

LGBT History Project of the LGBT Center of Central PA

**Located at Dickinson College
Archives & Special Collections**

<http://archives.dickinson.edu/>

Documents Online

Title: *History of Dignity/Central Pennsylvania, Richard Hill and Gerry Brennan*

Date: 1985

Location: LGBT-053 Richard Hause Collection

Contact:

LGBT History Project
Archives & Special Collections
Waidner-Spahr Library
Dickinson College
P.O. Box 1773
Carlisle, PA 17013

717-245-1399

archives@dickinson.edu

BEGINNINGS:

Once upon a time, Dignity (the National Organization) had a category of memberships called "At Large" for those individuals who lived in the hinterlands, away from big cities. At that time there were Dignity chapters in Philadelphia, Pittsburgh, Baltimore and Washington. Central Pennsylvania, even with the provincial capital of Harrisburg, was considered to be the hinterlands. The National Dignity required a minimum of 10 interested people in an area before granting chapter-in-formation status. In the Central Pennsylvania area there were at least 11 people who were "At Large" members. Many of these 11 people (J. Allen, G. Brennan, P. Cairo, M. Connell, J. Cramer, P. Cullison, W. Kinter, J. McLellan, J. Miller, J. Rebert and A Spicher) did not know one another. All that remained was for someone to take the initiative to call interested people together and generate enough interest to form a chapter. That someone was none other than Gerald Brennan (Jerry).

Jerry was very active in Gay Community Services in Harrisburg and had attended some meetings of Dignity/Baltimore before Jerry made his appearance at the Dignity East Coast Conference in Washington D.C. over the Memorial Day weekend in 1975. At the conference, Jerry was very concerned about "At Large" members and engaged in lengthy dialogue with the National Officers. After several letters went back and forth between Jerry and the National Office (at that time in Boston), the National President, Paul Diederich, challenged Jerry to start a chapter in Central Pennsylvania on June 23, 1975.

One sultry day in July (July 12, 1975 to be exact), Dignity members and friends met at 5:30 pm at 645 Pear Street in Reading, Pennsylvania. This was the address of the Reverend Jim Miller. Liturgy, discussion, supper and fun was on the agenda. The good news of July 12, 1975 went back to National and on August 23, 1975; Dignity/Central Pennsylvania was officially established. Jerry Brennan was appointed coordinator.

Not many documents survive from this period. The chapter was using the post office box of the Gay Community Services and had printed stationary by December 1975. The earliest surviving minutes are dated Dec. 13, 1975 and reveal 18 people attended the meeting convened by Jerry at 7:55 pm at the Friends Meeting House, 6th & Herr Streets in Harrisburg. At this meeting announcements were made regarding Dignity in Philadelphia, and Baltimore as well as MCC Baltimore. The food collection that evening was to be sent to Bethesda Mission (Harrisburg) and the monetary collection was sent to the National Office for their travel expenses. A discussion was held regarding the veto of PS 198 by Governor Shapp and the concensus was that the chapter would contact local legislators as well as the Dignity Chapters in Pittsburgh and Philadelphia to plan further action. The next meeting was to be January 17, 1976 at the Visitation Chapter in Shippensburg. The meeting then adjourned to the liturgy and after the liturgy there was a meeting of the Constitution and Bylaws Committee.

The earliest Treasurer's report was submitted by Aaron Spicher and received by the

membership at Shippensburg. This report was for the year ending December 31, 1975 and reveals there were 7 members (6 full and 1 transfer). The report further reveals there was a November 1975 liturgy in Lancaster as evidenced by the offering and there was a fundraiser (Beer Raffle) which netted \$14.

1976

Few source documents survive from this year; several newsletters, miscellaneous correspondence, and a set of minutes dated November 6, 1976 submitted by Richard Hill. (These minutes indicate no previous minutes survive.)

On January 19, 1976, on behalf of the chapter, Jerry Brennan issued a statement regarding the recent statement on Sexual Ethics by the Vatican. This statement was sent to the Harrisburg Independent Press, Harrisburg Patriot News, Catholic Witness, Lancaster Intelligencer Journal and the York Daily Record. On March 7, the Constitution and Bylaws Committee met at 257 Boas Street in Harrisburg. The agenda dealt with the issue of a permanent meeting place, operating procedures, establishment of committees in addition to the Constitution and Bylaws.

