

Charlene: Well, we've been to court. One guy who got in. We asked him to leave gently. He wouldn't. So the police escorted him out. When we got to court the judge informed him he was trespassing because we are a chartered private club.

Impact: What's the best thing about being a bar owner?

Charlene: What I think is absolutely marvelous, probably the most wonderful thing in 5 years even if I close the bar tomorrow, for 5 years only gay people have paid the rent on this place and every bill. I'm one of those people who absolutely refuses to borrow money. It's gay people. Gay people are everything.

Impact: Women's bars don't have "back rooms" in the sense that men's bars do. Do you think women should have this option?

Charlene: What I'm going to say and it's probably very important to me that you not mess up a word and I'm not sure how to say it. At my age, at 42 it's hard for me to think or decide or to read what today's 20-year-olds would enjoy. From what I see, No. I think it would mean a lot more problems. I think it will eventually become a reality and I find that sad. I see the changes that have occurred in 14 years and I think the back room can't be far behind.

Impact: What do you think of the 18 to, say 23 year olds today?

Charlene: I think they are physically more attractive. Intellectually, they are heads above our group. But because they don't know that it wasn't easy to get this far, they seem to take a lot for granted.

Impact: If it came to a political crisis, would they fight or run?

Charlene: I don't think you could make these kids go home. I think there'd be

another Stonewall. I find kids of today have a little bit harder time with identities. You go through a period in your life when everything is waste. Everybody goes through a period when they say, "Hey, I'm fuckin' up bad, but it don't matter. There ain't nothing better to do so I'm gonna fuck up. And that's okay, so I'm fucked up." But then you get to be about 21 and you say, "Hey! I'd better get my shit together!"

Impact: How do you account for the cancellation of Gay Fests '82 and '83?

Charlene: Apathy.

Impact: Whose apathy?

Charlene: The whole community. And it's nobody's fault 'cause I figure if this is a dead dog, let's let it lie.

Impact: Do you think a celebration of Stonewall is important?

Charlene: Yes. That is why we're having one here. Of course I do.

Impact: But that's not the same as the unified gathering.

Charlene: I think everyone is going their own way now. I think there's no more family.

Impact: No more gay family?

Charlene: I don't see it.

Impact: Can't there be a democratic way to get the gay community together again for just a two-day party?

Charlene: Maybe if gays realized that local gay issues are just as important as other political issues because this [Gay Fest] is a show of pride, a show of unity, of circumstances, of talent, of strength and heart and every beautiful thing you can say...when they don't care...and I do believe they really care; they just know if they don't do it, someone will. I just feel I don't have the energy anymore.

Impact: Do you perceive any particular threats to the Gay community in New Orleans? Does a Jerry Falwell somewhere have us in his sights?

Charlene: There's a Jerry Falwell every place. The thing that concerns me is that during bad times they always turn on minorities. But they can no longer do it to Blacks, to Espanol, to Germans, to Jews or Vietnamese. They would have to start...I mean, we seem to be low man on the totem pole. And God forbid we should ever go back to those days! It's just so important we don't lose any political footing we've gained over the past few years.

Impact: What have we gained?

Charlene: People like Mike Early and Mr. Boissiere drop into the bar and say, "Hey, Charlene, How's business?" Or Jim Brown bringin' in all those titled women from Baton Rouge to meet gay people. He wanted to show them the other side of what they'd been hearing and say, "You've been hearing garbage. I'm showing you the other side, what gay people really are." To know people like that have

confidence in you. Their respect...

Impact: Do you think what we've gained in 14 years we will lose in 7?

Charlene: I just don't see family anymore. It's kinda like everybody has somebody in their family who keeps the family together. It's usually grandmother. We all go to grandmother's and everybody will be there. Then grandmother dies, and you see all these offshoots. And pretty soon you don't know your own nieces and nephews.

The only time I see gay people care now is when they're threatened personally. As long as it's affecting the other guy, they're not concerned. Whereas before, if one person went to jail there'd be 80 of us up there that evening trying to get him out.

