TAKING IT TO THE STREETS: THE HISTORY OF GAY PRIDE PARADES
IN DALLAS, TEXAS: 1972-1986

Kyle Edelbrock

Thesis Prepared for the Degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

UNIVERSITY OF NORTH TEXAS

August 2015

APPROVED:

Clark A. Pomerleau, Major Professor
Jennifer Jensen Wallach, Committee Member
J. Todd Moye, Committee Member
Richard B. McCaslin, Chair of the Department of History
Costas Tsatsoulis, Interim Dean of the Toulouse Graduate School

This thesis describes the organization of two waves of pride parades in the city of Dallas, Texas. Using more than 40 sources, this work details how LGBT organizers have used pride parades to create a more established place for the LGBT community in greater Dallas culture. This work adds to the study of LGBT history by focusing on an understudied region, the South; as well as focusing on an important symbolic event in LGBT communities, pride parades.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This thesis was made possible by the help of Michael Doughman of the Dallas Tavern Guild.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS</td>
<td>iii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapters</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. INTRODUCTION</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. A BRIEF LGBT HISTORY</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. THE PRIDE PARADES OF 1972 AND 1973</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. THE PRIDE PARADES OF THE 1980s</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. CONCLUSION</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>APPENDICES</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BIBLIOGRAPHY</td>
<td>83</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

In late September of 2014 some 30,000 onlookers and participants celebrated a large parade in Dallas, Texas. The event included sponsorships from major corporations and Fortune 500 companies, and endorsements from local politicians including the Dallas City Council and the mayor of Dallas. Attracting such a large crowd and receiving affirmation from such important political and economic entities, the parade clearly illustrated an importance piece of Dallas’ accepted urban culture. It may surprise some that this incredible celebration was a pride parade put on by the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) community of Dallas, Texas. After all, Dallas is one of the country’s largest and most conservative cities, in one of the nation’s most conservative states. That a minority still so widely discriminated against both legally and socially could hold such a successful public celebration seems odd; perhaps even a fluke or a stroke of luck.

When looking back at the history of pride parades in Dallas, it becomes clear that their success is no fluke. Rather, the pride parades of Dallas have proven to be a finely crafted and well-tuned tool used by the city’s LGBT community to improve their standing in Dallas’ urban culture. That parades could be used as a tool in this manner is no surprise. Parades have long been important activities symbolizing community support, acceptance, and remembrance. In the United States, parades have occurred since before the nation’s founding, often taking place on anniversaries of key events or celebrating important cultural happenings. In her article “The American Parade: Representations of the Nineteenth-Century Social Order” historian Mary Ryan provides insight of parades early in the country’s history. These early public events made parades a core American
A Note on Terminology

Considering the intricate nature of terminology surrounding LGBT communities, it is appropriate to discuss the descriptive terms used in this essay before moving on. Historians of LGBT history most often use the term gay and lesbian to describe men and women, respectively, with same-sex identities as these are the terms most often used and accepted within the community itself. This work utilizes those terms when dealing with individual men and women, but rarely when speaking about the entire Dallas LGBT community. While “LGBT” or “GLBT” are accepted acronyms of overarching sexual and gender minority communities in the historical profession, some could argue that these acronyms are not as inclusive as possible. So in order to incorporate all individuals who fall under the broad LGBTQ+ umbrella, this paper often uses the term “queer community” synonymously with “LGBT community.” Understandably, the term “queer” is still a term of contention for older members of the community who know the term mostly as an epithet or slur. But the LGBT community has for some time started to reclaim the term, so much so that it has gained enough traction in the historical field to be used here.

A Brief History of Parades

Public parades in the United States evolved from military parades and public carnivals that took place across Europe in the Middle Ages and into modern times. Parades became major parts of popular urban culture as cities began to urbanize in the late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth centuries. As cities began to grow larger the lack of open, public meeting spaces made streets the
most viable places for public happenings that included protests, strikes, and of course, celebrations. Since streets were important thoroughfares for businesses and civic organizations, public gatherings often caused issues if they lasted too long or were too large. The quick, fluid nature of parades allowed for celebrations to occur in the heart of the cities’ political and economic center without long-term disturbances, helping to cement the growing popularity of the event. Cities and groups came to use parades to celebrate events of national importance such as the ratification of the Constitution, or local instances like the completion of the Erie Canal in New York. Cities across the country began to use parades to annually celebrate the Fourth of July, George Washington’s birthday, and other anniversaries of historical importance.¹

As parades continued to evolve, they took on some of the cultural role that belonged to the carnival in Medieval Europe. Numerous social scientists have commented on the role of carnivals in urban culture. According to the Mikhail Bakhtin, carnivals “celebrated temporary liberation from the prevailing truth and from the established order; [they] marked the suspension of all hierarchical rank, privileges, norms, and prohibitions.”² For common people, this brief suspension of societal norms gave them a glimpse of life without the structure that they had come to live in and provided a sense of liberation. Bakhtin postulated that while this temporary relief created new forms of political and social criticism within carnivals, they did not lead to direct political action. In her book *Society and Culture in Early Modern France*, historian Natalie Zemon Davis shows that this was not always the case, citing examples of tension, riots, and more springing up from carnivals, often voicing political and social opinions and even helping bring about change.³

---

potential of public celebrations and gatherings to make political and social changes is a characteristic shared between the carnivals of the Middle Ages and the parades of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, especially as parades began to focus more on the common people.

In the nineteenth century the structure and meaning of parades in America changed. In the late-eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, rank and occupation divided and organized marchers in parades with city leaders and business elites leading the parade, followed by more middle-class occupations such as skilled craftsmen, while the parade line ended with unskilled laborers of varying trades. Throughout the nineteenth century, the elite and middle class marchers eventually began to march less, so groups of unskilled laborers came to dominate the ranks of parades. Eventually occupational groups became a minority in parades as well, overshadowed by voluntary organizations such as “fraternal orders, militia companies, temperance associations, and ethnic benefit societies.”4 Like carnivals before them, parades were now a celebration focused on common people and able to provide social and political commentary, especially regarding urban culture and public space. The shift toward organization via voluntary association meant that “public group identity was now a matter of voluntary choice” instead of being mandated by urban hierarchy.5 The marchers in these groups now gained the ability to assert “their prerogative to participate actively and in their own right in the creation of urban culture.”6 By representing themselves in the public eye, these groups were putting forth their interests for the public to see, receiving in exchange a kind of public acceptance. By becoming part of a city or town’s celebration, the group had created an accepted place for themselves in that city.7 These facets of

---

4 Ibid., 138-142; quote on page 142.
5 Ibid., 142.
6 Ibid., 138
the cultural importance of parades play important roles in the history of pride parades in Dallas that follows.

Participation in public events was not only important for social reasons. These groups also took part in the “public political process in which popular forces acted in tandem with constituted authorities.”  

Participating in public events put on by civic leaders and authorized by city governments, these groups put the act of legitimization in the hands of those leaders. By allowing specific groups with political or social motives to march in the parade, city officials and parade organizers legitimized the needs and demands of these groups, promoting the group as an authorized minority of the shared urban culture that makes up cities. Parades, then, came to symbolize and show off the publicly accepted culture of urban America. To be in a parade, or for a minority to hold its own parade, meant that group had attained some sort of public consent to be an active part of the city’s culture, or at least enough to use its streets for celebrations. That public consent was and continues to be a goal of LGBT communities, as highlighted in their pride parades.

With parades serving both as exciting celebrations and as a method for minorities to create a place for themselves in urban culture, numerous minority groups began to hold parades across the country. In Texas, parades had differing success at integrating minority groups into the greater urban culture. Two specific parades that highlight these differences are the Juneteenth celebrations of freed slaves after the Civil War throughout Texas, and the Maifest parades and festivals of German immigrants in the greater Dallas area in the 1880s and beyond.

Communities of Africans and African Americans began holding celebrations that included parades long before the ending of slavery at the end of the Civil War. In Northern states that had abolished slavery by the early nineteenth century such as Massachusetts and New York, Freedom

---

Day gatherings celebrated the anniversary of the end of slavery in the respective states. Early parades put on by Africans and African Americans featured elements of African culture such as song, dance, language, and clothing. With the slave trade ending in the United States early in the nineteenth century, most American slaves had been born in America by about the 1830s. Following this trend, African American celebrations featuring parades took on more traditional American features, including orations which were most often given by local black or abolitionist leaders.9

Like Africans and African Americans, LGBT organizers have infused pride parades with aspects of their own unique culture, from music to group language and clothing. In some instances, including in Dallas, the visual culture of pride parades has been an issue, as LGBT organizers have limited freedom of expression from participants in order to better fit in with straight culture, like those African Americans who eschewed using African traditions in parades two centuries ago.

Unlike Northern free-blacks, slaves in Southern states did not have many opportunities to participate in parades prior to the abolition of slavery. When they were given their freedom, though, parades became one of the central ways for freed people to celebrate and commemorate the end of slavery. In Texas, parade celebrations began to occur on the anniversary of the date when the first Union soldiers reached Galveston, Texas and proclaimed the slaves to be free: June 19, which came to be known as Juneteenth. Traditional Juneteenth celebrations in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries featured public readings of the Emancipation Proclamation, religious services, park festivals and meals, and of course parades. Even during the time of Jim Crow segregation in the South, African Americans were able to use parades to celebrate Juneteenth. While given public consent to hold their parades and celebrations, these

---

communities were not able to acquire true acceptance in their respective urban cultures as systematic racism overwhelmed Southern culture. 10 Similarly, early pride parades failed to gain Dallas’ LGBT community significant improvements in acceptance and treatment by Dallas’ officials.

In the late nineteenth century immigrant populations also began to seek equal rights and to maintain a place in urban culture, and began to hold parades of their own. In Dallas, German immigrants were one of these groups. Annual Maifest celebrations began as early as 1880, which started with a parade to the festival grounds, where participants would drink German beer and eat traditional German food. By holding annual Maifest celebrations for decades, the German minority of Dallas was not only able to legitimize their place in Dallas’ urban culture and voice the needs of their community, but they also helped shape Dallas culture as a whole. In the grand scheme of Dallas urban culture, German Maifest parades became part of what Dallasites knew and expected to happen each year. In 1886 the *Dallas Morning News* printed numerous articles on the festival, even saying the German population was “casting their lot with the future of Dallas,” certainly becoming an integral part of the Dallas urban culture. 11 Parades were used in this way for various immigrant groups across the country, especially Irish immigrants on St. Patrick’s Day, which have become integral aspects of the urban culture of cities like Chicago, Boston, and New York City. Unlike African Americans or other racial minorities, white European immigrants were able to assimilate into greater urban culture fairly well by the middle of the twentieth century. For this reason, the ability of these festivals to showcase political and social need for these groups became moot. Instead, they shifted into the almost entirely celebratory events that are enjoyed by all

---

aspects of an urban population, to the point that non-Irish Americans can become “Irish for the
day” every March 17. This showcases how well those groups were able to integrate into their
respective urban culture.

It is unfortunate that Germans and other groups of white immigrants were able to use
parades and festivals to help integrate themselves into greater urban culture while African
Americans and other racial minorities were not. Of course, there is a major difference between the
symbolism of a group obtaining public consent in order to hold a parade and the reality of a city’s
population completely accepting a minority. Even after some minority groups had attained the
symbolic public consent garnered through parades they still faced, and continue to face to this day,
many socioeconomic and political difficulties while others assimilated rather painlessly into the
greater urban culture. It is at the crux between initial public consent and overall acceptance that
Dallas’ LGBT community has found itself in for the last few decades, using pride parades as a
significant tool to take the next step.

A Brief Historiography of LGBT History

Clearly, the symbolism and history of parades have received a good deal of academic
research. Unfortunately, LGBT pride parades have received far less academic attention. This lack
of attention stems, at least partially, from the relative youth of the study of LGBT history. Most
works by historians of LGBT history to this point have focused on the formation of LGBT
communities, such as *Gay New York* by Gregory Chauncey, or early LGBT organizations as
highlighted in *Sexual Politics, Sexual Communities: The Making of a Homosexual Minority in the
United States, 1940-1970*, by John D’Emilio. Most early works focused almost exclusively on
major urban areas in the United States, especially New York, Los Angeles, San Francisco, and
Chicago. There have been some excellent local histories of these major LGBT hubs, such as *Gay L.A.* by Lillian Faderman and Stuart Timmons; *Wide Open Town* by Nan Alamilla Boyd, on the history of gay San Francisco; and *Cherry Grove, Fire Island* by Esther Newton on the country’s oldest LGBT community. Some historians have ventured out to study other LGBT communities, such as John Howard’s *Men Like That: A Southern Queer History*, the first book-length examination of LGBT history in the South; namely in Mississippi. Likewise, historians have started to focus on LGBT communities in the Midwest, such as *Queer Twin Cities* by the Twin Cities GLBT History Project; and in rural communities as covered by Colin R. Johnson in his work *Just Queer Folks: Gender and Sexuality in Rural America*. Of course, there have also been histories written that give overviews of queer history in the United States or weave LGBT history into the American grand narrative such as *Out of the Past* by Neil Miller, *A Queer History of the United States* by Michael Bronski, and *Rethinking the Gay and Lesbian Movement* by Marc Stein.

