

# COUNTRYWIDE PRIDE

A sampling of pride activities proves a celebratory spirit reached across the country in June

## CALIFORNIA

More than 350,000 people hit the streets of West Hollywood June 28 for the 28th annual Gay and Lesbian Pride Celebration, reports journalist Rex Wockner.

Revelers included Los Angeles Mayor Richard Riordan and L.A. Police Chief Bernard Parks, who marched with gay and lesbian police officers. The two-day festival in West Hollywood Park featured food, live music, dancing and information booths.

According to Wockner, a "minor frenzy ensued Saturday night at the main stage when Kathy Sledge of the '70s disco group Sister Sledge sang two extended remixes of the gay mega-anthem 'We Are Family.' During the second remix, scores of ecstatic homosexuals jumped up on the stage with her and both she and they appeared to be in nothing short of seventh heaven."

## DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

While silver-screen Federal Bureau of Investigation agents Mulder and Scully uncovered amazing documents on screen this summer in the film *The X-Files*, real-life FBI employees had one amazing document sent to them via interoffice mail.

"June is gay and lesbian pride month, commemorating the June 1969 police raid of the Stonewall Inn, a gay bar in New York City, and subsequent riot which became a pivotal episode in the creation of the American lesbian and gay rights movement," read the Justice Department memo, according to the *Washington Times*.

The missive reportedly went to all Justice Department employees and invited them to hear Candace Gingrich and Assistant Attorney General for Civil Rights Bill Lann Lee speak at a pride event at department headquarters.

Later this summer, queer men and women can honor J. Edgar Hoover's memory at the Justice Department's gay, lesbian and bisexual employees' third annual Summer Pool Party and Picnic.

## IOWA

An estimated 500 people turned out June 20 for queer pride in Iowa City, reports the *Daily Iowan*.

According to the paper, "White paper cranes swung above the words 'Unity Through Diversity,' as the lead float took its place at the northwest corner of College Green Park. Bubbles bounced off the vivid wings of a huge origami crane behind Michael Stokes, one of the masters of ceremonies. Its 250 pieces of paper intertwined to form the ancient Japanese symbol for good luck, good health and prosperity."

The event marked the city's 11th annual Gay Pride Parade and Rally.

Jerry Wyant, parade coordinator, said, "There has been a lot more acceptance as years go on."

## MASSACHUSETTS

Rain got the best of Beantown, leading the Boston Pride Committee to cancel a parade and rally scheduled for June 13.

Nevertheless, a few hundred proud queers refused to let their pride be doused, according to the *Boston Globe*.

"The rain can't stop us from coming out," insisted a woman identified only as Chessica. "It's a bummer that the festivities are canceled,

but we're going to try to make as much of it as we can."

To celebrate Lawrence's first pride parade, some parents in the small mill town planned to ship their kids out of town to a park in New Hampshire. Mother Nature thwarted the plans to shield the town's children from glimpsing queers by forcing a Canobie Lake Park to close because of bad weather.

Instead, reports the *Boston Globe*, Fifi Garcia, one of the exodus planners, urged children to stay indoors June 14 and listen to her radio program, *Por el Mundo de los Niños*.

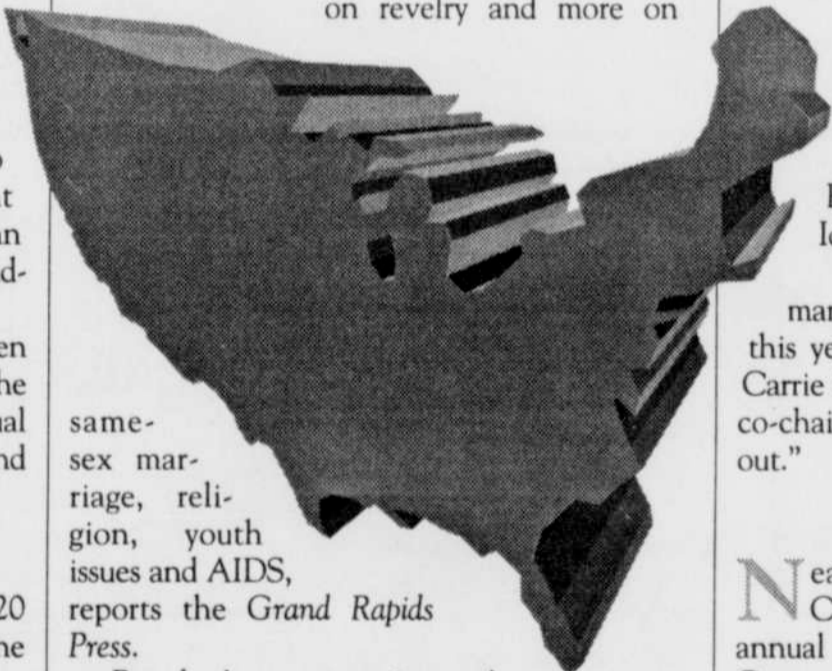
Some Lawrence parents thought it more appropriate to take their children to see the parade, which included about 150 marchers, roughly 60 spectators and a half dozen protesters.

