

## Foreword by the Author

SOME DANCE TO REMEMBER.  
SOME DON'T.

**Toward an Autobiography of *Drummer Magazine***

“Of course I have no right whatsoever to write down the truth about my life, involving as it naturally does the lives of so many other people, but I do so urged by a necessity of truth-telling, because there is no living soul who knows the complete truth; here, may be one who knows a section; and, there, one who knows another section; but to the whole picture not one is initiated.”

—Vita Sackville-West, *Portrait of a Marriage*

LET'S START AT THE VERY BEGINNING...

MY ZERO DEGREES OF SEPARATION  
(MAP INCLUDED)

Allegedly.

In the vertigo of memory, I write these eyewitness objective notes and subjective opinions *allegedly*, because I can only analyze events, manuscripts, and how we people all *seemed* together, and not the true hearts of persons.

As I said to Proust nibbling on his *madeleine*, “How pungent is the smell of old magazines.”

*Drummer* is the Rosetta Stone of leather heritage.

*Drummer* published its first issue June 1975.

What happened next depends on whom you ask.

Before history defaults to fable, I choose to write down my oral eyewitness testimony.

Readers might try to understand the huge task of writing history that includes the melodrama of one's own life lived in the first post-Stonewall decade of gay publishing and gay life.

The Titanic 1970s were the Gay Belle Epoque of the newly possible.

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“The first rule of Fight Club is not to talk about Fight Club.”

—Chuck Palahniuk

“The worst thing homosexuality can do is rob you of your identity by becoming your identity.”

—Jack Fritscher

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I was a witness to my time.

As a pioneer participant, I was there.

As a collector, I stored the evidence.

As an author, I wrote within that time.

As a trained scholar, I am an analyst of that time.

As a humanist, I never drank the Kool-Aid of the politically correct dogmatists whose views and diktats were always at odds with the lives of most gay people.

As a survivor, I am sharing—which is what survivors do.

As I near seventy years of age, this is one last chance to tell this untold story of the part I played in the euphoria. I must disclose that when I was five years old my kindergarten teacher, Mrs. Deitwig, wrote on my report card during the war in 1944: “Jackie is a very verbal little boy with a tendency to tattle.” Is that revelation naked enough?

This is *Rashomon*. This is *The Alexandria Quartet*. And it is autobiography. Is it also an autobiography of *Drummer*?

This is my experience. This lion in winter does not intend to beard any other lions in winter. The closer eyewitness pioneers get to the end the more we remember of the beginning.

I must thank the first publisher of *Drummer*, John Embry, who hired me as editor in chief, because without him I would have been less motivated to give my deposition in this eyewitness testimony were it not for his “visions and revisions and tricky takes and mistakes” about who did what to whom in the streaming history of *Drummer*.

Embry wrote about himself in *Manifest Reader 33*: “Like any survivor, I have gotten to the stage where I can tell you that being one isn’t nearly everything it’s cracked up to be.”

For years, Embry has been writing an autobiographical book titled, *Epilogue*. I hope that this, my version of leather history at *Drummer*, might be interpolated with Embry’s in order to keep balance on the tightrope of memory. I recommend his *Epilogue* memoir which has not yet been published except in part in very provocative fragments in *Drummer 2*

**Excerpt source: ©Jack Fritscher, *Gay San Francisco: Eyewitness Drummer*, San Francisco: Palm Drive Publishing, 2008**

(August 1975), and in two of Embry's post-*Drummer* magazines, *Manifest Reader 26* (1995), and *Super MR 5* (January 2000).

I am an exorcist properly ordained by the Catholic Church, but I wish to be devil's advocate, not for Embry or myself, or for our shifting points of view, but, if it is possible, for the truth of canonizing gay history.

In fact, on August 11, 2006, I sent Embry an email asking for permission to reprint two excerpts from his *Epilogue* as his own eyewitness testimony in this series of books. On October 17, he telephoned, thanked me for the floral arrangement I had sent him from Ixia, the drop-dead shop in the Castro, and, suddenly, in our conversation which was not about this book, gave oral permission for the reprint requested three months earlier. His representative excerpt from his *Epilogue* is included in the *Gay San Francisco: Eyewitness Drummer* volume titled *The Drummer Salon*.

For objective correlative throughout this memoir, I have tried fairly to include and quote other eyewitnesses, including John Embry who plays the part of the perfect antagonist. I wanted *Drummer* to exude San Francisco underground aura; he wanted it to have LA mass appeal.

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What of my analysis is too intuitional or too nuanced to be proven, I offer "allegedly."

Where it may be wrong, I offer apology as well as correction in future editions.

The rest, I swear, is true—even though I am the first to say that new revelations in my own memory and archives constantly pop up to support or dislocate previous testimony which I then change to the accuracy of the evidence.

This is not revisionism; this is first-hand eyewitness memoir.

I can't be neutral, but I can try to be fair.

About *Drummer* history...

...I think I'll here...tell it, if I may.

And, therefore, every gentle soul, I pray  
That for God's love you'll hold not what I say  
Evilly meant, but that I must rehearse,  
All their tales, the better and the worse,  
Or else prove false to some of my design.

—Geoffrey Chaucer, "The Miller's Tale,"

*The Canterbury Tales*

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A documentary such as this is good history when the origami of memory unfolds to ever-more specific perspectives wherein the events of a timeline are supported by human feeling backed with cold evidence.

Former *Drummer* editor, Joseph Bean, wrote to me on July 15, 2002:

I think that if your introductory histories in *Eyewitness Drummer* are huge compared to the articles they attach to, that's great. It is the nature of history to be huge by comparison to the once simple event described. Think of the massive volume of historical reflection, analysis, etc. written about any given moment or action in the human past. Moments have consequence. Those moments in *Drummer* and in the Leather Community are of great consequence. It makes complete sense that it takes far more words to describe a river decades later than it took to stand in the flow at the time, and say it's just this cold and only as deep as this.

#### MEMORY: NOT ALL ALONE IN THE MOONLIGHT

In a *pentimento*, made literary by Lillian Hellman with whom *Drummer* and I share June 20 as a midsummer's eve birthday, a painter at his canvas scrapes his way through layers of color and line and texture to reveal hidden pictures underneath which may or may not be a better truth.

Nearly everything alleged in this *pentimento* of *Drummer*, in fact, in this whole series of books, is based on my archived documents, nearly a thousand hours of my taped interviews of others, and my personal journals, photography, videography, and Super-8 films as eyewitness of late twentieth-century life as we lived it.

My friend Samuel Steward, a model record-keeper, was a great help to Dr. Alfred Kinsey researching the history of sexuality. Steward gave Kinsey grist for the Kinsey Institute studies: his high-school sex stories, 1950s sex photos and 1960s Polaroids, records of all his tricks, erotic journals of tattooing, artwork, and his two early closeted books, the short-fiction collection *Pan and the Firebird* and the novel *Angels on the Bough*. Sam wrote in *Chapters from an Autobiography*, page 98:

Later...at their request, I sent the Institute *all* of the Phil Andros novels I had produced, together *with a bibliography locating the hundred and fifty stories I had written for European and other magazines, and all the ephemera and reproduced artwork I had done.* [Italics added]

Just so. Some of my work is also archived at the Kinsey Institute where my photography is in the permanent collection. My annotated bibliography collecting my writing and photography spread throughout *Drummer* may serve others building a complete bibliography of everyone's work in *Drummer*. Its intimate recall may be of help in a general timeline of gay history and leather culture. My leather heritage work aims to support my premise that gays are a developing nation: a fourth-world culture of eros whose history, intellect, and roots will not be denied.

Various other scholars and historians have told and retold various stories of leather history in San Francisco. Some of the stories are true. Some are lies. Some are errors. Some are cautionary fables. Some are incorrectly sanctified by repetition. No offense is meant, but who of those people was ever inside the eyewitness loop of leather anchored in the 1970s salon centered around *Drummer* where it was "zero degrees of separation"? Who of them was an eyewitness listed as "Contributor" over a span of nearly twenty-five years?

Nevertheless, the history of leather should be open to all analysts the way the pages of 1970s *Drummer* were open to all. In fact, "the *Drummer* Salon," as Sam Steward dubbed my magazine crowd, was inclusive unlike, for instance, the exclusive Violet Quill book club in Manhattan in the 1980s.