The vast majority of these works, and especially those that center on a specific locale, focus on the formation of communities and organizations, as this basic understanding is the best starting point to understand the history of LGBT communities. The study of events like pride parades is a sort of next step in the understanding of these communities, offering a chance to analyze how LGBT organizers worked with local civic leaders to create a place for their community in the shared urban culture. Similarly, this specific study of the pride parades of Dallas adds to the understudied history of LGBT communities in the South, communities that deserve to have their story told.

With parades acting as potential tools for minority populations to raise awareness of their existence and the potential discrimination against them, it is no surprise that the Gay Activists Alliance decided to hold one in New York in remembrance of the events at Stonewall. In the years since that first makeshift parade, numerous LGBT communities have used parades to help bridge
the gap between the minimal public consent needed to hold a pride parade and the greater urban acceptance that other minority groups had achieved in part through annual celebrations, especially the queer community of Dallas.
CHAPTER 2
A BRIEF LGBT HISTORY

The pride parades in Dallas helped play a significant role in the shifting cultural acceptance of the queer community in the city. To best understand the role these events played, it is necessary to understand their place in the greater narrative of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender (LGBT) history. LGBT history, as historians see it, began in earnest when individuals began to identify as LGBT or queer, and it is a relatively recent occurrence for individuals to consider gender and sexuality as a specific identity. According to historian John D’Emilio, it was not until the industrialization and urbanization after the American Civil War that queer identities began to emerge as the autonomy that city life allowed for the separation of work, family, and “affection, intimate relationships, and sexuality.” Since sex and love were no longer bound to economic survival, individuals could pursue whichever sexual or romantic paths they desired.\textsuperscript{12} It was during this time that writers began to link sexual activity and personal identity, culminating in the understanding of separate “homosexual” and heterosexual identities. Unfortunately, most of these writers saw same-sex sexual attraction as a perversion, a classification that would help lead to discrimination against queer individuals for years to come.\textsuperscript{13}

As cities in America began to grow into the 1900s, so did their queer populations. These men and women met each other in myriad ways, but the ultimate place to coalesce became bars,


saloons, and clubs, which created loose queer communities and subcultures. As one of the nation’s most populous cities, New York became home to one of the first places for a large queer population to form. New York City’s status as a large port city also meant that world events directly affected its population. In the 1880s and 1890s the Bowery, located in Manhattan’s Lower East Side, was a working-class melting pot, originally home to Irish and German immigrants who were later outnumbered by Italians and Jews. The Bowery housed numerous forms of entertainment, including theatres, amusement halls, and brothels. The brothels created a sexually charged atmosphere in the Bowery that allowed effeminate men with same-sex attraction, often called “fairies” at this time, to become major fixtures in the club scene, as both workers and patrons.14

While the Bowery had become a haven for gay men, and to lesser extent lesbian women, in the 1890s, other parts of New York became popular spots for queer individuals to live and gather in the early twentieth century. With the United States’ entrance into World War I, New York saw an influx of soldiers coming into the city before embarking to Europe. With so many single men passing through the city, a string of purity campaigns and anti-vice raids attempted to curtail both prostitution and same-sex sexual acts, with varying results.15 Despite these attempts gay bars, apartments, and communities continued to grow in the city in the 1920s. Sizeable queer communities grew in the neighborhoods around Time Square as well as Greenwich Village and other areas in Manhattan, Brooklyn, and Harlem.16 While the overarching queer community in

15 Ibid., 141-149.
16 Ibid., 152-177.
New York saw increased discrimination in the 1930s, the city and the country in general was about to see a massive shift with the coming of World War II.\textsuperscript{17}

Whereas the First World War created a movement of troops to New York City, the Second World War created a much larger movement of troops and civilians throughout the country. More than 16,000,000 men and 100,000 women joined the armed forces, and large numbers of men and women moved about during this time finding work in the expanded war industry.\textsuperscript{18} These millions of men and women in the military entered a world, whether in the barracks, ships, or on the battlefield, where they were closer to a larger number of queer individuals than ever before. While large coastal cities had had growing gay cultures prior to the war, military life was the first chance for many gay men from smaller cities and rural areas to meet others like themselves and get the chance to experiment with their sexuality.

With the influx of recruits joining the armed forces, military officials attempted to keep men deemed unsuitable or undesirable for military service from joining. Thanks to popular societal ideas, effeminate gay men were included in this list of undesirables that the military needed to weed out from service using a two-pronged approach. The first method was psychiatric screening during recruits’ physical screenings. Prior to and in the early years of the war, military leaders and psychiatrists increased pressure to keep gay men and lesbian women from entering the service, either directly questioning the recruit about their sexuality or using more indirect methods. Psychiatrists were able to reject between 4,000 and 5,000 men due to their sexuality, a seemingly small number compared to the 18 million men who the military examined. Still, it was a major issue for those 4,000 to 5,000 men, hurting their chances for future employment and often causing issues with family. Between sympathetic examiners and

\textsuperscript{17} Ibid., 334-354.
\textsuperscript{18} D’Emilio, \textit{Sexual Politics}, 24-27.
loosening standards as the war went on, the military’s initial attempt to stop gay men from serving had mixed results.\textsuperscript{19}

Due to the military’s rules against same-sex actions, those gay men who had made it through the psychiatric screening were still not safe to disclose their sexuality after entering the military. The second measure the military used to keep queer individuals from the ranks consisted of court marshals that led to dishonorable discharges. It was junior officers who bore the brunt of the work accusing soldiers of same-sex sexual activity, leading to numerous interrogations. These interrogations often turned into witch hunts, as officers pressured scared soldiers to name other suspects as gay or lesbian, whether those men or women were actually queer or not. Historians are not exactly sure how many men the military discharged from the service due to concerns regarding sexuality, although some estimates state between 5,000 and 10,000. In all, the amount of men and women either kept from joining the military or kicked out of the service due to allegations regarding sexuality was a small fraction of the queer individuals who actually served during the war. Historians such as Allen Berube have shown that gay men proved to be excellent soldiers during the war, whether they were fighting on the front line, performing in drag at military-sanctioned entertainment shows across the world, or doing jobs stereotyped for less masculine men such as clerical work or serving as chaplain’s assistants.\textsuperscript{20}

Most of the gay soldiers who were lucky enough to pass through psychiatric screening and avoid probing witch hunts found themselves a part of growing queer communities. On base, separate gay and lesbian cliques formed carefully. While members had to be discreet about their sexuality, gay soldiers created solid bonds amongst peers that lasted much longer than individual

\textsuperscript{20} Ibid., 201-227; Berube quotes a government official’s estimate of homosexuals discharged in note 35 on page 345; 57-97 explains roles in which gay men often succeeded.
friendship circles did, as members changed fluidly based on troop movements. Off base, soldiers lucky enough to attain passes and furloughs were able to experience life in major cities across the country, and the world. Sexual and romantic rendezvous could take place in local YMCAs or hotels, and gay bars became an increasingly popular meeting place for soldiers with only a handful of hours to spend in town.21 Many queer soldiers and sailors were able to experience gay bars and gay cliques for the first time during the Second World War, experiences that showed them what their lives could be like in the right environment that undoubtedly led to the rise of LGBT organizations in the coming decades.

Although most men and women returned home directly after the war, queer individuals did not let this temporary migration stop the formation of queer communities that the war had allowed. As historian John D’Emilio writes: “demobilization did not turn back the clock.”22 Fueled by the sense of community they had shared during the war, as well as post-war economic upturn, gay man and lesbian women began to coalesce in large cities across the country much like they had in New York prior to the war. Gay bars began to open throughout the country in cities where there had never been any sort of gay subculture. Alfred Kinsey’s now famous report, published in 1948, changed how many Americans thought about sex and sexuality, especially homosexuality. While the statistics of the report quickly came under scrutiny, it benefitted many queer individuals across the country, assuring them that they were not alone.23 The end of the war did not threaten the growth of LGBT communities, but the rhetoric of some members of the government did.

---

21 Ibid., 98-127.
22 D’Emilio, Sexual Politics, 39.
23 Ibid., 31-39.
Fear of communism abroad and at home after World War II led to a series of committees, investigations, and campaigns to rid the federal government of traitors or those deemed security risks. Due to religious beliefs, medical theories, laws, and public opinion of same-sex acts, gay men and lesbian women quickly became the target of these anticommunist and anti-threat movements. Wisconsin Senator Joe McCarthy may be the most widely known hunter of the LGBT community and communists at this time, but many different government offices began their own investigations to oust queer employees. As the military shrank after World War II hunts for gay and lesbian soldiers increased, especially in the Women’s Army Corps and the Navy’s Women Accepted for Volunteer Emergency Service, or WAVES. Investigations increased in federal and state government agencies as well, even spreading to private industries with government contracts. The Federal Bureau of Investigation was at the center of many investigations, especially of non-military government employees at the behest of the House, Senate, and President Eisenhower, but anti-LGBT antics spread to the municipal level as well. Police raids of gay establishments increased across the country dramatically in the 1950s.24 The government meant to curtail the growing queer subculture with its increase in anti-LGBT rhetoric and actions, but ultimately failed. In fact it was during this time of witch hunts that the gay subculture created its first organizations which would eventually help lead to its liberation movement.

Despite anti-LGBT rhetoric becoming ever more popular, Los Angeles saw the creation of the first significant queer organization in 1951, becoming the model that spread “homophile” civil rights. The Mattachine Society was created by Henry Hay, who had first thought of creating an organization for gay men after joining a group that advocated the presidential campaign of

---

24 Ibid., 40-53.
Henry Wallace and had consisted of all gay men. Hay started the group with the help of friends Bob Hull and Chuck Rowland, both of whom, like Hay, were gay and members of the Communist Party, and one of whom was a veteran. Early in its existence, the Mattachine Society mirrored aspects of the Communist Party, especially its secrecy and hierarchical structure. This ironically legitimized, if only in this instance, Joe McCarthy’s fear of a link between communism and same-sex attraction. The Mattachine Society slowly grew through “semipublic discussion groups” that comprised the founders and gay friends. Those friends would then invite others they knew, insuring a safe environment free from potential entrapment.25

In 1952, the group first delved into the realm of politics. While the group remained secret, leaders created a Citizens Committee to Outlaw Entrapment after a police officer in a Los Angeles park had arrested a member of the society. The committee distributed fliers to gay establishments—bars, other gay-owned businesses, and parks to raise awareness of the issue of police entrapment. Through contributions of those who received the fliers, the committee was able to raise money in order to help pay costs of the member’s legal fees. The trial helped the group grow in Los Angeles, and separate groups began to grow throughout southern California by 1953. By the end of 1953 groups had sprouted up in northern California as well. That same year, members of the Mattachine Society created One magazine, which was technically independent of the society and would eventually come under the control of ONE, Inc.26

The Mattachine Society, ONE, Inc., and the Daughters of Bilitis, the first lesbian political organization, were the major groups that led the small political movement for gay rights across the country in the 1950s and 1960s. While these groups and smaller ones like them did not do much to affect public policy or opinion in these decades, they did help organize a small number

25 Ibid., 58-70
26 Ibid., 70-74.
of people to help lay the beginnings of the gay liberation movement. Franklin Kameny lost his
government job due to his sexuality, eventually became the leader of Washington D.C.’s new
Mattachine Society, and was one of the more vocal gay militant leaders of the late 1950s and
early 1960s. What Kameny did to liberalize Washington’s new Mattachine Society, Randy
Wicker did to the previously established Mattachine Society in New York City.27 For many
queer individuals, though, especially those in areas where LGBT organizations were small or
non-existent, gay bars were still the predominant meeting place. It was the reaction to the raid of
one of these bars in Greenwich Village, New York, the Stonewall Inn, that is often credited with
jump start a national movement for gay rights, and was certainly the inspiration for the
increasingly popular trend of pride parades.

It is not that raids of gay bars were a new phenomenon. In many cities like New York and
Dallas, police raids of gay bars increased as the bars became more popular. Even in a city like
New York, where the mafia owned and operated many of the gay bars and paid off the police,
raids occurred roughly once a month per establishment, and were even more frequent during
election seasons when candidates promised to clean up the city. For instance, the famous raid of
the Stonewall Inn on June 27, 1969, occurred just three days after a previous raid on the
establishment.28

The raid on the night of the 27th, though, was much different than previous ones. During
most raids, the patrons of the club dispersed as quickly as possible to avoid legal trouble; as
spending a night in jail could easily lead to job loss due to the legal ramifications and publicity.
Whereas most raids happened early in the evening, this raid happened around one in the

27 Ibid., 150-165.
28 David Carter, Stonewall: The Riots that Sparked the Gay Revolution (New York: Saint Martin’s Press, 2004), 82,
124.
morning, when the club was most busy. This timing allowed for a crowd to gather outside Stonewall, both patrons of the club who the police had released and neighborhood onlookers who were curious as to what was taking place. Inside the bar, drag queens and lesbians were giving arresting officers more of a hassle than usual. The growing crowd had already begun chanting and singing songs when an officer pushed one of the drag queens who had been problematic in the club. The drag queen slapped the officer with her purse, to which the officer responded by clubbing her. The crowd became angrier, booing loudly but also going to pay phones to call friends and tell them what was happening. When police began to fight with a lesbian they had taken out of the bar, the crowd began throwing coins, cans, bricks, and more at the police, who barricaded themselves inside Stonewall.29 A very physical struggle ensued, one that is rightfully termed a riot with violence coming from both the large crowd and the police, who had called in reinforcements. The raid and subsequent riot happened during the early hours of Saturday, June 28. Later that day and again on Sunday the 29th, crowds gathered again on Christopher Street outside of Stonewall, and trouble escalated both before and after police arrived to control the crowds. Monday and Tuesday night were rather calm, but when Wednesday’s Village Voice criticized the riots and the gay community, the crowd returned that night perhaps even larger than before, and the riot recommenced.30

The Gay Activists Alliance formed in Greenwich Village after the turmoil of the riots. Much more progressive and politically active than the early Mattachine and other “homophile” groups before it, the GAA planned a week of events to commemorate the one year anniversary of the Stonewall Riots. The GAA held the Christopher Street Liberation Day March on Sunday, June 28, 1970. As a number of gays and lesbians began the march, they saw many of their

29 Ibid., 129-158.
30 Ibid., 182-205.
homosexual friends remain on the sidewalk, afraid of potential backlash. By the end of the event, many of those onlookers had finally joined in. There was no violence, no backlash. The marchers from not only New York but across the East coast had brought signs, joined in chants and songs, and waved American flags. It is estimated that between 5,000 and 10,000 men and women had taken part in the march between Greenwich Village and Central Park, a distance of more than two miles. The tradition of the pride parade was born.