DIGNITY/Central Pennsylvania was incorporated on March 17, 1976. The Articles of Incorporation list the location of the initial registered office as 920 Green Street, Harrisburg, Pa. The corporate officers were: Gerald Brennan, as President, Rita Snyder as Vice President, Paul Foltz as Secretary, and Aaron Spicher as Treasurer. The chapter had 20 members and met monthly, usually on the third Saturday of the month at 7:30 pm at the Friends Meeting House (6th & Herr Streets in Harrisburg.)

The May 1976 newsletter features its name, The Keystone and the chapter logo. This issue of the Keystone reveals there were 23 members. Membership dues were \$15/^{set} Single, \$25/Couple and \$30 or more/Generous Person. Jim Cramer donated a Byzantine ^{cruets} ~~crucifix~~ (icon style) and Paul Foltz was making a banner and altar cloths. A Day of Recollection was planned for June 19, with Fr. Sawdy and Sr. Kathleen Leopold. The membership ratified the Constitution and Bylaws on May 22, 1976 with 18 people in attendance at the Liturgy.

June 1976 saw the chapter (complete with banner) attend the Gay Pride Festivities in Philadelphia. The First Pine Grove Furnace Picnic was held July 17, 1976. About 40 people attended, eating, drinking, making merry and playing volleyball. Fr. Fisher and Fr. Sawdy celebrated Mass. On August 3, the chapter went to Philadelphia to attend the 41st Eucharistic Conferance and joined with DIGNITY/Philadelphia in celebrating the Eucharist on the sidewalk outside the Philadelphia Civic Center. There were 26 members as of September 1976.

On October 9, 1976, Sr. Jeannine Grammick and Fr. Robert Nugent held a workshop "The Church and the Homosexual" at the Friends Meeting House which was followed by a liturgy and buffet supper.

1976 (cont.)

^{Other activities included}
~~as a Board Meeting on November 6, 1976, and a~~ Unbake sale on Nov. 23, Special Food Collection on Nov. 27, Day of Recollection on Dec. 4, and A Christmas celebration including liturgy, dinner and party on Dec. 18, 1976.

A reorganization of the executive Board was held on Nov. 6, 1976. The officers at that time were: Gerald Brennan as President, Barbara Graham as Vice President, Richard Hill as Secretary, Aaron Spicher as Treasurer, Sr. Kathleen as Chaplain and Pat Cairo as Member at Large. The Constitution and Bylaws were adopted. The Board was informed incorporation notices were placed in the Paxton Herald. (D/CP was one of the first DIGNITY chapters to be incorporated through the nation. The date of incorporation (March 17, 1976) predates the incorporation date of DIGNITY/Inc (the National Office) by several years.) National Central Bank was designated as the repository of our funds. Possible office space in the basement of 920 Green Street was discussed. Pat Cairo resigned as Member at large. John Onofry and Janice Myers were the editors, lay-out personnel, typists, and proofreaders of the Keystone. Also at this meeting the concept of a pledge/tithing system was explored. (This concept would be implemented in several years to come as the Annual Advent Appeal.)

1977

Once again, the Archives are fairly silent-- the only documents which survive are miscellaneous correspondence and newsletters. On the Board, Aaron resigned as Treasurer and was replaced by John Barns. Richard Hill resigned as Secretary and was replaced by Paul Foltz. Aaron then became Member at Large (replacing Pat Cairo) with Steven A. Leshner. Paul Foltz was also coordinating the liturgies. Friday night liturgies were cancelled during June July and August.

The first Seder was held jointly with MCC in April and was directed by Sr. Kathleen Leopold. Sr. Miriam organized a retreat. The disco dance after the Seder flopped. The North Street Sale was held June 4. (This affair, a large flea market type served and continued to serve in future years as a major fundraiser. There was also a Fall North Street Sale. All D/CP's efforts at the sale were coordinated by John Barns.)

