



The showboat was festive on Halloween.

Ministry . . .

Continued from Page 17

Blvd. in Lafayette; and on December 9 at the Diocesan Meeting Hall of the Catholic Diocese of Houma-Thibodaux, 1220 Aycock St. in Houma.

A \$25 pre-registration fee (\$10 of which is non-refundable) includes tuition, resource materials and beverages. Participants are asked to bring a brown bag lunch for the 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. workshop.

In their 1978 Plan of Pastoral Action for family ministry, the U.S. Catholic bishops spoke of the need to acquire specialized skills in ministering to "hurting families" who have homosexual members.

In July, 1980, Archbishop Rembert Weakland called for more "dialogue among the grassroots, pastoral ministers" and others so that no one is treated as "a secondclass citizen or as somehow contaminated."

New Ways Ministry is an organization founded in 1977 to serve as a bridge be-

tween gay and non-gay groups. It has provided educational programs, resources, and consultation services for a wide variety of dioceses, seminaries, colleges, religious congregations, peace and justice groups and universities.

Further information and registration can be obtained from New Ways Ministry, 4012 29th St., Mt. Rainier, MD 20712, or by calling (301) 277-5674 for all workshops with the exception of the Dallas workshop. For further information or registration concerning the Dallas workshop, please contact Dan Wallis, Holy Trinity Church, 3811 Oak Lawn, Dallas, TX 75219.

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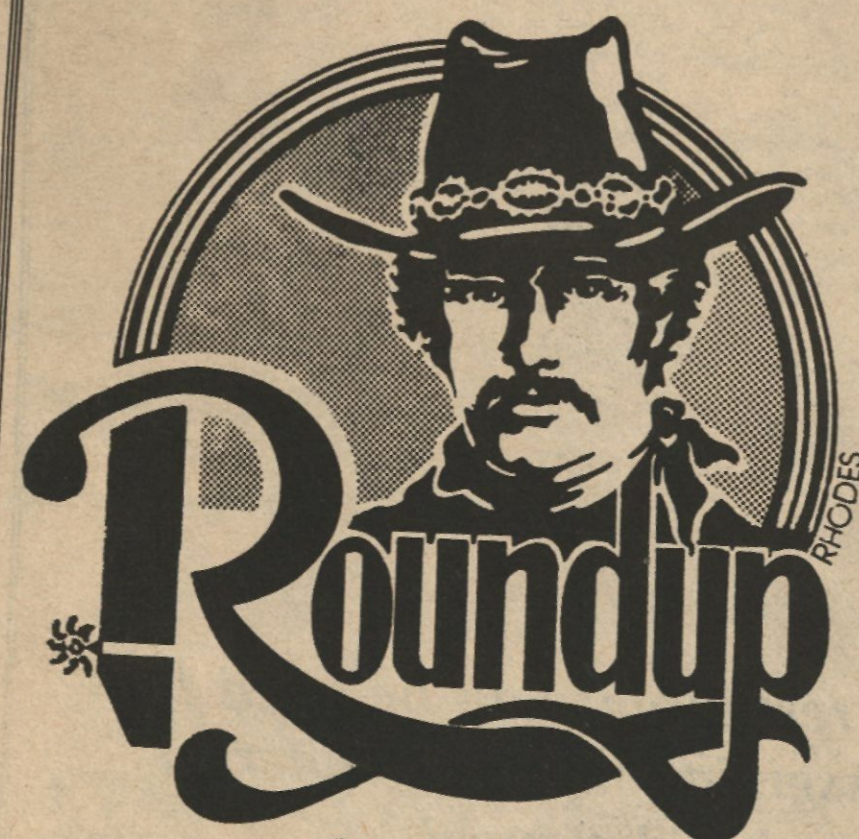
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**Tosha Kohl Wins Miss Gay America ...
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The official Miss Gay America Pageant was held September 15-18 in Oklahoma City, and Tasha Kohl, Miss Texas, was named the new Miss Gay America for 1984. She competed against 53 other lovelies from across the country and, once again, Naomi Simms, Miss Gay South, was 1st runner-up. Stella Stair was 2nd runner-up. The irresistible Donna Daz retained her title of Miss Congeniality. Lord only knows what Donna does backstage, but year after year, beg, borrow or steal, Miss Congeniality is always Miss Donna Daz. Dionne Martel won this year's Lady Barbara award. Others among the twelve finalists were: Sookie Simone, Trudy Tyler, Diana Lee Bishop, Melissa Montgomery, Candy Slayton, Diane Curry, Vickie Vincent, and Lisa King.