Dallas LGBT History

Since the riots at Stonewall and the first Christopher Street Liberation Day March, a gay liberation movement has picked up steam throughout the country. One important facet of that movement has been a push to create a historical narrative inclusive to the LGBT community. LGBT historians have created national histories, biographies, institutional histories, and a growing number of regional and city-specific studies. Even with the growth of this historical field, historians have written very little on the LGBT history of the city of Dallas. Even city histories that mention minority groups’ interaction with the straight majority fail to mention the history of the city’s queer community. The history that has been written mostly follows the general outline of American LGBT history: gay subcultures started growing in urban centers, like Dallas, as urbanization increased, gaining more momentum after the Second World War. Before World War II, there was a very small scene for gays and lesbians in Dallas. “Maggie’s Corner,” on the corner of Commerce and Akard Streets was a popular pick up area for gay men, and the Adolphus Bar had a table where gay men often met. The first gay bar in Texas, Club Reno, opened in Dallas in 1946. While Club Reno was not open long, other gay bars took its

31 Ibid., 233-255.
32 D’Emilio, Sexual Politics, 237.
place into the 1950s. With the increase in gay bars in Dallas came an increase in police raids of those bars. 33

Phil Johnson is one of the central figures in mid-century LGBT history in Dallas, as both one of the city’s LGBT leaders and the community’s historian. Johnson, along with four of his friends, created the aptly named Circle of Friends in 1965, a social organization with the purpose of giving gay men a place to socialize other than bars, which was the first LGBT organization in the state of Texas. 34 The group grew slowly but surely, much like the early Mattachine Society, as members and potential members were afraid of police intervention. In 1969, Rob Shivers of the Circle of Friends started the process of bringing a branch of the Metropolitan Community Church (MCC), a Christian church friendly to LGBT members that had started in California, to Dallas. In 1970, the Circle of Friends were granted a MCC mission, which became a full member of the MCC on May 21, 1971, the eighth MCC church in the Universal Fellowship of Metropolitan Community Churches (UFCMCC) with 40 charter members. 35 With the creation of Dallas’ first queer-friendly church, the gay community quickly began to organize more concretely than it had previously, which is touched on later. Between the momentum of establishing the MCC and the national fervor regarding LGBT issues after the Stonewall riots in New York in 1969, the Circle of Friends began planning more outgoing events, and its purpose became increasingly political. The culmination of the Circle of Friends political activity was the organization of Dallas’ first pride parade, in June 1972.

34 Ibid., 31-33.
CHAPTER 3
THE PRIDE PARADES OF 1972 AND 1973

Phil Johnson arrived at the Kennedy Memorial Plaza on the morning of June 24, 1972 to find a small group of unexpected yet wholly welcomed compatriots: “all of them female impersonators, all of them beautiful, all of them resplendently [sic] gowned, and all of them black.” June 24 was not just another morning for Phil Johnson and the city of Dallas. It was the morning of the first gay pride parade in city history, the first time that the LGBT community was putting itself completely in the public light, the first time the community could be publicly accepted or rejected. It went off without a hitch. Despite a few catcalls and degrading remarks, the parade began and ended with no complications. For all intents and purposes, it was a phenomenal accomplishment. With such a successful first parade, the LGBT community seemed to have attained that first glimmer of approval that parades so often symbolized.36

Unfortunately complete public approval was not that simple. Dallas’ actions proved to be deceptive; while the city publicly accepted gays and lesbians, it acted in a different manner towards the community in private. Police officers intensified their raids of gay bars and clubs in Dallas in the late 1970s. The AIDS crisis took its toll both in the LGBT community itself and in mainstream Dallas society in the 1980s. It took until 2003 for same-sex acts to be legalized, and only then at the hands of the United States Supreme Court. Despite these issues, gay pride celebrations, whenever the LGBT community decided to hold them, continued to be well attended peaceful events featuring the community’s identity. From these facts, a simple question arises: why did the city of Dallas allow for these public celebrations if it did not truly accept the LGBT community?

36 Phil Johnson, “A Decade of Gay Pride,” manuscript, Folder 4, Box 62, “Phil Johnson Collection” Resource Center LGBT Collection of the UNT Libraries, 1940-2011 (Willis Library, University of North Texas, Denton, Texas); hereafter cited as: Johnson, “A Decade of Gay Pride.”
The answer to this question lies at the heart of the history of Dallas, a city proud of its unique way of doing things, the “Dallas Way,” a city with only one major negative event popularized in its history: the assassination of John F. Kennedy. At least, that is the history that the city and some scholars attempt to portray. More recent scholars paint a different picture: the city either had hidden its historical skeletons in the closet or the powers that controlled Dallas acted in a manner of forced concession, accepting acts and changes despite distaste for them in order to appear as an open, progressive city and to minimize any negative press that could affect the city’s daily business and economy.

The gay pride parades in Dallas, especially the first event in 1972, show this forced concession and deception by the city of Dallas and the Dallas City Council. With no legal grounds to stop the first pride parade, the council members may have reasoned that to fight against it would only have brought the city and themselves negative press, the very sort of negative press the proponents of the Dallas Way hoped to avoid. This fear of backlash forced the council’s hand, allowing the parade and subsequent public events by the LGBT community to take place. By allowing these early public celebrations, the Dallas City Council unintentionally gave the LGBT community its first glimmer of acceptance that parades so often confer. Although the struggle for complete acceptance in Dallas urban culture continues today, the Dallas LGBT community took fate into its own hands with the planning of the first gay pride parade in 1972.

The Dallas Way

There is no general consensus over when the idea of the Dallas Way began. In his book, *White Metropolis: Race, Ethnicity, and Religion in Dallas, 1841-2001*, Michael Phillips asserts that journalists and members of the Dallas elite who could sway public opinion constructed facets
of the Dallas Way in hindsight. Histories of Dallas are not common but the early ones went along with the notion of the Dallas Way, a city that accepted progressive ideas in an attempt to grow economically. Only in the last twenty years have studies emerged arguing that Dallas’ history is not one of painless progress and acceptance. Still, the history of the city and those in control of it show that the Dallas Way did in fact exist, even if only as a deceptive story that those in power attempted to pass off as truth.37

The group in power that most often claimed credit for the Dallas Way was the Dallas Citizens Council (DCC). The council came about and began gaining political power in the 1930s. The shifting of businesses in World War II and its aftermath brought incredible growth to the city. Dallas County’s population grew by more than 270,000 between 1940 and 1953, a time span that also saw a 184 percent rise in manufacturing in the city of Dallas. This growth allowed the DCC to gain even more power as it was comprised of the most influential businessmen in Dallas.38 By the 1960s the DCC reached the peak of its power, and the idea of the Dallas Way played an important role in how the council ran the city, attempting to continue economic growth while minimizing negative opinions of the town. Negative opinions and negative press, the council believed, would either keep businesses from coming to Dallas or keep consumers from spending to their fullest potential. The DCC’s actions to minimize negative reactions were especially visible when it concentrated on the changes brought about by the civil rights movement.39

Numerous civil rights groups in the South used non-violent direct action, often in the form of pickets, boycotts, and sit-ins. According to Martin Luther King, non-violent direct action “seeks

to create such a crisis that a community which has constantly refused to negotiate is forced to confront the issue.”

Birmingham, Montgomery, New Orleans, and Little Rock, were all southern cities where non-violent direct action campaigns took place in the 1950s and 1960s. These campaigns publicized the cities in a negative light on television, radio, and in newspapers. Under the leadership of the DCC, the city of Dallas acted proactively to minimize direct action campaigns and the negative press releases they could bring in an effort to protect the city’s economic prosperity. In the 1950s the council began to move African Americans out of underdeveloped housing projects, in part to reclaim that land for industrial growth. When these African Americans moved to traditionally white neighborhoods and had their houses bombed by angry white citizens who protested the changes, the council quickly set up a grand jury to investigate the bombings. The council never prosecuted the case, but the initial act of setting up the jury created enough positive spin in the media to stifle any negative press about the bombings themselves.

When intense challenges to segregation arose in the early 1960s, the DCC began a series of conciliations to cast the city in a positive light and to minimize the chances of public demonstrations that could hurt business. The DCC created the Committee of Fourteen, consisting of seven white and seven black local leaders who handled issues regarding the desegregation of public accommodations. The DCC and the Committee of Fourteen worked sluggishly, often giving token concessions to the African American community. Members of the Committee took African Americans to eat at previously segregated lunch counters on July 26, 1961 as a sign of progress in integration, hoping to keep the African American community from non-violent direct action campaigns. While the Committee of Fourteen made this show of good will, many restaurants and

---

41 Hill, Modern City, 168-169.
other stores in Dallas remained segregated until the passing of the Civil Rights Act in 1964. This particular concession did work well for the city council, with the city’s only major boycott coming to the Piccadilly Cafeteria in 1964. The Dallas School Board also was instrumental in allowing a token concession to the African American community, implementing the stair-step integration plan in the autumn of 1961. The stair-step plan was to integrate one new grade a year beginning with the first grade. Dallas appeared to be progressive on this issue as it was one of the first cities in the area to begin to desegregate its school, but the black community widely panned the stair-step plan as complete integration in schools would not have occurred under this plan until the mid-1970s. Black activism eventually caused the city to do away with the stair step plan, desegregating schools by 1967.42

While the concessions made by the DCC and Dallas School Board allowed Dallas to portray itself as a more progressive and peaceful place than other Sunbelt cities, racism and violence against African Americans never completely subsided. Still, since the city began to desegregate before it was legally required to, and since it did so without much publicized violence or the need for public demonstrations as had happened in such cities as Little Rock; Dallas was able to portray itself as a progressive Sunbelt city. The token concessions that included the grand jury in the 1950s and the early desegregation of some businesses and schools in the 1960s allowed Dallas to avoid negative press and keep the city’s growth and positive image intact. This pattern would reappear in 1972 when the LGBT community made its first foray into the public sphere.43

The Circle of Friends and the Dallas City Council

Historians have written little about the LGBT community in Dallas, or in Texas in general. What has been written about the Dallas community generally reflects the records compiled by Phil Johnson, one of the original leaders of the LGBT community in Dallas who also acted as its unofficial historian. Johnson’s pivotal role in the community began when Johnson and a group of friends created the first gay organization in the state of Texas. Since Johnson and some of his friends did not enjoy frequenting bars, one of the most popular destination for gays and lesbians in Dallas at the time, they wanted to create an organization where members of Dallas’ queer community could meet outside of bars, which became known as the Circle of Friends. The organization grew slowly from its original five members because many gays and lesbians were still afraid to meet together in fear of being discovered, potentially losing their jobs, or of facing police intimidation. Both the Circle of Friends and others were aware that this had happened to other small homophile groups in different parts of the country. Community members often traveled or moved to areas with large LGBT communities, sharing any information about queer organizations and movements with their friends in Dallas. At first, the Circle of Friends was merely a social group, with members opening up their homes for meetings and gatherings. Over time, the group became more organized and politically orientated, creating a constitution, bylaws, and a mission statement that sought to “create a better atmosphere of understanding with the general public, the Church, and the Law Enforcement Authorities [sic],” as well as to “demonstrate at every opportunity that the Homophile [sic] can be a useful and productive citizen” and finally to help gay men (and presumably lesbian women, although the mission statement used only masculine pronouns) spiritually, economically, socially, and legally.45

45 “Circle of Friends Newsletter” manuscript, Folder 13, Box 65, “Phil Johnson Collection” Resource Center LGBT Collection of the UNT Libraries, 1940-2011 (Willis Library, University of North Texas, Denton, Texas).
The police raid on the Stonewall Inn in New York City on June 27, 1969 and the subsequent riots following the raid brought LGBT issues to the forefront of American society. In 1970 and 1971, different LGBT organizations across the country began to celebrate pride parades, especially in New York, Los Angeles, San Francisco, and Chicago. By 1972, the queer community in Dallas had decided that it wanted to celebrate as well.\textsuperscript{46} The Circle of Friends wanted to hold a pride parade for many reasons. Of course, the commemoration of the Stonewall riots was an important aspect of the parade, but the Circle of Friends intended the parade to serve a more political purpose as well. The parade provided a method to educate the straight majority about LGBT people, specifically regarding common beliefs that gay men and lesbian women were sex-craved. The Circle of Friends wanted to show that LGBT individuals were just like the straight majority, hopefully eliminating ignorance and irrational hatred towards gays and lesbians and creating an accepted place in Dallas’ urban culture for the queer community.\textsuperscript{47}

