our Empress I Sybil Bruncheon was the M.C. at the Roxy and as usual had to endure the obnoxious taunts of a very drunk male heckler who spit -- can you imagine -- spit at Sybil!!! Security was promptly on him and the offending "object" removed to eternal perdition. The bridge and tunnel crowd, obviously Limelight refugees, rather square and merely straight, wanted to dance rather than observe queens cavorting. Anyway, Leeza Monet, elegant in black, was first up and no tape!!! Oh well, that left it up to Lita Austin as funky fishnet

clad Cher-clone to thaw the icy audience. Tape found, Leeza did Lena Horne. These kidz have never heard of Lena Horne! Then Coco as Coco, who else, in a nifty psychedelic print outfit and the glacial crowd was melting a bit. Finally crimson clad Ran-Dee as Reba McIntyre zipping around the stage. Besides courtiers some of the stiffs actually tipped! Wow! Released from cultural purgatory the kidz could now have their disco back..

Among the sturdy IC contingent were Johnny Cella, video voyeur Von Busch, Tom DeConza, Grant Anderson and a few more. And ZF herself, indefatigable as always, this time in pink, purple and gold took it all down. We did not stick around because the next day was...New Members Brunch.

NEW MEMBERS BRUNCH AT LIPS

by Zondra Foxx

.....Another party! That's right, on three hours of sleep! The court had it's get acquainted brunch, regal attire requested, for new members in the Lower Lip Lounge and Restaurant (2 Bank Street) Sunday, November 24.



More than 60 prior and new members, many decked out in courtly finery, got to size up one another. As a prologue

Swana Sorrell first discoursed on a few fine points of court etiquette. The sixteen new members in attendance were presented to the reigning monarchs and although the curtseying was not always perfectly executed, no massive faux pas occurred. Two new members, Gusty Winds and Veronica Blaze, were working at Lips and unfortunately could not relax and socialize fully, but they performed along with November's Sunday brunch host the buxom Jackie, who is very pleasant and sweet and is not yet corrupted by the nasty city. As there was an out-of-town coronation this weekend (Houston?) the crowd was somewhat reduced, but the Court comfortably filled the room. The Court has grown sooooo much of late: only a few years ago there were 25 members, not 118!!! Maybe this year there really will be 1000 gowns at the ball. It's gotta happen eventually. Those who dressed looked great and I cannot even begin to enumerate everyone, but styles ranged from cocktail length beaded glitz to corestry.

Wigs off to Fred Frick, Vice President, and his devoted helpers for making it all happen so smoothly. We need more informally formal parties like this. Every week! On to next weekend's event.....

12 DRAGS PROVED TO BE A HIT SHOW

by Kitty Fouché

Many, many, thanks to our friends at Pieces (8 Christopher Street) namely the two fabulous bar owners Bob and Ken. (Writers bloc prevents me from remembering their last names. Please forgive me guys.)

The Imperial Court of New York were featured performers in the bar's annual "Twelve Drags of Christmas Show" Wednesday, December 11. This year Bob decided to make the annual show a benefit for the Imperial Court in recognition of all of our hard work we do for the community. With your authoress as organizer, I drafted Anne Tique, Amanda Mackie, Brenda Starr, Diva D., Patty Cakes, Billy Little, and Josephine Boner Parte to do their Christmas finest. I was not disappointed ladies. Thank you for contributing your time and talents!! Attending in support were Gary Cosgrove, Damian Ross, Maria, Zondra Foxx, Robert Van Glahn, Tammy Recine, Howard Hadley, and Ron Kresl.

The evening of Christmas fanfare and jubilation enabled us to raise \$300. Maybe we could persuade the Board to allocate this fund to the newsletter budget???? Merry Christmas all and thank you again! 

RUNWAY FOLLIES, A GLAMAZON REVIEW

by Tori Adore

World AIDS Day, Sunday, December 1, 1996 found many members of the Imperial Court of New York hard at work at the Web on East 58th Street, preparing for a fashion show to benefit Broadway Cares/Equity Fights AIDS and Canadian Actors Equity. The show was Co-Chaired by our reigning monarchs, TMISM Empress X. Ran-Dee and Emperor VI Steven, and Honorary Chair Bob Mackie. The fashions of 15 New York and 1 Toronto court designers were modeled by Court Members, with millinery by Robert Tabor, jewelry by David Mandel, Robert Sorrell, and Larry Vrba. Dom Tolipani worked the door and provided gorgeous floral arrangements for the stage and for the traditional bridal

finale of the show starring the imperial couple, Ran-Dee and Steven.

