

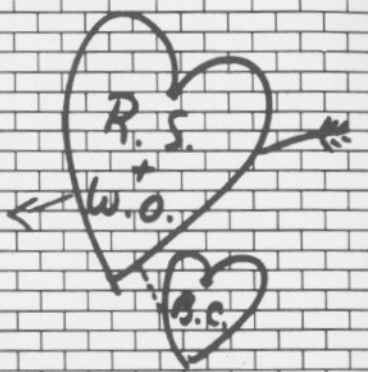
**ROD'S**







NEW SONGS:  
 I LEFT MY HEART IN SAN FRANCISCO  
 AND LEFT MY LIVER IN NEW ORLEANS!

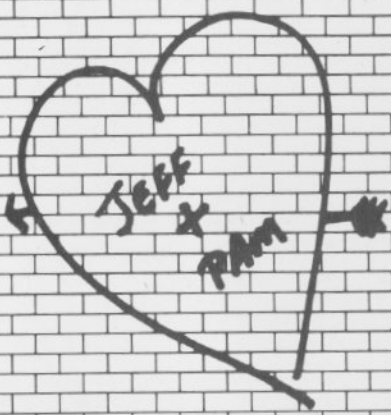


RODNEY  
 WAS HERE

A GOOD NAME FOR A  
 RUBBER "The Rodney  
 Shield"

THE SHERATON HOTEL IS  
 STILL LOOKING FOR YOU

NO  
 FARTING  
 IN  
 HOT TUBS...



TO THE STAFF  
 OF ROD'S  
 FROM THE STAFF  
 OF **TOUCHED**  
 Chicago





**Dear Friends,**

It is a pleasure to be writing to you now, over ten years after I first conceived of ROD'S. I am grateful for the support and friendship you have shown me.

This magazine is a project of many months. Thinking about ten years of ROD'S history and trying to digest and condense it was both frustrating and stimulating. There are forgotten events and names, I'm sure, and for these, accept my apologies. I know that your contribution was special in its way.

I have benefitted from the love and affection of a few very special people; my family, especially my brother and business partner, Greg, and my partner in life, Warren Olson. My thanks go to them, and also to the special members of the Hotel Family.

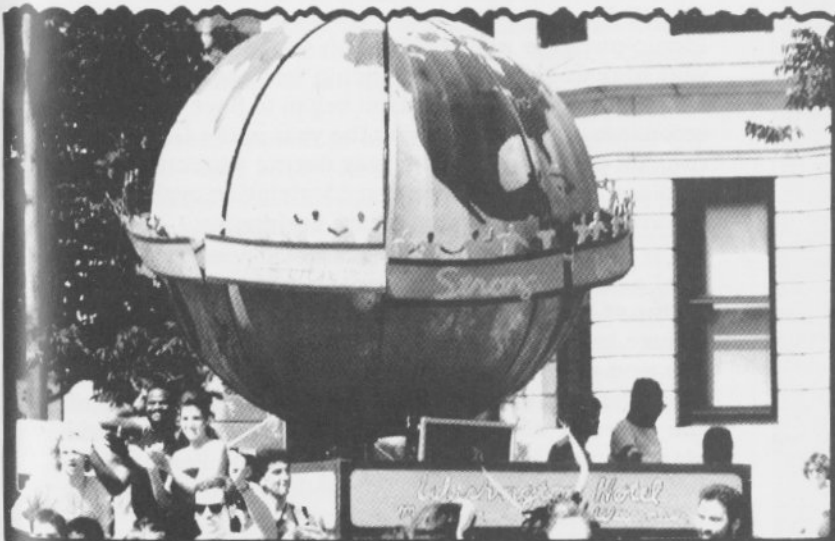
The past ten years have caused us grief and pain because of the tragedy of AIDS. But, I have come to understand how death and illness can be a trade-off. I have learned that to lose someone is to gain special understanding of what he meant, to celebrate life and to fight harder for those who still struggle.

The future of ROD's is much on my mind. We remain committed to quality entertainment and leisure activity for Madison's Gay Community. We will integrate and improve the quality of life for Gay Men and Lesbians. Much of what we try to do at ROD'S is fun, and we want to promote a healthy and fun loving lifestyle even as we deal with the serious side of the world we live in.

Finally, I want to thank those who helped produce this magazine: R.J. Chaffin, of Back Door Promotions, in Chicago, without whose guidance and production expertise the project would not have been possible. Pam Geisler for her commitment to the project, her insights, and her leadership in bringing it to completion. Lewis Bosworth, editor of *ROD'S Newsletter*, whose sense of history and editorial skills helped put words and spirit on paper.