Other summer activities included cook-outs: June 19 at Paul's, July 31 at Jerry's August 28 at Barb and Sandy's. The Pine Grove Anniversary picnic became institutionalized on July 17. This affair was so successful a second picnic at Pine Grove Furnance was scheduled on Aug. 14. This second picnic featured an ecumenical service with MCC.

Except for summer events, attendance had slackened off. October 23, 1977 was the general membership meeting. At this meeting, the following officers were elected: Jerry Brennan as President, Barb Nissley Graham as Vice President, John Barns as Treasurer, Jan Myers and Bob ? as Members at Large. Bernie served as interim Secretary and it was agreed that the Board would later appoint a Secretary. Bob ? was working on the Social Committee and Sr. Kathleen Leopold was coordinator for

1977 (cont)

womens' concerns. Also at this meeting, an amendment to the Bylaws was proposed and passed. This amendment ~~to the effect~~ that "amendments to the Bylaws shall require a simple majority vote of the Executive Board" effectively placed the control of the organization in the Executive Board. The amendment passed by a vote of 11 yeas and 0 nays. At the next meeting of the Executive Board (November 29, 1977) the Constitution was eliminated. The Articles of Incorporation were amended accordingly.

Other events in 1977 included a retreat on October 8, a sensitivity workshop by Dale Lehmer at the Friends Meeting House on November 12, and a Christmas Party on December 18 including a ham dinner at the Friends Meeting House.

Work also began on a flier for distribution in the bars, and a letter (public service announcement type) to be sent to the Radio Stations.

1978

Only newsletters survive from this time period. Membership on January 1, 1978 was 32. On January 7, Dr. Walter Lear of Philadelphia gave a presentation on public health. The publication of the newsletter was suspended due to the editor having experienced a fire in his apartment building. A fire fund was established for his benefit. On February 4, D/CP sponsored a program with Ronald Wesner, the President of Integrity/Philadelphia. On March 13, D/CP with the Gay Switchboard of Harrisburg, did training for CONTACT volunteers. The Seder was institutionalized on March 19 with the second observation of it. Yvonne Milspaw of Pennsylvania State University presented a talk on Culture and Personality On April 1. D/CP attended Pride '78 at The Delaware Water Gap on April 7/8. and a comment was made in the newsletter that "some events were cancelled due to lack of interest and other events suffered from a lack of participation."

Iris Praeger-Decker of Pennsylvania State University presented a workshop on Stress on May 6. The North Street Sale was held June 3, A Day of Recollection was held June 10 by Fr. Sawdy. Picnics were scheduled on City Island during June and July and the 3rd anniversary picnic was held at Pine Grove Furnace was held July 23.

By September 1978, Fr. Sawdy was appointed cochaplain. A conscious raising session was held on September 30. Interest in the chapter waned to the point that it was harder than usual to get people to run for office, this year noone was interested so the elections were pushed ahead to the next year. On December 31, 1978, the chapter had only 23 members.

1979

1979 was to be a banner year for DIGNITY/Central Pennsylvania. Given the mood of the community in the last months of 1978, noone would have believed it possible. The current officers held a retreat on January 4 at 920 Green Street in preparation for the chapter's monthly meeting in January. On January 21, Elections were held with

1979 (cont)

the following results: Gerald Brennan as President, Steven A. Leshner as Vice President, John Barns as Secretary, Fr. Sawdy as Treasurer, John Onofry and Richard Hill Members at Large. John Onofry was also the newsletter editor. A DIGNITY volleyball team was started and met at the Police Athletic League Building. Bible Sharing was featured as a continuing program and the concept of a group of people going out to eat in a different restaurant once a month was discussed. As a fundraiser the selling of pens/pencils was also investigated and the concept of continuing house masses was discussed. A new brochure was prepared and the membership was 27 on May 3, 1979.

Dinner out at the various restaurants was instituted March 24 at the Gazebo Room. The months to come saw the group eating out at Zorbas, Hardings, Riverboat, Steak and Ale, and Hanover Trail. A Discover weekend was slated for May 11-13 at Camp Kirkenwald and was led by Sr. Kathleen and Fr. Sawdy. (This event was one of the few Dignity events advertised by the Catholic Witness.) The times were unified for masses and potlucks; masses would start at 5:30pm and potluck suppers would start at 6:30. The Seder was also held as well as the North Street Sale.