The evening was emceed by the Atlas Empress I of New York, Sybil Bruncheon whose wit, charm and radiance provided the perfect compliment to the runway beauties. The masterful Tom McNamara and I kept things running smoothly backstage, and the handsome Gary Cosgrove and Damian Ross assisted with the sound. ICPR Tom DeConza supervised the silent auction, assisted by ICPR Gianna. Her Highness Gianna also helped Brian Crede and Fred Frick with the program, designed and modeled three of her own fantastic fashions and assisted our reigning Empress! You go girl!! The auction featured jewelry donated by the 3 aforementioned talented and generous court Jewelers, gowns by Fred Frick, Billy Little and Douglas Thompson from Toronto and other goodies that I hope find their way under my



Christmas tree!

The Glamazon Review was part of a simultaneous benefit in 10 cities, sponsored by the East Coast Conference. Judging from the dedication of those involved in this show, they have a lot to be proud of. We raised around \$4000 in New York and had a great time doing it! Despite the monsoon that prevailed outdoors, HBO (Home Box Office) managed to capture the entire evening on film, which will be part of their "Drag in America" series set to air in 1997. I spoke to the producer afterward, who told me that he had never attended such a glamorous event and had so much great footage that it would be difficult to edit!

Some of the evening's highlights included the entire (Fred) Frick Collection modeled by Lita Austin, Josie, Tromphe L'Oeil, Anne Tique, Luisa and Ran-Dee; Empress Philomena who cleverly remade her coro-

nation gown into a hostess outfit with Capri pants; a knockout number performed by the Broadway Angel Empress Ran-Dee in a gown by Robert Legere (Empress II Champagne) with opulent jewels by Vrba; and so on. We must mention contributing talents of Billie Ann Miller, Coco LaChine, Art Snyder (Marjorie Dunne), Chicklet, Billy Little, Gary Greene's creation shown by Luisa, Vivica Fairfax, Leeza Monet, Delta Lamanns, Charlene Chivoe, David Mandel, Bella, and Victoria Weston.

It was a wonderful extravaganza and congratulations to all who worked to make it a success, particularly our TMISM Empress Ran-Dee and Emperor Steven. 



FESTIVE HOLIDAY PARTY PLANNED

The Imperial Court of New York's Annual Holiday Party promises to be like none other than before according to organizer ICPR Tomas (Tom DeConza). Tom reports that the semiformal (girls that mean cocktail length dresses and guys, suits)! evening shall be at an elegant ballroom located at 24 Fifth Avenue from 8:30 to 12:30 PM. White glove service of hot hors d'oeuvres accompanied by an elaborate assortment of buffet platters. Adding to the evening festivities will be a 4 (Four) hour open bar. Such amenities for only \$55 per member and guest. Everyone is invited. Reservation and payment deadline are Tuesday December 31. Any questions please contact Tom DeConza at 212-929-6478. See you there! 

IN MEMORY OF

With deepest and heart felt sympathy we bid farewell to the passing of long term companion

ion Charles Gelber to Charles Ching (Coco LaChine). With the passing of Charles on Saturday, December 7, arrangements are being made during publication. Coco, we give you our love and support in your time of loss. A Memorial Gathering is being planned for January 25th, time and place to be determined. 

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J A N U A R Y C A L E N D A R

Sun	Mon	Tues	Wed	Thurs	Fri	Sat
29	30	31	1 New Year's Day	2	3	4
5	6	7	8 8:00 PM - General Membership Meeting @ the Center.	9	10	11
12	13	14	15	16	17	18 Houston Coronation Victor Grossetti
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
26	27	28	29	30	31	1 Minneapolis/St. Paul Coronation Victor Grossetti

UP-COMING EVENTS:

February 15 - Seattle Coronation - Victor Grossetti

February 22 - San Francisco Coronation - Victor Grossetti

March 22 - Night of a Thousand Gowns - Emperor Steven or Empress Ran-Dee