*Drummer* with all its hundreds of voices (writers, and readers writing personal) and eyes (cameras and graphic artists) was an inclusive, but transient, culture eagerly inviting everyone into the open tent.

That's what made *Drummer* culture unique.

It took a village to fill an issue.

It took the village people to act it out.

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*Drummer* was a center of a whole cultural phenomenon.... and its editor Jack Fritscher is a prolific writer who since the late sixties has helped document the gay world and the changes it has undergone.... if queer people do not preserve our own history, most of it will simply disappear.

—Willie Walker, founder, GLBT Historical Society (1985); Board of Directors, San Francisco Lesbian and Gay History Project (1982); quote from "Periodically Obscene," October 2002

The legacy of *Drummer* has many sides and to ignore one or the other because it is untidy is to subtract from the total.

— Robert Davolt, the last editor of *Drummer*, interviewed by Joe Gallagher at leatherweb.com

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Having arrived in San Francisco the first time in August 1961, I experienced personally, sexually, and esthetically the growth of Folsom Street culture in many ways: streets, bars, baths, backrooms, clubs, restaurants, galleries, and theaters. On March 13, 1976, my one-act comedy *Coming Attractions* was the first gay play written in San Francisco about contemporary San Francisco and produced in San Francisco. It opened South of Market at the SIR Center Theater (Society for Individual Rights) presented by Michael Lewis and the Yonkers Theater Production Company, famous for its *Hello Dolly* (1975). The double-bill also featured Lanford Wilson's *The Madness of Lady Bright*. The plays were noticed by the San Francisco *Chronicle* and were headlined on the cover of the *Bay Area Reporter* (BAR), Volume 6, Number 5, March 4, 1976.

(*Coming Attractions* was the first appearance of my female character Kweenasheba aka Kweenie who plays a major role as the “Sharon McKnight” cabaret chanteuse “Queen of the Castro” in *Some Dance to Remember*.)

The same spring 1976, the buzz around San Francisco was that a newspaper centered on Folsom Street life was about to begin publication and be distributed free in the South of Market bars and restaurants. It was to be called *The Bridge*, but despite it being a great idea it never took off because, at the same time, San Francisco leather men began to hear of *Drummer* in Los Angeles. By the time *Drummer* began its slow six-month move to San Francisco in February 1977, the idea of *The Bridge* had collapsed.

From my eyewitness recall, the San Francisco leather community early on—even with the vanilla *Bar Area Reporter* and *Vector* magazine starting up—had a need for a dedicated newspaper or magazine when *Drummer* blew into town. Having worked in magazine editing and writing for twenty years at that time, I sensed support was there not only in potential readers but in a talent base eager to be tapped to fill the pages of a leather publication.

#### LIFE NEED NOT UNRAVEL EVEN AS IT UNFOLDS

Gay history is a medium distorted by decades of irony, gender politics, and disease. The time has come for forward thinking about the leather past in San Francisco which was way more than what most first-wave GLBT historians have so far written, for instance, about what ultimately

**Excerpt source:** ©Jack Fritscher, [Gay San Francisco: Eyewitness Drummer, San Francisco: Palm Drive Publishing, 2008](#)

proved to be the *reductive* archetypes of “the Catacombs” and “the Society of Janus.”

For years I was a participant in both clubs. I loved the Catacombs’ founder Steve McEachern whom I hired to work for me as my personal transcriber at *Drummer*. I played with Janus’ founder Cynthia Slater who had an affair with my straight brother, and for a time almost became my sister-in-law. Cynthia seemed worth introducing to my bicoastal lover Robert Mapplethorpe because she was an instant classic in the new identity category of “leather woman.” In the stroboscopic zero degrees of a woman descending a staircase in an incestuous salon, “Fritscher’s *Mapplethorpe* shot Janus’ Slater at McEachern’s Catacombs.”

In the same zero degrees, California *Drummer* magazine (1975) created itself on the Philadelphia magazine *Drum* (1964-1969); and the San Francisco Society of Janus modeled itself on the Philadelphia Janus Society. That Janus begat *Drum*. When Philadelphia Janus split in a civil war over lesbian and gender issues, Clark Polak took control of Janus and founded the male-oriented *Drum* which premiered the first panels of future *Drummer* art director Allen J. Shapiro’s satiric cartoon strip *Harry Chess*. Polak shut down *Drum* when the government accused him of mailing obscene materials. Driven out of business, he may have become embittered because when the gifted young David Hurler (who in 1976 became my longtime friend whose talent I immediately embraced and whose star I would raise in the 1977-1979 *Drummer* salon) pilgrimaged in 1969 to meet Polak, Polak — perhaps overwhelmed by the singular vision of the not-yet-famous “Old Reliable” — savaged Hurler’s portfolio. Hurler, sweet-tempered enough to be undeterred, flew off to Washington, D. C., to enter the cosmos of erotic media working with the legendary physique publisher Dr. Herman Lynn Womack who welcomed Hurler as model, apprentice, photographer, and friend working at Guild Press, and testifying in court defending Womack against the government’s bourgeois charge that erotic models are by definition exploited adults. Where Polak had been persecuted, Hurler and Womack won the case and pioneered the legal road that allowed *Drummer* to be invented in June 1975. Aspects of the lesbigay civil war over gender and internecine rivalries are dramatized in *Some Dance to Remember*, Reel 2, Scene 15, “Queers against Gays.”

Some leather historians might re-calibrate their perspective regarding the Catacombs and the Society of Janus. Leather culture was a social force far bigger than either important but tiny private venue. It is reductive for historians looking the wrong way through time’s telescope to try to retrofit either group into more than each was at the time. Most leather people in 1970s San Francisco were never personally invited to, nor had anything to do with, either. The Catacombs was an elite group.

**Excerpt source: ©Jack Fritscher, [Gay San Francisco: Eyewitness Drummer](#), San Francisco: Palm Drive Publishing, 2008**

The Society of Janus was a private group. Both had “requirements” and “codes.” It was easier to get into the clannish Mineshaft or the privileged Studio 54 than it was to get into the Catacombs. Over the years, no more than a floating total of 200-300 of us played at the Catacombs. The intimate Janus membership grew even smaller with schism over issues ranging from gender to consent. Witness the famous Society of Janus gender drama when my longtime friend, the Catholic leather priest, the Reverend Jim Kane, bolted out the door, never to return. Earlier, I had written about him under a pseudonym I created for him, Frank Cross, in “The Janus Society,” *Drummer* 27 (February 1979), pages 14-22.

In the separating leatherstream culture of the late 1970s, the distaff theorists Gayle Rubin (b. 1949) and Pat Califia (b. 1954), reached into *The Story of O* and founded the lesbian-feminist S&M Samois (punning the identity, C’est moi?) collective (1978-1983) as a kind of response to the Catacombs and Janus and to the way each had marginalized itself through inclusions and exclusions around fisting, gender, and power exchanges.

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Insofar as religion threads its agenda through homosexuality, it is neat balance to Catholicism and Judaism to mention that Pat Califia arrived on scene simultaneously with the 1970s “Mormon Mafia” imported from Salt Lake to LA by Robert I. McQueen, the Mormon editor of *The Advocate*, because David Goodstein, the Jewish owner of *The Advocate* preferred what he termed “the Mormon work ethic.” Goodstein also popularized the phrase “Mormon Mafia.” (I mentioned Califia by name and as a Mormon in an homage in *Some Dance to Remember: A Memoir-Novel of San Francisco 1970-1982*, Reel 3, Sequence 3.) Open-hearted diversity allowed the immortal changeling Califia, once a Mormon female, to write an advice column for non-Mormon gay males in *The Advocate*, 1981-1991. In December 1979, *The Advocate* 238 showcased then Pat, now Patrick, Califia authoring “A Secret Side of Lesbian Sexuality” which connected to *Drummer* through Samois, the Janus Society, and the Catacombs. On my birthday, June 20, 1984, Pat Califia generously connected the dots to *Drummer*:

On my birthday, June 20, 1984, Pat Califia, a decade before transitioning FTM, generously connected the dots from me to *Drummer* in her “Dear Jack” letter in which she, “very excited,” thanked me for sending her the complete eight-issue run of my *Man2Man Quarterly* which she had specifically requested, and to which I had added for her historical archives a complete run of my San Francisco tabloid, *The California Action Guide* (1982). Coming from Califia, a salonista around both *The Advocate* and *Drummer*, it was birthday cake indeed to read “You are one of the

finest gay porn writers around...you write a 'dirty-talking' story better than anybody else I know." Commenting on my magazines themselves, analyst Califia confided with a personal sentiment I treasure: "In every single publication you've produced...something...hits me right between the eyes." (Fellow-academic Patrick Califia and I also share the fact that we both have BDSM books that have been seized by Canadian customs in a dragnet chronicled in *The New Yorker*, October 3, 1994.) With the 1984 startup of her *The Power Exchange, A Newsleather for Women*, Pat, perhaps feeling isolated in Richmond Hill, New York, generously signed off her long June 20 letter with: "...if it wasn't for your work, I'd feel impoverished. There were a lot of times when...a Jack Fritscher story renewed my optimism....I'd like to put you on the comp list for the *Newsleather*."

