

Stonewall Romances (1979) [zine]

Stonewall Romances: A Tenth Anniversary Celebration

(New York: "Flower Beneath the Foot" Press, 1979). Interviews by Steven Watson, photographs by Ray Dobbins, drawings by Joe Longo, story script by Charles Webb, collages by Mark Simon, cover and interview illustrations by Daniel Abraham

featuring memoir by Sylvia Rivera, poem by Jimmy Camicia about Marsha P. Johnson, recollections of gay bars and bookstores, and cameos of Agosto Machado, Peter Hujar, and others

STONEWALL ROMANCES



D. ABBAM

\$2.50

A Tenth Anniversary Celebration



GEE, TIMES HAVE CHANGED!

AS OUR STORY OPENS OUR TWO
FRIENDS MEET AGAIN ON
CHRISTOPHER STREET...

Photos by RAY Robbins

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LET'S EAT HERE —
SAY, WASN'T THIS
THE OLD STONEWALL?



YES, CHARLES, IT
WAS. I USED TO
GO THERE ALL OF
THE TIME.



WERE YOU THERE,
JUDSON, WHEN ALL
OF THAT RIOTING
HAPPENED?



YES, CHARLES,
I WAS THERE ON
THAT FATEFUL
JUNE NIGHT IN
1969...

AS THE TWO
WALK WEST
ON CHRISTOPHER
STREET, JUDSON
BEGINNS HIS
STORY...

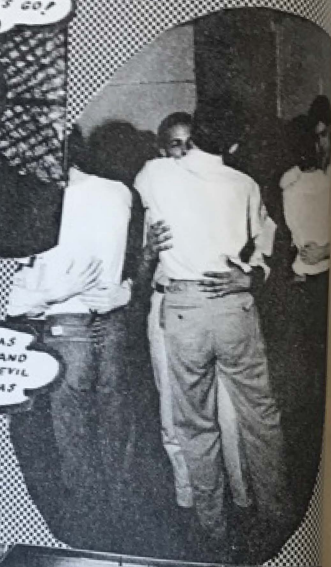
"... IT WAS A HOT
FRIDAY NIGHT AT
THE STONEWALL
INN. GO-GO BOYS
DANCED ON THE
BAR AS DRINKS
WERE SERVED,
THE DANCE FLOOR
WAS PACKED
WITH PEOPLE
FRUGGING...
OR LOOKING
FOR PRINCE
VALIANT IN
CHINOS... EVERYONE
WAS THERE, DESPITE
SYSTEMATIC POLICE
HARRASSMENT...



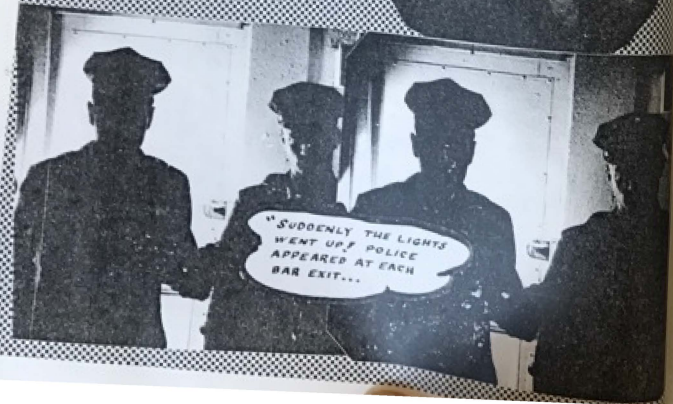


LET'S GO!

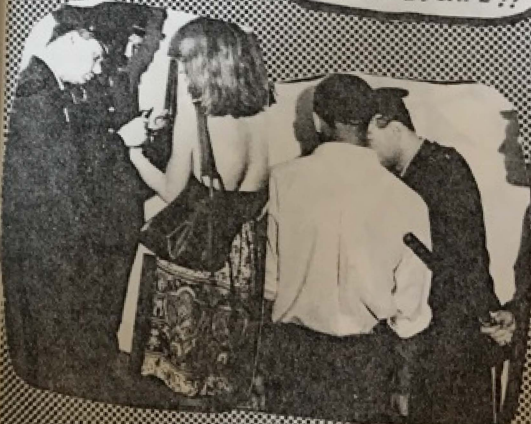
"LITTLE DID WE REALIZE, AS WE SIPPED OUR COCKTAILS AND SLOW-DANCED, THAT THE EVIL GENIUS OF INSPECTOR PINE WAS AT WORK!