Norma Jones, better known as Norma Kristie—the first Miss Gay America, produced a simply fabulous show once again to a packed house.

Even though the City Public Property Authority and Scott Johnson had made a verbal contract to hold the finals of the Pageant at the Great Hall of the Myriad Convention Center, when it was realized that the pageant would be featuring female impersonators, they decided the pageant was immoral and made an attempt to renege on the contract already agreed to with Norma Kristie Inc. They soon found out that you don't cross the notorious Norma Kristie. Norma got them on the phone and said don't f— with me, boys.

Since much money had already been spent on advertising the fact that the finals

CONTINUED ON PAGE 21

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Ellen and her husband, Paul, invited their friend, Tony, to dinner recently. When Tony arrived he greeted each of his friends with a warm hug. The three settled down for an evening of shared food, drink, and conversation. Such an occasion would be a very common thing under ordinary circumstances. Paul and Tony are ex-lovers, and Ellen is fully aware of it.

A year ago Ellen discovered that her husband is gay, after many years of living with suspicions, half-truths, and little real communication between them. Paul didn't "come out" of the closet—he was forcibly pulled out by his wife.

Two months later they were separated, on the verge of divorce, because they thought it was the only alternative. The only problem with that solution was that Ellen and Paul still loved each other very deeply.

Today their marriage is stronger than ever. They still love and respect one another, they have fun together, they have a satisfying sexual relationship, and they give each other the freedom to grow as an individual. They take each day as it comes.

Yes, Paul is still gay. He still has a need for both sexual contact and companionship with other men. But Ellen is his number one priority, and he is hers. They are committed to keeping their marriage not only together, but in top form.

While they were separated and living in another city, Ellen formed a support group for herself and other wives (or husbands) married to a gay person. The purpose of the group, called Straight Spouses, is to offer each other emotional support through the various stages toward acceptance of the spouse's homosexuality. They also make every attempt to educate themselves in all aspects of homosexuality. But the most important reason for Straight Spouses banding together is to let each other know that he or she is not alone, that there are others who are dealing with the same situation.

Not all such marriages can be saved, obviously. It takes a firm commitment on both sides and an enormous amount of love and patience.

Straight Spouses deals with topics like jealousy, anger, whether or when to tell the children, fear of sexually transmitted diseases, overcoming the homophobic myths, and guilt (his and hers).

Straight Spouses is now forming a group in the New Orleans area. More information may be obtained by contacting Ellen, c/o St. Louis Community Center, 1022 Barracks St., New Orleans, LA 70116. The phone number is 524-6932 or 524-7023. Only first names need be given and confidentiality is respected at all times.

Continued from Page 20
would be held at the Myriad Convention Center, Kristie's Constitutional rights under the 1st and 14th Amendments had been violated by denial of permit.

Judge David L. Russell of the U.S. District Court concluded that the defendants gave no shred of evidence that the production of the Miss Gay America Pageant would be obscene. When asked if all the contestant's in the pageant were

gay, Norma Jones replied that he had no idea, since he hadn't slept with any of them.

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LAMBDA CHAI—Gay/Lesbian Jewish Congregation. Weekly Services and Social Activities. Fridays, 7:30 P.M. 1022 Barracks Street. 524-6932.SHALOM!

INTEGRITY—For gay Episcopalians and their friends, to meet 1st & 3rd Mondays at 7:30 p.m. at the St. Louis Community Center.

DIGNITY—for Catholic Gay Men and Lesbians and their friends. Friday evening sharing 7:30-9:00 p.m. (for members only). Coffee house 9 p.m. till midnight at our new coffee house location, St. Louis Community Center, 1022 Barracks. Sunday Mass—4 p.m. 3037 Dauphine St. 5424-6932 or 899-8538.

LET'S ALL WORK together to get off drugs. Meetings every Monday, 8 p.m. at the Lambda Center, 1431 Chartres St. Call: 945-0222 for more information.

PARENTS AND FRIENDS OF GAYS is a peer support group which provides a warm, non-threatening environment in which families, friends, and gays express their feelings and learn about each other. Our major focus is to help gays and non-gays to communicate, and to prevent the family breakdowns which sometimes follow the revelation that a person is gay. We meet on the second Thursday of each month; The meetings are free and open to anyone, gay or straight, who is interested in breaking down barriers of fear and misunderstanding. For more information, call the Center at 524-6932 or 524-7032.