Of course, her words pleased me as much as did her return to live and work in San Francisco, appearing in a back-to-back reading with me at Karen Mendelsohn's September 1989 QSM Conference; speaking during Leather Week 1993 with Robin Sweeney, April Miller, Nicola Ginzler, and Lydia Steptoe at venues as outre as the men's sex club, Eros; and entertaining at the Women's Building Benefit for the Spanner Defense Fund, with music by Gayle Rubin.

Supporting inclusive camaraderie, on December 26, 2001, I mailed Patrick Califia a copy of one of my new Palm Drive Video leather documentaries about the Folsom Street Fair; and, because we have been so frequently connected through the years, I invited him to write an historical essay for *Gay San Francisco: Eyewitness Drummer*. Early on, Califia had exhibited the drive and talent that would make her the San Francisco editor of *The Advocate*; so in the byzantine drama when I was exiting *Drummer* in late 1979, I proposed to *Drummer* art director Al Shapiro (who was negotiating between publisher Embry and me) that Califia follow me as editor of *Drummer*, because I thought she authored a good calling card in her article, "A Secret Side of Lesbian Sexuality" in *The Advocate* #238, December 1979 (!). However, I had no power, and gender separatism on every side scotched the concept which was further trampled by the Machiavellian John Rowberry who would have knifed Eve Harrington to get himself temporarily hired as "assignment editor" of *Drummer* 31 to *Drummer* 39 for the year 1980 during which no actual "editor in chief" was hired to replace me.

So, torching myths, and inviting Califia into the *Gay San Francisco* tent in 2001, I had my reasons precisely connected to the history of my editorial direction of *Drummer*. We've had our, our...six degrees of relationship? exchanging Solstice and Beltane greeting cards...how many decades now? She with her Mormon SLC BDSM FTM, and I with

my Catholic stories of homomasculine Platonism, muscle worship, and shapeshifting Irish she/he's.

One might say: Fritscher and Califia both began in sex and set about intellectually changing S&M.

In one of Patrick Califia's books, I don't recall which one, he dubbed me a "prophet of homomascularity" which is the clarion keyword defining that men can self-fashion their own identity as legitimately as can women. (I may be a bit apostolic, but a prophet?)

On April 18, 1991, Pat Califia sent me the final draft of her essay for the Mark Thompson *Leatherfolk* anthology which also included my *Drummer* article on Folsom Street's "Artist Chuck Arnett." Her piece was titled "Mr. Benson Doesn't Live Here Anymore," and she thought I might like to see the pre-pub copy because, she wrote, I "was one of the few people who will know what I'm talking about." (I had done the final "polish edit," and had serialized, *Mr. Benson* in *Drummer*.)

In an earlier *Drummer* connection, on May 16, 1979, Pat Califia had written personally to me, at my home address, as editor in chief of *Drummer* regarding "the dimensions of gay male fantasies about women [in *Drummer*]" in her proposed story about "a female top fist-fucking a male bottom" with what I dubbed the "O. Henry twist" in that at the end the bottom discovers the top's gender. She also thanked me for addressing her concerns over my inclusive "Society of Janus" feature in *Drummer* 27 (February 1979), and she included some of her S&M poetry and her lesbian-masochist story, "Jessie," for my consideration.

At the same moment vis a vis women and *Drummer*, I was conferring with Society of Janus founder Cynthia Slater, who was dating my straight brother, about her straight-female BDSM story, "Discovery," which she dedicated to our mutual pals, the Catholic leather priest, Jim Kane, and his lover, the former pro-football player, Ike Barnes, and to John Pfleiderer, the S&M male escort, who was her straight top.

Unfortunately, in the autumn of 1979 during San Francisco's nervous breakdown over anti-gay assassination at City Hall, gay riot in the streets, and gay murder South of Market, *Drummer* itself was in chaos; the publisher had been ill and AWOL with cancer; I was not being paid; and I began withdrawing my authorial input prior to my editorial exit on December 31, 1979.

The upshot was that, having been the first author and editor to mention women inside *Drummer*, I was unable to continue my experimental evolution toward a gender-blind magazine because in the office chaos I could not fight the publisher who, perhaps because he had hired a woman to be the first LA editor of *Drummer*, seemed, well, perhaps reactionary in his keeping *Drummer* for men only. (He denounced that first strong

female editor in *Drummer* 30, June 1979, page 38.) That, I think was one of his (not *Drummer's*) missteps, because, as the names of women here entwined exhibits, there existed, at least before the tsunami of feminist-driven separatism, a huge talent pool and demographic that *Drummer* might have tapped.

When the lesbian civil war over gender broke out during the Titanic 1970s, *Drummer* was affected as much as the rest of the GLBT community. Because females turned from males, *Drummer*, abandoned by feminist identity politics for what it was not, turned to homomascuine identity “esthetics and erotics” to define what it was, and to answer to the demand of the demographic of masculine-identified men who had no magazine and no media representation.

It “was a whiter shade of” beyond the “pale.”

Califia in her person fashioning himself, and I as an author-editor driving *Drummer*, both chose to virilize ourselves.

And “the crowd called out for more.”

We all live in a world so foreign no straight tourists bother. That’s why our kind will always be forever marginal with never a presidential candidate of our own.

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In *Drummer* 31 (September 1979), I published a letter to the editor sent by Samois (presumably Rubin and Califia) in response to my Society of Janus feature in *Drummer* 27 (February 1979). I titled the letter “Things That Go Bump in the Night.” Samois based in Berkeley seemed intent on keeping its membership separate from Janus based in San Francisco:

“[The Society of Janus]...was an informative and well-written article....however...Samois...is an independent organization, which does not have, and never has had any official connection with the Society of Janus. There is some overlap of membership and this may have been partly responsible for the error. Several of Samois’ founding members were and still are members of Janus. Apparently, even within Janus there is some confusion about this matter....”

Along with this letter, Samois sent its “Handkerchief Color Code for Lesbians.” In a bid to acknowledge in 1979 the emerging presence of leather women who did not really break the Leather Ceiling until the 1980s, I printed the Lesbian Hanky Code with Samois’ letter on page 79 of *Drummer* 31. My pro-active “Janus Society” feature and the publication

of this Samoisi letter were the first gestures toward women made in the pages of *Drummer*.

After my exit as editor in chief on December 31, 1979, my initial gender-tuned steps in *Drummer* evaporated because of a rising civil war of gender separatism, and because women, in founding their own feminist magazines, made *Drummer* ever more masculinist—although *Drummer* was never ever separatist.

In fact, between 1987-1990, nearly every issue of *Drummer* addressed the “civil wars” in the leather community which I had dramatized in *Some Dance to Remember*. (I’ve always been more “Cowboy Up!” than “Kumbaya.”) Sadly, AIDS-era publisher DeBlase tried to please everyone and broker some civility and make a buck. His misguided “kumbaya pages” ate up precious column inches that should have been filled with *Drummer’s* famous erotic writing. The gender war, not the earthquake, was the main reason DeBlase’s *Drummer* tanked, sales fell, and he had to sell.

In *Drummer* 100 (August 1987), eyewitness Judy Tallwing McCarthy, International Ms. Leather 1987, lamented the “uncivil war” in her guest editorial calling astutely for unity rather than separatism. In *Drummer* 107 (August 1987), page 7, eyewitness Dane Leathers aka Mike Leathers, who was on the *Drummer* staff for a dozen years, wrote: “Educational organizations such as GMSMA [Gay Men’s SM Activists] and [the] Janus Society...tend to attract groupies and petty power-junkies more than stable teachers.”

In *Drummer* 133 (September 1989), page 32, Sal Vittore wrote an editorial calling for unity in the leather community: “What’s going on here? Is it now to be you’re gay, but you’re not gay enough?”