The Quarterly Calendar of Events appeared on May 20, 1979 and was very well received. This publication listed all the events of D/CP in a three month period. Such delights were featured as: Carpool to the Olde English Faire in Hershey, Pa., Trip to New York City for the Gay Pride Parade, Dinner Theater at Allenberry, A garden Party, Volleyball, Steak and Cold Duck Party as well as cookouts, City Island picnics and the ever popular Pine Grove Furnace Picnics. A trip was also planned to the fledgling chapter in Wilkes-Barre, which would be known as DIGNITY/Northeast Pennsylvania.

The Fall Quarterly Calendar of Events featured First Friday Mass every month, Bible Study, North Street Sale, Rap Sessions after pot luck suppers, Carpool to the March on Washington, Day of Reflection, Baltimore by Day and Night, Bike Hike in Stoney Creek, A thank you members Christmas party at the Box Office. The Lesbian Rap Group is instituted September 13, 1979. and the Committee of 100 is instituted October 27, 1979. The decision was made to raise the membership dues effective January 1, 1980; \$18/Single & \$30/Couple. The Pennsylvania National Bank and Trust was the repository for the Committee of 100s Funds.

At the membership meeting, the following officers were elected, Gerald Brennan as President, Steven A. Leshner as Vice President, John Barns as Secretary, Fr. Sawdy as Treasurer, and Robert Sevensky and Richard Hill as Members at Large. At the Executive Board Meeting, a novel idea for celebrating the Christmas Season was born in the 12 Days of Christmas Program. (This program featured a party every night for 12 consecutive days after Christmas.) Membership was 45 as of December 31, 1979, almost double what it was a year ago. A proposed workshop featuring John McNeil is slated for Feb. 16, 1980.

1980

1980 was ushered in with the remaining 12 days of Christmas Program. In addition to the elected officers, the following committee chairpersons were active: Fr. Sawdy as Liturgy, Robert Sevensky as Education, Joann Gottshall as Women's Concerns, Larry Valerio as newsletter, John Barns as Communication, and Richard Hill as Social.

During 1980, the focus began to be getting guest pastors for our liturgies, as part of the concept to acquaint local pastors with gay men and lesbians in order that the pastors may better minister to the Gay and Lesbian Community. The cost of a subscription to the newsletter was \$5. The Lesbian Rap Group continued. A new brochure is designed. The lectern and offering plate were purchased in memory of Charles Hartlaub. The pledging program was discussed again. The Speakers Bureau was formed. The Dignity women's group is called Women Alive (as opposed to the Lesbian Rap Group). The Daily Missalette was ordered for masses. An ad was placed in the Philadelphia Gay News. A console organ was donated to the chapter, but the Religious Society of Friends gently refused permission to keep the organ at the Meeting House. It was decided that the chapter would provide the beverages this year as an experiment for the summer picnics. Outreach programs to York and Chambersburg were planned. The possibility of a consciousness raising group was also discussed. On March 14, 1980 D/CP gave the Gay Switchboard of Harrisburg an answering machine.

The Quarterly Calendars of Events list such varied and sundry activities as: Mass followed by potluck suppers, Bible Study, Bowling Night, Card/Game Night, Indoor Olympics, Dinner out at the Gazebo Room, Railroad House, & floating (the group decides where they want to go), Brunch at Hotel Hershey, Theme potluck suppers, Contact training, "Leonardo da Vinci Kite Fly & Tail Gate Picnic, Kite building party, Spring party, Flower-arranging workshop, Cheese-tasting, Tour of Hickory Farms, Weekday City Island Picnics, Trip to New York City for Gay Pride Day, Pizza after volleyball, Camping trip for Women Alive, Champagne Social after the Anniversary Mass, Day at Hershey Park, Workshop on Sexism, Racism & Homophobia by Louise Oncley, first Friday masses, North Street Sale and North Street Sale Previews.