"THE CROWD PANICKED AND TRIED TO RUN— BUT THERE WAS NO ESCAPE !!



"SUDDENLY THE LIGHTS WENT UP! POLICE APPEARED AT EACH BAR EXIT...



"THE POLICE CHECKED OUR I.D.'S AND RELEASED US ONE AT A TIME... THE EMPLOYEES WERE ARRESTED!



"THE PATRONS, THEIR RANKS SWELLED BY SIGHTSEERS, FORMED A CROWD OUTSIDE THE DOOR AND APPLAUDED AS EACH PERSON EMERGED..."



"AS THE APPLAUSE — AND THE CROWD — SWELLED, THE EXITS BECAME MORE CAMPY, MORE FLAMBOYANT!"



"THE OWNER OF THE STONEWALL WAS ARRESTED!"

"THEY BUSTED THE DRAG QUEENS, BUT DRAG QUEENS ARE TOUGH AND THEY FOUGHT BACK: IT WAS A DRAG QUEEN — NOT SOME BUTCH MOVEMENT NUMBER — WHO STRUCK THE FIRST BLOW FOR GAY LIBERATION!"



"WHEN THE QUEENS WERE DRAGGED OUTSIDE, THE CROWD EXPLODED WITH ANGER!"



"THE CROWD BEGAN TO HURL ROCKS AT POLICE... THE COPS RETREATED INTO BAR AND CALLED FOR REINFORCEMENT."



"WHEN THE REINFORCEMENT ARRIVED THEY CHARGED THE CROWD... CHRISTOPHER ST. BECAME A BATTLEGROUND."

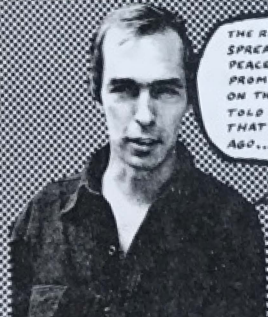
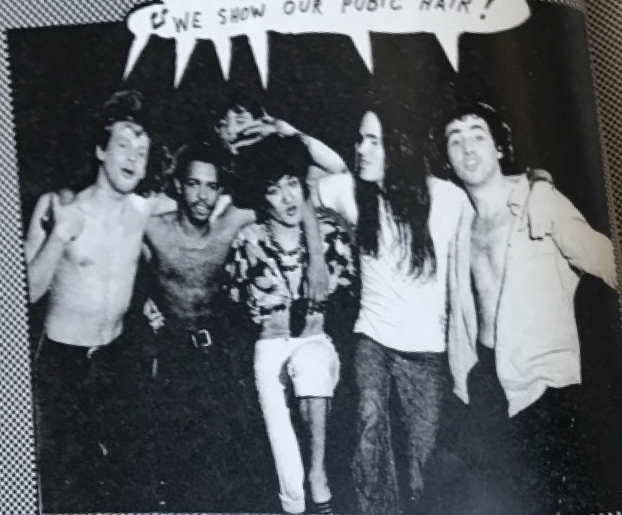
"ONE LESBIAN ESCAPED FROM THE POLICE VAN TWICE, ONLY TO BE DRAGGED OFF AND ARRESTED A THIRD TIME / SHE WAS SEVERELY BEATEN..."



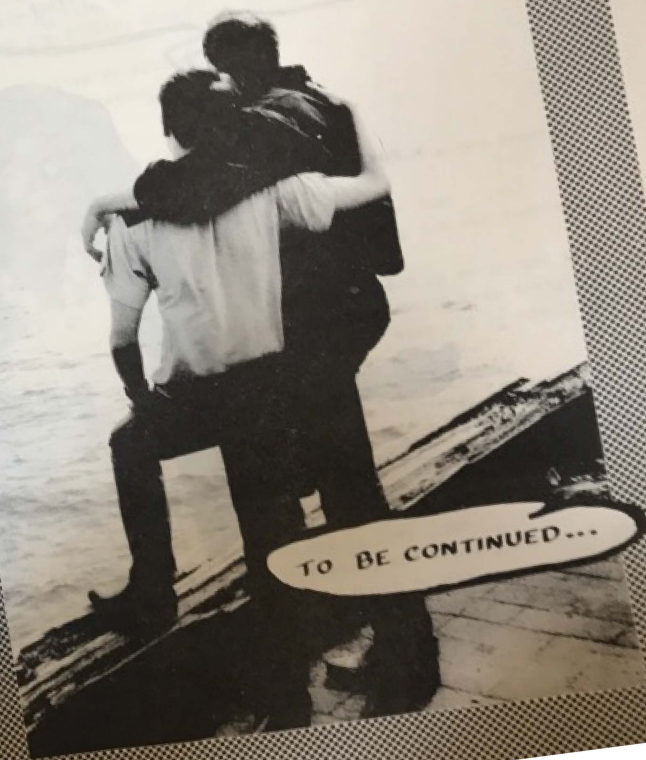
"ONE DRAG QUEEN CLIMBED A LAMPPOST AND THREW BRICKS AT PASSING POLICE CARS / FIRES WERE STARTED AND WINDOWS BROKEN ALL UP AND DOWN CHRISTOPHER STREET!"