That interested me because that is the charge most often leveled against me by vanilla queens—that I am not “gay enough.” Leather columnist Mr. Marcus and others in the gay press have written about that as irony. In the same *Drummer* 133, page 33, Paul Martin published a flyer purportedly distributed at the Michigan Womyn’s Music Festival by a group called “Seps [Separatists] Against Sadomasochism.” Martin responded: “I won’t go into the issue of Lesbian Separatism here. Suffice it to say that stupidity knows no gender.”

In *Drummer* 134 (October 1989), managing editor Joseph W. Bean wrote a two-page editorial, pages 4-5, refuting the anti-leather book *After the Ball: How America Will Conquer Its Fear and Hatred of Gays in the 90s*. Written by two allegedly homophobic gay men, Marshall Kirk and Hunter Madsen, *After the Ball* was a mainstream queer book that proposed that the leather community should disappear. So virulent was the Kirk-Hunter

attack that Bean editorialized a “Know Your Enemy” campaign against the book a year later in *Drummer* 144 (November 1990).

*Drummer* 138 (March 1990) was a satirical issue. The reader had to flip it upside down and backwards, literally, to open the “front cover” of the post-earthquake Naugahyde magazine *Dummer*. My initial proposal had been to title it *Dumber* as a parody of the movie *Dumb and Dumber*. The editorial by “Pipistrelle” aka “Fledermaus” aka DeBlase satirized the dichotomies of the gender civil war as a kind of theater of the absurd:

San Francisco says one thing and Los Angeles disagrees...Establishment gay men say that it does not properly conform to tradition and leather women refuse to participate until there is a full and complete financial accounting....

In the rainbow arena, deep breathing is required.

In all diversity, there is a principle at work over which the “thought police” have no moral right to the politically correct control they wish to enforce in life or encode in revisionist history.

Every human being has analytical thoughts and personal feelings, for example, about race, but those thoughts and feelings are *racial* not *racist*. Race feelings don’t become *racist* until a person’s actions discriminate against another person.

The same is true of thoughts and feelings *versus* actions around gender. In addition to the Seven Deadly Sins, one might add the sins of racism and sexism.

It is through such territory that self-fashioning gay identity struggles to achieve a delicate balance. It is necessary to know this to address *Drummer*. Trying to dramatize this moral difficulty in gay culture, I purposely wrote *Some Dance to Remember*. Amidst its comedy and satire, the book was also a “tell-all expose” of the “politically correct civil war” over “heterophobia,” “gay sexism,” and “gay fascism” that drove some gender bigots crazy.

For instance, instead of hating gay males, some myopic genderistas might acknowledge that the 1970s decade of gay liberation, at least in San Francisco, was kick-started by young gay male pioneers who, as the first wave of sex immigrants emerging from the Stonewall closet, created the Titanic 70s out of whole cloth. *Drummer* itself was a document of immigrant self-assertion. Gay liberation of the 1970s wasn’t dominated by gay white males; it was simply populated with GWMs who dared come out first.

In the early to mid-1970s, gay males struggled—and had to struggle—with growing their own identity and unity first before activating

that identity and unity to support other diversities. By 1979, an army of gay males, who were hardly sexist or racist, opened up the Gay Parade to a new theme of “Diversity,” as advertised in my edit of a press release I prepared for *Drummer* 30 (June 1979), page 86.

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The 1979 Gay Freedom Day Parade & Celebration  
Sunday, June 24, 1979

Diversity...

...the right to be different...to live your own way...to follow a “different drummer...” These rights are what the annual Gay Freedom Day Parade and Celebration are all about.

When we march in support of others’ right to adopt different modes of speech, dress, sexuality, and self-expression, we are supporting our own right to be different.

When we celebrate the home we have found in this city, we also celebrate the tremendous value we derive in our lives from the diversity that IS San Francisco.

This year marks the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Stonewall Rebellion, the beginning of the end of second-class citizenship for gay men and women everywhere.

We will march to support gay men and women here, and throughout the world, who look to this event, more than any other, as evidence that our numbers are plentiful and that our movement is strong.

We will march to remind politicians, in this election year, that votes are not to be won at our expense, and that harassment of any part of our community will be met with the resistance of our entire community.

We will all be there, celebrating the joy and full self-expression we experience in our sexuality...celebrating our cultural contributions...celebrating with music, color, sun, and dancing in the streets.

Join us.

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Even more than now, the rate of uncloseting oneself and freeing oneself varied vastly according to culture and gender: whites tended to come out before Blacks and Hispanics, males tended to come out before

**Excerpt source: ©Jack Fritscher, *Gay San Francisco: Eyewitness Drummer*, San Francisco: Palm Drive Publishing, 2008**

females. There was no All-American Boy clothing store on Castro Street before gay males arrived. Presence creates culture signified by commerce. Genderistas might note that gay men could not back then support women who were not present. It is not ingenuous to posit that in the 1970s, *Drummer* did not publish female creatives, even when Jeanne Barney was editor in chief, because, as far as she remembers and I know, no women submitted material. Before the arrival of Cynthia Slater, Pat Califia, Camille O'Grady, and Gayle Rubin, gay men's acquaintance with "women in leather" began with Ann-Margret in *Kitten with a Whip* (1964) and ended with *Ilsa: She-Wolf of the SS* (1975).

My first mention of women in *Drummer* was at the time *avant garde* in my feature "Leather Christmas" which I wrote for the first issue I edited under my byline, *Drummer* 19 (December 1977). (I produced words and images for *Drummer* issues 14 to 18 and for the special issue, *Son of Drummer*, and ghost-edited *Drummer* 18, *Drummer* 31, 32, and 33.)

Even though proprietor McEachern sometimes rented to female groups on separate nights, the Catacombs was a gentlemen's club that "invited a few women"—specifically, Cynthia Slater. Janus was an educational support group whose bisexual females "invited some sympathetic gay, straight, and bisexual men" who, of course, all turned out to be gay and competing to pick up the straight men the women supposedly attracted.

Those self-defined profiles made the Catacombs and Janus historical, but not representative of mainstream leather history which in the pioneer 1970s was only beginning its wide-stream identity evolution:

- 1) toward its first immediate self-fashioning masculine identity;
- 2) toward the new wave of pop-culture S&M in advertising, fashion, and the arts; and
- 3) toward the next wave of gender immigration of the 1980s when men died and women migrated in to nurse and nurture queer culture.

AIDS enabled omni-gendered opportunists to inject their own virus. HIV was the Trojan Horse that prepared the way for the galloping Marxist *coup* whose political correctness started the gay civil war that turned the joyous "gay liberation" of the 1970s into the divisive "gay politics" of the 1980s. This coup was driven by gay-left-wing fundamentalists kneeling on their politically correct prayer rugs arrogantly demanding compulsory egalitarianism. It was sanctified by Foucault who, because he was not conventionally good-looking, confused sex with power.

I saw the best minds of my generation destroyed by political correctness.

Arts analyst Jane Kramer in *The New Yorker* named these trouble-makers “the storm troopers of political correctness.” (October 8, 2007, page 49)

One day the “divisive far-out-wing GLBT conspiracy” may renounce its hateful heresy of declaring male-identified homosexuality anathema. In one generation, those gays disrespecting homomascularity have become so Marxist and Fascist that if they could travel back to the future of their more liberated youth, they would denounce themselves for what they have become: saboteurs of an integrated and inclusive gay gestalt.

*Drummer* and its inclusive salon was *the* hub interpreting leather popular culture. *Drummer*, according to the San Francisco GLBT Historical Society was—in the most important assessment in this book—“the center of a whole cultural phenomenon.”

*Drummer* was epicentric to leather culture for what happened then and for what happened later.

Leather, like homosexuality itself, is a hologram. I might say, “You see it; but when you reach out to touch it, your hand closes empty around the projection of what your eye tells you is there.”

Our leather history has no more memory than the remembrance we give it.

And all our leather memoirs are epic.

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Question Marx?

Socrates: It Takes a Village to Raise a Question?

Is there in the younger politically correct crowd a kind of gay-moral disapproval, a kind of Puritan uptightness, and a jealous ageism as if they are angry that their forebears stole a march on them? Is theirs a petulance about a party missed that rebels against the generation of us who in the first decade after Stonewall invented gay life while celebrating our psychological liberation like the fauns, satyrs, angels, imps, and gods that the sex, music, and drugs revealed we were in our new world of faerie?