Admittedly afraid of potential backlash, the Circle of Friends applied to the Dallas Police Department to hold a pride parade on June 24, 1972, that would commemorate the third anniversary of the Stonewall riots. The Circle of Friends got the go ahead to plan its parade when the city accepted the permit. There was no viable legal reason to deny the permit, but when city council members found out about the parade in late June they hoped to do just that. In a special meeting two days before the parade on Thursday, June 22, nine of eleven Dallas City Council members met with City Attorney Alex Bickley to discuss any potential legal grounds to dismiss the parade permit.\textsuperscript{48}

\textsuperscript{46} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{47} Circle of Friends, “Press Release,” manuscript, Folder 24, Box 75, “Phil Johnson Collection.”
Councilman Doug Fain appeared to be the catalyst of these events, asking Bickley to set up the meeting with other members of the council. Fain considered it to be “highly disappointing” that the pride parade would be allowed to happen so shortly after the Christian Explo of 1972.\textsuperscript{49} Explo ’72, as the event is known, was organized by the Campus Crusade for Christ and took place between June 12 and June 17, 1972 in Dallas. The gathering attracted an estimated 100,000 to 200,000 students, preachers, and musical artists. Featuring Minister Billy Graham and musician Johnny Cash, the event’s evangelical Christian nature was one with which conservative council members could agree.\textsuperscript{50}

When speaking to the media, council members refrained from sighting overt religious or moral protests to the parade. Councilman Jerry Gilmore had little to say about the matter, only that he was “opposed to the parade being held” but also that he was advised there were no legal grounds to dismiss it. He believed the parade could be “properly contained.” Councilman George Allen, the first African American member of the city council, wished gays and lesbians “wouldn’t parade here” but admitted the group had the right and that the parade would not cause much of an issue. Councilman Fain’s comments were by far the most transparent. Fain thought it was a “crying shame the council didn’t know of something of this magnitude earlier.” Indeed, following the pride parade it was required that all parade permits would be made known to the city council after their acceptance. Fain was worried that the parade would cause a ruckus, having received half a dozen calls protesting the parade. He was “fearful of someone interrupting the parade, which would involve police action in protecting the parade. Violence might erupt.” Putting possible personal objections aside, the city council seemed to worry not about the parade itself or the group that was

\textsuperscript{49} Domeier, “Parade Protests Fail to Halt Homosexuals.”
\textsuperscript{50} Larry Eskridge, “‘One Way’: Billy Graham, the Jesus Generation, and the Idea of an Evangelical Youth Culture,” \textit{Church History} 67, no. 1 (Mar., 1998): 100-103.
putting it on but rather the potential backlash it could create. Any reaction that required police intervention was likely one that would reflect negatively on the city. With no legal ability to stop the parade, though, the city council would only attract more harmful attention toward itself and the city if it had decided to act. Stuck between the legality of the situation and their own misgivings, the city council decided to forego the legal process and any potential negative press it would bring and allow the parade to go on, hoping that the citizens of Dallas would refrain from acting in a way that would reflect poorly on the city. The fears of the city council never came to fruition, and the parade went on without issue.51

Dallas’ First Pride Parades

All fifteen members of the Circle of Friends helped plan the parade, but much of the organization fell on lesbians Rob Shivers and Chris McKee.52 Preparations began early in the year with McKee, the parade chairwoman, sending out invitations to LGBT groups across the South and Midwest to join the parade, as a strong regional and national presence would greater highlight the needs of the LGBT community. The Circle of Friends hoped the parade would consist of “a band, several floats, banners, cars, and hundreds of people carrying signs.” While no band was present, the Circle of Friends was successful in getting a wide variety of participants and floats. A small organization with limited funds, the Circle of Friends required a fee of ten dollars per car and twenty five dollars per float to pay for the “parade permit, police protection, advertising, posters, mimeographing, postage,” and other expenses.53 There was a large response to McKee’s

51 All quotes from: Domeier, “Parade Protests.”
52 Johnson, “A Decade of Gay Pride.”
invitations, as groups came from Texas, Oklahoma, Arkansas, and even Iowa to participate in the parade, one of the first held in the Midwest.  

Expecting backlash and also hoping the event would reflect positively on the LGBT community, McKee sent out a list of guidelines for participants in an attempt to keep the parade under control. Some of these measures were straightforward; the Circle of Friends prohibited any kind of violence as well as drugs and alcohol. Other rules were important for more nuanced reasons. “Obscene or overtly sexual words, symbols, or objects” were banned from signs, posters, banners, and cheers. While members of the Circle of Friends did not want to be offensive, they also put this rule in place because the organization and the queer community were seeking to be known for more than the sexual orientation of its members. Obvert sexuality was the first characteristic many in the straight population thought of regarding gay men and lesbian women, a characteristic that was heavily frowned upon in the conservative South, so limiting sexual imagery at the parade was one way to help shape the community’s image in a different light. In some ways, the Circle of Friends was as worried about potential physical violence as the City Council was, especially in regards to drag performers. Members of the community who were dressed in drag were the most visibly unique; so minimizing their contact with the crowd was one way to limit backlash against them. For this reason, parade organizers allowed participants dressed in drag to ride in floats and cars but not march on the street. One guideline was enforced for legal reasons; participants could not march with bags or masks over their head, a law meant to limit public Klu Klux Klan rallies. The Circle of Friends advised participants who wished to hide their identity to wear a full body costume such as that of a clown or an animal.

---

54 Johnson, “A Decade of Gay Pride.”
With these guidelines in mind, participants began to line up on the corner of Market Street and Main Street at 9:30 in the morning of June 24. Seventeen cars acted as makeshift floats with differing levels of decoration. The Circle of Friends’ float was themed “Homosexuality is as American as Apple Pie” and consisted of Johnson’s decorated car and a trailer featuring one of the gold-clad African American drag queens that Johnson saw when he first arrived to the parade-marshall area that morning.  

This float was certainly an odd visual site. The car’s message and appearance showed how normal and commonplace gay men and lesbian women were in America. The brightly dressed drag queen, on the other hand, showed off the vibrancy of the community that would only continue to grow. The juxtaposition of the conservative attempt to fit in with straight society and the flashy potential of the queer community is a culture clash that LGBT organizers in Dallas and across the country grappled with for years to come.

The parade started relatively small, Johnson believed there to be between 50 and 150 marchers, gay and lesbian alike. Many held signs that included coming out statements-“Mom and Dad-Surprise”-as well as messages regarding equality, such as “I’m not prejudiced, I like heterosexuals.” Marchers also joined in occasional cheers of “two, four, six, eight gay is just as good as straight” and many others.  

To Johnson’s delight, members of the LGBT community who initially had been too afraid to march in the parade joined in as the parade went along its route.

This phenomenon was one that McKee and other organizers had expected. A document written by McKee, which covered the parade marshal’s responsibilities, explained that one of the marshal’s first duties was to help people enter the parade from the street. Seeing a lack of vicious responses to participants, many onlookers, members of the LGBT community and their friends,

---

56 Johnson, interview by Saxon, 60-61.
58 Johnson, “A Decade of Gay Pride.”
joined the parade as it traveled its route from the corner of Market Street and Main Street and up Main Street to City Hall, an unabashedly symbolic route that was not lost on organizers or participants. In all between 150 and 300 gays and lesbians ended up marching in the parade. The city of Dallas attached roughly thirty police officers to the parade to keep order, and some 3,000 onlookers watched the eclectic group of marchers and floats. After the parade, the Circle of Friends held a picnic for participants and community members at White Rock Lake Park in Dallas.⁵⁹

Marching through downtown Dallas clearly symbolized the place in Dallas’ urban culture the LGBT community hoped to claim, and ending at City Hall hinted at the political needs of a discriminated-against minority. Parading downtown also had economic symbolism. The pride parade brought gays and lesbians into Dallas from all over the state and region. Surely, downtown businesses enjoyed the influx of consumers, regardless of parade-goers sexuality. With a city so focused on economic growth, could it afford to discriminate based on sexuality since gays and lesbians used the same currency as the straight majority? In 1972, the Circle of Friends were aware of the social and political symbolism the pride parade encapsulated, but it took another decade for the economic symbolism of pride parades to truly hit home, as will be discussed in the next chapter.

The overall public reaction to the parade was positive. Some of the police officers in attendance disapproved of the event, with one dissatisfied officer complaining that the parade had drawn a larger crowd than the Armed Forces Day Parade that he had also worked.⁶⁰ According to Johnson, though, many of the police officers “seemed to have a good time” as “they laughed and joked” with the marchers.⁶¹ The crowd seemed to accept the event as well. There were “some catcalls and a few insulting remarks,” and the parade was followed by Addie Barlow Frazier,

---

⁶⁰ Bernabo, “Gays March Proudly.”
⁶¹ Johnson, interview by Saxon, 61-64.
known as Dixie Leber, a local Klu Klux Klan leader who told reporters she favored laws that would execute gays and lesbians. Despite these negative reactions, many other onlookers gave neutral remarks along the lines of “live and let live,” while others remarked favorably. 62 Most importantly, there were no violent or disruptive reactions that the council had feared. In Phil Johnson’s opinion, the large crowd that came to watch the parade was a direct result of the “Dallas City Council’s effort to revoke” the parade permit. 63 In this respect, the city council’s efforts had backfired, ironically promoting an event they had wanted to stop. By doing so, the City Council had unintentionally awarded Dallas’ queer community a place in the city’s greater urban culture. By allowing any group to hold a parade in the heart of the city, officials affirmed that group’s rights as accepted members of the community. 64

The Circle of Friends continued their planning for a second parade on June 30, 1973 despite hearing rumors that the City Council was attempting to find a way to ban the group from repeating. 65 The Circle of Friends was still a small organization, which caused the group to begin planning as early as March, and to start the creation of their float just a few weeks later. 66 The group was again able to recruit parade participants from across the region, including Norman, Oklahoma; Houston, and Fort Worth. Ken Cyr, a member of the Circle of Friends, started his own organization, the Awareness, Unity, and Research Association or AURA, in April of 1973 in Fort Worth. Cyr used his connections with both AURA and the Circle of Friends to create a greater community presence for Fort Worth at the 1973 parade than the year prior. 67

62 Bernabo, “Gays March Proudly.”
63 Johnson, “A Decade of Gay Pride.”
64 Johnson, interview by Saxon, 64.
65 Johnson, interview by Saxon, 64.
The Circle of Friends showed that they had learned from the previous parade and created an elaborate paper mâché dragon. LGBT community members who wanted to march in the parade but were afraid to come out publically would be able to march under this dragon and keep their identities secret, an ingenious idea to increase participation while assuaging the fears of some community members. The Circle of Friends also sharpened the focus of the parade, placing the emphasis of the event on civil rights and the right of the LGBT community to the basic rights that everyone deserved. Although the Circle of Friends had focused the meaning of the parade and expanded the range of possible participants, the 1973 lacked the excitement of the inaugural parade the year before. In fact, both the parade and the coverage of it seemed to repeat from the year before. The *Dallas Morning News* article covering the parade mentioned numerous signs and slogans being used in the parade, which happened to be used in the parade and written about in the newspaper the year prior. Perhaps the shock factor of Dallas’ first pride parade had worn off for both the queer community and the straight majority.

The one thing that did change in regards to the 1973 pride parade was how the Dallas City Council responded to it. Perhaps aware that media attention brought out more onlookers in 1972, the Dallas City Council refrained from any sort of action in regards to the parade in 1973, despite the rumors the Circle of Friends had heard about the City Council trying to prohibit it. City officials also refrained from speaking about the parade publically. Instead, city officials seemed to ignore it and tried to minimize any publicity it could attract. When State Representative Frank Gaston was set to have a fundraiser at Flagtop Hill in White Rock State Park, the same location as the post-pride parade picnic, a member of the city’s Parks Department called Gaston and notified him.

of the potential issue. Gaston quickly moved his gathering to another part of the park as to “spare
the sensibilities” of his conservative constituents and donors.70 Like the year prior, the city acted
in a manner to minimize any potential negative press, while benefitting from any positive media
the event could attract. That a state representative decided to move his event instead of forcing the
Circle of Friends to change plans shows the cultural impact the first ride parade had created.
Governing bodies had publically legitimized the events of Dallas’ LGBT community, accepting
them into Dallas’ urban culture.

