

Gay Community Remembered at Holocaust Memorial

by Charlotte Goedsche

Rabbi Birnham remembered the gay community at the beginning of the sixth annual Asheville Interfaith Holocaust Memorial Service which was held April 10 at Beth Israel Synagogue. It was overwhelming for me as a lesbian to witness for the first time a public acknowledgement of the Nazi's oppression of homosexuals. It was overwhelming for me to see that a man whose own people have been decimated, a man who ministers to Holocaust survivors in his own congregation, has so much strength and courage and compassion left over that he can publicly reach out to a still stigmatized group and include them in his remembrances. It was overwhelming to be part of a group of people acknowledging the lives and mourning the deaths of over 11 million people who happened to be different from the norm contrived by Hitler and other Nazi leaders.

The service was conducted by Rabbi Birnham of Congregation Beth Israel and Rabbi Bluming of Congregation Beth H-Tephila, and was sponsored by both congregations. Asheville City Councilman Eugene Ellison also contributed to the service, and read the Proclamation of the City of Asheville, signed by Mayor Ken Michalove, which dedicated April 7 through 14 as Days of Remembrance in the City of Asheville.

During the service, the words of Pastor Martin Niemoeller (a Christian minister imprisoned in a concentration camp) were read aloud:

In Germany they first came for the Communists, and I didn't speak up because I wasn't a

Communist. Then they came for the Jews, and I didn't speak up because I wasn't a Jew. Then they came for the trade unionists, and I didn't speak up because I wasn't a trade unionist. Then they came for the Catholics, and I didn't speak up because I was a Protestant. Then they came for me--and by that time no one was left to speak up.

After the evening service, 36 people of various religions, races and ethnic backgrounds presented *Night Words: A Midrash on the Holocaust*, compiled by David Roskies. (*Midrash* can roughly be translated as *story*.) The Thirty-Six, as they were called, sat in front of the congregation and read their roles, after having deposited their shoes in a pile. (Before going to the "ovens" where they were to be gassed, prisoners of the concentration camps had to deposit their shoes and their clothes for collection by the Nazis.) One of the 36, a woman, sang beautiful, haunting songs in Yiddish.

Among the more than 11 million people murdered by the Nazis were six million Jews. Approximately 50,000 homosexuals also died in the camps. Some of the other groups targeted by the Nazis were Jehovah's Witnesses, Gypsies, and Slavic people.

Each person in the camps had to wear an insignia. While Jews were forced to wear yellow stars, homosexual men were made to wear pink triangles. The pink triangle has since become the symbol of gay liberation, that is, the movement to attain equal civil rights for lesbians and gay men.



A WNC Pride benefit was held Sunday, April 14, at TRAX II Nightclub in Asheville. Eight local entertainers put on a fabulous show before a very enthusiastic audience. The scene above was the audience-participation finale. "From a Distance" played while everyone held hands. The funds raised will be used to help finance WNC's Lesbian/Gay Pride Festival, to be held Sunday, June 16.

Gay Community Has New Phone

A new telephone line for those seeking information about the gay and lesbian community went into operation in April. All Souls Episcopal Church in the Biltmore area of Asheville began the new private line to support Joan Marshall and her outreach ministry. Marshall is a Deacon at All Souls.

An answering machine takes the calls when Marshall is not in the office. The machine's message states that the caller has reached the Gay and Lesbian Community Ministries, AIDS Ministries and Parents-FLAG. It assures the caller that calls will be answered promptly with

complete privacy and confidentiality.

The new number will be listed in *Community Connections* as the contact number for CLOSER (the gay and lesbian support group in Asheville), as well as for Parents and Friends of Lesbians and Gays (Parents-FLAG). Neither group is a religious organization, but both have flourished with the help of Joan Marshall and her husband, Dan.

The number will be listed in the telephone book under "G" for "Gay/Lesbian Ministries." The new number is (704) 277-7815. ▽

--from previous page

to Second Stage Readers' Theatre; to the Educational Division of the Western North Carolina AIDS Project; to Janet Oliver, ANita Pratto, Jane Snyder and C.A. Whittemore who appeared in *Dos Lesbos*; to Kai Schmoll, Dan Marshall, Pat White and Nan Williamson who appeared in *Andrés Mother*; and to Director Jerry Crouch for an excellent production at CLOSER April 9;

to Betsy Mayers for organizing the program "Gay and Lesbian Vacations," and for all those who shared their vacation options. ▽

Thanks from SALGA:

to Judy Chaet, Teri Gibbs and Ellen Hines for facilitating at the SALGA Retreat; and to Ron Lambe, organizer of merriment;

to everyone who attended the SALGA Retreat. ▽

Thanks from WNC Lesbian/Gay Pride Committee:

to Bill Allen and Betty Sharpless for going to the Flea Market;

to all those who donated items for the Flea Market;

to Jess, Ron Huskins and Bill Haines for pricing the Flea Market items;

to all those who attended or performed at Pride Benefits at TRAX and at Club Cabaret. ▽

Thanks from the Asheville Gay and Lesbian Community Council:

to Mark Swann and Ron Huskins for preparing a new message on the Asheville Gay and Lesbian Information Line. Call 253-2971 to hear Mark's deep, resonant voice. ▽

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