The highlights of the year were: the Region III meeting in Harrisburg on Feb. 9, 1980, Fr. McNeil's talk on February 16 (which was covered by the Patriot News), first membership Recognition award (chalice, paten & vestments given to the chapter in recognition of Jerry Brennan's work), and Pride '80 where D/CP sponsored the hospitality suite and received the Exemplary Community Service Award of the Pennsylvania Lesbian and Gay Support Network on October 4, 1980.

D/CP activities in the fall of 1980 included an Advent Program, Project Hope which was ecumenical, a Conscious-raising Group for men which started September 29 and lasted for 8 weeks, Cooking Thanksgiving Dinner/potluck, a Voter Registration Drive, and outreach visits to Chambersburg and York. At the General Membership meeting, the following officers were elected: Jerry Brennan as President, Steven A. Leshner as Vice President, Jeffrey

1980 (cont)

Dressler as Secretary, Fr. Sawdy as Treasurer, and Barbara Nissley (Graham) and John Folby as Members at Large. Committee chairpersons included: Joann Gottshall as Women's Concerns, Robert Sevensky as Education, John Folby as Social, Jerry Brennan as Liturgy, Richard Hause as Finance, John Barns as Communications, Larry Valerio as Calendar Editor and John Onofry as Newsletter Editor. Fr. Sawdy resigned as Chaplain and Treasurer on November 23, 1980. Jonathan Lippert was appointed Treasurer. The first Annual Advent Appeal was launched December 8, 1980 and proved to be a very successful fundraiser. The Committee of 100 was disbanded as the National Office received their non-profit status. The Lesbian Rap Group also folded. Christmas caroling was scheduled for December 21, 1980 and the chapter embarked on a second round of the 12 Days of Christmas Parties. Membership was 56.

1981

The chapter resumed its wide range of activities on January 23 with a series of Community Lectures. These lectures featured Harvey Schwartz (Gay Community Center of Baltimore) speaking on building community, Joann Hunter Farr speaking on Sexual Intimacy, & Barabara Nissley speaking on The Dating Game, Gay Style. There was also a discussion on morality.

Other activites included Dinner out at Hunan, Volleyball Anniversary Party, Game nites, Card Parties and in House Gaylas, a Coffee House, Pizza after Volleyball, bowling, Kite Fly, City Island Picnics, Susquehannock State Park Picnic, Negley Park Picnic, Halloween Party, Dinner out at Lucia's Ristorante, Swim Party in Middletown, Cooking Thanksgiving Dinner, Christmas Caroling and the usual pot-luck suppers, and Pine Grove Furnace Picnics.

The Brochure was revised and reprinted featuring th Speakers Bureau and a mailing was made to the Priests, Religious & Layworkers in the Diocese. Dispite this mailing there was some difficulties getting priests to celebrate mass. Liturgical events included the Seder, Stations of the Cross and Evening Prayer.

A membership drive with reduced rates of \$12 to new members only was held in April and May. Joann resigned as chairperson on Women's Concerns and Sr. Kathleen was appointed as her replacement. Aaron was appointed Liturgy chairperson which he later resigned. A revision of the Bylaws got underway with an airing of the proposed changes on Sept. 14. (It would be 4 years before the revisions are acually implemente The Tax Exempt Status Suit was filed against the Commonwealth to recover Pennsylvania and replenishing the stock of the publications. In the area of finances, the North Street Sale and Advent Appeal were the chief fundraisers. A contribution was also

1981 (cont)

made to the Ecumenical Food Bank.

Memorable events included: a Thank you to the Friends which consisted of the chapter providing coffee and doughnuts to members of the Religious Society of Friends after the Friends Meeting on February 22, 1981, and the First Bus Trip to the Gay Pride Parade in New York City. (The chapter chartered a bus and charged \$15 per person for the round trip to New York.), and Celebrating Us, a one day workshop devoted to feeling good about ourselves on October 24, 1981. The anniversary mass was celebrated by Fr. Sawdy and was followed by a champagne Reception. At the Reception, Larry Valerio received the Outstanding Member of the year award. But the Robin Tyler Concert was the best not just because of the entertainment but the fact that the concert was a benefit for DIGNITY/Central Pennsylvania and was held October 6, 1981.