Thank you. Enjoy this history, and stay tuned. We've already started a second decade!

Love,





1979

ROD'S

1979

In 1979, the Hotel Washington Complex took a long look at itself and concluded it was incomplete. The Club de Wash was bringing in name bands, the new "Barber's Closet" was being talked about on the Square, and the Café Palms had improved its image and was getting reviews in the *Capital Times*. But something was missing. So, in the spring, a crew of dedicated, if somewhat mismatched, folks set out to build a bar for gay men: a bar to end all bars, a bar which would set the standard for a decade. Carved out of a ghoulish basement area as far to the rear of the Hotel as it could be, the new concept took off. **Ben Tester's** masonry, **Bob Bartel's**, and **Boomer's** carpentry, and the skills of **Larry Klosterman**, **Ron Piercy**, and **Rodney**, himself, shaped the black hole into what would become "state-of-the-art" gay-barism. A contest to name the bar was later held, and **Al Skinner** – all due double entendre noted for the record – won. The "new bar" was christened **ROD'S**.

No fewer than three weeks went by, and about everything that made ROD'S what still makes it special, took place. Take the underwear shtick, for example. One night, **Johnny Star** tore off Rodney's T-shirt, and threw it up on the pipes. This innocent prank led to a tradition which still persists – involuntary underwear donation! So prevalent was this practice that buttons were designed by **Ed Ferguson**: "I gave," the first read, and later another for the diehards proclaimed, "I gave, and gave, and gave . . ."

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"Five years of underwear weighs  
446.5 Pounds." – Tom Wilkie

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The birthday of ROD'S is July 7, 1979. Now, you can't open a bar without somebody to man it, so **Rodney** elected himself manager, and chose **Mike Uselmann**, **Ben Tester**, **Larry Klosterman**, and **Lewis Bosworth** as his first crew. The bar needed a logo, and **Neil Sandstead's** bi-penile erectus won, hands down! A large, neon version is still there to greet you as you descend the staircase.

Our first customers, not to speak of the staff, were in every sense an experiment. The B.V. (that's "before video") treats for all of us were 8mm films (produced long before 4★★★★ Video came along) projected on a makeshift window shade via a projector that broke down more often than it projected. Uselmann managed to load it, reload it, throw something up at the window to block out the light, make the cutest guy in the bar help him with these tasks, fix drinks, watch three minutes of the first flick, rethread the projector

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"Ben used to be cute." – Joey Tovar

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when it failed – every five minutes – yell at everyone who didn't like this kind of entertainment, direct most sexual productions which, by now, were in full force, make three more drinks, adjust the lighting again, leave the bar to find out what the guys on the other side of the window shade were doing, and be back in time to reload the projector, make four more drinks

and get in a quickie with the cute guy he had picked out at the beginning of this paragraph.

This was not everyone's style. Lewis, for example, could never find the window shade, refused to learn how to load the projector, gave the telephone to anyone who would take it when one of an increasing number of "dirty phone calls" came in, turned up the lights, turned down the music, and corrected papers. His one concession to proper b'tending was to spend more time making drinks.

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"GMW wouldn't even let men take off  
their shirts on the dance floor." – Rodney

---

Since it was summer, there was a lot of activity going on outside, and the first floor of the old Hotel annex was the "dancing deck" which was to become the prototype for the Patio we know today. We had a few shows – and some more-than-little-known help: **Gilbert Helmsley** and his students did lighting for us (free of charge!). Gilbert, bless his soul, gave ROD'S a lot even while commuting regularly to NYC to become a famous lighting designer. We still receive notice of the successes of his students.



And that first summer, picnics abounded. The "Big Deal," of course, was the July MAGIC Picnic, the 2nd official Madison Gay/Lesbian extravaganza, and the less official 7th "Back Door" Picnic, one of many legacies of Rodney's extraordinary love of people, and especially of his brothers and sisters in the gay community. By the time ROD'S took over the planning of "major" picnics, the old Back Door Picnic and the MAGIC Picnic had become synonymous. The MAGIC Picnic put gays and lesbians on the map during that year here in Madison. The Picnic was not alone, however, as folks here in Madison began to have their consciousness raised. 1979 was the year of the *Glad to be Gay* TV program, and the year during which the UW-Madison Faculty Senate passed legislation prohibiting discrimination based on sexual preference.

For Halloween, in this momentous year of 1979, we held a "Dildo Dip" in the front bar.

One of the first "specials" that ROD'S produced was a huge barrel of peanuts. It sat near the middle of the bar, and everyone threw the shells on the floor. Most of us didn't take it to mind, until the very last day of the year. At about 2:30 a.m., New Year's Eve, while cleaning up, Useless announced that the Peanut-Barrel had been pissed in. Thank goodness the once-full barrel had been eaten down to the last "nut."

