

DAUGHTERS OF BILITIS

ROOM 203

34 S. 17TH STREET

NEWSLETTER

May
~~April~~ - 1968

CALENDAR OF EVENTS FOR MAY

Regular business meeting	- Friday	May 3rd - 8:30 P.M.
Newsletter Deadline	- Friday	May 17th
Picnic at Reading	- Sunday	May 19th
Newsletter Mailing night	- Friday	May 24th

EDITORIAL

On March 8, 1968, the most popular female homosexual bar in Philadelphia -- Rusty's -- was raided by the police. No minors were found on the premises. There were no apparent violations of existing law. We assume that the bar was operating as usual: couples dancing to the juke-box rock; people talking, trying to make themselves heard over the music; newcomers looking for familiar faces in the semi-darkness. In fact the same familiar scene to be found in any bar in the city. Just one exception: the patrons were all female. Rusty's was closed for the remainder of the evening. Approximately a dozen of the customers were taken in by the police and, after being treated to a tour of three police stations, booked on the all-purpose charge of "disorderly conduct". Several of the women were subjected to verbal abuse in connection with their sexual preferences. The women were not advised of their rights to refuse to answer questions until after those rights had been violated. They were pressured to fill out a questionnaire which extracted information which could be potentially harmful to those arrested, without being told that it was within their constitutional rights to refuse such information. The women were held in jail overnight, subjected to further harrassment, and brought before a magistrate in the morning. The charges, of course, were dropped. No harm done. Except that the women's rights were abused. Except that they were coerced by fear. Except that they were made to feel like criminals. Except that they know that enough information was left behind to make them vulnerable to future harrassment. The charges were dropped. No harm done.

Such occurrences do not seem to arouse the indignation of the community. It is taken for granted that such inconveniences are part of the price one pays for being homosexual in this society. But we are told that this society is governed by laws, not by men, and that these laws are to be applied equally to all. Show us, then, the statute which prohibits the gathering of congenial people in a place of their choosing. Show us the statute which makes it a criminal act for two women to dance or drink or engage in conversation. No, the girls were not charged with being homosexual -- because that is not a crime. They were not charged with sodomy -- because no such act was being committed. They were not charged with immoral conduct -- because that plainly was not the case. They were charged with

disorderly conduct because people in positions of authority had decided it was the opportune time to exercise their prejudices again.

What can be done about this situation? First, the homophile community must become aware of its rights, aroused by these violations, and determined to secure the full and equal protection of the law. We must not be satisfied with deploring our situation among ourselves, and trying to adjust to the limitations imposed by the arbitrary actions of the authorities. We, as a group, must find the means to make our case known to the entire community so that those traditionally concerned with protecting individual rights will lend us their support, and see our cause as their own.

A.B., C.F.

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QUOTE:

"They that can give up essential liberty to obtain a little temporary safety deserve neither liberty or safety."

Benjamin Franklin

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GUEST SPEAKER

On March 24th, our Chapter hosted an appearance by Barbara Gittings, well-known leader in the homophile movement, which was attended by a large number of women, members and non-members alike.

Miss Gittings presented a brief history of the movement, highlighting its development from organizations primarily concerned with the homosexual's internal problems to the groups we have today, whose work is concerned with the discriminatory attitudes and practices of society. She emphasized that the allegations that homosexuality is "sick" are unsupported by scientific studies, and that the need is for research into the question of what determines sex orientation in general. Miss Gittings was also of great help to those involved in the raid on Rusty's, answering many of the legal questions raised by the police action.

Most valuable for our group were the suggestions for programs which we may adopt. Miss Gittings recommended the following as areas we might work in:

1. Distribute among homosexuals ACLU pamphlets on the rights of the arrested.
2. Inform the ACLU of any abuses
3. Establish a 24-hour telephone service to aid in emergencies
4. Compile a list of lawyers who would be available for us
5. Work against employment discrimination
6. Find out if there is discrimination against homosexuals who seek to be bonded
7. Aid efforts towards the July 4th demonstration at Independence Hall
8. Write letters answering articles on homosexuality in various publications

With this kind of inspiration, the Chapter should be ready to make waves in our community. And with the quality of leadership provided by intelligent, articulate people like Barbara Gittings, the homophile movement should become an important force in this country.

C.F.

April Social - held Sunday April 21st was attended by 14 members and friends
A good time was enjoyed by everyone. Door prizes were won by Marge and Kate.
Do we want a social in May? Think about it and attend the Meeting, May 3rd and
tell us your desires.

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ACTION

The Philadelphia Chapter of Daughters of Bilitis has committed itself to
undertaking a much-needed project, that of responding to references to homosex-
uality in the mass media and initiating relevant letters to appropriate publica-
tions.

Articles dealing with homosexuality, and references to it, are increasingly
found in newspapers and magazines with wide circulation and broad influence in
this country. We deem it our responsibility to respond to these articles --
whether their attitudes are positive or negative -- in order to promulgate the
viewpoints of the homophile community.

For this reason, we ask that all who read this newsletter aid us in this
effort by forwarding to the editorial committee articles of interest.

C.F.

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MEN OF MEDICINE OR MEDICINE MEN?

The April 12 issue of the prestigious Medical World News carries some facts
that we find surprising, frightening and even somewhat infuriating. The article
"Sex Education in Medicine" is a candid admission of the incomplete information
the prospective Physician receives on the physiological and psychological aspects
of sex. In a 1959 study done among the graduates and faculty of the five
medical schools in Philadelphia it was found that "half of the students have a
feeling that mental illness was frequently caused by masturbation. Even one
faculty member in five still believes in this old and now discredited idea."
This deficiency is not, of course, restricted to our city; it is a nationwide
phenomenon. Several medical schools are now taking the necessary steps to
correct this situation.

But haven't some of these learned gentlemen been expounding elaborate
theories on sexual problems all along? When terming a certain behavior natural
or unnatural, were they reasoning on strictly scientific bases or on moralistic
grounds? In a society where "authoritative" opinions are taken as gospel-like
truths such lack of factual knowledge can have deep and far-reaching consequences.
Let's hope that in the future when the oracles speak they do it from a more solid
position.

A.B.

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WHO IS SICK ? ?

"If the laws and mores in America are changed to accept homosexual behavior,
who is going to protect me, the average American male, from homosexuals and per-
verts? When in a public rest room, who is going to keep the homosexual's hands
off me? To protect myself against these advances, I will have to use my fist,
my knife or my gun, and that seems rather barbaric."

The above letter appeared (and was appropriately answered) in the May
Playboy Forum. Does it need comment?

A.B.