The Annual Membership meeting was held October 18 and the following officers were elected: Robert Sevensky as President, Jeffrey Dressler as Vice President, Richard Hause as Secretary, Jonathan Lippert as Treasurer, and Fr. Sawdy and John Folby as Members at Large. The appointed committee chairpersons were as follows: John Folby as Social, William Clifford as Finance, Thurman Grossnickle as Communications, Steven A Leshner as Education, Richard Hill as Liturgy, Jerry Brennan as Bylaws.

Wrapping up the year, the chapter membership was 62, the chapter's bank account was moved to the Pennsylvania State Employees Credit Union and MCC & Dignity sponsored a joint Christmas Dinner. A discussion on doing outreach to the bars was tabled until the next year and there were no 12 Days of Christmas (only 3 parties).

1982

1982 was a year of transition and saw DIGNITY/Central Pennsylvania becoming a little more involved and outspoken in local civic matters. (This should not be interpreted as meaning the chapter was not involved or concerned in such matters in previous years.) This involvement took the form of continuing support to the Gay Switchboard and donations to SIGMA (Sisters in Gay Ministry) and a donation to the soup kitchen at St. Francis Church. D/CP permitted the use of their post office box as an address where Evangelicals Concerned (Gay and Lesbian Evangelicals) might write for additional information on their newly formed group in the Harrisburg Area. The entrapment arrests in the Bookstores in downtown Harrisburg prompted DIGNITY to address the issue of harassment of gays by municipal officials. in a sharply worded letter to the Mayor of Harrisburg. This action led to the chapter's involvement in the Harrisburg Privacy Legal Defense Fund for those individuals who stood trial and resulted in the Chapter addressing members of City Council. (Dignity was one of several gay/lesbian groups who began to work with City Council at that time to draft a comprehensive Civil Rights Bill for the City Of Harrisburg which would be enacted at a later date.)

1982 (continued)

In addition to the usual potlucks, volleyball, pizza and picnics, activities included Bigger and Better Card and Game Nights, Yearbook Party, Kite Fly, Dinner out at Castiglias, Railroad House, Bowling and a dinner party at a historic mansion in downtown Harrisburg. Educational activities included hearing about PFLAG, Battered Partners, and small group discussions. Two buses were taken to New York City for the Gay Pride Parade which proved to be so successful that a day trip to New York City was planned and executed for November 20. Events of a spiritual/liturgical nature included the Blessing of homes and animals, continuation of Friday liturgies, Evening Prayer, Seder, and a Day of Meditation in June.

The Advent Appeal and North Street Sale continued to be fundraising ventures as well as the trips to New York City. A benefit was held for D/CP at the Shadows on September 22. D/CP won \$100 in the Pennsmen's summer raffle, courtesy of an anonymous donor. and D/CP had a 50/50 raffle which was concluded April 30.

Membership reached 67 in the beginning of 1982 and decreased to 63 by October 10. Early in the year, Thurman Grossnickle became editor of the Keystone and the decision was made to have envelopes preprinted with our mailing permit stamped on them. Booklets were purchased for Evening Prayer, The Region II House of Delegates was hosted by D/CP on the weekend of January 23. D/CP joined with MCC in sponsoring a skating party in November. A set of vestments were donated to us from Seven Sorrows BVM Church in Middletown. John Barns received the outstanding Service award in July at the Anniversary Mass and this year the award was a ceramic basket in the shape of an Eggplant. Bishop Daley permitted Fr. Sawdy to be featured in the Catholic Witness regarding his ministry to the gay/lesbian community. (The article finally appeared December 17.) At

At the General Membership Meeting, the following officers were elected: Robert Sevensky as President, Micahel Pizzi as Vice President, Joseph Russian as Treasurer, Fr. Sawdy and Thurman Grossmickle as Members at Large. It was very difficult to find persons to chair committees, as hard as it was to find someone who was willing to serve as Secretary. Gary Hannakan was appointed by the Board as Secretary. The new Board then had to deal with a minor crisis -- where to move volleyball because the electricity was shut off in the Police Athletic League Building. Volleyball was moved to the Salvation Army Building in December. A joint ecumenical Christmas service was planned on December 19 with MCC/Harrisburg, MCC/Lancaster, and Evangelicals Concerned at the Boas Street Methodist Church. Then the holiday parties started.