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DEATH AT THE FIRST CASTRO STREET FAIR,  
AUGUST 18, 1974

The gay world lies somewhere between the Wild West and Chaos.

For instance, in 1970 in San Francisco, long before there was a *Drummer*, my lover David Sparrow and I posed as two leather players in a couple hundred black-and-white photos for the first leather magazine

**Excerpt source: ©Jack Fritscher, *Gay San Francisco: Eyewitness Drummer*, San Francisco: Palm Drive Publishing, 2008**

published in San Francisco, *Whipcrack*. Intending it as a one-issue one-off, we helped create that slick, large-format magazine with photographer Walt Jebe, David's employer, who owned Jebe's Camera, 4117 20<sup>th</sup> Street. Jebe's Camera, founded in the 1960s, was the first camera shop to hire gay clerks and develop gay sex photos in the Castro. The straight Jebe had been in business ten years before *arriviste* Harvey Milk immigrated and opened his own Castro Camera shop a couple doors away, around the corner on the main drag at 575 Castro Street.

If eyewitness truth be sorted, the hyper-zealous Milk was considered rather a jokey camp on cool Castro Street where he was liked okay as a sexual immigrant, but not well liked as a political carpetbagger, because he was Manhattanizing laid-back San Francisco. He wasn't particularly cool. He was a New Yorker telling "The City That Knows How" what to do in his "Milk Forum" column in the *Bay Area Reporter*. In the 1970s, *Manhattanization* was a very bad word. He was elected because he was gay, not because he was "Harvey Milk." It was not personal. The 1970s was a period of rapid population growth in California, the Bay Area, and San Francisco. The horde of new gay immigrants, five minutes or five months in the City, knowing little of local San Francisco politics, voted on one issue in the way campus towns fear the temporary student population will turn out to change local laws and then leave the town holding the bag. Beyond even Harvey's control, he was swept up in a symbolic role in ritual politics. The convergence of his times, not his life, propelled him. His latter-day sainthood came through a martyrdom that could have happened to anyone playing the role of gay supervisor. It was his bad fortune that "Tonight the role of gay supervisor will be played by Harvey Milk." Even in death, the urban-legend jokes continued: the mourning crowd on the party boat, spreading his ashes at sea, deciding instead to snort lines of Harvey.

There are other instances of eyewitness events no other historian has mentioned: on Sunday, August 18, 1974, at the first Castro Street Fair—exactly at the corner of 18<sup>th</sup> and Castro—a gunman who had opened fire on the huge crowd was shot dead at my feet by a San Francisco cop as reported the next day when David Sparrow and I appeared in the right half of the tragic "death photo" on the front page of the August 19, 1974, *San Francisco Chronicle*.

Reporter Kevin Wallace wrote:

A shotgun blast from a crowded sidewalk....Police Officer Arnold Strite [rushing with gun drawn and knocking David and me down], finding two shopkeepers trying to grapple with the man with the shotgun, shoved his revolver against the young

man's rib cage and told him to drop the shotgun. Instead, a second shotgun discharge ripped into the nearby pavement, sending ricocheting pellets into the shoulders of two women in the surrounding crowd—and Police Officer Arnold Strite fired his .357 Magnum. ©*San Francisco Chronicle*

Ironically, Harvey Milk had invented that first street fair because he wanted to register 20,000 gay voters. Instead, suddenly, like a foreshadowing in Greek tragedy, suddenly that summer, death, *gravitas*—suddenly death by gun—became possible in our liberated golden dream time when we dreamed the happy dreams of urban aboriginals before the political and religious poachers arrived with their culture war swinging too far right and too far left.

In this way, newspaper clippings, and my handwritten diary entries, crept into my eyewitness journals which created the *mise en scene* of both *Drummer* and *Some Dance to Remember: A Memoir-Novel of San Francisco 1970-1982*.

That autobiographical front-page “death photo” is a measure of the zero degrees of gunfire in all this gonzo eyewitness testimony.

I was there.

Dodging bullets.

#### PIONEER PARTICIPANT CREDENTIALS: HIRING ON TO *DRUMMER*

In March 1977, when Embry offered me the job of editor in chief of *Drummer*, I was otherwise employed—twice-over. Educated for eleven years for the Catholic priesthood (1953-1963), with a Ph.D. from Loyola University of Chicago (1968), and a California lifetime teaching credential for university lecturing, and working in a permanent position as a full-time writer managing the marketing and proposals department of Kaiser Engineers, I had also on March 7, 1977, placed eleventh among 1,200 straight and gay men and women when I qualified as a “Class 8304 Deputy Sheriff” for the City and County of San Francisco, and was offered a deputy's job which I had three opportunities to accept or decline. I had nearly twenty years' experience writing for magazines and had already written five published books [*What They Did to the Kid: Confessions of an Altar Boy* (written 1965); *Love and Death in Tennessee Williams* (1967); *I Am Curious (Leather)* aka *Leather Blues* (1968-69); *Television Today* (1971); and *Popular Witchcraft: Straight from the Witch's Mouth* (1972)] and was in the midst of writing what has been called my

**Excerpt source:** ©[Jack Fritscher](#), [Gay San Francisco: Eyewitness Drummer](#), San Francisco: [Palm Drive Publishing](#), 2008

“signature novel” *Some Dance to Remember* which I had begun in 1970 and completed in 1984.

Priest. Professor. Writer. Sheriff. Editor.

I had lots of choices.

Q. So why *Drummer*? Why did I choose to throw in my lot with *Drummer* in 1977?

A. Because in pre-Stonewall 1968 I saw the transgressive value of gay publishing. Gay pop culture had come out of the closet in the 1960s the way Black culture and Beat culture had come out in the 1950s. I figured attention must be paid. At the Second Annual Meeting of the American Studies Association, October 30, 1969, I presented my paper, “Popular Culture in Tennessee Williams.” Immediately thereafter, when approached by Ray Browne who was one of the founders of the American Popular Culture Association (1968), I jumped on the opportunity to document our gay popular subculture by writing gay-themed essays in the newly founded *Journal of Popular Culture*, and in writing the nonfiction book *Popular Witchcraft: Straight from the Witch’s Mouth* (1972; 2005). Soon enough, along came *Drummer* begging for content and identity.

In the dual roles of 1) pioneer-participant, and as 2) historian-analyst commenting on that participation, I have been writing this eyewitness history for around forty years, but I am not clinging to a floating deck chair from the “Titanic 70s.”

I have had a long and rewarding personal and literary life and photographic career before, during, and after *Drummer*.

Nevertheless, in a way, this memoir is my last will and testament about *Drummer* made in response to queer historian Dusk Darkling who once asked me to describe “a typical day during the 1970s in the *Drummer* office.”

As high as passions, fun, creativity, and sex always surged around *Drummer*, it was not the worst of times, but the best, as the innocent first-class party-people in the Titanic 70s cruised on not knowing that ahead lay the iceberg of HIV.

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In a drag-dominated GLBT culture of sissynood entitled by feminism, I edited, wrote, and photographed for the gay men’s homomasculine adventure magazine *Drummer*...

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Masturbation Is Magical Thinking

What I did to virilize *Drummer* was add realism to the magical thinking of *Drummer* readers who wanted a magazine that made the frontiers of newly liberated sex seem possible, accessible, and boundless. What they wanted they saw in the media image of themselves come alive in my *verite* pages reflecting what they really did at night.

*Drummer* reported the lifestyle it generated.

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#### WHERE THE BOYS ARE:

A Manifesto of Equality

Addressed to GLBT Historians, Journalists, Academics,  
and Fiction Writers

Compton's Cafeteria, Stonewall,  
and the *Drummer* "Slave Auction"

When revisionists writing their "new histories" come to historic moments of gay riots and gay resistance such as the Compton's Cafeteria rebellion (San Francisco, 1966) or the Stonewall riot (New York, 1969), the tradition of "gay urban legend" is to fantasize that drag queens and hustlers and transgenders led the charge the way that some people insist that witches historically were feminist leaders rather than victims caught in a trap. (See *Popular Witchcraft: Straight from the Witch's Mouth*.) What is consistent in these GLBT urban legends is that masculine-identified gay men are deleted.

The suspects who create this revisionist slant are most often the journalists who need a hook, or at least a hooker, to give their stories flamboyant local color in the way that *Priscilla, Queen of the Desert* would be a generic road-trip movie were it not about drag queens.