This symbolic acceptance was not lost on the Circle of Friends. Days after the first parade
in 1972, Chris McKee sent a congratulatory letter to the city council on behalf of the Circle of
Friends. While McKee believed it unfortunate that council members did not participate in the
parade, she congratulated the council on its “public recognition of the fact that Dallas’ gays are
indeed citizens and entitled to the same freedom of speech granted to all citizens under the U.S.
Constitution.” Clearly McKee understood the symbolic importance of the city council granting
gays and lesbians the right to use public space by allowing the parade. McKee also mentioned the
concerns of councilman Fain, stating that the gay and straight communities of Dallas “acted in a
way that reflected well on the image of Dallas as the All-American city.” In this way, the city
council’s inaction was successful in limiting negative press as well as promoting the city to show
an accepting, positive attitude, similar to the way it had handled desegregation roughly a decade
earlier. McKee’s letter can be seen as a promise and a truce. The promise being that the city’s
LGBT community will continue to plan events and try to fit into Dallas’ urban culture, with the
truce being that the community would do so with Dallas’ best interest in mind. McKee and the
Circle of Friends knew that they had to do thing the Dallas way.71

71 Chris McKee, “Letter to City Council,” manuscript, Folder 24, Box 75; “Phil Johnson Collection.”
By accepting the pride parade and granting gays and lesbians the right to use public space, the city of Dallas appeared to be progressive and accepting. Through the 1970s and into the 1980s the city of Dallas proved to act in a manner very much in contrast to that accepting image, however. While Dallas accepted the LGBT community publicly, in private manners Dallas proved deceptive, heavily discriminating against queer individuals. When Texas State Legislators revised the Texas Penal Code in 1973, it outlawed all same-sex sexual relations, including for the first time sex between women. The revised Penal Code was also stricter regarding “Public Lewdness” and “Indecent Exposure.” Whereas the Dallas City Council lacked legal grounds to cancel the pride parade, the revised Penal Code gave the city’s police department greater ability to persecute the LGBT community, and it wasted little time in doing so. In the mid 1970s, the police department began to raid bars and other known gay establishments in Dallas such as bath houses. The police department’s vice squad raided a bathhouse on Swiss Avenue in 1975 and 1976, leading to protests from multiple gay organizations in Dallas. D.L. Burgett, head of the police vice squad, stated the police department would continue to check on LGBT-owned or frequented businesses. The Penal Codes allowed for discrimination in other forms as well. In 1977 the superintendent of the Dallas Independent School District, Nolan Estes stated that any teachers identified as gay or lesbian would immediately be asked to resign. Estes backed off his stance when estimates stated that ten percent of the DISD’s teachers were queer, which would require replacing a sizeable portion of the city’s teachers. Police raids, in contrast, continued and even intensified over time. In 1979 Dallas police raided the Village Station, a popular gay bar, leading to multiple arrests and ten counts of lewd conduct. Later that year three more raids of gay establishments resulted in another sixteen arrests. 

Raids and other forms of legal discrimination continued into the early 1980s.72

In 1982, ten years after the first pride parade, the pressure from continual police harassment seemed to come to a head. Leaders of the Dallas Gay Alliance met with Dallas Police Chief Billy Prince on Friday, May 10th to hold a conversation regarding the mistreatment members of the gay community received at the hand of the police department. Several hundred people attended a rally in support of LGBT rights in Dallas that weekend. Days later, gay leaders met with the Dallas City Council. With the actions of the LGBT groups gaining significant local press, the city council had begun to attract the press reports it worked so hard to curtail. In another act of conciliation, city officials promised it would recognize the LGBT community “as a segment of the greater Dallas community which is entitled to equal treatment under the law,” a promise that bears a striking resemblance to the message Chris McKee believed the city council had sent by allowing the first pride parade. 73

If the traditional story of the Dallas Way is to be believed, the Dallas City Council acted in a progressive manner by allowing the first gay pride parade in 1972, effectively accepting the city’s gay community. Seeing the events of the 1970s and early 1980s unfold, it is clear that this was not the case. Lacking the legal ability to stop the pride parade, the city council acted in a manner to minimize any negative press it could receive, an act that followed the council’s precedence of putting the city’s economic stability and good reputation before all else. The LGBT community hoped the allowance of the pride parade, as well as the lack of retribution, was the first acceptance of their community into Dallas urban culture by the city council and the straight citizens of Dallas. Unfortunately, the LGBT community thought wrong. In just a year’s time the state of

Texas’ Penal Codes were revised, giving those in power more legal grounds by which to target gays and lesbians. Years of harassment of the LGBT community in Dallas ensued. In 1982 the community finally got the promise that it believed it had received and earned with the first parade a decade earlier.

The Dallas Way did exist, however it was not as positive a phenomenon as some would promote. The Dallas Way was not one of progressive thinking and acceptance. Rather, it was a deceptive attempt to minimize negative opinions of the city in order to keep its economy growing and its image intact. If accepting a disliked minority was necessary to keep the city’s positive image, the leaders of Dallas did enough to appease that minority without making any significant changes. Many will point to the civil rights movement to show how this facet of the Dallas Way worked, but it is important to remember that the Dallas Way affected every minority group in Dallas, including the city’s LGBT community. By allowing the first pride parade in 1972, the Dallas City Council minimized detrimental press, even receiving positive remarks for its actions from the LGBT community itself. When it came to gay establishments, generally gay-owned businesses often isolated within the LGBT community with little impact on the city’s overall economy, Dallas acted in a different manner. The Dallas Police Department raided gay establishments often, under the precedence of the revised Texas Penal Codes, leading to multiple arrests and fines and continual discrimination. The only thing that saved the jobs of many queer school teachers in Dallas in 1979 was the economic and logistical infeasibility of replacing one tenth of the city’s teachers. Only when gay leaders and organizations began to get significant media coverage did the city take their needs into account. The city’s promise in 1982 acted just like the acceptance of the pride parade ten years earlier, keeping negative media about Dallas at a minimum.
The Dallas gay pride parade of 1972 had proven to be a catalytic moment in Dallas LGBT history. The parade was the first major event to put the community in the public eye, a sort of coming-out-party for the gays, lesbians, bisexuals, and transgender people of Dallas. The hard work and bravery of Rob Shivers, Chris McKee, and the rest of the participants forced the first concession from the city council regarding the rights of gays and lesbians in Dallas, creating a small place for themselves in Dallas’ urban culture that would grow with time. With a city council so dependent on a positive public image, the first concession granted by the council was an important step in the long and difficult journey towards acceptance that continues today. Gay marriage and workplace non-discrimination in Dallas may very well be the final, mainstream concessions; legitimate acts of integration following a string of insincere allowances and promises. When that day comes, the community will likely take the time to look back at the first concession that illuminated Dallas’ queer community and was the beginning of its gay rights movement, the gay pride parades of 1972 and 1973.
CHAPTER 4

THE PRIDE PARADES OF THE 1980S

The Circle of Friends used the pride parades of 1972 and 1973 as a sort of coming out for Dallas’ LGBT community, staking an initial claim for the queer community in Dallas’ greater urban culture. Over the next fifteen years major shifts occurred in the Dallas’ queer community and the organization of pride parades to alter the message and meaning of the parades themselves. The first of these shifts was a change in power of LGBT organizations.

Despite being the first “Homophile” organization in Texas, the Circle of Friends was not able to capitalize on the success of the first two parades in 1972 and 1973. According to Phil Johnson, the Circle of Friends simply did not want to deal with the hassle of organizing the event again in 1974 or the years after. Unfortunately, there is little archival material that deals with the 1973 parade or the lack of a parade in 1974. More than likely, the lack of a parade in 1974 came from two issues. First, it came in part from the shrinking of the Circle of Friends. Some members of Dallas’ LGBT community thought the Circle of Friends was too exclusive of a group, which limited potential new members. At its peak, the Circle of Friends never had more than 30 members. The name of the organization also contributed to its perceived exclusivity, as some thought that it was more of a group of friends than a legitimate organization. This factor forced the group to change its name to the Gay Organization of Dallas (GOOD) in 1975. 74 Second, on January 1st, 1974, the new ruling of the Texas Penal Code 23.01 came into effect, making illegal all acts of same-sex sexual activity. Some members of the community likely feared that a public LGBT event like the pride parade would bring unwarranted scrutiny thanks to the new penal code, limiting the community desire for the parade.

74 Phil Johnson, “A Decade of Gay Pride,” manuscript, Folder 4, Box 62, “Phil Johnson Collection” Resource Center LGBT Collection of the UNT Libraries, 1940-2011 (Willis Library, University of North Texas, Denton, Texas).
The Circle of Friends did lead to a series of events that helped establish a powerful LGBT community and organization that continues to this day. As mentioned previously, the Dallas Metropolitan Community Church was founded after Rob Shivers and other members of the Circle of Friends expressed interest forming the church. It was through the MCC that the Dallas Gay Political Alliance, Dallas’ most powerful LGBT organization, took off. In 1975, members of the MCC began to host unofficial meetings at the church, where they would speak about political events and elections that could affect the city’s LGBT community. Becoming an official organization in 1976, the DGPC quickly became the largest and most motivated gay organization in Dallas with some 500 to 600 members on the mailing list and roughly 300 active members by mid-1977, having utilized the popularity of the MCC to recruit members. Broadly, the mission of the DGPC was to stop discrimination and prejudice against gays and lesbians in the city of Dallas, as well to project a positive image of the queer community that dissolved common negative stereotypes.

One of the more important missions of the DGPC was to end discriminatory raids on gay establishments by Dallas Police vice squads, such as the raid on the Village Station bar on October 23rd, 1979. During this raid a police vice squad rounded up ten gay men, and arrested them for alleged lewd conduct. Three more raids took place in December of 1979, leading to sixteen more arrests. In the months to come, the DGPC raised funds to pay the legal fees of those who had been arrested and held numerous meetings with members of both the LGBT community and city officials to try to end the police harassment of the queer community. The legacy of helping create

---

75 Mims, “Cathedral of Hope,” 45.
the MCC, which in turn would help create the DGPC, was not the only vestige of the Circle of Friends. Multiple members of the Circle of Friends remained active in the community and in the DGPC. Phil Johnson, one of the central founders of the Circle of Friends, was elected to the first board of directors of the DGPC, and was elected as the organization’s secretary numerous times.78

By the time of the development of the DGPC and the police raid on Village Station in 1979 two other major shifts had happened for the queer community of Dallas. First, the community had established a permanent home of sorts, the Oak Lawn neighborhood of Dallas. Cedar Springs Road, especially on the intersection with Throckmorton Avenue, had 100 establishments owned and operated by gays and lesbians, with most of the city’s twenty-five gay and lesbian bars and clubs being located in the neighborhood. Gays and lesbians made up an estimated 25 percent of the neighborhood’s residents.79

The creation of a queer neighborhood allowed gay and lesbian owned and operated businesses to thrive. These businesses sprouted up shortly after the creation of the MCC, as the gays and lesbians in Dallas began to see that there was queer community large enough to support more than just bars and nightclubs.80 This, combined with the advancement of closeted gays and lesbians in Dallas’ numerous corporate offices, created the second major shift of the decade: a predominantly middle-class queer community. Middle-class queer communities had become the norm in large cities across the country. A 1979 Business Week article entitled “Gays: A Major Force in the Marketplace” emphasized how the average median income of gay households in Los Angeles were nearly 50 percent above the national average. A branch manager of a San Francisco

78 The impact of Phil Johnson on Dallas’ early LGBT community is hard to overemphasize, including the early days of the DGPC. While he was not often in the most prestigious of roles, he is the reason why the history of the early DGPC is able to be researched, as Johnson typed most of the records and meeting notes of the DGPC from the late 1970s and early 1980s that survive to this day. See: Boxes 62-65, “Phil Johnson Collection” Resource Center LGBT Collection of the UNT Libraries, 1940-2011 (Willis Library, University of North Texas, Denton, Texas).
80 Mims, “Cathedral of Hope,” 45.
firm stated “it would be foolish not to go after the [gay] market,” in the city with a queer minority of 100,000 or more. 81 Although Dallas in the late-1970s and early-1980s was clearly not San Francisco or Los Angeles in terms of the size of the queer minority or the support or acceptance of that minority, the Dallas queer community was fully aware of its economic and political potential. The DGPC commissioned a report of the queer community in the spring of 1979, which found the community to be predominately middle age, middle class, and of higher social status than the average Dallas resident. 82 These factors were visible in the fundraisers held by the DGPC in the 1980s.

The operation of the DGPC required funds to print fliers, to mail monthly newsletters, to support queer-friendly political candidates financially, and to sustain various other activities in the community. The bulk of these funds were raised through small events and fundraisers held at establishments in Oak Lawn. After years of no organized events to celebrate the commemoration of Stonewall, which throughout the country became known as “pride weeks,” a pride week was planned for Dallas in June 1979. The DGPC planned the main event, Razzle Dazzle Dallas, as a large party held at the Hall of State in Dallas’ Fair Park, home of the Texas State Fair. Over 1,000 people attended the event, with tickets costing two dollars in advance or three dollars at the door. 83

The DGPC (which became the Dallas Gay Alliance [DGA] in 1981) quickly realized the potential of the Razzle Dazzle as a fundraising event. In 1981, just two years after the initial Razzle Dazzle, the DGA raised ticket prices to five dollars for an advanced ticket and eight dollars for a...

ticket at the door. The event did over $23,000 in sales for a profit of over $7,000.\textsuperscript{84} By the height of the AIDS crises in 1987, the event attracted some 7,000 participants and raised over $40,000 dollars, most of which went to AIDS organizations that helped members of the community who were living with AIDS attempt to cope with the disease.\textsuperscript{85} The fundraising at the numerous Razzle Dazzles in the 1980s showed the strong economic status of Dallas’ queer community, which played a crucial role in the organization of the pride parades in the 1980s and the creation of supportive relationships with the straight majority.

