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The Lily-Gram

A NEWSLETTER FOR DRAGS IN-THE-KNOW

AUGUST 1993

VOLUME 02 NUMBER 3

President's Column: Something Happened on the Way to the Festival

Many of you have heard bits and pieces of what happened concerning Lily White & Co. and the steering committee of the Gay and Lesbian Pride Festival. The Board felt it appropriate that you get the full story so that you have an accurate accounting of the events surrounding the July 25th Festival.

At its retreat, the Board asked the Treasurer, Ed Fuhrer, to send to the Festival committee a request for space featuring the Dunk-a-Drag booth at the Festival. Ed was told by the committee co-chairs that vendors would not be able to use water at the festival due to lack of water accessibility at Reservoir Park. I called the director of Parks & Recreation for the City of Harrisburg who informed me that the City would be more than happy to fill the tank the day of the event. Ed relayed that message to the co-chairs with nothing more heard for one and a half weeks.

The Steering Committee met days before the opening of the Lily White and Co. production of *The Lisbon Traviata* and decided that it would not be appropriate for Lily White to have the dunking booth at the festival because:

1) "all vendor forms indicate that water is not available to vendors." (No vendor form was sent to Lily & Co.),

2) "...many male and female feminists and many lesbians find 'drag'...demeaning to women and showed an insensitivity to women's plight when society has long told them how they should dress....Camp/Comic/Caricature drag is looked upon as degrading to women...".

3) "...the dunking of 'drag' heightened the women-debasing nature of the activity, and could potentially be humiliating to individuals with serious trans-gender identities."

The Steering Committee still wanted us to participate in the Festival, but we were given only 1 1/2 weeks to come up with other ideas. I asked the co-chairs if we could address the Steering Committee, but was told that the group would probably not meet before the Festival. I told them our Board would hold an emergency meeting to work on options. Two days later, July 16th, the Steering Committee asked if they could attend our meeting to convey their sentiments to the entire Board to which I consented.

The Board of Lily White & Co. met on July 17th with five members of the Steering Committee present---four in agreement with their decision, one against. They presented their concerns and a compromise (to dunk political conservatives who have oppressed the gay/lesbian way of life---Gen. Colin Powell, Phyllis Schlafly, Anita Bryant, Dan Quayle, etc.) After fifty minutes of

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August Membership Meeting . . . Be There or Be Thoroughly Confused

The next membership meeting is probably the most important meeting of the year to individual members of the Company. It is definitely the meeting that directly affects every one of the performers. In case you haven't figured it out . . .

We're hashing out the
1993-1994 Performing Schedule, Folks!!!

A tentative two-year schedule is outlined on an enclosed sheet to give us something to work from. This is not cast in cement. Your input is needed and expected. Eric and the Board have also been up to mischief with the By-Laws again. A copy with proposed changes is enclosed. We also have some housekeeping chores to do like approval of the old minutes, but it shouldn't be too painful.

Tuesday, August 31, 1993
7:00 pm
The Vault - 3rd floor

(No you're not crazy - it was originally scheduled for the 24th, but we moved it.)

WITF Volunteer Nite

Tuesday, August 17, 1993 is Lily White night at WITF for their fall pledge drive. Its not too late to volunteer to man the phones (unless you don't get this til Tuesday) so contact Eric at 234-8074 if you want to go. You need to be at the station at 7:30pm. Don't be late. There is a brief training period before you're on. If you're going, remember that you could be on TV "live", so, as my grandmother said, "dress nice". (Please note, we are suggesting that you don't go in drag; we're pretty sure WITF and central Pennsylvania are not ready for that . . . yet.)

The Lily-Gram

Production Editor: Sharon L. Staub
Contributing Editor: Eric W. Selvey

Deadlines for 1993-94 LilyGrams are the fifth (5th) of each publication month: August, November, February, May. We plan on producing a LilyGram on the 15th of each of those months. Keep that in mind if placing announcements in the LilyGram.

To place an announcement, contact Sharon Staub at 234-7444 (eve) or 787-5251 (days).

discussion, the board went into Executive session from which came the following:

1) a letter be composed outlining Lily White & Co.'s disagreement with the positions taken by the Steering Committee taking into consideration the water issue, the "opinion" of "rmany" concerning drag, the "endorsement" of violence against women via dunking and the compromise proposed (which we refused to accept);

2) that the Steering Committee had until midnight, July 21st, to reverse its decision, or the Board would: a) release the 5-page letter to the gay press in Philadelphia and Baltimore, to the area gay bars, to other gay organizations, and to the members of the Host Committee of the July 24th Flirtations/Nancy Day concert; b) file a complaint of discrimination with the Harrisburg Human Relations Commission; and c) circulate a petition of support within the gay community for Lily White & Co.

