

# Herland

## VOICE

July, 1999

## CELEBRATING PRIDE IN OKLAHOMA

by MOC

Tulsa's first-ever Pride Parade, July 11, was a rousing success. There were, according to the official police estimate, several thousand people in or watching the parade, and gathered at the picnic following. The temperature was maybe 130 degrees in the shade, but I wouldn't know for sure, I never found any; and the humidity hovered around the Ivory soap purity level, 99.4% at a minimum. Being Tulsa's first parade, there were very few people who knew they should pass out water to the marchers – and not one water bazooka to shoot us with and cool us down. (The fabulous Susan from Norman took care of that for us in Oklahoma City)

The onlookers were otherwise quite wonderful and appreciative – thanking us so often for marching that our mantra became “well, thank you, too, yes, well thank you”. My attempt to get the group I was marching with, (Cimarron Alliance Group) chanting was feeble and ineffective – I wanted to go with the great chant the Oklahoma contingent came up with in Washington in 1993, “Ten percent is not enough, Recruit Recruit, Recruit!” But no. Cimarron can be a little stodgy sometimes, despite the good work they do.

According to his despicable website, Rev. Phelps and his gang of homophobic picketoids planned to give the parade a “bye”; it was probably the presence of Congressman Barney Frank, (D-Mass) as Parade Marshall that brought them down from Kansas. They and their ugly signs served a useful purpose for anyone who forgot why we were marching.

At the park following the parade the Council Oak Mens Chorus sang two songs, one a rousing and beautiful arrangement of “We Shall Overcome”. Following the music, Congressman Frank addressed the gathering. Widely recognized as one of the brightest and wittiest members of Congress, he amused, entertained and inspired the crowd. His primary message was the need for us all to register and vote.

He pointed out that AARP and the NRA never march, but are enormously effective in their lobbying efforts: old folks and gunlovers vote!



Later that evening TOHR (Tulsans Organized for Human Rights) and Cimarron sponsored a reception and dinner for Rep. Frank at the Greenwood Cultural Center, which commemorates the worst race riots in our history. The wonderfully appropriate site led into his remarks about the distance the gay rights movement has come; when he first began addressing parades and dinners such as this, he said, he could be sure he was within thirty miles of an ocean. Now the movement is vigorous and open in the heart of the country.

Sunday June 27 was the Oklahoma City Parade. Karen Parsons of EQUAL! and of Cimarron did a fine job as keynote speaker at Memorial Park preceding the march. There were many floats and marching contingents, however Herland was on foot this year except for Pat on her bicycle and Laura as one of the Dykes on Bikes. Ms. Liberty marched for the second year in tennis shoes instead of high heels (thank you Victor! It hurt watching you walk in those killer shoes) but another marcher walked in heels and a tasteful summer frock that went well with his mustache, carrying a sign which said “Beaten but Not Bowed”, in tribute to the Stonewall Rebellion drag queens. I hope that if s/he marches next year s/he will be invited to lead the parade. □

### **HENSLEY COLLECTION OPENING**

A reception will be held at Herland on July 18th at 2:00 pm to formally accept the Charlotta Hensley Special Collection to the Herland Lending Library. As a memorial, Hensley's family and friends donated hundreds of fiction titles that she had collected to the library.

Please come by on Sunday and hear more about this great gift of books. Light refreshments will be served.

# SAINT SYBIL

Dear St. Sybil,

Interesting times. I used to joke that City Councilman Jack Cornett wouldn't know a hate crime unless it bit him on the butt - well, it bit him, and he's seen the light - a glimmer of it, anyway.

Israel Bird's mother doesn't think that it was a hate crime when her son was beaten half to death by a bunch of black kids. The police don't think that it was either. But to Jack Cornett and many other of his mentality, the assailants were black, Israel is white, and ergo, it's a hate crime - no further evidence needed. Gone are the lengthy rationalizations about not being able to judge what's in a person's heart, the stern lectures about a crime being a crime no matter what the motivation, about the law's ability - and willingness - to punish all crimes equally. No, Mr. Cornett's butt has been bit, and suddenly he realizes that with the greater publicity given a designated hate crime there might be larger rewards for information, speedier arrests, a public moral stance of condemnation that might deter such crimes in the future....

But of course, much as he would like to come out for hate crime ordinances covering black against white crime, he's not about to do anything that might possibly lead to protective coverage for gays and lesbians.