It was just the beginning . . .

1980

# ROD'S

1980

Ushering in the 1980s was awesome. By the time ROD'S was six months old, we had garnered so much enthusiasm for the place that you could hardly tell the customers from the staff at times (nor could you pry them apart at others!). Officially, **Uselmann** was the manager, and his staff included **Rodney** (of course, by then, he only put in guest appearances behind the bar!), **Ben, Lewis**, and newcomers **Larry Baumann, Bill Bradley, and Buddy Hubbard**. Never could we have imagined what kind of year it would be!

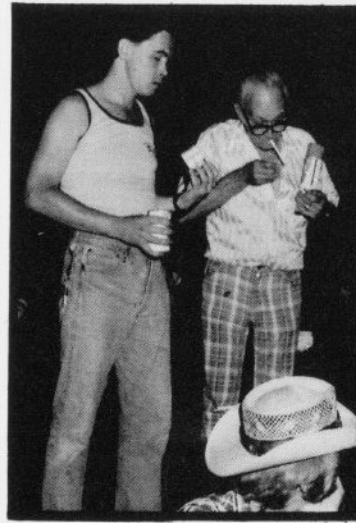
While we're on the subject, it's only fair to mention that ROD'S in its early days had already established itself as somewhat of a dual-personality kind of place. On the one hand, we worked hard to make a new kind of bar. On the other hand, we had a lot of fun, and we did not take ourselves too seriously. By the end of 1980, for example, we had more rules about what could and could not be done in the bar. Yet, at the same time, we started to let things "hang out." It was not unusual to see Mr. Baumann "digesting" a well-endowed hunk, or to be found, himself, shackled up in the "window seat" with all manner of things being done to him. He was, of course, on duty at the time . . . . Otherwise, it wouldn't have been any fun! And, just like Uselmann before him, he could do most of this while taking orders for drinks, answering the phone, changing the porno flicks and tossing out one or two (at most) of the kids who didn't belong there. There was an aura of kind and gentle leadership and friendship about Larry.

On March 10, Uselmann began the tradition of the "69th Day of the Year Party." We aren't certain what we did to celebrate, but use your imagination. 1980 began a series of bus trips to Milwaukee and Chicago. It was on one of those first trips that our own Lewis, sporting customary coat, tie, and carrying briefcase, was robbed in front of Man's Country in Chicago. He swears he wasn't there . . . .

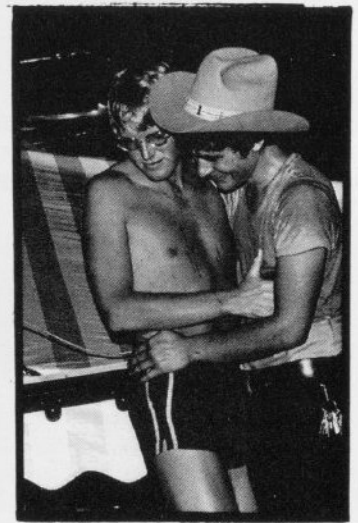
Ah yes, the BUS TRIPS . . . . Rodney organized a series of bus trips to Chicago whose itineraries included stops at Alfie's on Rush (Dan), the Gold Coast, Redoubt, Bistro, Ozone, Machine Shop, Carol's Speakeasy (Molly at the helm), and an "end" at Man's Country.

1980 could be said to be the year of the fruits. On Memorial Day, when Rodney's birthday is usually celebrated, a bunch of the guys threw him on the bar, removed his pants, and covered his extremities with strawberries and whipped cream. There were plenty of volunteers to help serve and consume this special dessert. Not to get ahead of ourselves, but, on their respective birthdays, Larry got the same treatment - "berried" in blueberries - and Lewis got birthday cake with cherries. Later on, you'll read about Uselmann's fate . . . .

We celebrated our 1st anniversary on July 7, 1980. We had survived the first year. A new tradition was born for the 4th of July: Truckloads of guys in varying



Mike Williams of *Gay Chicago Magazine* and Tom Wilkie, some of our earliest friends.



Rodney and Warren at the 1st Mr. Rod Show - before the patio was the patio.