WE ARE THE STONEWALL GIRLS
WE WEAR OUR HAIR IN CURLS
WE WEAR NO UNDERWEAR
WE SHOW OUR PUBIC HAIR!



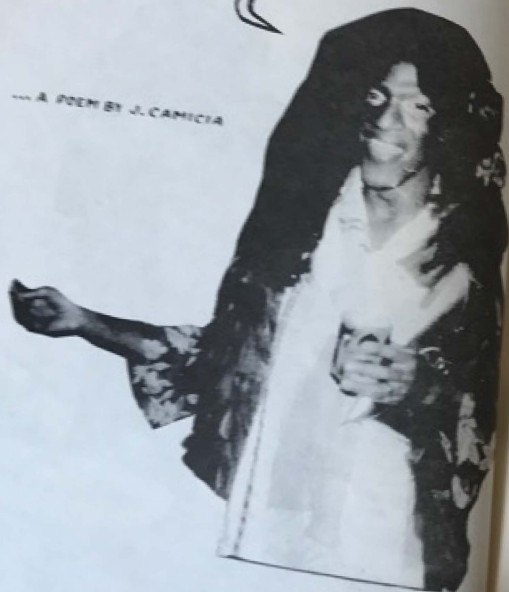
THE RIOTS CONTINUED FULL-SCALE FOR TWO MORE NIGHTS
SPREADING INTO OTHER PARTS OF THE VILLAGE.
PEACE WAS RESTORED ONLY WHEN A SPECIAL POLICE COMMISSIONER
PROMISED TO STOP HARASSMENT OF GAY BARS.
ON THE SECOND NIGHT OF TURMOIL, POET ALLEN GINSBERG
TOLD A REPORTER WHO WAS THERE, "THE FAGS HAVE LOST
THAT SCARED LOOK THAT WAS IN THEIR EYES TEN YEARS
AGO... DEFEND THE FAIRIES!"



TO BE CONTINUED...

Spare Change, Darling...

... A POEM BY J. CAMICIA



Change for a Dying Queen

Can you spare any change for a dying
queen dar-ling?

I mean I am dying.

I know you don't believe me

But I know what I'm talking about

Yes I do

Us Queens know what we're talking about

Because we're for liberation

Yes we are.

Look at the Stonewall.

When I first came to New York

All pressed and clean

In a white shirt and tie

That my mother bought me

I heard about the Stonewall

So I thought I'd go over and

Check it out

And Lord!

Men dancing with men

And one more gorgeous than another

And way in the back

Way in the back

Were my sisters, Honey

Turning it out

In gold lame and wigs for days.

So

I was hanging out in the Stonewall
one night

Talking to Miss June

Who was feeling low and nodding out
on downs

When she looked up at me and said

"Them pigs come in here tonight

They better stay off my motherfuckin'
case."

And she was right cause

We wasn't bothering nobody

Just hanging out and being ourselves

When don't you know

Sure enough

The whistle done blew

And in they come

Pushing and shoving everyone just like
a bunch of pigs

And ain't nobody said nothing

Cause in them days

If you was gay

You didn't say

You was gay

So they're pushing and shoving
And nobody said nothing
Til they came to the queens
Then this pig comes up
And gave Miss June one slap
Knocked her down
Ripped her dress
And scratched her face.
Now darling
Anybody will tell you
That a queen is a sort of
Soft hearted, easy going person
Who you can sort of shove around
But darling let me tell you this.
There are two things you cannot
do to a queen.
One. You cannot rip a queen's dress
And two . . . don't you ever, never
ever
Touch t he face honey . . .
Well Miss June got up
Screaming and yelling
When this pig goes to hit her again
So I said
"Hey, why don't you leave her alone
She ain't she ain't bothering nobody."
And her turned to me and said
"Shut up you sick faggot."