So my thought is, and I guess my question to you, Sybil, is what do you think of this brainstorm of mine: if a gang of gays, maybe me and some friends, went around beating up straights, would our elected leaders have their eyes opened enough to finally pass some hate crime legislation?

Yours,

Ima Willin

Dear Ima;

Well my dear, that certainly was a storm in your brain; and such an unpleasant one too. I suggest you take a nice cold shower and come to your senses.

First and most importantly, who are these anonymous "straights" who you plan to sacrifice to the cause? Odds are that your random choice would be the president of PFlag or a lesbian in straight/working-world drag.. And secondly, Ima, look to your own soul. You can't be held accountable for thoughts that pop into your mind, but you mustn't invite them to come in and sit down and have a cup of tea. Violence hurts the soul of the perpetrator to the extent it hurts the body and mind of the victim.

And thirdly, it wouldn't work anyway. It would just result in overt retaliation against the gay community by the much larger hetero world. It is certainly possible for blacks to commit crimes of hate against whites; women against men, Jews against nazis, gays against straights; but it is not possible for blacks, Jews, women, or gays to use hate crimes as a means to an end. "Hate crimes" are a tool of oppression, not of revolution. A real "hate crime" can only be committed by a member of an empowered group against a minority or disenfranchised group. They are used to intimidate an entire class of people, and they are very effective..

What kind of act is a hate crime? Of course the dreadful murders of Matthew Shepard, Chuck Mears, James Byrd were all hate crimes. These are the highly visible and well- publicized showpieces of bigotry at its ugliest extreme; and what Jack Cornett

says is true about this kind of heinous murder - murder is murder and will be tried and punished as such. I would however suggest to him that it is still important to recognize a hate murder for what it is so that he and our other "leaders" might lead us all in a spirited denunciation of hate and intolerance. Oh, wouldn't it be welcome and refreshing!

Far more numerous and yet in the long run equally oppressing are the racist graffiti, the swastikas painted on synagogue walls, the overturning of Jewish headstones, the crossburnings, the vandalism aimed at the homes of African-Americans in "white" neighborhoods, the beatings not-quite-unto-death of interracial couples and homosexuals, and on and on. It is for this latter group that the enhanced punishment accorded by hate crimes statutes is intended. Vandalism intended to intimidate an entire group of people should carry a higher penalty than overturning trash cans on Halloween. Violence intended to spark fear in the hearts of an entire group of people, intended to dampen a group's feeling of being at home in their own country and safe being themselves, is a great crime and should be acknowledged and treated as such.

Now, nothing is going to persuade Mr. Cornett, Governor Keating, and the usual sordid suspects at the legislature - Bill Graves, Tim Pope, Leonard Sullivan, etc., unless they have a huge transformation in their hearts. They are totally lacking in that generosity of soul that it takes to recognize when one is a member of an oppressive class or group; and to take the next step and want to end that oppression. The whites who marched in Selma, the white Freedom Riders, the heteros active in the gay rights movement, the men active in anti-rape and domestic violence work - these are people with soul, heart, imagination, integrity and conscience. Do you detect any of those qualities in the people I named above?

So remember, Ima, no violence from our side. Remember also that when you try to teach a pig to sing, it just wastes your time and annoys the pig. Get busy electing decent people to the City Council, the Legislature, the Governor's office. Then everything else will follow.

And keep the faith,

Fondly,

Sybil

## *HSR Supper Club*

*5:30 PM Saturday, July 12*

*Meet at Herland and we'll pick a dinner location.*

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# 3RD ANNUAL HERLAND PRIDE WEEK COOKOUT AND CONCERT



Thank you, thank you, thank you to all those who attended and assisted with the 3rd Annual Herland Pride Week Cookout and Concert held on June 26. More than 200 folks enjoyed the evening and helped raise money for Herland.

We especially want to thank the performers and those donating auction items.

## Performers

Nathaniel Batchelder  
Darenda  
Dee Britt & Marilyn Moore  
Donna D. & Nancy Nesser  
Jeri James Comedy Troupe —  
    B.J., Boo, Laura, Pam & Preston,  
Peggy Johnson  
Rich Klessig  
Oklahoma City Metro Men's Chorus  
Deb Mills

## Two thumbs up to our friends donating auction items:

4th Dimension Landscapes, Inc.  
Darenda  
Kathryn  
Jay  
Jane  
Jill  
Julie  
Laura  
Mary  
Rita  
Ginger



Special thanks to our wonderful emcees — Kathi McCallie & J.B. Schuelein. And a BIG THANK YOU to our excellent auctioneer, Mary Ann.

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