

Detroit Gay Paper Folds

Richard Schrader

1978

April of 1978 marks the closing of a publication that has had a definite impact on the gay movement of Detroit, even though most straight leftists (and probably many gays) were never aware of its existence—*The Metro Gay News*.

Its story begins a few months after the radical *Gay Liberator* closed its operations in March 1976. *The Metro Gay News* (MGN) commenced publication and its first meetings were well-balanced between men and women (one of its few points over the *Liberator*), but even in this early stage it was very obvious where the power of the paper was truly centered: in David Krumroy, a former steel lot salesman. Though MGN always had some articles by a few women, gradually they seemed to shift to the bottom of the staff box, or drop out entirely.

Krumroy stated many times that he wanted a community-oriented paper that served the needs of the entire gay community, not just gay militants and activists. He also had definite ideas on how to conduct a business. He appeared to expect to achieve something on the level of a cleaned-up *Advocate* (which in turn is trying to be a gay *Rolling Stone*).

Krumroy openly admired the efficiency of the MacDonald's Corporation, and this was faithfully reflected in his final product, the paper.

MGN was most certainly the MacDonald's hamburger of the many gay newspapers—each issue slick and bland as the last, layers of tasteless breading encasing an occasional beefcake.

MGN's demise should be interpreted as proof that no one serves an "entire community" of any social type by homogenizing a product so it offends (read challenges) no one, by cutting off the annoying "fringe" issues of economic justice, etc.

This is the dangerous side of the gay movement—to assume that when priests, bank presidents and policemen can be openly gay that everything will be peachy-keen. This type of sexual freedom may be a part of, but not the only thing needed, to bring about real social justice, yet this seems to be the attitude of the gay chic publications like MGN or the *Advocate*. To take this logic to its advanced conclusion, one could say that Hitler's Third Reich was most progressive during the time when the top officers of the SA were kidnapping boys off the streets for their sexual pleasures. The real point is, of course, that against the backdrop of the social holocausts of WWII, the sexual orientation of the Nazi leadership is very insignificant, to say the least.

Krumroy got the MGN off on a strong financial start by using his business experience to sell stocks in the paper to gay businessmen. Before the first issue appeared, \$2,000 was raised in this manner.

In his final editorial before the paper's collapse, Krumroy stated: "Those of you with some business experience can recognize that \$2,000 is an absurdly small amount with which to start a business." While this statement shows a knowledge of the processes of business, it also demonstrates an ignorance of the usual operation of community and alternative presses. Successful papers of this nature have been started with more money, but most often with much less. Publications of this nature succeed and survive, not because of large investments or because of a mass-market, lowest-common-denominator concept of their audience, but because they respond positively to specific needs and interests of a community and is supported by it.

This is not to say that the MGN did not have some memorable news articles and features, but just as much, if not much more, valuable front page and inside space covered social events at the bars around town—very good for advertising. Actually, one would wonder how any self-respecting writer would be attracted with the spineless statement in the staff, box noting “any controversial articles will be printed with a disclaimer.”

When I first came to Detroit, religious and chic crowds tried to tell me that the collapse of the Gay Liberation Front and the Gay Liberator newspaper was really a good thing, so that screaming, militant, culturally oriented queens would not interfere with the image they wanted to portray of “serious” liberal reformism.

However, with the heavy, anti-gay votes, starting a year ago in Dade County and continuing with St. Paul, and now Wichita, Kansas (a 5–1 margin) and even Eugene, Oregon, this liberal, soft approach must be viewed as a total failure. Support must be militantly vigorous and visible. Unacknowledged by Detroit’s bar crowd, everywhere anti-gay repression is on the rise.

In Milwaukee, 30 cops recently stormed into the On Broadway Health Club at 3 am arresting 18 persons. In Boston, 105 people have been arrested at the Public Library in recent months. For what it’s worth, donation to help those arrested in Milwaukee can be sent to the Gay People’s Union, PO Box 92203, Milwaukee WI 53202.

It is really more enlightening to compare the MGN with the publication it could not replace, the Gay Liberator. GL was one of the few gay publications to tie in sexual politics, revolution and culture into a somewhat cohesive social analysis.

Even though GL started and remained on a shoe-string budget throughout its entire life (7 years), and did not have a precisely on-target publication schedule and many “odd” variations in graphic’s quality, it was supported by the gay community for many years and was one of the most often quoted and most mourned-upon passing of the may gay publications across the entire country. It will be remembered for years to come, whereas few will recall MGN in years hence.

Already a new publication has popped up, *Gay Detroit*. Here there isn’t even the pretense of what made the Gay Liberator such a valuable paper to the gay community, just articles on bars, smaller-than-a-tabloid page size, color photos and nudes, but no news. If this rag last more than a few months, it’ll be only because it subsists totally on ads and is given away.

With the next scheduled referendums on gay rights ordinances set for Seattle and Madison, gays should take a serious look at their status in this country or start thinking about creative ways disco parlors can be transformed into concentration camps.

Moon Empire Expands

NEW YORK (LNS)—Townpeople of the isolated Alabama fishing town of Bayou La Batre have suddenly found right-wing religious entrepreneur, Rev. Sun Myung Moon, in their midst. Moon’s Unification Church recently paid \$6 million for land and a boat-building company in the town and is said to be negotiating for a bankrupt seafood processing plant.

The town will be the third seafood operation in the Unification Church’s empire. Its worldly holdings also include the New Yorker Hotel and other Manhattan real estate, properties in Tarrytown and Barrytown, New York, over 700 acres in Mendocino County and the Napa Valley in California, real estate in Berkeley, and the Tong Il Fishing Co. in New York City.



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