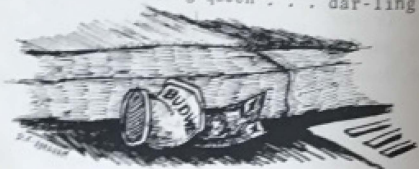
Now darling,
You can call me a lot of things
You can call me
A queer
A cocksucker
Or a crazy fool
But ain't nobody got no right to call me
A piece of wood
That's right
A piece of wood.
I looked it up one day
And it said right there
In the Webster's
'A faggot is a piece of wood.
And darling I ain't no piece of wood
And I was telling Miss Pig this when
He came to knock me
Then Miss June picked up a chair and swung it
And everybody started screaming and fighting
And queens was getting their faces scratched honey
And you know what that meant.

And the next thing I know
We all wound up in the Tombs . . . again.
Them pigs done
Busted up our fun, busted up our heads
And just plain old busted us.
But that was O.K., honey.
Yes it was
Because that was the beginning of Gay Liberation
in New York
And in the World.
Yes it was.
And now everybody done forgot
Who done what and why and how



And you know, sometimes
When I pass one of them gay bars
Where I see my sisters or brothers
Having a good time and turning it out
In all their liberated glory
And I see hanging right over that bar a sign
What says "NO DRUNKS, NO DOGS, NO DRAGS"
Can you imagine comparing me to a dog!

Well honey I just want to break right down.
But I just pay it no mind
That's right darling, cause once you 86 me I tip
And once I tip I stay tipped.
And they can 86 me out of every gay bar in the Village.
And they can 86 me out of every gay bar in New York.
And honey, they can 86 me out of every gay bar in the World
And I pay it no mind because I got my friends.
Yes I do, and I do know who my friends are.
My friends are people who love their gay sisters and brothers
Including the queens.
My friends are people who smile at me and understand
When I say
Can you spare any change for a dying queen, dar-ling?
So the next time you're in one of them bars what has that sign
"NO DRUNKS, NO DOGS, NO DRAGS"
The next time you see them
Turning out one of my gay brothers or sisters
Honey, you just dig real deep down
Into your pocket and take some of that change you're saving for
Your cold beers and your hot dogs
And get over yourself and
Spare some change for a dying queen . . . dar-ling.



Elmer Kline, poet and playwright

I started having sex when I was 14, I've been fucking around for 44 years now, I'm as active as I ever was, and I hope that it goes on for a long time.

I was in California at the time of the Stonewall riots, but when I came back, I could see that some things were different. People are not scared of cops anymore, and cruising is a much more direct thing. It used to be a sneaky, clandestine affair. I have always thought it similar to hunting--if you were experienced and expert, you'd go into strange territory for the sport and stay away from game preserves, like Christopher Street is today.

Technique was very important, because you couldn't rely on the "gay" uniform people wear today. Christopher Street is all ersatz laborers, state policemen, and coyboys--it used to be that men



dressed like gentlemen.

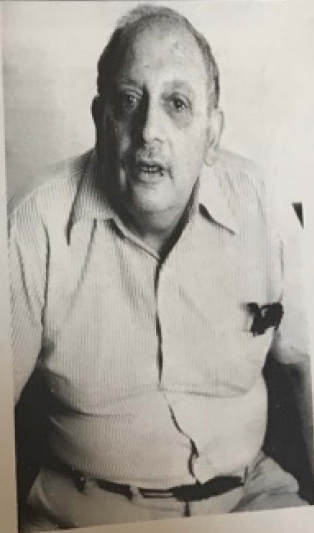
Without the identifying uniform, you had to watch body language and go through a more elaborate ritual, asking for a match, stopping at a shop window, seeking the time, talking double entendres. I particularly remember one guy--he looked like an insurance agent--that had this line: "Would you like a substitute?" Most of that subterfuge language is gone now. I sometimes miss the old stalking,

which had to be both artful and masked.

Gay bars then were transient--up for a few months, very popular, then busted. They were the post-Prohibition speakeasies. The bust I remember most vividly was at an innocent Sunday morning brunch in the Bronx. All these cops burst in with guns pointed at harmless kids sweating, with napkins tucked up around their chins.