NEW ORLEANS GAY MEN'S CHORUS—Open rehearsals, Wednesdays, 7:00 p.m., St. Mark's Church, 1120 Rampart. 529-1146.

THE NEW ORLEANS VOLLEYBALL ASSOCIATION (NOVA) sponsors a weekly summer, fall, and spring recreational league for all power volleyball players of all levels (especially beginners). A member of the North American Gay Volley Association, NOVA maintains a year-round training program for advanced players to compete in semi-professional tournaments all over the country. We also host picnics, parties, and tournaments of our own. All of the community is welcome to get involved. For more information, please call 949-6542.

GAY-BRIDGE PLAYERS—Let's get back in the swing & play cards. Guys & Gals can get along together. Tiger, 943-2244.

GAY GOLFERS—There is more to City Park than cruising. They have several nice golf courses. Let's get together & hit the balls around. Tiger, 943-2244.

GAY TWIN OR TWINS (M or F)—Needed for university research study conducted by gay professor. Please send name, address and phone number \$ paid for telephone interview. Write: *Twin Study*, Dr. Williams, P.O. Box 77632, Los Angeles 90007.

GAY PARENTS—Is a support group offering the gay person who has been married or is presently married, a non-threatening group where they can communicate their needs and be supported by others in similar situations. Sup-

port is offered in coming out after marriage, dealing with children, family and friends, legal aspects and other topics. It is an educational & social group for a special segment of the gay population. Meetings held every 2nd & 4th Monday at the St. Louis Comm. Center. For more info., please call the Center, 524-6932 or 524-7023.

N.O. AIDS TASK FORCE is working to establish programs offering legal and financial assistance and emotion support to persons with AIDS as well as a regular series of educational programs. Meetings are the 4th Wednesday of each month, 7:30 p.m. at St. Louis Community Center, 1022 Barracks St.

DIGNITY CHAPTER, PENSACOLA an organization to meet the spiritual and social needs of gay and lesbian Catholics and other interested persons. Meetings are 2nd and 4th Sundays, YWCA at 1417 Twelfth Ave. at 7:30-9:30 p.m. For information, write: BOX 9244, Pensacola, FL 32503 or call 432-3894 or 476-9166, 6 to 9 p.m.

BATON ROUGE AREA GAY POLITICAL ACTION CAUCUS was formed to work for the rights of all Louisianians and in particular, the area residents. Join now. Face the challenge. Send a self-addressed, stamped envelop for applications and information to P.O. Box 19098, Baton Rouge, LA 70893.

"IF YOU WISH TO DRINK," it's your business. If you wish to stop—it's ours." In Mobile, AL, the Phoenix Gay AA meetings are held 8:30 p.m. Sundays at 908 McRae. A member of the ALANO club.

METROPOLITAN COMMUNITY CHURCH—Sunday, 3:30 p.m. at St. Mark's Community Center, 1130 N. Rampart St.; 7:00 p.m. at First Unitarian Church, 1800 Jefferson Ave. We meet every Wednesday & Sunday at 7:00 p.m. at 1800 Jefferson Ave. Pot Luck Dinner, last Wednesday of the month at 6:15 p.m. Service to follow.

METROPOLITAN COMMUNITY CHURCH—is sponsoring a Thanksgiving Day Pot Luck Dinner. Come join us for a day of worship, fun and fellowship. Games, singing, etc. St. Mark's Community Center, 1130 N. Rampart St.

GRACE FELLOWSHIP IN CHRIST JESUS—Are you tired of being put down by "straight preachers"? Then come hear Rev. Sylvia Pennington, author of *But Lord, They're Gay*, discuss her book Friday, Nov. 11, 1983, 7:00 p.m., and again Saturday, Nov. 12th from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. at 1913 Dauphine. She will also be available for counseling from Nov. 11-16. For an appointment call: Days—944-3143; Nights—844-9836.

THE WOMEN'S COFFEEHOUSE—Sat., Nov. 19, 1983, 7-11 p.m., St. Louis Community Center, 1022 Barracks. Join us for an evening of poetry, reading, feature the original works of local women. We provide refreshments, assistance with child care and the opportunity to meet others in a chemical free space. \$2.00 minimum donation requested at door. Call 524-6932 for more information.