The Pride Parades of the 1980s

One year after the first Razzle Dazzle in Dallas, on June 29, 1980, Oak Lawn merchants and members of the DGPC organized the city’s third ever pride parade, and first since 1973. Having not organized a parade in so long, the event was rather unsuccessful, and little about the event has been recorded. According to Phil Johnson, then the secretary of the DGPC, the parade started 30 minutes before its scheduled start time and most onlookers missed the parade entirely.\textsuperscript{86} There was seemingly no mention of the event in the Dallas press which instead covered the murder of a gay man by an off-duty police officer at the Houston Pride Parade the day before the event in Dallas.\textsuperscript{87}

The annual tradition of pride parades began in earnest, then, in 1981. After DGPC members renamed their organization the Dallas Gay Alliance (DGA), they created a Dallas Pride Week Committee (DPWC) to oversee the organization of the parade. This marked the first time in its

\textsuperscript{84} “A Report to the Community” manuscript, Folder 24, Box 75, “Phil Johnson Collection” Resource Center LGBT Collection of the UNT Libraries, 1940-2011 (Willis Library, University of North Texas, Denton, Texas).
\textsuperscript{85} Taffet, “Razzle Dazzle Returns.”
\textsuperscript{86} Johnson, “A Decade of Gay Pride.”
five years the DPGC/DGA organized a pride parade. After seven years without an official parade, a number of factors came together to help restart the tradition in Dallas in 1981. The success of the parades in Houston, where 30,000 people saw the parade annually, likely had an impact. Phil Johnson, who helped organize the original parades as a member of the Circle of Friends, also likely played a role in raising support for the reintroduction of Dallas parades, especially considering that he was a member of the newly created DPWC. The DGA had also gained experience in planning public events, having now planned two Razzle Dazzles with a third coming that year. With Johnson’s experience of planning parades and the DGA’s experience in planning successful events like Razzle Dazzle, the DPWC hit the ground running to plan a successful pride parade in 1981. Generally, pride parades take place on the last weekend of June, in remembrance of the Stonewall Riots. The DPWC picked Saturday, June 21 to hold the parade to avoid competing with the larger Houston pride parade that many Dallasites wanted to attend the following week.88

Themed “Dreams do come True,” the parade began outside of the Village Station, traveling down Cedar Springs Road before turning left onto Turtle Creek Boulevard, and left again onto Hall Street before ending at Lee Boulevard and the Robert E. Lee Park, where a rally and get together was held after the parade.89 This parade route reflected the development of the “Gayborhood” since the early 1970s and a shift in attitude about the parade. The first parades in 1972 and 1973 marched up Main Street to City Hall, clearly sending a political message to the City Council.90 The stated purpose of the pride parade in 1981 was to “celebrate our pride as Americans, Texas, Gays and Lesbians in quest of our human rights.”91

89 Ibid.
91 Dallas Pride Week Committee, “Information Sheet.”
the very place where the community’s human rights had been violated just two years before during the raid on Village Station, the parade route symbolized a moving forward from that event, an attempt to grow out of the oppressive past. As the parade moved on it traveled past many gay and lesbian bars and establishments, symbolizing the strength of the community moving forward, before the parade ended in Lee Park. This final celebration on city property undoubtedly symbolized the governmental support that the queer community so desperately desired and worked for.

Though the route of the parade changed in the near ten years between parades, one thing that did not change was the worry about presenting the gay community in a positive manner. Like during the parades of 1972 and 1973, parade participants were under strict orders to refrain from nudity, alcohol and drug use, obscenity, and immature behavior. Even within the friendly confines of Oak Lawn, the organizers of the parade knew that any obscene material in the parade would reflect negatively on the gay community. 92 Despite over a decade of political activity in Dallas, members of the community still had to fight the negative stereotype that gays and lesbians were sex-crazed and lewd. By maintaining appropriate attire, meaning fully clothed, and messages on signs and floats, meaning no crude language or sexual references, the DGPC hoped to show Dallas’ straight majority that the queer minority was not so different after all.

The 1981 parade was much more successful in terms of organization and public turn-out than the parade in 1980, but parade organizers were unable to get media coverage in Dallas, limiting the impact of the positive image the parade could send to the straight majority. Considering the Dallas newspapers covered the parade the very next year, this was likely due to

92 Ibid.
an inability of organizers to notify media instead of a media blackout of some kind.\textsuperscript{93} The DPWC did make one particular stride to help expand the parade in 1981, though. Miller of Dallas, Incorporated bought advertising space on the Pride Week Committee’s flier for the parade, becoming the first corporate sponsor of Dallas pride parades to come from outside the gay and lesbian community. The relationship between Miller of Dallas, Inc. and the queer community is an obvious one, as the company had been working with the owners of gay and lesbian bars for years, a beneficial relationship for both sides. This sort of symbiotic relationship with businesses of the straight majority is one queer organizers hoped to create, as they believed it would help their minority move forward in its quest for tolerance.\textsuperscript{94}

Looking at the flier for the pride week celebration in 1982 shows both how quickly the organizers of the pride parade learned from their past attempts, and how quickly different aspects of the straight majority of Dallas began the long process of supporting the queer community. The flier for pride week in 1981 was a simple tri-fold, light blue piece of paper with a list of activities and one graphic: a Miller Lite logo from the sponsor of the flier, Miller of Dallas, Inc. The booklet for pride week in 1982, on the other hand, was a comparatively complex production. The cover of the booklet shows an incomplete puzzle of a pink triangle on a green field. The image symbolizes the work done by the gay community to achieve equality and acceptance piece by piece. In hindsight, this image is strikingly appropriate, although one could argue the puzzle has still yet to be completed.\textsuperscript{95}

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{94} Dallas Pride week Committee, “1981 Pride Parade Flier,” manuscript, Folder 24, Box 75, “Phil Johnson Collection” Resource Center LGBT Collection of the UNT Libraries, 1940-2011 (Willis Library, University of North Texas, Denton, Texas).
\textsuperscript{95} Dallas Gay Pride Association, “Progress Through Unity, Gay Pride Week 1982,” Folder 43, Box 477, “Organizations” Resource Center LGBT Collection of the UNT Libraries, 1940-2011 (Willis Library, University of North Texas, Denton, Texas). To see the cover of the 1982 booklet, see Appendix B1.
\end{flushright}
The booklet begins with an advertisement by a beer distributor, but not Miller of Dallas, Inc. Instead, the reader is greeted by an advertisement for Budweiser, distributed at the time in Dallas by Ben E. Keith Company. With the familiar slogan “This Bud’s for You,” placed over a six pack of Budweiser, the ad promotes a sense of support for gays and lesbians by a corporate entity, another important symbiotic relationship for the queer community. After welcoming statements from the co-chairpersons of the Dallas Gay Pride Association (DGPA), Ann Brown and Carl L. Mallies, the booklet continued with advertisements for numerous companies in the Oak Lawn neighborhood and the calendar of events for pride week. Don Baker, then president of the DGA had his own welcome letter, which was followed by more advertisements, including a page and a half spread by Miller of Dallas, with the message “Miller of Dallas Thanks You for your Support,” a sentiment that surely went both ways in this relationship. The booklet also included information on the parades’ two grand marshals. One of the grand marshals was Lucia Valesca, executive director of the National Gay Task Force. The other grand marshal was Ricardo Medrano, a member of the Dallas City Council who represented the Oak Lawn neighborhood. Ten years after councilman Doug Fain tried to get the pride parade canceled, Councilmember Medrano was one of the most celebrated participants in the parade. Medrano was a noted supporter of the queer community during his time as the city representative of the greater Oak Lawn district and the first politician to enter into a symbiotic relationship of support with Dallas’ queer minority, where votes by gays and lesbians were traded for a queer-friendly political policy by Medrano; the sort of political relationship so badly wanted in Dallas.

Unlike the parades in 1980 and 1981, the 1982 pride parade also received mentions by the press in both the *Dallas Morning News* and the *Dallas Times Herald*, the first mention of Dallas
pride events in local media since the parade in 1973. Parade organizers saw media as an important tool, both as advertising for the parade, which could potentially lead to a larger crowd; and as a method to show the Dallas straight majority that there was no reason to discriminate against the queer minority.\(^98\) After noting the success of the parade, with some 3,000 onlookers, the *Dallas Morning News* mentions a physical altercation that took place between Bob Holder, a straight man who held a sign that read “Straights are People Too,” and several gay onlookers and parade participants. No arrests were made and no charges were filed due to the dispute. Instead of focusing on the quarrel, articles in both papers shift to the after-parade rally at Lee Park, where parade grand marshal and National Gay Task Force executive director Lucia Valeska was the keynote speaker.\(^99\) The focus on the after-parade rally instead of the physical altercation served as a way for the media to create a positive spin for the city of Dallas. But the newspapers were also showing some semblance of support for the queer community, giving the kind of positive press the organizers wanted to help develop the parade and the relationships the parades could foster with the straight majority.

The queer community of Dallas had made significant strides in gaining the support of some members of the straight majority by the beginning of pride week in 1982. The beer distributing companies of the area knew the economic viability of the queer community through the community’s ability to keep over twenty gay and lesbian bars in business, and attempted to corral future business by advertising in the parade booklets and showing support of the pride parade. Likewise, Ricardo Medrano was the first local politician to show support of the queer community.

\(^98\) No detailed record of the funding of the parades in 1981 or 1982 exist, but the records of the Dallas Tavern Guild for later parades show that organizers spent fairly large sums of money advertising the parade in local media such as *This Week in Texas*. See: “Pride ’86 Committee,” manuscript, Folder 26, Box 75, “Phil Johnson Collection” Resource Center LGBT Collection of the UNT Libraries, 1940-2011 (Willis Library, University of North Texas, Denton, Texas).

by acting as the parade’s grand marshal. Certainly, Medrano knew that if he were to be elected to represent Oak Lawn, he needed the queer vote, and used events like the parade to show the community that he would support them if they reelected him. Pride week and the pride parade of 1982 first to highlighted the trend in Dallas of business and political leaders realizing the value of the city’s queer community, both economically and politically. The organizers of the parades would help these symbiotic relationships of support flourish in the years to come.

The booklet for pride week and the pride parade of 1983 continued the increase of advertisements, with the majority of the booklet’s pages containing ads for Oak Lawn businesses. With Willow Distributors, distributor of Coors, and S.H. Lynch and Company, distributor of Stroh’s and Stroh Light, taking out ads along with Ben E. Keith’s Budweiser advertisement, regional beer distributors again increased their presence in the booklet. The DGPA included a message from its president, Jim O’Connor, as well as a schedule of the week, guidelines for the parade, an acknowledgement page, biographies of the parade’s grand marshals, and a list of the groups participating in the parade. Miller of Dallas, Inc., refrained from purchasing an ad for the first time in three years, but became the first business based outside of Oak Lawn to join the host of bars, small community businesses, and political organizations that marched in the parade.100 This was an important first step in the support of the gay community by straight businesses. Miller of Dallas, Inc., was testing the waters, so to speak.

By becoming physical participants in the parade, Miller of Dallas, Inc., showed support for the queer community at a very different level than they did by simply advertising in the pride booklets. Media coverage was more likely to discuss the participants in the parade than those who advertised in the booklet. Similarly, Miller of Dallas became more visible to the straight majority

100 Dallas Gay Pride Association, “Gay Pride Week ’83,” Folder 26, Box 75 “Phil Johnson Collection” Resource Center LGBT Collection of the UNT Libraries, 1940-2011 (Willis Library, University of North Texas, Denton, Texas).
who likely had little access to the booklets or other publications that parade organizers printed in queer businesses and distributed only at queer events. By literally becoming part of the pride parade, Miller of Dallas showed the entire city that they supported the queer community and were, on some level, active in the community. However, parades by their very nature are relatively short celebrations, meaning that Miller’s physical support of the community need not be permanent. If Miller received negative attention from the straight majority for their participation in the parade, there were no further public displays of support that needed cancelling, no billboards to be taken down, etc. As it turned out, the first physical show of support garnered no negative attention for Miller of Dallas, proving that the waters were safe for not only Miller of Dallas, but other businesses that would follow suit in the years to come. By utilizing the queer community’s economic viability, parade organizers continued to create stronger bonds of support with aspects of Dallas’ straight majority.

The parade in 1983 was seemingly a great success with 4,500 onlookers, or 1,500 more than the year before.\textsuperscript{101} The biggest impact of the 1983 parade, though, did not have to do with the large crowd, the increase in advertisements in the parade booklet, or the physical show of support by Miller of Dallas, Inc. Rather, changes began happening behind the scenes as an argument took place between the Dallas Gay Pride Association and the Dallas Tavern Guild (DTG).\textsuperscript{102} The DTG was an organization of the owners and managers of gay and lesbian bars in the city of Dallas. The group loosely organized itself in the late 1970s and early 1980s as a way for bar managers to notify other bars of police raids. When city police would raid individual bars, the owner or manager of

\textsuperscript{101} Jane Wolfe, “4,500 Turn out for Parade Marking Gay Pride Week,” \textit{Dallas Morning News}, June 20, 1983.
that bar would get on the phone with the other bars, letting them know of potential trouble. As the group became more officially organized, they planned to have a float in the 1983 parade. The DGPA denied the Tavern Guild’s entry, stating the plan for the float was too obscene. The Oak Lawn Symphonic Band also had issues with the DGPA in regards to their entry in the parade. Eventually, the Tavern Guild, Dallas Gay Alliance, and DGPA met to resolve many of the conflicts, which kept gay businesses from boycotting the parade although the DTG float was still not allowed. The DGPA had further issues, though, as they failed to get the winners of the parade’s judging contests their trophies at the post-parade rally at Lee Park.