The only touch dancing that was legal was a conga line, so you'd see conga lines in very unlikely spots. I remember one touch dance establishment across from the Planetarium. You'd come in, go downstairs, through a long passageway ending at a door, and beyond the door was a semi-dark room with a few perfumed men dancing to a Wurlitzer and many youths standing around groping each other and paying a buck for a soda.

I felt ill at ease in these type of places--I preferred the open streets. The cruise areas were different in the forties and fifties. The Oak Bar at the Plaza was an expensive rendezvous and the Soldiers and Sailors Monument on the Upper West Side was free. The mecca for the entire city was in the Village and aptly named the Meat Rack. It was across from Eleanor Roosevelt's apartment on Washington Square South.





Meat Rack Memories
By Elmer Kline

Never were anxious, sleepless nights longer,
 Never did the peach-tinted sun rise more slowly,
 Than when its pale weak rays illumined the arched backs
 Of those who had waited till dawn
 Sitting perched like parakeets on the Meat Rack,
 Waiting, hoping like wall flowers at a country club dance,
 To be picked up and whisked away by Prince Charming,
 A Prince Charming, not from the Grimm Brothers,
 Or Hans Christian Anderson, or the illumined Fables of Medieval France,
 But from Herr Dr. Freud, the New School, NYU, and the twin dungeons,
 Madison Avenue and Wall Street.

O happy thoughtless carefree martini days,
 When Eisenhower was king,
 And the "bird bars" were the aviaries to try one's wings,
 And perhaps be trapped by such vultures from the real world
 As Nellie S. and Wallie C.,
 Whose respective empires embraced the kingdom temporal,
 And the kingdom spiritual,
 Extending to the far north of 14th Street,
 Up to the Camelot-like towers of the Plaza,
 And posh seedy Third Avenue still hidden in the shadows of the El,
 Where pimply Irish boys from Queens already traded,
 Their milky white buttocks and blue veined pricks
 For a few dollars cash and a chance to smash a fairy.

The courtesy of the Meat Rack,
 Was the courtesy of a club,
 The regulars had their regular time and space,
 And if a stranger presumed upon your reserved seat,

Or rather your reserved 14 inches of hollow iron bar,
Your friends would drive him away
So that the natural order would not be disturbed,
And when the minions of the law checked
The quiet peaceable tree-lined sanctuary,
And it was quiet, peaceable and serene,
They too were happy,
As peace in the Village was more important than anything,
Except possibly the moneys raised at the feast of San Gennaro.

A brigade of 100 peaceable men
Breaking the night silence
With quiet shispers and slight intonations
Hinting of what might happen later at home,
Half promises and sad wary smiles,
For one never said too much

As not all the bobbies wore blue,
And some were as lithe and as magnetic
As the suntan summer boys,
And the Oxford grey winter boys
Who were weekend sojourners on the Meat Rack.

If blessed memory has not been dulled by Father Time
The Meat Rack was the center of the Daily Ritual
Of the Moonlight Campaigns,
The game and the hunter merged into one in the bloodless battle,
Both "trade" and "competition" lined up
Like tin soldiers waiting shipping orders,
Waiting to be called . . . Selected . . . Chosen----Awarded,
The Medal of the Meat Rack:
Four times in one night
Four separate campaigns,
Four separate loads,
As well as two of your own.

Private Faggot,
You have been selected by the
First Washington Square Official Cocksuckers Committee
To be the Cocksucker of the night.
Report for duty immediately,
At the headquarters bushes,
In back of the Washington Square Men's john.

One by one the ranks lessened,
The sixty swinging on the meat rack at 12:30
Melted into forty at 1:45--
Charles had an early class,
Francis had to read the Wall Street Journal before retiring,
Lennie had to go home to mother in Brooklyn--
So by 5 A.M. there were only three college boys left,
And a derelict Bowery bum
Waiting for the dawn.

By the time the dawn finally showed up, late,
The last two sat only three feet apart,
And had been sitting that way for over four hours.



Craig Rodwell, founder of the Oscar Wilde Memorial Book Store

I escaped from the Midwest as soon as I could and came to Greenwich Village. It was 1959, I was 17, and I was only allowed to come if I promised my mother to return home to Illinois for summers and Christmas.

The summer returns home stopped soon, because I preferred the hot summer nights in the Village. We'd all sit on the hoods of cars along

Greenwich Avenue, dishing and being outrageous. It wasn't easy--the cops were vicious then, poking their sticks at us, "Move on, fag." They could move us on--we weren't organized then--but they couldn't stop us from being outrageous.