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To place an ad, simply dig up a piece of paper, and allow 25¢ per word (remember the \$5 minimum) and figure out the amount of money required. If you send the wrong amount, we will not print your ad, so don't say you weren't warned. Make payment to **IMPACT, P.O. Box 52079, New Orleans, LA 70152.** Deadline for classified is the first and third Wednesday of each month. We must receive your classified by mail. Please—don't call the office—we no longer accept classifieds by phone.

To respond to a personal ad, include the box number in care of the above address.



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Ginny Foat—Her Times and Troubles

by Garry Boulard

That she might have hung out in one of the French Quarter's more questionable pubs, or that she might have been involved with a series of ne'er-do-wells, or that she would even admit outloud that Sammy Davis, Jr. was her favorite entertainer—would be enough in the books of conventional folks to close the doors to Ginny Foat.

But then, Ginny Foat never would be or could be understood by those who are proud to be called conventional. Her life, perhaps stunningly symbolized by her acquittal in the death of an Argentine businessman this week, has been a panoramic view of a person thrust into the world's sometimes dangerous web of trickery, intrigue and—above all—survival.

While hungry reporters from local and national journals gathered at the Gretna courthouse daily to hear the latest word on the Ginny Foat case, it soon became clear that the murder case in question would not provide anything close to an answer or explanation when it came to defining who

and what Ginny Foat is.

One journalist has compared her with Patricia Harris, that much-maligned feminine heavy in the famous Scarsdale murder case of 1981. Someone else has jokingly called her a Mary Hartman, a woman who somehow always gets herself involved in plots and schemes that only a magician could later unravel.

"There seems to be three clearly defined stages in her life," writer Grace Lichtenstein noted in *Rolling Stone*. "The Rebel without a Cause Ginny, the Dress for Success Ginny and the Sisterhood is Powerful Ginny. The first two, to borrow a phrase, are the girls Ginny left behind. Left with them was a pile of debris not uncommon to some of our lives: broken marriages, adulterous affairs, domestic violence, macho lovers, dead-end jobs."

If we know what Ginny has left behind—and her story is, without the colorful turns and twists, pervasively common among feminists who didn't discover their sexual and social force until late in life—we also know, sadly, what she hasn't

left behind.

His name is John Sidote. He could probably be played, sans all the muscles, by Sylvester Stallone. Sidote is the kind of fellow who is made fun of by comics today. Wet-backed hair, perhaps a leisure suit, quick fists, and a taste for good drinks that has turned him into an admitted alcoholic, Sidote in the late 1960's was in many ways the culmination of some of Ginny's greatest fantasies.

Sidote was a sometimes bartender, who walked with a strut and occasionally sang *That Old Black Magic* to his customers. The regulars in one lounge called him "the white Sammy Davis, Jr."

When Ginny met Sidote she was on the comeback trail after a failed marriage, and anxiously and hopefully looking for any kind of excitement or commitment that could be found out of life. With Sidote she got both—and plenty more.

Sidote has said that when he met Ginny, "It was just like magnetism." Already drinking heavily, but earning a regular income, Sidote fell madly in love with Ginny

and took her away from the world she wanted so much to leave in a new, white Bonneville convertible.

Up until this time, Ginny had seen enough ups and downs to make one think that the saloon song, *That's Life*, had been written expressly for her. Raised in New York by Catholic, middle-class Italian parents, Virginia Galluzzo was a vociferous fan of the Brooklyn Dodgers—before they sold their respective souls and moved to California—and a movie-goer who greatly admired James Dean's performance in *Rebel Without a Cause*.

She graduated from high school and decided she wanted to become a stewardess, a career that many young women of the day looked at as a professional break from the oppressive boredom of getting coffee for the boss at the office.

She actually was able to realize her dreams in a regular Cleveland-to-Newark run for Allegheny Airlines, but after her marriage to Danny Angelino in 1962, she settled for a life of marriage and dutiful subservience to her college student husband.

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GULF SOUTH GAY NEWS

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Nigliazzo Heads New Local Health Foundation

Increased news coverage and heightened fears about the effects of Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS) in recent months has led to the establishment of a number of health information programs in such cities as Atlanta, Chicago and New York.

With the official founding of the Foundation for Health Education—New Orleans Incorporated, the City That Care Forgot has followed suit. "We decided that it was crucial to begin a program that will provide information both on what symptoms to look for with certain diseases, and where to seek help if needed," said Joe Nigliazzo, the president of the group.

