

In keeping with this year's theme, "Family Matters," we have collected three accounts of queer life in the Rose City from three community members who were here in the '50s and '60s, the early '70s, and the early '80s. To understand where our community is today and to choose where we are going, we must remember where we have been. These stories put us in touch with our collective history.

Portland Gay Bars in the '50s and '60s

by Duane Frye

It was the summer of 1949 that I went to my first gay bar. It was an exciting experience as I was not quite 21 and gay bars were secret places in those days. Bars were where most gays went to meet people and beer and liquor were the intoxicants of the time. A few sniffed beneadrine inhalers to stay awake and alert for long periods, but all the hard drugs were not available as they were to become in the following years.

My first bar was The Back Stage and named thus as it was connected by a back stairway to an upstairs night club where drag shows nightly. Both places were owned and operated by the Schneiderman family and were jammed with customers. It was an exciting time for a young gay who had never even had a drink the secrecy of it all titillating to be among some guys that fre-

There was some genuine talent in the Music Hall shows as Mickey Mercer, a female impersonator, emceed the shows with headliners such as Harvey Lee, the actor to ever work in Hollywood. He was elegant and dressed in wonderful costumes and was truly beautiful. He used a white stately act. Unfortunately, he fell in love with the pianist and often spoiled the illusion and mood to be with the object of

This was before lip drags sang their own considerable time and involved in a production. Other performers such as Lynn Carter performed there and later became quite well known on the East coast while Jerry Kline remained in the Portland area and later became a hair stylist.

Dorothy Lee was mayor of Portland at the time. There were never any problems with the police department at that time even though gay bars were thought of as illicit in most of the states. There were no crack downs as happened in what was thought of as more liberal places such as San Francisco. Unfortunately, the Music Hall billed a very popular trio of the time, The Mills Brothers, for a run of performances, and instead of omitting the drag shows, included them on the bill.



NOT IN PORTLAND, BOYS—Never more, Mayor Dorothy McCullough Lee said Thursday, may these female impersonators impersonate in Portland if night club owner wants council recommendation for liquor license renewal. Act, which played many months at Music Hall, no longer is featured there, proprietor says. Swishy stuff shan't sully city, says mayor.

ine talent in the Music Mercer, a female shows with headliners only female impersonator Earl Carroll's Follies in elegant and dressed in and was truly beautiful. Unfortunately, the hound nist and often spoiled straining at the leash his affections.

synching, so all the songs and there was effort and rehearsal. They were quite performers such as

Continued on page 19