The "Alice Blue Gown" city police had a regular routine in the bars. They would enter in gay drag--cashmere sweaters, tight pants, low sneakers--and pick a patron up. As soon as they were

on the cement, the guy was arrested. The first stop was the police room in the nearby Hotel Albert. All the gay men arrested were taken there and the room would slowly fill up with men, scared and huddling together, as the plainclothesmen shuttled back from the bars with the new victims. When the room was full, they would take them in to the Charles Street Station. The police recommended two lawyers--Dirty Gertie and Enid--who could get you off. It cost \$500. Most people paid. No one questioned. We were afraid. So these stylish shysters would waltz in and collect their easy money.

I learned as a teenager that my social life was run on one side by the Mafia and on the other side, the law. There were enough laws on the books so that cops could bust any time they wanted to. My first run-in was for breaking a 1918 law which specified that a man's bathing suit



had to extend from his navel to mid-thigh. The fuzz used that law to regularly bust men at the gay section of Riis Park; it was public knowledge. I went anyway, and it was off to the queens' tank.

I preferred being there to the other part of the prison--I was with my people anyway. During the day we were in this room behind frosted glass. No one could watch us so I used to lead the inmates in dance lessons.





lived with its own fear; it was hard not to in those dark times. When I began to write for the Mattachine Society, they asked me what name I wanted to use. Not if I wanted to use my name, but what name.

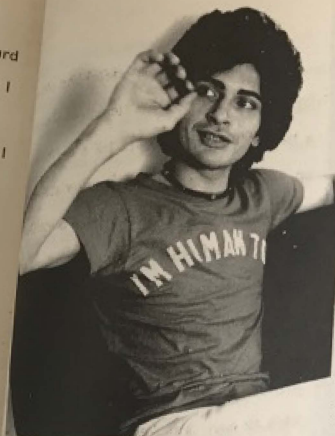


Of course, it makes a man feel weak and angry, hiding away from his own name, moving on at the push of a cop club, waiting in line to congregate in Mafia hell-holes where we drank our watered drinks. By 1969, there was plenty of anger built up. We just didn't know what to do with it.

The night of the Stonewall Riots I was walking home and I saw the crowd in Sheridan Square. I turned to my friend and said: "This is it. That crowd is the spark that could turn this into a mass movement."

The gay social places then were hardly gay. They were dark piss-hole bars with Mafia goons at the door deciding whether to let you in and buy over-priced drinks. Why did we go? There wasn't much choice though, and I remember lines along Eighth Street of men waiting to get in.

We never fought back much. The Mattachine Society--the main homophile organization during those times--didn't like confrontation. It



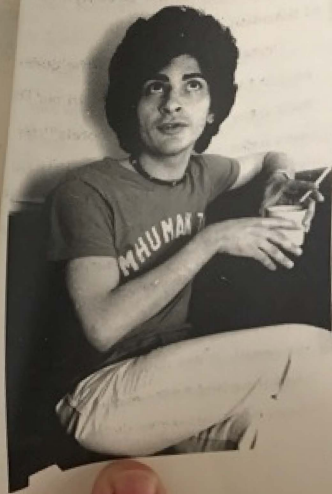
Sylvia Rivera, founder of S.T.A.R. (Street Transvestite Action Revolutionaries)

I decided my banner this year is going to say: "Ten Years of Impending Liberation." It's been a long impending liberation.

I started wearing make up to school in the fourth grade. I had no hassle until some kid on the playground called me a faggot and I had to beat him up. I stood there in full face make up and the tightest pants I could squeeze into and said: nobody calls me a faggot.

I left home--I lived with my grandmother--very early. I was eleven and hustling, so they were calling my grandmother a pimp. Now, I wouldn't have minded if they called her the grandmother of a homosexual, but I hated to see them call her a pimp. So I ran away.

The only place I knew to go was that place she always talked about when we went by in the subway: 42nd Street. She'd always do this thing with her eyes when we went by that stop. So of course I had to go there.





I was hustling in drag and picked up by the police by the time I was eleven and a half. There used to be a coffee shop on 42nd where all the queens ate and dished and the police would just back the paddy truck up and fill it with queens.

My first bust, they had fifty queens shoved together in this little alley behind a movie theater and a hot dog stand. When the judge asked us in the courtroom if we were all men, I laughed. So it was off to the queens tank in the Brooklyn House of Detention.