Masculine-identified gay men are as difficult to dramatize emotionally as are heteromale straight men. Ask Oliver Stone who stumbled with his homomale love story *Alexander* (2004). In *The Advocate* (February 28, 2007), Stone said his premise for the love between Alexander and Hephaestion and Bogaos was that "With the passing of sperm was the passing of wisdom, literally, so that's why the older man always took on the young man, to pass on his wisdom." In *Drummer* 132 (August 1989), Mark C. Blazek's story "To Show That I'm a Man" began

with a quote of secret wisdom from Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World*:

“Do you mean to say that you wanted to be hit with that whip?” ...the young man made a sign of affirmation. “For the sake of the pueblo—and to make the rain come and the corn grow. And to please Pookong and Jesus. And to show that I can bear pain...Yes,” and his voice took on a new resonance.... “To show that I’m a man.”

Most journalists and most novelists, overly perplexed in a feminist-acute culture, reduce masculine men to villainous abusers, romantic ciphers, and action figures. Or worse, they make them invisible as Tennessee Williams’ absent father in *The Glass Menagerie*: he worked for the phone company and fell in love with long distance.

This is why Annie Proulx, Diana Ossana, and Larry McMurtry were so brilliant with *Brokeback Mountain*. Actors Heath Ledger and Jake Gyllenhaal played masculine men with nary a hint of drag; and their performances quivered with a fresh sexuality and humanity in the cold mountain air. There is a camp infinity between *Brokeback Mountain* (2005) and *City Slickers* (1991), the other gay cowboy movie in which Jake Gyllenhaal appeared.

That element of the “human male force” is missing in most every historical narrative of gay rebellion. In truth, that archetypal force has rarely been dramatized in gay literature because of politics and because of the perceived inherent difficulty in dramatizing two men in love. Long before *Brokeback Mountain*, there was its predecessor, that other edgy homomascuine film, *Midnight Cowboy* (1969).

I have argued this same gender point regarding polarity witchcraft that some wiccan traditionalists mistakenly demand requires a man and a woman. My research, best exemplified by Aleister Crowley, is that polarity magic can be practiced by two people of the same gender who discover subtler polarities between their physical and spiritual selves.

A case in point is the drag-free *Some Dance to Remember*. Both leading men are masculine, which means that each character had to be defined by subtleties of characterization other

than the easy deus-ex-machina polarities of male-female and butch-sissy gender differences that dramatize most love stories.

Some reviewers, victims of speed-reading too many gay books, wanted one of the pair of men in *Some Dance* to be draggy, or camp, or, at the very least, gayer, because that kind of comic relief and dramatic shorthand is the norm that plays to the groundlings where camp is easily pitched.

One reason that the reporting about the riots at Compton's Cafeteria and of Stonewall are drag-intense is that when a journalist or scholar goes trolling for post-factum interviews, drag queens are as willing to be interviewed as the eager Lady Chablis in *Midnight in the Garden of Good and Evil*.

In the same way, hustlers who sell sex for cash are extremely willing to "tell you what you want to hear" for cash.

Masculine men, on the whole, are more taciturn, more invisible and harder to find, and once found, tend to a human-male reticence that is not "for sale" and does not lead to a particularly colorful interview.

This hardly helps the heat-seeking journalist or the queer historian such as Martin Duberman or the queer theorist such as Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick.

For instance, regarding the masculine-identified *Drummer* "Slave Auction" busted in LA in 1976, no journalist created any instant legend. No one rioted. Defense funds were quietly raised. As there were no drag queens to spin for color, *The Advocate* retreated to the opposite sensationalism quoting the lurid LAPD police report about "slaves and nipples" because *The Advocate* had a grudge against unsavory men in leather. In its coverage, *The Advocate* carefully never mentioned Embry or *Drummer*. The *Drummer* arrests, widely covered in the straight press, went un-championed in the gay press because the incident shattered "the received stereotype of gay oppression" with a new gay archetype: homomascularity came out of the closet.

That night of April 10, 1976, everything changed: it was homomascularity men who were abused by heteromascularity cops. Not a drag queen in sight. The *mise en scene* was muscular Kabuki scripted by Mishima who had launched the leather decade of the 1970s with his manifesto and ritual suicide on November 25, 1970. As if it were one of the initiation sacraments such as Baptism or Confirmation, the "Slave Auction" arrest was the acting out of one of the primal themes constant in *Drummer*: masculine gay men involved with masculine straight men.

**Excerpt source:** ©Jack Fritscher, *Gay San Francisco: Eyewitness Drummer*, San Francisco: Palm Drive Publishing, 2008

Unto itself, that night was erotically brilliant, even though no one had then what few have now: the tropes or the chops to handle this newly uncloseted archetypal way to be a manly homosexual.

Annie Proulx knew this.

She applied her insight to *Brokeback Mountain*.

Michael Bronski knew this.

He wrote his seminal article, “S/M: The New Romance,” *Gay Community News* (Boston), Volume 2, Number 30 (1984), examining the emergence of the trope of courtly love in homo-masculine romance in Sam Steward’s Phil Andros stories, in John Preston’s *Mr. Benson* (1979), and in Jack Fritscher’s *Leather Blues* (1969) and *Corporal in Charge of Taking Care of Captain O’Malley* (1984).

*Drummer* editor Joseph Bean knew this. In a recorded conversation in June, 1997, he told me that in his youth, not yet intuiting the possibility of homomascularity, he had invested in effeminate gay culture because acting out “sissiness” was the only behavior he knew. Part of our chat exemplifies the two polar views:

Fritscher: I never went through that [an effeminate coming out] because in Chicago in the 1960s even before I knew fully the range of what homosexuality was, I knew to go to the Gold Coast and not one of the other bars, because I knew men went to the Gold Coast.

Bean: That’s the difference between us in our youth. You thought of yourself as a man...

Fritscher: ...liking other men. And I knew I’d find...

Bean: I thought of them as men, and thought they wouldn’t want me around, because they’re men.

Why would they want me around?

Fritscher: Because they like other men around.

Bean: But I didn’t think of me as a man.

Fritscher: You didn’t? But there’s nothing effeminate about you.

Bean: But I tried desperately to be effeminate. I was terribly unsuccessful. But I really tried, because, I thought, there are men and then there are people who like men, and I was one

of the people who liked men. It didn't occur to me...

Fritscher: But that's thinking like a heterosexual.

Bean: I was raised among heterosexuals and adopted their view.

Fritscher: But, see, homosexuality, the "homo" part means "the same," like, you like the same thing you are.

Bean: I didn't get that till I matured.

Is homomascularity a new meme of gay natural selection? It's as if masculine-identified homosexuals have come out as a brand-new gender requiring, among other gay-culture mutations, a bricolage of gay identity that breaks the traditional frames of acculturated effeminacy. The Darwinian *Drummer*, for instance, always served as a virtual gay *Origin of the Species* for leathermen, bears, and other evolutionary homomascularity identities. For instance, *Bear* magazine required the DNA of its ancestors, *Drummer* and *Man2Man Quarterly*.

Before, during, and after *Drummer*, I have been an eyewitness-participant as well as a critic-analyst of this kind of journalistic thinking and this kind of local-color choice. When I decided to write a short story about 1960s gay liberation, I chose to write a campy drag-queen comedy titled "Stonewall, June 27, 1969, 11 PM" rather than a leatherman story about the *Drummer* "Slave Auction" which no author has yet fictionalized on page or screen.

As a further eyewitness, let me add Tony Tavarossi who is as important to gay liberation history in San Francisco as his contemporary, the drag-queen politician Jose Sarria. The homomascularity entrepreneur Tony Tavarossi was my longtime friend and sex playmate from 1970 to 1981.

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No one else knows what I reveal here for the first time: he nicknamed himself "Tony"; his birth name was Elloyd Tavarossi, and he was born December 17, 1933; he died of AIDS July 12, 1981, two days after the epic fire that destroyed the Barracks bath on Folsom Street, putting an end to the Titanic 1970s.