Understand that it was not the intention of Lily White & Co. to call for nor to endorse a boycott of the Festival, but to convey our frustration at a blatant act of discrimination occurring within our community. In fact, because there were members of the Harrisburg Men's Chorus that were not going to perform at the concert due to their adamant support for Lily White & Co., I went to their July 19th rehearsal to ask them not to boycott the Festival. Instead, they voted to write a letter expressing their discontent with the decision of the Steering Committee.

It was also decided at the Executive session to poll the community at the Festival & to survey the feelings of the gay/lesbian community toward drag and if they found the dunking of a man dressed as a woman offensive to the women. (You will hear the results at the general membership meeting.)

Also note, we received a lot of support during our ordeal from members of the community. Besides the Men's Chorus, bar patrons, bar owners and staff publicly stood by us.

As you know by now, the Steering Committee reversed its decision and Lily White & Co. was allowed to do the dunking booth at the Pride Festival. And though we did not think ourselves offensive, we changed the name of the booth to "Watering the Lilys". However, the repercussions stemming from this episode have not dissipated. Four issues have stemmed from this situation which will benefit the future of the Company.

First, the idea of a survey was sheer brilliance. Many times we have simply taken for granted the success we've enjoyed over the past years without stopping to consider how we are perceived by the general public--straight and gay. Are we actually offensive to some? Yeah, but as all of you who are gay/lesbian know, we're never going to be totally accepted by all--not even in our own community.

This leads me to my second point. If we are to continue to succeed first as a fund raising organization and second as an entertainment troupe, we must be certain why we do what we do and be able to express that to the public. The survey revealed there are many who have never attended our shows either because 1) they don't like drag or 2) they don't know about Lily White & Co., Inc. This is an image problem that is currently being worked on by the Public Relations Committee and it is ironic that this all occurred during our reorganization period.

continued next column

Third, I was not certain if our organization and more specifically the Board, was strong enough to weather such strong protestations--especially from within the gay community. However, I am proud to report that each Board member acted to fullest of their ability by stemming the criticism launched towards the body it represents. You, as a member of Lily White, should thank any and all Board members you see because they went to bat for the principles this organization espouse and took, first hand, the criticisms given it.

Finally, though I have not been witness to comments of this nature, I feel it important to give each and every one of you a bit of encouragement. If I may get personal for a moment, I, as I am sure other Board members, have defended the Company and the purpose for which we were created. There have been occasions when I have lost friends over the activities we conduct because they either did not understand our purpose or did not want to listen just because we have chosen to cross dress in order to perform and raise funds for AIDS groups or gay/lesbian organizations. I have a commitment to the principles of this organization, one that I had long before I assumed the presidency, and one that will stay with me long after I leave this office. I want all of you to be proud of everything you have accomplished with the Company be it as a performer, back stage helper, set designer, choreographer, fund raiser, patron, etc. Each of you play a vital role in the make-up of Lily White & Co., Inc. and it is because of you that we will be successful in the years to come.

New Acting Managing Director

Lily White & Company is once again on the search for a Managing Director. Rich was offered the position as head of the HCT Schools and has accepted. He will be seeing the 501(C3) through until its filing, however. Thanks, Rich. It was great working with you and our loss is HCT's gain.

The job, especially with the Board reorganization, is going to be demanding over the next couple of years, but should prove to be an exhilarating challenge for someone looking for something a little different with which to stretch their mental muscles. If you are interested or know someone that you think would love the challenge and be good in the job, please contact Ray Myers or Eric Selvey immediately. Resumes should be sent to Ray Myers as soon as inhumanly possible. (See membership list for his address.)

Fall Flea Market

Don't toss that turban! Save that sarong! Retrieve that record!

Ways & Means is planning to participate in area fall garage sales and street fairs, so we need your junk and clothing. Bob Leonard is W&M chair so contact him about how to go about donating your tossable treasures. We've always had a lot of success raising casholla at these, so please donate! Also, when someone calls to ask you to help, say YES! We've had just a few Company members doing all the work. We need more of you involved. Besides that, you just never know who could be waiting just around the next stack of old 45's. Maybe, Mr. Right.