I remember nights when the queens used to sit around and smoke in our little hotel rooms. "Hot springs hotels" they were called, mostly people in transit. We'd party and dream of some day when we could walk down the street and say: "Fuck the cops, we're here, and we're going to stay here." We'd dream that dream over and over.

So when I was there the night of the Stonewall, it was this wonderful thing. And the queens were ready to be in the front lines because we didn't have much

to lose and we knew about violence. I remember the first time I met Miss Marsha P. Johnson. It was on 42nd Street and Marsha came out of the subway on Halloween night in full drag. One of the Spanish queens grabbed Marsha's red wig, and that set Marsha off running—and when she caught that queen there was no mercy. "Don't you ever steal my wig."

There's three things you don't do with street queens. You don't mess with anybody's lover. You don't mess with their dope. And you don't mess with their wig. It is not done.

So the queens knew how to fight and were early members of the Gay Liberation Front. Miss Marsha and me started our own organization called S.T.A.R.: Street Transvestite Action Revolutionaries. We had a S.T.A.R. house—a place for all of us to sleep. It was only four rooms, and the landlord had turned the electricity off. So we lived there by candle light, a floating bunch of 15 to 25 queens, cramped in those rooms with all our wardrobe. But it worked. We'd cook up these big

spaghetti dinners and sometimes we'd have sausage for breakfast, if we were feeling rich.

We'd all get together to pray to our saints before we'd go out hustling. A majority of the queens were Latin and we believe in an emotional, spiritualistic religion. We have our own saints: Saint Barbara, the patron saint of homosexual-ity; St. Michael, the Archangel; La Calidad de Cobre, the Madonna of gold; and Saint Martha, the saint of transformation. St. Martha had once transformed herself into a snake, so to her we'd pray: "Please don't let them see through the mask. Let us pass as women and save us from harm." And to the other three we'd kneel before our altar of candles and pray: "St. Barbara, St. Michael, La Calidad de Cobre: We know we are doing wrong, but we got to live and we got to survive, so please help us, bring us money tonight, protect us, and keep evil away." We kept the sword of St. Barbara at the front door and the sword of St. Michael at the back door to ward off evil. We were watched



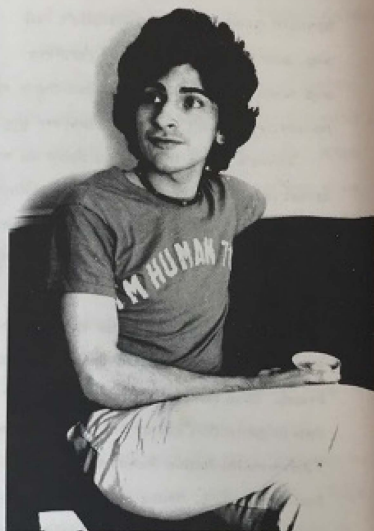
over. The S.T.A.R. house was everyone's dream for a while. But the landlord fucked us over. So before we left, we put it back in the shape we got it. We had made it beautiful, but if you fuck with us, we fuck with you. So the pipes were ripped and the refrigerator went out the back window.

Around that time, the street queens were being drummed out of the gay movement--"stereotypes" and "bad role models" we were called. At the 1974 rally, they tried to stop me from speaking. My gay brothers wrestled me down three times from the platform, so I looked a little roughed up in my dress, standing at the mike. I was booed. But no one was going to stop me from talking. I'm a loudmouth queen, and if you fuck with me you don't get away with silence.

But that whole incident took me way way down, and I left the movement. I moved up north of the city and I am living a domestic life with my lover.

I still have my friends, but there is no place in the movement for me. My only

connection now is the gay pride parade-- I come into the city every year for that parade. I'll be doing that as long as we have parades.



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David Nieske

Michael Shanker

Michael Kester

Elmer Kline

Sylvia Ray Rivera

Bill Cassidy

Bob Gresch

Jane Gruenbaum

Steven Brown

Rosalie Winard

Don Walker

Marie D'Antoni

Andy Reese

Frank Holiday

Charles Webb

Peter Hujar

Eric Redd



The world's first gay riots took place outside the Stonewall Inn in New York's Greenwich Village. They were the spark that ignited a ten-year fight for gay liberation. Inside are personal accounts of those nights.

«Flower Beneath the Foot» Press
• NEW YORK CITY •