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Tony Tavarossi was a native San Franciscan who came out at the age of twelve under the tables in the curtained booths of the South China Café at 18<sup>th</sup> and Castro streets. He was a “walking oral historian” who in his own personal history set in motion a “domino effect” in gay liberation history:

1. Tony Tavarossi founded San Francisco’s first bike bar or leather bar, the Why Not? (1960), where
2. he was himself arrested for propositioning an undercover cop, thus closing the Why Not? in a raid that was a rehearsal for
3. the police raid on the Tay-Bush Inn (1961) which emboldened
4. Chuck Arnett to hire Tony Tavarossi in opening the legendary Tool Box bar (1961) which, as a symbol of masculine mutiny, fortified the gay resolve to
5. found the Tavern Guild (1962) to protect gay citizens from harassment by the San Francisco Police Department.

Tony Tavarossi told me explicitly that the Compton’s Cafeteria scene in 1966 was a riot led by a mixed crowd of Levi’s-wearing leathermen, straight-trade hustlers (many of them ex-GI’s from World War II and Korea), and tough drag queens.

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What gay-ghetto journalists forget is that all three groups—aged forty and younger at that time—were men born in the 1920s, 1930s, and early 1940s. Underneath the butch boys sausaged into Levi’s 501s and the drag queens swimming laps in Chanel Number 5, the Compton’s Cafeteria crowd were seasoned combat veterans of three then recent wars: World War II, Korea, and Vietnam.

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As Tony Tavarossi said, it is a truism of the bar business, as it was true of Compton’s Cafeteria as a late-night hang-out, that for the most part, drag queens and male hustlers follow the money. They have a vested interest in hanging out where the boys are, where the men are, because that’s where the wallets are.

Journalists love “appearance and reality” the way historians love a “good story.”

In *And the Band Played On*, Randy Shilts—and I knew and worked with Randy Shilts—so loved the “hook” of Patient Zero

that he tilted the HIV truth, not into a lie, but into the legend that, I think, immorally demonized the fun-loving flight attendant Gaetan Dugas into some kind of Typhoid Mary. In short, Shifts succumbed to a storyteller's temptation: he narrowed down the huge AIDS story in the same way journalists simplify and dramatize the seventeen-year-old drag Sylvia Rivera as the "hook" at the anonymous Stonewall Rebellion.

In just such an endless stream of personalization of an historical moment, the writer Edmund White, like Woody Allen's omnipresent character in *Zelig*, claims he was part of the Stonewall Riots; so do hundreds, if not thousands, of others, who were also, of course, at Woodstock eight weeks later! The review-proof White and the others may have turned up on the second night but that's not original-recipe Stonewall. It's all wannabe sons of Christopher Isherwood screaming the mantra about 1930s Berlin: "I Am a Camera!" Of course, you are, darling; sit down and have a martini, so literary devices can be separated from reality.

Such fly-on-the-wall point-of-view coverage makes great copy; it makes human interest; it's a chance for a post-factum photo op; it makes a movie; it builds careers; it wins GLBT awards. But it's not truth. It's worse: it's not quite the truth, but it seems true enough until the sniff test.

Perhaps journalists over-characterize drag queens as "ultra-tough real men" because that definition is one way to rebut and deconstruct the straight homophobic prejudice that "all gay men want to be women" and thus, in the straight mind, are as deserving of abuse as are "women who don't fight back."

In a GLBT society constantly bragging about inclusion, GLBT journalists, historians, and novelists might start liberating their perceptions of the reality-TV *mise en scene* before their very eyes.

It's necessary for authors to correct and square off the lists of simpleminded threes: "The riot was fought by drag queens, hustlers, and transgenders."

This may be true of some gay riot some place, but all gay riots everywhere forever had no gay male representation?

WHAT WAS IT LIKE EDITING *DRUMMER* FOR THREE YEARS FROM MARCH 1977 TO DECEMBER 31, 1979?

Eyewitness historian Mark Thompson, one of the important former editors of *The Advocate*, reminded me with a wonderful objective correlative of what kind of “hysteria” gay life in San Francisco was up against during the high time I was editor in chief of *Drummer*.

Mark Thompson, separating facts and legends, is writing both a screenplay and an analytical biography of author and photographer Robert Opel, the first “star” created by *Drummer*. Thompson is the author of several books including *Gay Spirit: Myth and Meaning* (1987) and the seminal anthology, *Leatherfolk: Radical Sex, People, Politics, and Practice* (1991). His article “Black Leather Wings: The Radical Faeries Host a Leather Gathering” appeared in *Drummer* 136 (January 1990), pages 6-8, with seven photographs by Thompson, pages 66-69.

On May 30, 2001, Mark Thompson wrote:

Dear Jack,

It was good speaking recently. Thanks for agreeing to see me on Friday, June 15. I really look forward to catching up...and...to discuss the Robert Opel [murder] case [at Fey-Way Gallery, South of Market, July 8, 1979].

What was your relationship to Opel? Did you know him well, or mainly in the context of his gallery?

What was your view of the man? Do you have any insight into the personal factors that may—or may not—have contributed to his demise?

You once mentioned to me that you had met a man (at a party, I believe) who claimed he knew who was behind the murder. Can you remember what he said? Was it a police conspiracy? A hit job by a rival drug dealer? Maybe a combination of both? There were a lot of hysterical rumors floating around after Robert’s death. [Opel had famously streaked the live telecast of the 1974 Academy Award Oscar show when David Niven and Elizabeth Taylor were at the microphone.] Can you remember other theories or views about the circumstances relating to his murder?

The autumn of 1978 through the summer of 1979 [precisely when I was editing and writing *Drummer*] was a very volatile time for San Francisco: [the] Jonestown [Massacre committed by San Francisco gay messiah Jim Jones], the Moscone-Milk assassinations, Dan White’s trial and subsequent City Hall riot,

and then the Opel murder. What is your perspective of that period? It seemed like the end of an era. Why and how did these tragic events follow so closely and what impact did they ultimately have on...the gay community?

Finally, I would enjoy hearing about where you are today concerning the past. Do you entertain fond memories, regrets, sadness—or a bit of each? Are there lessons for today's generation from what transpired in the past?....

All best wishes,

Mark [Thompson]

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In the zero degrees of separation, the soigne party in question was a cocktail benefit sponsored on Sunday, March 4, 1990, by *Drummer* owners Anthony DeBlase and Andrew Charles, and *Drummer* editor Joseph W. Bean at the San Francisco home of advertising and circulation manager John Ferrari. (See John Ferrari, *Drummer* 115, April 1988, page 94; *Drummer* 145, masthead.) The purpose was to raise travel cash for International Mr. Leather, Guy Baldwin, a *Drummer* columnist and a psychotherapist who had appeared in Jim Wigler photographs in *Drummer* 128 (May 1989), page 30, and on the cover and in the centerfold of *Drummer* 132 (August 1989), and in *Drummer* 139 (May 1990), page 58. With an RSVP invitation suggesting the dress code of “formal leathers, dress uniform, or black tie,” the *creme de leather* crowd was that year's quintessence of the drop-dead salon around *Drummer*. Behind the charade of that party, who was doing what to whom, and what was the truth of that salon?

(For *Rashomon* details in this *Gay San Francisco: Eyewitness Drummer*, see the volume titled *The Drummer Salon*.)

#### “SPEAK LOW WHEN YOU SPEAK LOVE”

Marlon Brando's film *The Wild One* (1953) exposed leather culture and shaped *Drummer* in a good way.

John Ford's film *The Man Who Shot Liberty Valence* (1962) forecast leather history in a bad way.

When the unruly biker Brando is asked, “What are you rebelling against?” He snaps back: “Whatcha got?”

When the reporters conspire about how they should report the truth about the man who supposedly shot Liberty Valence, revisionism wins when one says: “When the legend becomes fact, print the legend.”

Some messengers should be killed.

Some seigneurial “historians” should stop quoting crap.

Revisionism is a cover up that is the worst kind of journalism, the worst kind of history, and the worst kind of lie.

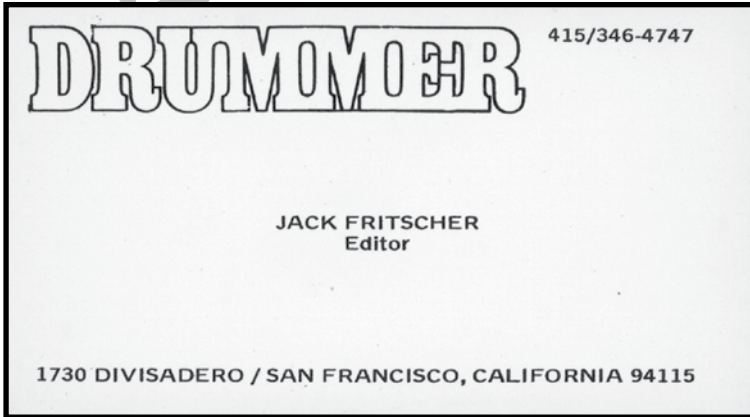
Before the Titanic 1970s and the era of *Drummer* pass into the hands of historians, it is time to blow the whistle.