A private party at the Raintree Restaurant last week introducing the concept of the information program to area residents proved how great and pervasive the concerns of late have been. More than 120 people showed up at an information meeting designed to explain and formulate the new program. Nigliazzo said he was "greatly encouraged" by the turn-out. The response may also be of particular interest to proponents of the Foundation for Health Education simply because the group is planning to rely heavily on active community involvement.

Nigliazzo said he got the idea for the program earlier this fall when he discovered that there was no one program in the New Orleans area that provided information and referral services for those suspected of carrying a sexually transmitted disease. "I thought that it was a tremendous gap that needed to be bridged," said Nigliazzo.

Accordingly, Nigliazzo sat down with a few friends and associates and began tentative plans for the program that he now hopes will be in full bloom in early 1984.

Unlike other such programs in other

cities, Nigliazzo has taken pains to explain that the Foundation for Health Education is not involved in any social or political struggles to get more funding on a federal level for AIDS research. "Our goal relates to health and nothing more," he commented.

In that goal, Nigliazzo has been joined by area activists and members of the business community who agreed that there is a need for not only more information on the symptoms of AIDS but also hepatitis, venereal disease, and a host of other sicknesses.

Alan Robinson is secretary-treasurer of the group and board members thus far include Gene Adams, Ron Bennett, Lucille Hartman, Donna Mayer, and David Zumalt. "We've had a lot of discussion on what the service should be and where we

should go with it," said Nigliazzo.

One of the directions in which the group is traveling is not only education to the gay world about diseases and screening services, but also information to the straight world which recently has been marked by rampant fears of catching AIDS through shaking hands with a gay person, sitting on a public toilet, and sharing the same hospital room with a gay patient. One funeral parlor in New York announced last summer that it would refuse to embalm the bodies of any deceased AIDS victims.

"We want to become a repository of gay information," said Nigliazzo, who added that his group will work in tandem with other gay organizations in the city to provide information to both gays and lesbians. "We're not interested in re-

inventing the wheel. We want to work with other groups and help each other out."

One of the long-range plans of the organization—not yet finalized—calls for the establishment of a building that might house the Foundation for Health Education services. "We're still talking that one over," Nigliazzo said.

As part of the studied approach the group is taking toward their program, board members last week began the first of several trips to various other cities to observe how similar health and information units are working.

"We want to handle not only the physical needs, but also the mental needs of the gay community with this service," said Nigliazzo who has hopes of building up a substantial medical referral list for members of the gay community.

Gay Mayor Elected in Key West

by Garry Boulard

History has been made in the southernmost point of the United States this month with the election of the first openly self-declared gay candidate as mayor of Key West, Florida.

Richard Heyman, 48, scored an impressive first-run victory with more than 54% of the vote against a conservative, well-organized challenge from former county commissioner Richard Kerr. The balloting was marked by one of the heaviest turn-outs in the island's recent past; more than 60% of Key West's 11,598 registered voters made it to the polls.

While Key West has had a legacy of growing pains and tensions in the past decade that has included a utility service which frequently causes random neighborhood blackouts, a water system that has been known to run dry, and a city government that has been many times on

the verge of economic collapse, it was Heyman's gayness that was the central issue of the campaign.

Opponent Kerr issued flyers which proclaimed "Your vote will help set the MORAL TONE for our COMMUNITY." Although he denied that he ran a blatantly anti-gay crusade, Kerr frequently mentioned that he was a family man. On many occasions he added, "We need strong moral leadership in this city."

Others were less diplomatic. One county commissioner predicted that a Heyman win would bring more gays to the island, while many old-time Conchs (the descendants of the original island settlers) charged that Heyman might turn the entire City Hall gay.

Heyman, meanwhile, discussed a wide variety of civic and political issues. "I

don't think being gay will hurt me," he said at the beginning. "If you level with the people and remain honest with them, they'll respect you for that and judge you on your ability."

Since at least the early 1970's, a large number of gays have moved to Key West, bringing with them a new, self-perpetuating economic power. Gays have set up dozens of small and larger businesses, renovated old Conch houses, and formed a variety of community organizations.