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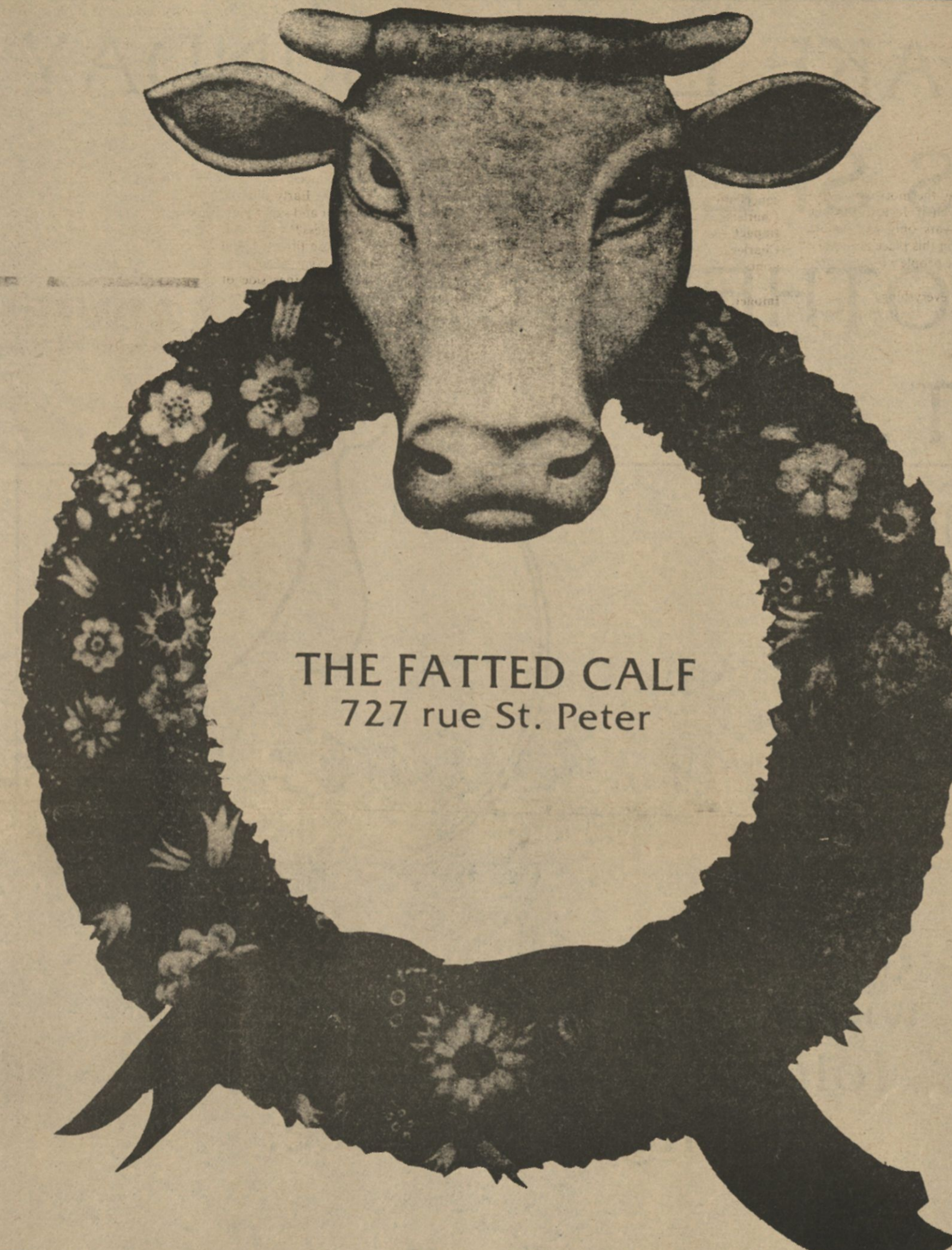
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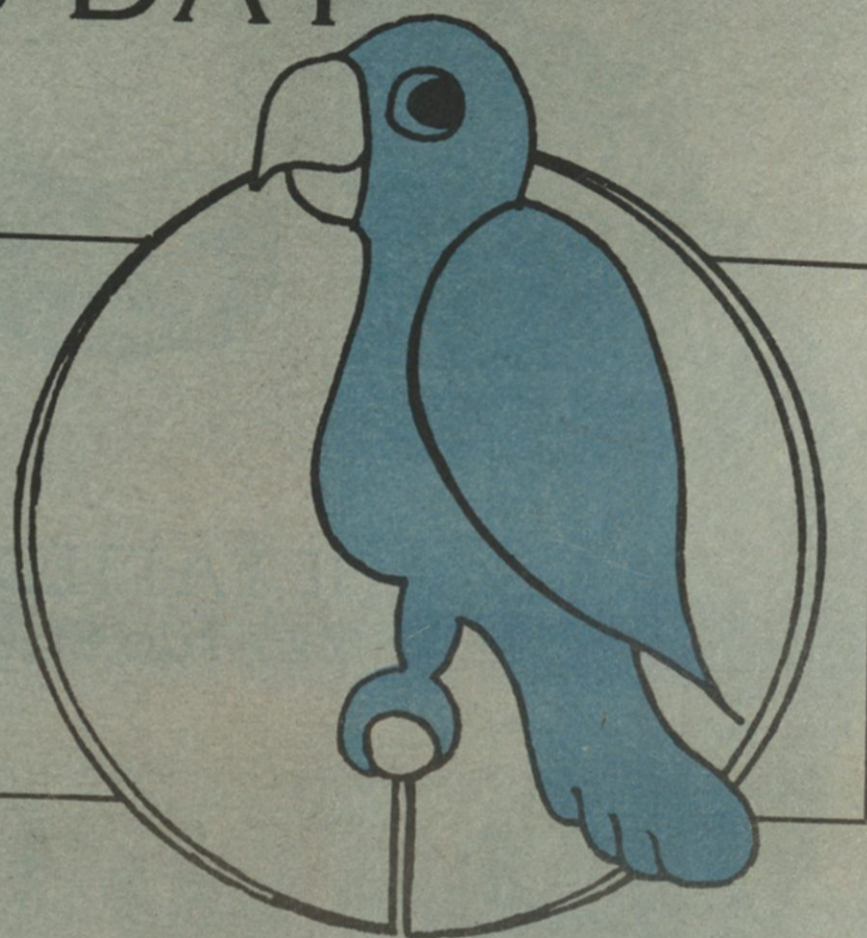
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