1983

D/CP started off this new year with an Open House at Fr. Sawdy's. Other activities early in this year include the Blessing of Homes, Taped presentation of John Boswell, Evening Prayer, Brunch at the Hershey Hotel, Volleyball Party and the Movie Michael, a portrait of a gay son. A sadness entered our midst when we found that one of our friends, Kirk Harrison Dukes, from York was killed in an auto accident on his way to our

February liturgy.

March 8, 1983 was a historic date in Harrisburg. On that date, City Council unanimously passed a Human Rights Ordinance which specifically included gay men and lesbian women. Prior to passage, the City Council held final hearings on the proposed ordinance. At that time 4 chapter members, including President Robert Sevensky spoke out in favor of the ordinance. Mayor Steven R. Reed signed the ordinance the very next day, March 9, 1983. On June 4, 1983, the entire Gay and Lesbian Community celebrated the passage of the Ordinance with a dinner-Celebrating Us featuring Ginny Appuzo as keynote speaker.

Educational activities included an employment counseling lecture by Elizabeth Conrad, Sexual Minority Image in Current Film and TV by Dr. Moylan C. Mills, a Pennsylvania Humanities Council Speaker on April 16, 1983 and an explanation of the Human Rights Ordinance by Rodger Beatty. A pamphlet on Homosexuality by Public Affairs Inc. was purchased for distribution. Dr. Nicholas Ifft presented a workshop on Aids, Oct. 15.

Liturgical/Spiritual activities included monthly mass, Evening Prayer, Stations of the Cross, Ashes Distribution on Ash Wednesday, the Sedes, an ecumenical service at Italian Lake on June 22, and Worship Service for Women which began April 17, 1983.

Social activities included the Book Discussion Group which began March 20, Couples Support Group which began June 20, Volleyball, Folk Dancing, the movie Victor, Victoria, and dinner out at the Gazebo Room, Railroad House and Country Oven, in addition to the Pine Grove Picnics & Fort Hunter Picnic. The bus trip to New York City was another success with the cost being \$20 per person. The Anniversary Mass and champagne Reception was held at the Harrisburg Civic Club. This year Richard Hause received the Outstanding Service Award.

The Minutes of the Board of Directors reveal that Michael Pizzi resigned as Vice President in April and Kathy Seitz was appointed by the Board to succeed him. Our name was listed in the Human Resources Section (Blue Pages) of the telephone directory. Sr. Kathleen resigned as chaplain in August and she moved to New England. An outreach liturgy was held in Lancaster on July 26.

At the general membership meeting the following officers were elected: Richard Hill as President, Kathy Seitz as Vice President, Richard Hause as Secretary, Joseph Russian as Treasurer, Bruce Thomas and Carolyn Kramer as Members At Large. Membership was 66 in November. Fr. Sawdy was appointed chaplain, and the committee Chairpersons included: Jeffrey Dressler as Social, Robert Sevensky as Liturgy, Carolyn Kramer as Communications, Bruce Thomas as Education, Joseph Bryner as Membership & Finance, and Mary Pacella as Women's Concerns. The new Board found it necessary to raise the dues to \$22/Single and \$40/couple. The Women's Concerns Committee sponsored a Holiday Drop-in on December 17. The joint Christmas Service with Mcc/ Harrisburg and MCC Lancaster was held December 18. The Board also issued resolutions to Mayor Steven R. Reed and City Council commending them for the passage of the Human Rights Ordinance as directed to by the membership at the Annual meeting.

1983 (cont)

A bit of free publicity occurred when the Philadelphia Gay News published several article on the Gay Scene in Harrisburg. The articles featured an interview with President Sevensky and mentioned the chapter and its activities at length. Carolyn Kramer was appointed editor of the Keystone.

