

Let the Good Times Roll

Gay skating is a blast from the past

The last time I went roller skating, Ronald Reagan was in the White House, Michael Jackson's "Thriller" was at the top of the charts, David Letterman had just begun *Late Night*, and I still had hair. In other words, it was a long time ago.

So, it was with some trepidation that I ventured to Oaks Park on a rainy January night with 150 others for *Just Out's* first monthly Gay Skate Night. And with the attendance skyrocketing to 360 the following month, there were even more people to witness my humiliation. In the course of just two hours, I had more spills than the Exxon Valdez. One woman even asked, "How come every time I see you, you're on your knees?"

I've never been a good skater. The only way I know how to stop is to yell "Incoming" and slam into the wall. Of course, once I realized this trick could help me land a trick, I began scoping out cute guys to body-check. Like **Tim Healea**, who (unfortunately) was skating with his boyfriend, **Doug Mendenhall**.

Apparently, I'm not the only beginner who knows this sure-fire method of meeting men. (Only at a skating rink would "Whoa. Outta my way!" work as a pickup line.) Both **Rick Hawes** and **Billy Le** slammed into me from behind. But I didn't mind 'cuz I'm a bottom.

In fact, one young Hawthorne hipster crashed into so many skaters, it was as if he mistook the skating rink for the bumper cars. He was as dangerous as a driver's ed student in the Terwilliger Curves and, at one point, caused a seven-man pileup with lucky me in the middle. Still, politeness ruled, and the most frequently heard phrase of the night was "I'm so sorry."

When it comes to skating, there ought to be an OSHA regulation requiring I have a two-foot safety zone around me at all times. (I imagine myself cruising around the rink wearing a life preserver or, better yet, a ring of inflatable buoys.) Occasionally, I would stumble and my limbs would fly out to the sides in wild semaphore gestures that looked like the Village People doing "Y.M.C.A.," or perhaps a meth addict playing charades.

But once I found my footing, I also found I could actually sail round the rink at a pretty fast clip. During a two-minute men's speed skate, I fantasized I was Raquel Welch in *Kansas City Bomber*. I even pretended I still had hair and could feel the wind whipping through it as I whizzed past awestruck (OK, frightened) bystanders.



Out Going
BY FLOYD SKLAVER

Soon, I grew so confident I even gave pointers to first-timer **Harrison Chine**. A few minutes later, as I skated past, I shouted encouraging words to him; this only succeeded in distracting my protégé and landing him on his rear. It was such a tumble, some smart-ass drag queen yelled, "Timber."

Not everyone was an accident on wheels. Some were grace personified, like **Michael Stanley**, who could grasp his uplifted foot behind his head like a queer **Michelle Kwan**. Or **Liz DePaolo**, who skillfully saved herself from falling by grasping a girlfriend's waist.

Others were stylish, like **Kajanne Pepper**, whose mixture of '70s hot pants and '80s baggy socks reflected the music and brought me back to my skating days of yore. Or **Alice Ocean**, who celebrated her 40th birthday wearing a bright pink tiara. Still others were just plain cute, like **Brian Burk** and **Riff Surjawan**, who spent most of the night plopped against the wall like he was bellying up to the bar.

Gay Skate Night is romantic, too. At one point, skating was restricted to pairs and threesomes only. As Marc and I wheeled around the rink together, I couldn't help but wonder whether the threesomes were the polyamorous among us or just those who needed someone on each side to hold them up.

Best of all, skating is surprisingly good exercise. By the end of the night my butt was sore—as were my feet, my legs and my back. But I didn't mind because I haven't laughed this much in a long time.

Just Out's Gay Skate Night occurs on the third Monday of each month. The admission is cheap (5 bucks), the music is good, and the friendly crowd is definitely Out Going. 10

FLOYD SKLAVER wants to know about your event.
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Floyd hitches a ride at Gay Skate Night.

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