Heyman, who moved to the island in 1973 from Toledo, Ohio, is the proprietor of a large art gallery in downtown Key West. He first surprised many local politicians by winning a seat on the city commission in 1979. His victory in this month's mayor's race may later be considerably enhanced by the outcome of two city commission contests which must go before the voters in a run-off election. If

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Foat Cont. from Page 1

The marriage didn't work, and by 1964 Ginny was out on the loose, wondering where her goals and ambitions would eventually be realized. "I won't feel free as long as John Sidote is still around," said Ginny after her victorious court battle in Gretna.

Despite the fact that the prosecution was unable to come up with any compelling evidence to send Ginny to the slammer, Ginny feels that her life will forevermore be a version of the tensions she has experienced for almost the past year, simply because Sidote is still walking the earth.

On the stands, Ginny testified that Sidote carried his Las Vegas hipster routine too far: he regularly beat her. "It was almost like I was on trial because I was a woman and because I dared to reach out with love to another man who beat and abused me," Ginny commented.

According to her testimony, when Ginny got sick after oral sex with Sidote he continuously beat her. "That's when he tried to kill me."

The marriage, obviously, wasn't working out.

Down on their luck in New Orleans, Sidote said a plot was hatched in which Ginny, in suggestive dress, would lure away Argentine businessman Moises Chayo with the promise of other things to happen, and then the married couple would rob him and run.

Chayo was killed, mercilessly bludgeoned to death with a tire iron and then rolled for \$1400.

By the late 1970's, long after Ginny had divorced Sidote, remarried and become involved in the women's movement in California, her white Sammy Davis decided that Ginny had to be paid for leaving him. Or at least that's what he said. Foat testified that Sidote threatened to kill her or let her "rot in jail" if she ever left him.

Ginny, who had cleverly avoided the police inspectors of several states for over seven years, was fingered by a rival, apparently jealous woman in the golden state's women's movement as the possible accomplice in the long-forgotten Chayo case, and Jefferson Parish Sheriff officials suddenly took a new interest in the matter.

What really happened that night in 1965, in a remote corner of Metairie is still unknown. The only certainty is that Chayo found a fate greatly undeserved. Sidote is now in prison, although his bad times of late will be considerably fattened by a \$3000 fee he will get from *Penitence* this month for his version of the Ginny Foat story.

As for Ginny Foat, now married four times, her future looks suddenly bright; she's on another one of those rolls toward the top—the kind she has always dreamed of. "I've been a piper, a pauper, a pawn, and a poet," goes the barroom song. Ginny has truly seen enough reality for now to give her the kind of empathy needed for any human-oriented problem she may encounter in the women's movement.

Inevitably, rumors and speculation now invade Ginny's private life.

Why was rival feminist Shelly Mandell so mad and indignant that she would tip off the Louisiana cops on Ginny? After years of failed heterosexual experiences, did Ginny find not only a professional high but also an emotionally favorable ambience among her sisters in the women's movement?

Betty Friedan has written in her epic book *The Feminine Mystique*, that even love cannot overcome the process of dehumanization. With Sidote, with what she said were his continued physical attacks on her, Ginny's love must have found its practical limits.

If she found a new direction for her convictions and affection in the women's movement, it has never been talked about openly or suggestively.

One thing is for sure: the people at the National Organization of Women have given Ginny absolute, unquestioning support during her legal ordeal. Jean Conger, a NOW official in California, said after Ginny's acquittal that Foat will have unlimited opportunities in California, both within the women's movement and the far larger state political circles.

What Ginny will do, remains a puzzle. As always, she defies conventional analysis.

Mayor Cont. from Page 1

the two progressive candidates in those two respective races win, Heyman will rise into City Hall with significant commission support.

A registered Democrat, Heyman said he is hoping to establish more of an organized managerial approach to the problems of Key West and an ongoing policy of contained growth that would limit the construction of large, multi-unit condominiums on the tiny island.

The first victorious candidate in decades to win a campaign against the old-line regulars who have almost always run City Hall, Heyman said after his election win, "I feel the people of Key West have given a mandate and are tired of cronyism."

Reader's Opinion

I went to a local hospital to visit a friend recently. In the elevator I began a conversation with a nurse. The topic of AIDS came up and I said, "there don't seem to be many cases in New Orleans." As we walked down a corridor he pointed to a distant room and said, "There is a man dying of AIDS in that room right now."

This conversation lingered in my mind and I began to pose many questions to myself. How many people have AIDS in New Orleans? What population groups are they from? How many have died? Where can people at "high risk" go for diagnostic testing—particularly, if they have limited resources, i.e., no health insurance, no private doctor?