1984

1984 was another year of transition as the new Executive Board felt its way. The mass schedule was switched in an attempt to attract more people. Masses were held the first Sunday and 3rd Saturday of the month. Evening Prayer, Worship Service for Women, Bible Sharing and Prayer, Stations of The Cross, and Distribution of Ashes were featured in addition to the Seder and an exquisite Palm Sunday liturgy with procession, palms, & pussy willows. In keeping with the ecumenical spirit, Lakeside Lutheran Church was the site of the Seder. The Blessing of Homes & animals was also featured.

Social activities included the usual Pine Grove Furnace Picnics, Volleyball, Game Night, Bowling, Evening at Hershey Park, Swim Party, Corn Roast, Ice Cream Social, Halloween Party, Lawn Party and Dinner out at the Gazebo Room, Mandarin, Archives.

Educational events included lectures by Martin Rock of Bretheran and Menonite Council for Gay Concerns, Fr. Chip o Toole of Lewisburg Penitentry speaking on Prison Ministry, and Peter Willms on the new Religious Right. A film about Thomas Merton was also shown and the Book Discussion Group continued. Another featured program was entitled Four Nights on Intimacy (audio presentation with a guided discussion)

Fundraisers included the North Street Sale, the annual Bus Trip to New York City for Gay Pride Parade and the Womens Concerns Harrisburg Drive In Flea Market Booth, The Advent Appeal of 1983-1984 was the largest.

Kathy Seitz resigned as Vice President and moved to Idaho. Agnes Donehoo was appointed by the Board to serve out the remainder of the term. Bruce Thomas resigned as Member at Large and Education Chairperson and moved to Florida. The chapter brochure was revised and reprinted and work started on the Bylaws., Peoples Mass Books were purchased for use in our liturgies and members were encouraged to purchase a book in memorium. The chapter hosted the Regional House of Delgate s in grand style the weekend of February 11, 1984 The chapter also assisted the Harrisburg Gay Switchboard after the Switchboard last everything in a fire.

The anniversary Mass and champagne Reception was held at the Unitarian Church. That year Jeff Dressler and Jonathan Lippert received the Outstanding Service Award. The membership was 69 in October and Volleyball was dropped as a sponsored activity on November 30, 1985. Antigay forces in the city attacked the Human Relations Ordinance and Jeffrey Dressler read a prepared statement to City Council in defense of the Ordinance and City Council s actions in September.

At the general membership meeting in November the following officers were elected: Richard Hill as President, Agnes Donehoo as Vice President, Jeffrey Dressler as Treasurer Fr. Sawdy and Carolyn Kramer as members at Large.

1984 (cont)

The following committee chairs were appointed: Robert Sevensky as Liturgy, Joann Gottshall as Women's Concerns, Carolyn Kramer as Communications, Thurman Grossnickle as Education, Jonathan Lippert as Membership and Finance, Jerry Brennan as Anniversary. Once again the chapter held a joint Christmas Service with MCC.

1985

The new Bylaws, which had been in process for over four years were passed. The biggest change in the Bylaws is that now terms of office are for two years and not one year. Gary Hannakan was appointed Secretary. Gary resigned in February and Barry Loveland was appointed to fill out the remainder of his term.

The usual activities were held. New activities included a Retreat on January 19 with Fr. Bill Ratchford. There was a "potluck" after the retreat where the chapter provided soup and bread and participants were to provide fruit and cheese. A Super-bowl/Game Sunday was held in what was to be the coldest day of the year and 12 hardy souls attended. There were 64 members as of January 8. A new tradition was started with the Epiphany Cake served on Epiphany Sunday where the person who finds the coin in the Cake is crowned Epiphany King/Queen. This year Alan Weaver was the lucky winner.

Another social event was the theatre party to see Torch Song Trilogy in the Hershey Theater. The chapter reserved a block of 20 seats and sold out. Before car pooling to the theater, the group enjoined a cocktail hour.

A workshop by John McNeil was planned and then cancelled when Fr. McNeil became ill. This workshop is to be rescheduled in the Fall.

Plans are underway to make the tenth anniversary a spectacular event. On June 14, 1985 the membership was 70.

The history of DIGNITY/Central Pennsylvania is far from complete. There are many individuals whose names and actions are not known and many whose names and actions are known but were not included in this composite history for reasons of space.