"It's part of life he's eventually going to find out about, and I want him to find out the right way, not through ignorance," said Lawrence resident Andrea DeMuth, who brought her 5-year-old son to watch the parade.

## MICHIGAN

"West Michigan Family Reunion 1998" was the theme of the 11th annual West Michigan Lesbian, Gay and Bisexual Pride celebration held in Grand Rapids.

By queer standards, the June 13 celebration was relatively conservative, focusing less on revelry and more on



same-sex marriage, religion, youth issues and AIDS, reports the *Grand Rapids Press*.

But that's not to say it wasn't feisty. Keynote speaker Craig Dean drew cheers after demanding the freedom "to walk down the sidewalks my tax dollars paid for holding hands with my lover without fearing for my life."

## NEW YORK

Twenty people were arrested in New York City June 28 after they tried to block Mayor Rudolph Giuliani from taking part in the 29th annual Gay and Lesbian Pride March, reports The Associated Press.

The protesters were charged with disorderly conduct after they chained themselves together across Fifth Avenue.

"We're quite upset Giuliani is marching in our parade when he has done quite a lot of harm to the lesbian and gay community," said Joneil Adriano.

Demonstrators blamed the Giuliani administration for ignoring an increase in reported anti-gay violence, inadequate AIDS education in the city's public schools and the shutdown of adult businesses.

Giuliani defended his record on lesbian and gay issues, citing the recent passage by the City Council of a domestic partnership law as evi-

dence of his commitment to lesbian and gay issues. The legislation, crafted by Giuliani along with lesbian and gay advocates and council members, is intended to give unwedded couples the same benefits as married people.

The parade drew about 600,000 marchers and spectators, organizers said.

## TEXAS

Overcoming internal strife within its queer community, San Antonio residents produced a parade that seems to have exceeded their own expectations.

While past problems had gotten so severe as to cause different camps within the community to hold separate pride-related picnics, this year's June 13 parade was about reconciliation, reports the *San Antonio Express-News*, one of PrideFest's sponsors.

Anel Flores, who planned only to watch the parade, was so moved by the new energy that she joined in.

"I think it's groundbreaking for San Antonio to have a parade like this.... I liked the energy of it," Flores said.

Another spectator, Jeff Hall, added, "They haven't had anything like this for a couple of years, and now it's coming back. Now they can come back and show their pride."

## UTAH

Salt Lake City's June 14 pride parade should be commended for its momentum.

According to the *Salt Lake Tribune*, as parade participants moved through the city sweeping up spectators, they grew themselves into a crowd of about 15,000 by the time they began rallying. Revelers reportedly hailed from Utah, Idaho and Nevada.

Salt Lake's pride evolution from a march of about 50 people six years ago to this year's thousands is a simple equation for Carrie Gayler, the city's Gay Pride Committee co-chair: "As time passes, more people come out."

## WEST VIRGINIA

Nearly 300 participants enjoyed Charleston's pride gathering—the second annual affair, reports the June 22 *Charleston Gazette*.

The Pride Parade and Festival, held June 19 to 21, has grown in many ways from last year's inaugural festivities, said co-chair Karen Dickman. The parade has gotten bigger, and the festivities have grown from a one-day to a three-day event. The festival also crowned its first Miss Pride West Virginia.

Pride committee members, meanwhile, had mixed emotions on the reception they received from the political establishment.

According to the *Gazette*, they were disappointed that Gov. Cecil Underwood did not send a letter of welcome, but were pleased with the welcome they received from Charleston Mayor Kemp Melton and Secretary of State Ken Hechler.

David Cuxhaus of Ashland, Ky., said he was both surprised and pleased with the reception the festival received.

"For being in the Bible Belt and being the state that it is," he said, "I'm surprised the streets aren't lined with hecklers. I figured they would be."

Compiled by WILL O'BRYAN and INGA SORENSEN

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