It is time for extrapolations and disinformation and agenda to stop.

Legend is gossip and lies.

Fact always trumps legend.

Truth is a boner.



Top: "Jack Fritscher, Golden Gate Park," 1976. Photograph by David Sparrow. ©Jack Fritscher. Middle: "David Sparrow and Jack Fritscher: Honeymoon Album," with alternative shots in *American Men*, Fritscher-Sparrow House, Kalamazoo, Michigan, 1969. Auto-Photograph by Sparrow and Fritscher. ©Jack Fritscher. "David Sparrow Solo," Fritscher-Sparrow House, San Francisco, 1974. Photograph by Jack Fritscher. ©Jack Fritscher. Bottom: "Jack Fritscher, 19<sup>th</sup> and Castro Street," Jim Kane-Ike Barnes House, 1972. Photograph by David Sparrow. ©Jack Fritscher. During his fiftieth year in publishing, Fritscher was awarded a "Lifetime Achievement Award 2007" from the national Erotic Authors Association founded by Marilyn Jaye Lewis.

**Excerpt source: ©Jack Fritscher, *Gay San Francisco: Eyewitness*  
*Drummer, San Francisco: Palm Drive Publishing, 2008***

©Jack Fritscher

Top: “Jack Fritscher and Steve Saunders,” Davisburg, Michigan, 1968. Auto-Photograph by Jack Fritscher. ©Jack Fritscher. Middle: “Jack Fritscher, *Whipcrack*,” set of *Whipcrack* magazine photo shoot, 19<sup>th</sup> and Castro, 1970. Photograph by Walter Jebe. Bottom: “David Sparrow and Jack Fritscher, *Whipcrack*,” *Whipcrack* photo shoot, 19<sup>th</sup> and Castro, 1970. Photograph by Walter Jebe. ©Walter Jebe. Used with permission.

Excerpt source: ©Jack Fritscher, [Gay San Francisco: Eyewitness Drummer](#), San Francisco: [Palm Drive Publishing](#), 2008

©Jack Fritscher

Top: "Jack Fritscher, Castro Street," 1970. Photograph by David Sparrow. ©Jack Fritscher.  
Bottom left and right: "Castro Theater Marquee, Castro Street Fair 1975," and "Crowd at Market and Castro Streets: Castro Street Fair 1975." Photographs by Jack Fritscher.  
©Jack Fritscher

Excerpt source: ©Jack Fritscher, [Gay San Francisco: Eyewitness Drummer, San Francisco: Palm Drive Publishing, 2008](#)

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“Death at the First Castro Street Fair,” August 18, 1974. *San Francisco Chronicle*, August 19, 1974. Lensed within the intersection of 18<sup>th</sup> and Castro, this front-page news photograph is essential to *Gay San Francisco* insofar as it documents and symbolizes the literal role of Jack Fritscher (circled) as an historical eyewitness of GLBT culture. ©*San Francisco Chronicle*

**Excerpt source: ©Jack Fritscher, *Gay San Francisco: Eyewitness*  
*Drummer, San Francisco: Palm Drive Publishing, 2008***

©Jack Fritscher

Top: "Thom Morrison and Jack Fritscher, Election Day, November 1979." The editor in chief of *Drummer* campaigning at corner of 18<sup>th</sup> and Castro for Dianne Feinstein who plays a walk-on in *Some Dance to Remember: A Memoir-Novel of San Francisco 1970-1982*. Photograph by David Sparrow. ©Jack Fritscher. Bottom: "Jack Fritscher and Jim Kane, Gay Rally 1972." Longtime companions from 1968, Fritscher and Catholic priest Jim Kane, San Francisco Civic Center plaza, June 1972. Fritscher was a monthly columnist for editor Kane's *Dateline Colorado*, the newspaper for the Catholic diocese of Colorado Springs. When Fritscher became editor in chief of *Drummer*, he profiled Jim Kane in "The Janus Society," *Drummer* 27 (February 1979). Photograph by David Sparrow. ©Jack Fritscher

**Excerpt source: ©Jack Fritscher, *Gay San Francisco: Eyewitness Drummer*, San Francisco: Palm Drive Publishing, 2008**

©Jack Fritscher

'Diversity' proclamation published by editor in chief Fritscher in *Drummer* 30 (June 1979).

Excerpt source: ©Jack Fritscher, *Gay San Francisco: Eyewitness Drummer*, San Francisco: [Palm Drive Publishing](#), 2008

© Jack Fritscher

Top: “*Drummer* art director A. Jay (Al Shapiro) and *Drummer* editor in chief Jack Fritscher,” Fey-Way Studios, Friday, May 26, 1978. Publicity kit photograph by Efren Ramirez. ©Efren Ramirez. Published with permission from the Al Shapiro-Dick Kriegmont Archives. Bottom: “Jack Fritscher and Andrew Charles,” Mr. *Drummer* Contest 1988, the Galleria, San Francisco. Friends since 1969, Fritscher was a judge of Mr. *Drummer* 1988, and Andrew Charles was the Chicago psychiatrist who in 1986 bought *Drummer* magazine for his lover, the writer Anthony DeBlase, who became the publisher of *Drummer* until 1992. Photograph by Mark Henry. ©Mark Henry

Excerpt source: ©[Jack Fritscher](#), [Gay San Francisco: Eyewitness Drummer, San Francisco: Palm Drive Publishing, 2008](#)

Three players key to the founding of *Drummer* magazine. “Jack Fritscher, Jeanne Barney, and Larry Townsend,” Dorothy Chandler Pavilion, Los Angeles, January 10, 2007. Photograph by Mark Henry. ©Mark Henry

Front and back covers of *Mapplethorpe: Assault with a Deadly Camera*, the erotic biography of bicoastal lovers Robert Mapplethorpe and Jack Fritscher who gave Mapplethorpe his first magazine cover, *Drummer* 24 (September 1978), and wrote the first article on Mapplethorpe in the gay press for the “New York Art” special issue, *Son of Drummer*. Front cover photograph of Mapplethorpe by George Dureau. ©George Dureau. Back cover photograph of Fritscher and Mapplethorpe by Rink. ©Rink

**Excerpt source: ©Jack Fritscher, *Gay San Francisco: Eyewitness Drummer*, San Francisco: Palm Drive Publishing, 2008**



Captions: Eyewitness documentation of the existence of graphics providing internal evidence supporting Jack Fritscher's text are located in the Jack Fritscher and Mark Henry GLBT History collection. Out of respect for issues of copyright, model releases, permissions, and privacy, some graphics are not available for publication at this time, but can be shown by appointment.

**Eyewitness  
Illustration**

Poster for Kenneth Anger's *Scorpio Rising*.

**Eyewitness  
Illustration**

Two drawings of legendary founding icon of Folsom Street, Tony Tavarossi, who was intimate friends with Fritscher for eleven years from 1970 to his death (1981) which Fritscher dramatized in the memoir-novel *Some Dance to Remember*. Top: Flash drawing, large watercolor, created in the Ambush bar by Lou Rudolph, 1975, Tavarossi on left. ©Lou Rudolph. Bottom: Pencil sketch limned in the Barracks baths by Chuck Arnett (1972) ©Chuck Arnett. Both drawings were gifts from Tavarossi to Fritscher.

**Eyewitness  
Illustration**

Drawing. "Jeanne Barney, Founding LA *Drummer* Editor in Chief," drawing by Chuck Arnett (1975). ©Chuck Arnett. In the salon around *Drummer*, Arnett was the house artist. His leggy drawing of Jeanne Barney is revealed for the first time in *Gay San Francisco: Eyewitness Drummer*. From the collection of Jeanne Barney.

**Eyewitness  
Illustration**

Book cover. *Sun and Steel*. Grove Press, 1970. "The Leather Decade" of the 1970s began with the ritual harakiri of writer and leatherman Yukio Mishima November 25, 1970, and ended with the burning of the Barracks baths, July 10, 1981, as first word of "gay cancer" spread.