The City Department of Health says, first of all, that there is no actual definition of AIDS. Implying that any statistical information is meaningless. When pressed as to the actual figure, again there was a non-answer; there are 15 or less AIDS patients in hospitals in New Orleans. However, the Center for Disease Control in Atlanta lists only 9 cases. The State Department of Health says 12.

What population groups are the patients from? was answered with the pat response, "sexually active gay men with multiple sexual partners, and intravenous drug users." When pressed as to the demographics, the reply was that about half the AIDS patients are black, and half are white. Our sexism combined in that I did not ask if any of these people are women, and he did not volunteer that information.

The question of how many people have died was evaded by restating that there is no actual definition of the disorder. The actual figure varies from 1 to 8, again depending on the source, and again after pressing for the answer.

When I asked about where one could go for diagnostic testing if one had limited access to resources, I was lectured on the necessity of health insurance and a private doctor, and was insulted for not having these things. There was no recognition of the class nature of medicine in this society, no understanding that for the majority of people who work but barely earn subsistence wages, access to health care is inadequate. Again the question was posed to finally be answered with "Charity Hospital."

Organizations Take Note!

Impact wants to help! Whether you're having a meeting, lecture, seminar, workshop, fundraiser, or social event, we want to help get the word out.

But keep in mind that we're not mind readers! Unless you let us know what you're doing, it's hard for us to help you publicize it. To insure that your organization's activities are included in the calendar, send the information to our Organizations Editor, Richard T. Devlin, 2426 Chartres St., New Orleans, LA 70117, or call 947-5295. Try to let us know what's going on about a month in advance. In that way, you won't have to worry about missing a deadline.

We want to help! And with your input, we will!

Why is the information the gay community needs to have for a better understanding of this disease—and to put the situation in perspective—so difficult to obtain and so slow in coming?

A case could be made that the City officials in charge do not want to cause a panic situation. However, truth is what is needed to allow us to get beyond fear. Fear immobilizes people, and fear is based on misunderstanding. Misunderstanding is based on inadequate, inaccurate or misleading information. People need to know the truth so they can decide for themselves what they want to do.

Why is the City being so silent when our Mayor Ernest "Dutch" Morial is co-chair of the National Conference of Mayors' AIDS Task Force? We believe it is because the "high-risk" categories are "fringe" elements of society: sexually active gay men with multiple sexual partners, Blacks, Latins, and intravenous drug users. We believe that the City is ignoring the health care needs of the people, or the City would have already set up the mechanisms for dealing with epidemics.

What is our City doing that other cities are doing? There is not a free drop-in diagnostic clinic as in New York. Charity Hospital is unacceptable because it is underfunded and understaffed. The Delgado Venereal Disease Clinic, which is in need of much more funding and higher priorities from the City, could be structured to include such a clinic.

There is not a telephone line to refer and counsel people regarding institutions or individual doctors that are capable of dealing with AIDS as in Chicago. There is not a free hospice system for displaced patients providing housing and support as in Houston.

So what is New Orleans City government doing? Virtually nothing. Proclaiming a resolution naming October 8, 1983 New Orleans AIDS Vigil Day is a hollow and ineffectual token, at best, which does nothing to address this real and human tragedy.

This is what we want the City to do. Improve and adequately fund Delgado V.D. Clinic, while expanding its capabilities to deal with AIDS and health care crises in general. Open a free telephone referral and counseling service. Many gay men would welcome the opportunity to volunteer their resources and actually do something about AIDS. This could function through the Health Department. Establish a hospice system by linking Public Housing with private sector housing projects accustomed to working with the City. Again, many gay men would volunteer.

For too long all the citizens of New Orleans have needed the services outlined above and much more. The truth of the matter is that the City government is monstrously irresponsible regarding health care in general. Syphilis and gonorrhea are at epidemic proportions citywide, as is hepatitis. Yet, there are no billboards or public service announcements, advertising the resources available to address these crises. There is not adequate health care

for the working class majority.

The money to fund these programs to improve the overall quality of and access to health care for all the citizens is sitting in the City's coffers. It is up to the City government to rearrange their economic priorities, and long past due. Businesses and property owners do not pay their fair share of taxes because the local tax structure is regressive in nature.