The spat between the DGPA and other organizations and businesses within the community quickly became public. Mike Stewart, then president of the DGA, addressed the issue in his column of the DGA’s monthly Dialog newsletter. After praising the efforts of the DGA and the Oak Lawn Symphonic Band, which had also played and marched that week in Houston’s parade, Stewart dismissed the issues the DGPA raised as “unnecessary conflict” and praised the “‘grass roots’ efforts to provide quality activities and a commitment to find solutions to problems,” which seemingly came from the DGA and the DTG. Finally, he outlined a goal for the future planning of pride weeks that would “coordinate activities and draw strength from our diversity rather than to control activities and be threatened by our diversity [his emphases].” Clearly, the DGA was not going to let organizational squabbles affect the future planning of one of the community’s most popular events.

---

103 Michael Doughman, interview with author, October 24th, 2014.
As the DGA was deciding how to proceed in regards to organizing the city’s pride parades, DGA fundraising chair Alan Ross organized an event that would eventually change the course of the pride parade in Dallas. Ross organized the Texas Freedom Festival in September 1983 to commemorate the one year anniversary of Judge Jerry Buchmeyer overturning Texas Penal Code 21.06, the law that made homosexual acts illegal in the state of Texas. The event featured numerous workshops in Oak Lawn that focused on AIDS related issues and two concerts at the Majestic Theatre. Ross had expected a few thousand people to attend, and while it failed to meet that expectation, it still drew over 500 people to the concerts and workshops, helping to raise money to pay for lobbyists in an attempt to get the federal government to pay for AIDS research. The experience Ross gained event organizing, and specifically holding an event in September, would help Ross and the DGA in the near future.106

Changes in the Organization of Pride Parades

The tentative alliance between the DGA, the DTG, and the Oak Lawn Symphonic Band that had helped save the 1983 parade led these groups to take over control of planning Dallas’ pride week for 1984. In January 1984, approximately 175 community leaders met to vote on the planning of pride events for that year, with Allen Ross presiding over the meeting as moderator. Kathy Jack, then treasurer of the Dallas Tavern Guild, outlined a plan that would make sweeping changes for pride week in Dallas. Instead of a single pride week taking place in June, the plan Jack outlined consisted of three separate weeks of pride celebrations. The first, Pride I, would be a

106 For more on the first Texas Freedom Festival, see: Rick Abrams, “Gays Receive Data on AIDS,” *Dallas Morning News*, September 5, 1983. The Dallas Tavern Guild traces its history of parades back to the first Texas Freedom Festival in 1983, even though there was no parade at that event and organizers had no official connections to the Tavern Guild at the time. The Guild celebrated the 30th annual parade and festival in 2013, but it was actually the 29th parade under the leadership of the Guild, and the 30th iteration of the Texas Freedom Festival.
traditional week of pride events in late June to commemorate the Stonewall Riots, with Razzle Dazzle Dallas as its main event. The pride event in August, Pride II, would consist of an evening of entertainment at the Majestic Theatre and a banquet to celebrate Judge Buchmeyer’s 1982 court decision to overturn 26.01. The third and final pride event, Pride III, would feature a week of celebrations from September 16 to September 23 that included parties, athletic events, and other fundraisers, ending with the pride parade. The last piece of business at the meeting was a decision to create a Steering Committee to oversee the organization of all three pride events. The committee consisted of Gary Monier, president of the Dallas Tavern Guild, “Judith A.”, past president of the Oak Lawn Symphonic Band, and Mike Stewart and Alan Ross of the DGA. The Steering Committee would form a planning committee of at least 15 community members who would meet first in February to begin planning the years’ pride events, with the funding of those events coming from the Dallas Tavern Guild.107

Although leaders in the community agreed upon these changes democratically, they did garner some public scrutiny. The shifting of the pride parade from its traditional June celebration to September was controversial, requiring two motions to be passed by the majority at the January meeting. Some saw the change of dates only as a way for the DTG to create another week that would be good for business at its bars, as people would flock to the bars to celebrate yet another pride week. Similarly, an individual or organization printed and distributed flyers after the meeting of the Steering Committee in February that accused the DGA of “being ‘divisive’ and ‘seeking to confuse and destroy.’”108 The actions by the DGA to change pride celebrations reiterated their

---

107 Alan Ross, “Gay Pride Week,” *Dialog* 8 no. 2 (February 1984), Folder 6, Box 467, “Organizations” Resource Center LGBT Collection of the UNT Libraries, 1940-2011 (Willis Library, University of North Texas, Denton, Texas); Alan Ross, “Pride III ’84,” *Dialog* 8 no. 3 (March 1984), Folder 6, Box 467, “Organizations” Resource Center LGBT Collection of the UNT Libraries, 1940-2011 (Willis Library, University of North Texas, Denton, Texas).
position as the major organization in the queer community and catapulted the DTG into a position of authority in the community as well, which could easily be seen as a power play by suspicious members of the community. Despite these few dissenting voices, no sizeable minority ever attempted to undo the changes or overthrow the DGA or DTG. The members of the DGPA, who were perhaps most likely to disagree with the changes, had no organized response to the decision. The lack of organized opposition stemmed, most likely, from the fact that the continued organization of Dallas pride parades became incredibly successful. After all, what better way was there to continue the fostering of supportive economic and political relationships than to have members of the politically-minded DGA and economically-orientated Dallas Tavern Guild plan the organization of the parades?

By moving the parade to September, Ross and the Tavern Guild had assured that there would be no competition between the events in Dallas and those in Houston, which had always drawn a larger crowd and kept floats from greater-Texas entering in the Dallas event. Avoiding the summer heat of Dallas in June also seemed beneficial. Without these deterrents, the parade organizers anticipated a larger event and lengthened the parade by adding a few more turns to the original route. Whereas the earlier parades of the decade stayed within the friendly confines of the Oak Lawn neighborhood until the after-parade festival at Lee Park, this new parade route ventured out of Oak Lawn in order to incorporate the anticipated larger size of the parade. By venturing out of the Gayborhood, the new route symbolized the desires of the queer community to be more visible and better respected by the straight majority of Dallas.109 The efforts of Ross and the Steering Committee to expand the parade paid off immediately, and the role of the parade in fostering relationships with the straight majority became ever more important.

---

Whereas the 1983 parade had some 35 entries of organizations and businesses, the 1984 parade grew to include 60 cars and floats. Like the number of floats, the crowd had also grown for a second consecutive year, with between 5,000 and 6,000 onlookers. That was surely larger than the police-estimated crowd of 4,500 in 1983, and potentially double the 3,000 spectators at the parade in 1982, just two years earlier.110

The floats ranged in size and decoration, from the Oak Lawn Exterminating Company’s fitting paper-mâché dead hornet, to Safeplace’s simple yet elegant bed propped on a pick-up truck. Miller of Dallas, Inc. was present in the parade again, with an inflatable Miller High Life bottle resting high atop its parade entry. While the new and more numerous floats were a welcomed addition to the DTG’s first pride parade, so too was a relaxation of the previously conservative dress code. Most parade participants wore clothing that matched the theme of their float, most of which maintained relatively modest themes. There were a group of clowns in full costume, the men from the Crew’s Inn wore jeans and tuxedos with long tails, and those who road on the floats of both the DTG and DGA wore traditional street clothes, shorts or pants with a short sleeved shirts. Other floats, mostly those that represented different gay bars, featured numerous muscular men without shirts. The Union Jack’s float featured a group of men dressed as the Village People, a group that had quickly been adopted in queer culture.111 This represented the first year in the shift towards a more sexualized visual experience for Dallas pride parades that has increased to this day. The earliest pride parades in Dallas and across the country attempted to show that there was little different between the straight and queer community, meanwhile hoping to diminish


111 Safeplace was an organization that provided, naturally, a safe place for members of the LGBT community to sleep. For pictures of the 1984 pride parade, see Appendix A, gathered from: “Picture Book,” Folder 17, Box 467, “Organizations” Resource Center LGBT Collection of the UNT Libraries, 1940-2011 (Willis Library, University of North Texas, Denton, Texas).
stereotyping gays and lesbians as merely sexual beings and identities. By the mid-1980s, members of the queer community wanted to shed this perceivably accommodating approach and embrace the more sexualized nature of the community’s identity. This shift symbolized that the queer community now pushed themselves and others to accept both the similarities between the differences between the queer minority and straight majority. In a way, this shift also affirmed the queer community’s acceptance of itself, publically embracing a visualized sexual nature of the queer identity for one of the first times.

Ross and the Steering Committee were very aware of the parade’s role in fostering relationships with the straight majority, and knew that a larger parade with more spectators would increase the number of those important relationships. Dallas City Councilmember Paul Fielding, who beat out Ricardo Medrano in city elections the that April to become councilmember for Dallas’ second district, attended the parade as a show of support like Medrano had in 1982, and even proclaimed the day “Pride III day in Dallas,” a very public show of support for the queer community. Numerous political groups made appearances to represent candidates, including for the first time the Republican Party, which even had a float in the parade. Many of these political groups set up shop at the after-parade rally in Lee Park as well, taking full advantage of the large crowd just a few weeks before the local elections. With more potential voters attending the pride parade, politicians saw the parade as a great resource.112

The success of the 1984 parade stemmed in part from the organizing of Alan Ross and his ability to receive help from within the queer community itself. The Dallas Tavern Guild helped fund the parade, but it also provided Ross with two specific volunteer organizers, Kathy Jack and Paul Lewis, who received paid leave from their salaried positions at Caven Enterprises, where they

---

112 Egiebor, “Dallas gays celebrate with parade.”
were bar managers. Along with the help of Jack and Lewis, Ross was able to use his connections in the DGA to canvas the organization looking for extra help. Ross was a writer for the DGA newsletter *Dialog* so he asked for volunteers in the August issue, as the Steering committee needed street marshals, security drivers, banner bearers, a color guard, and people to staff booths both at the parade and at the celebration afterword at Lee Park.¹¹³ In 1985, Ross was able to send a specific interest form to DGA members, needing 45 members to fill many of the same positions as the year before.¹¹⁴ Considering the success of the parades, it is clear that the community fervently answered Ross’ calls for help. With the full support of the queer community of Dallas, Ross and the Steering Committee were able to focus on expanding the parade and creating more positive outside relationships.

The 1985 pride was again the largest parade in Dallas yet with 65 entries and an expanded scope. The Dallas City Council was not only present, but an active participant, with councilmember Lori Palmer and her husband riding in a car at the beginning of the event. The distributing companies of Miller, Budweiser, and Coors beer also marched in the parade, continuing the trend that began years before. The symbiotic relationships between the queer community and individual businesses resulted in a competition between these rival businesses, an incredible opportunity for the parade organizers to get the best deal possible from its straight supporters. The 1985 parade also saw an increase in participants from outside of Dallas itself. LGBT organizations from Fort Worth, San Antonio, Lubbock, and Houston were present, as were Preston’s Bar from Little Rock, Arkansas and the Gay Officer’s Action League from New York.

¹¹⁴ Alan Ross, “Many Volunteers are needed for the Texas Freedom Parade,” manuscript, Folder 23, Box 75, “Phil Johnson Collection” Resource Center LGBT Collection of the UNT Libraries, 1940-2011 (Willis Library, University of North Texas, Denton, Texas).
City. More marching bands had also entered; the Montrose Symphonic Band from Houston, the Texas A&M marching band from College Station, the Mile High Freedom band from Denver, Colorado, and the National Lesbian and Gay Band of America all joined the Oak Lawn Symphonic Band. Bringing in more gays and lesbians from outside of Dallas of course made the parade a bigger and better celebration, but also made it a more powerful tool for organizers to use to gain more support from the straight majority. 115

While the parade in 1985 maintained its celebratory nature, both the participants and crowd could not hide the seriousness of the time. With the AIDS crises continuing to grow, spectators held signs and flags with messages such as “Stop AIDS,” a theme that would continue at the Dallas parade for years to come. Undoubtedly, the pain and suffering in the Dallas queer community caused by AIDS brought that community closer together than ever before, making celebrations like the pride parade more important and better attended. Beginning in 1987, the parade became so economically successful that the Tavern Guild began to donate parade proceeds to local organizations that helped members of the community deal with HIV/AIDS. As if the AIDS crisis was not enough, there was yet another adverse experience that weighed over the participants and onlookers of the 1985 parade. The Steering Committee had moved pride events into August and September years prior to celebrate Judge Buchmeyer’s decision to rule against 26.10, but the 1985 parade took place not long after an appeal was upheld that overruled Buchmeyer’s decision, keeping 26.10 on the books and same-sex sexual relations illegal in the state of Texas. 116 Although the pride parades continued to create strong relationships of support in Dallas, they had

115 “Texas Freedom parade Celebration in Lee Park,” manuscript, Folder 26, Box 75, “Phil Johnson Collection” Resource Center LGBT Collection of the UNT Libraries, 1940-2011 (Willis Library, University of North Texas, Denton, Texas).
116 Ibid.
unfortunately not yet been able to create a culture of complete support or tolerance at the state level.