The City is unresponsive to the needs of the people because it is part of the capitalist system based on profit motives. It uses the citizens to these ends and when people get sick and cannot work or pay their rent, they are left out to die. Capitalism makes money off people's illnesses, so it does not profit or benefit the system to provide free, or at cost, quality health care. These reasons underscore the necessity of changing the health care system from one based on private profit to one based on public need.

The people of New Orleans need to indicate to the government that the status quo is unacceptable, to prove that we know what we want, and to fight for the institution of these changes. By working together we can insure that the quality of life for all the people of New Orleans improves dramatically.

Quality Health Care is a Right—Not a Privilege!

Aurora Corona
for Lavender Left

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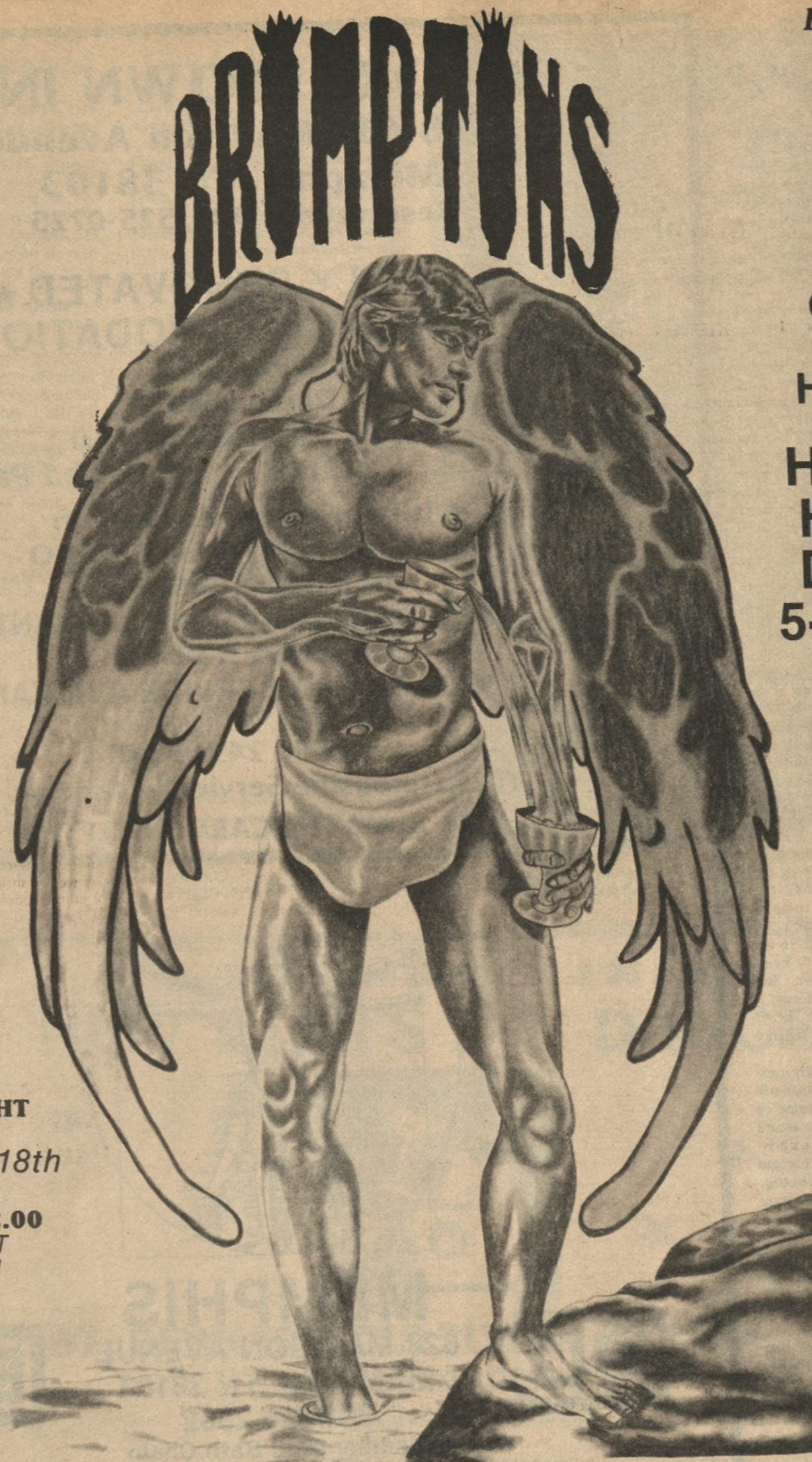


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