The Steering Committee that had been voted on in the early winter of 1984 had organized Dallas’ two most successful pride parades in 1984 and 1985, but the loosely organized group realized that it would not be able to proceed as the organizing body for Dallas pride events. Members of the Tavern Guild found that they could no longer legally fund the Steering Committee, due to the committee’s unofficial nature. Considering the 1985 parade cost over $15,000 with $4,000 coming from the Tavern Guild itself, another $1,000 directly from bars within the Guild, and the remaining $10,000 or so coming from different fundraisers often held at Tavern Guild establishments, the continued financial support of the Tavern Guild was paramount to the future of pride parades in Dallas. To assuage the legal concerns, the Tavern Guild voted to essentially absorb the Steering Committee by forming its own subcommittee for planning the parade, called the Pride Committee, and reorganizing the Guild itself as a nonprofit 501(c)(3) organization. The Tavern Guild did not want to appear to be taking over the organization of the pride festivities, and took steps to make sure the community knew volunteers from outside the Guild could and needed to help organize the parade. Alan Ross continued to lead the organizers, now acting as Executive Director of the Tavern Guild, a role that made him well known and respected within the queer community of Dallas.117 The reorganization of the Tavern Guild as a nonprofit was a fitting one, allowing Ross and the Guild the ability to continue raising funds for the community and developing the ever important relationships with straight businesses and politicians in an official manner.

Towards the Future

117 “Pride ’86 Committee,” manuscript, Folder 26, Box 75, “Phil Johnson Collection” Resource Center LGBT Collection of the UNT Libraries, 1940-2011 (Willis Library, University of North Texas, Denton, Texas).
With Ross and the Tavern Guild in control of organizing and funding the parades, the events kept expanding year after year. By the tenth annual Texas Freedom Festival in 1993, a crowd of roughly 10,000 watched as 80 floats traveled from Cedar Springs Road to Lee Park.\textsuperscript{118} By 2010 an estimated 30,000 onlookers watched the Alan Ross Freedom Parade, which the Tavern Guild named after Ross in 1990.\textsuperscript{119} The parades grew from a combination of organizational ability and experience and cultural changes. Overtime, straight culture had shifted to be more tolerant of queer communities for numerous reasons. Of course, part of that shift comes from the effort of the communities themselves, using events like pride parades to change public ideology to be more tolerant.

The increased size of the parades and celebrations in Lee Park continued to attract more corporate and political attention from the straight majority as well. In 1994, Dallas Chief of Police Ben Click spoke to the crowd at Lee Park, fifteen years after the police raid at Village Station, just blocks from the park. In the early 1990s Dallas had elected its first openly gay councilmember, Craig McDaniel. McDaniel, along with other openly gay council members Chris Luna, John Loza, and Ed Oakley, were fixtures at the pride parades in the 1990s and early 2000s.\textsuperscript{120} Since the Tavern Guild began publishing a yearly Pride Guide in 2004, each issue of the yearly publication has featured letters of support from both the mayor and Dallas City Council, the same political body that had attempted to stop the initial parade in 1972.\textsuperscript{121} Similarly, straight businesses continue to seek out the symbiotic relationships with the queer community through support of the pride parade. Andrews Distributing has been the lead sponsor of the parade for a number of years, leading a long list of local, regional, and national companies that sponsor the parade such as American Airlines,

Red Bull USA, and Capitol One. Support from outside the queer community had clearly developed from the one city councilman and one beer distributor so many years ago as businesses and politicians saw the benefits of supporting and advertising to the queer minority.

It is not surprising that the parades eventually came under the control of Alan Ross, the fundraising chair for the politically-inclined Dallas Gay Alliance with the funding of the Dallas Tavern Guild, an organization comprised of business owners. This combination of political organizers and economic supporters were able to satisfy the desires of both the queer community and economic and political groups by expanding the parade and fusing the interests of all involved parties. Whereas pride parades began as a sort of political “coming out” for queer communities across the country, the parades in Dallas since the 1980s have become events that emphasize the community’s political needs at an important juncture before local elections. Likewise, gays and lesbians have long struggled for equal rights in the workplace. By creating and maintaining trusted bonds with the queer community, many businesses in the area have not only gained the economic support of the community, but also become queer-friendly workplaces as well. The pride parades of Dallas are not merely celebratory, economic, or political, but combinations of the three. Organizers have utilized the parades as a unique coming-together of the economic and political motivations of the queer minority and straight majority that have both highlighted and helped expand the support of Dallas’ queer community.

---

In the 1970s and 1980s, Dallas’ queer community came together and organized in an incredible way. Pride parades became one of their most important public events, as the parades allowed the community to create a spot for themselves in Dallas urban culture. They did so by using the desire for economic growth and positive press at the heart of the Dallas Way to their advantage. Organizers were able to hold the two parades in the 1970s in part because of the City Council’s fear of backlash that could lead to a negative image. This gave the city’s LGBT community a small and incomplete, yet incredibly important first showing of public support. With these first parades through the heart of downtown Dallas, the LGBT community had become a tolerated member of Dallas’ urban culture. Of course, that first showing of approval and the initial place in Dallas’ culture did not mean the community was completely accepted. However, as the community grew, LGBT organizers were able to use pride parades to show the community’s economic and political potential, broadening the support they received from local politicians and businesses. Over the years the pride parades of Dallas have helped the city’s LGBT community to become an integral part of the city of Dallas.

It goes without saying that pride parades are not the only instrument that queer communities have used to create a more accepted place for themselves in urban culture. LGBT organizations have worked hard to gain access to the civil rights that have been denied to them for so long. The issue that hit queer communities the hardest and has brought about much of the internal and external change is, of course, the HIV/AIDS crisis. The disease that came to be known as AIDS was first observed in the United States in 1981. While little was known about the disease for many years, the general public knew that many gay men were affected by the
disease, which came to be known as Gay-Related Immune Deficiency, or GRID. Queer activists quickly began working to alter the public image of the disease, which was the beginning of a long and multi-natured attempt to combat AIDS. With the federal government under Ronald Reagan refusing to address the issue until 1986, it was up to LGBT communities and organizations to take care of their own: funding research, personal care, and leading political campaigns to get the federal government involved in figuring out a disease that killed nearly 7,000 people in 1985 alone.  

HIV/AIDS devastated queer communities across the country. According to one owner of a Dallas gay bar and member of the Dallas Tavern Guild, clientele at gay establishments was cut in half throughout the eighties, due to both the loss of lives and the fear of catching the disease. While there was an enormous physical toll in terms of those that died, there was also a tremendous psychological toll on those who they had left behind that is still hard for community members to discuss to this day. “We were having to go to four or five, six funerals a week,” recalls Kathy Jack, while other members of the community compared the constant death of the time to being at war. HIV/AIDS in the 1980s caused unimaginable pain for the Dallas LGBT community; it also brought the community together unlike ever before. According to Jack, “women became sisters [to gay men] rather than just lesbian friends… we were there to pick up the pieces for the guys that were sick and couldn’t take of themselves.” Any divide between gay men and lesbian women that had existed before the crisis was eliminated, creating a true queer community as opposed to two separate but related gay or lesbian circles. Even the bars

---

124 Howard Okon, interviewed by Vogel Castillo, November 7th, 2013. Oral History Collection, University of North Texas.
127 Jack, interview by Wisely, 25.
and clubs started to mix, a trend that continues to this day. By the height of the AIDS crisis in the mid-1980s, Dallas’ queer community was more tight-knit then it had been even at the beginning of the decade, eliminating or at least minimizing political squabbles like the one that had taken place regarding the organization of the pride parade in 1983.

The same affluent middle-class status that gave the Dallas queer community agency in regards to organizing pride parades allowed them to fund the care of numerous members of their community affected by HIV/AIDS. One of the first AIDS service organizations (ASOs) in the country was the Gay Men’s Health Crisis in New York City. In Dallas, the DGA founded the Foundation of Human Understanding in June of 1983, which established the AIDS Resource Center in 1985. The Nelson-Tebedo Clinic was founded shortly after, which was the clinic that obtained drugs for off-label use to help patients as portrayed in the film The Dallas Buyer’s Club. Much of the fundraising for these clinics and other establishments created to help those who suffered from AIDS took place in DTG bars and clubs, and this fundraising in combination with the political and economic factors of the parades helped foster greater relations with straight Dallas in spite of the negative stigma HIV/AIDS cast on the queer community. That the queer community could overcome both the physical and psychological toll of HIV/AIDS, and the negative perceptions it cast on the community shows how strong they had become in the more than two decades since the formation of the Circle of Friends.

There is no lack of incredible history to further study Dallas’ queer community. Pride parades have, though, been some of the best documented activities of the community. The archival sources used in this work were accessible because some members of the queer

---

128 Eaklor, Queer America, 177.
129 David Taffet, interview by Celeste Graham, November 12th, 2013. Oral History Collection, University of North Texas.
community in Dallas had the foresight to know their documents would be important, especially Phil Johnson, who kept his own ‘archives’ in his home for numerous years, filing any flyers, meeting notes, and newspaper clippings he could find that dealt with the city’s LGBT community. Johnson’s archive eventually grew too big for his home, and was moved to the Resource Center Dallas, a community health clinic that started at the height of the AIDS crisis. In 2012, the Resource Center transferred its archives to the University of North Texas Library. The contributions of Phil Johnson, the Resource Center Dallas, and a local LGBT history organization called the Dallas Way to collect the history of their own community are incredibly significant, and not only for this work. They highlight how vital it is for any minority community to keep record of its history, so that someday their story can be added to the popular narrative of U.S. history.130

As important as it is for minority communities to keep archival records of their history, the practice can lead to some unfortunate consequences, particularly regarding the lack of varied voices in the archival material. When documents are kept from one person, or perhaps a small number of organizations, the voices of those who were not a part of that group, and especially those who opposed that group in anyway, are usually not heard. Take for instance the issues between the Dallas Gay Alliance, the Dallas Tavern Guild, and the Dallas Gay Pride Committee in 1983. The only sources that mention this rift in the community came from publications released by the DGA or the DTG, meaning the DGPC’s thoughts on the matter do not appear in the archives in anyway. Because of this, the retelling and analyses of the issue is not, and cannot, be complete. That is not to say that this work and others like it are incomplete in themselves, or

ill-advised. Rather, the analysis of the sources that do exist can pay dividends both as original research, and as guides to future historians and archivists as to what else needs to be researched or recorded.

The popularity of the pride parades hosted by the Tavern Guild grows yearly, further developing the political, economic, and social capital of the city’s LGBT community to use in its quest for complete acceptance. Since the Circle of Friends held their first pride parade in 1972, the city’s queer community has made major strides towards that acceptance, but there is still much work that needs to be done. But there are signs of hope. Nationally, trends in the legalization of same-sex marriage as well as positive poll results regarding the acceptance of LGBT individuals show that we as a society have come a long way since the raids and riots at Stonewall. One can be certain that when the state of Texas finally legalizes same-sex marriage, there will be one hell of a pride parade.
APPENDIX A

PHOTOS OF THE 1984 PRIDE PARADE
A1- Union Jack, Round-Up Saloon, and Oak Lawn Exterminating Company

The Imperial Court of Dallas, 4001, and the Unicorn

Pride III Dallas
Sept. 23, 1984

The Imperial Court of Dallas float

09-23-84
(20-7)

4001 float

09-23-84
(20-8)

1: "Unity and More in '84"
"Hand Made by the Management and Staff"
Unicorn float

rt: "Working Together"
The Hidden Door float

09-23-84
(20-9)
Dallas Gay Alliance

"Picture Book," Folder 17, Box 467, "Organizations" Resource Center LGBT Collection of the UNT Libraries, 1940-2011 (Willis Library, University of North Texas, Denton, Texas), 3.
A4- Color Guard, Oak Lawn Symphonic Band, and Flag Corps


73
A6- Dallas Tavern Guild, Metroplex Republican Society, and Oak Lawn Exterminating Company

A8- At Lee Park, Lee Statue

At Lee Park, Unity and More in ‘84

FMAE Dallas
Sept. 23, 1984

At Lee Park

09-23-84
(23-7)

At Lee Park

09-23-84
(23-8)

At Lee Park

09-23-84
(23-9)

APPENDIX B

1982 PRIDE FLIER
THE DALLAS GAY PRIDE ASSOCIATION PRESENTS

PROGRESS THROUGH UNITY
GAY PRIDE WEEK 1982
JUNE 19-27 DALLAS

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Primary Sources

Manuscript Collections, Photographs
Denton, Texas
Willis Library, University of North Texas

Oral History
Dallas, Texas
Interview in possession of Author
Doughman, Michael. Interview by Author, October 24th, 2014

Dallas, Texas
Dallas Public Library

Denton, Texas
Oral History Collection, University of North Texas

Autobiographies

Pride Parade Guides
Dallas, Texas
Viva la Difference! 2004 Dallas Pride Guide
Gift to author from Dallas Tavern Guild

Dallas Pride 2005
Gift to author from Dallas Tavern Guild

Deep in the Heart of Pride: 2013 Pride Guide
Gift to author from Dallas Tavern Guild
Newspapers

Dallas Morning News
Dallas Voice

Secondary Sources

Theses


Books and Articles