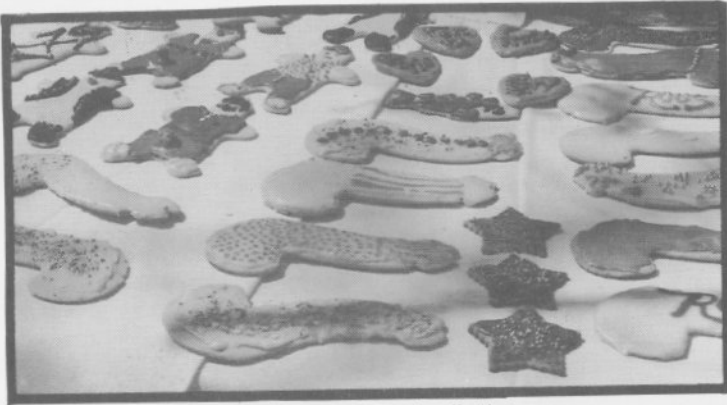
degrees of sobriety were carted off to watch the fireworks alongside Madison's middle class and their children.

August was the month of the very first MR. ROD SHOW/CONTEST. Since ROD'S was still too small, we held it in the Club de Wash on that teeny little stage. The theme was country-western, complete with a Dolly Parton Look-Alike Contest. **Carl Boyd**, who was at the time the major purveyor of graphic art for the bar (and known especially for his renderings of body parts), designed a T-shirt with the "Rod Man" in western gear. We also did buttons with the same logo.



Contestants from "Mr. Rod Show"





Our charity bake sale effort!



First Mr. ROD Show's customers.

Michael Bruno was the emcee, and Faron Evans, Chuck M., and Ray-Ray Krenn, on drums in the crowd's nest, were our entertainers. The headliner, however, was Lewis, appearing as "Mother Superior," who belted out a not-half-bad version of "Climb Every Mountain." Rick Hancock was crowned MR. ROD 1980.

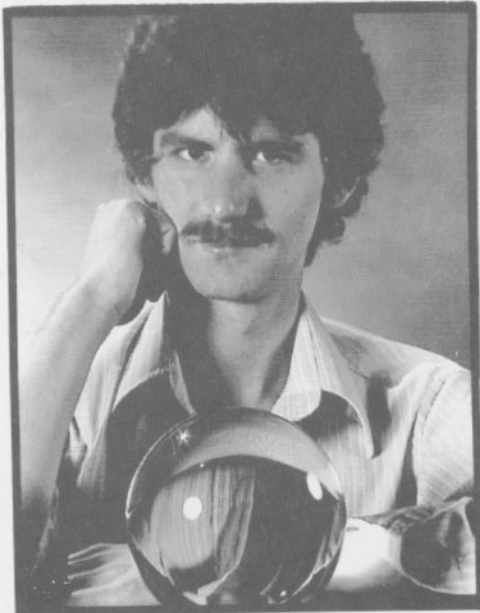
*"Tim Vaughn was supposed to be tending bar; but he was 'digesting' some kid by the popcorn machine. Jeeze! I thought I'd never get a drink!" - Terrence Gilles*

Sometime during 1980, although no one will admit to remembering exactly when, the sling materialized in the back hallway of ROD'S. Also during this time came a dark, black back room furnished only with mattresses. Again, the dates are fuzzy, but we know it was there. The natives, obviously were restless and hankering for some "big city action." By Halloween, we had blasted a hole in the wall in the rear, and patrons could climb through it and reach our new "rear bar." More about that in 1981 . . . That Halloween was the first after-bar party held off the premises (as duly required by law - legal, just as everything was which took place in our early history) at an empty building at the corner of Bedford and West Mifflin Streets. Buddy (and his famous skating feet) and Larry were rumored to have had the "S-Word" in a coffin at the party!

As 1980 drew to a close, we mailed out a holiday card with a cowboy motif provided by Carl. Ben finished the "rear bar," and we were ready to meet 1981 head on.

In later years, as we'll see, Greg Scheel started to photo us in the buff during New Year's Eve fetes in temps lower than 40 degrees F.

CONGRATULATIONS!



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**Congratulations  
ROD'S**  
on your  
**10th Anniversary**  
from  
**Chuck Renslow  
and  
Family**



1981

**ROD'S**

1981

There is absolutely no doubt in any sane staff member's mind that the most important event of 1981 was the arrival of everyone's favorite righthand lady, **Ms. Pam Geisler**. We may not know much about courtly love, but we know what we like! And from sea to shining sea, from the shores of Tripoli to the "gold coast," from 219 to Touché, and from labor pains to pure grit, we love that lady!

Those accolades almost make us forget that there was a cast of characters doing the everyday job of making all of you happy: **Uselmann** was the 1981 manager for the first half of the year, to be succeeded by **Larry, Lewis, Bill, and Buddy** retained their senior status. But, we did pick up some newcomers! **Mark Dwyer, Richie Becher, Tim Vaughn, Lynn Pilla, Ron Glass, Rocky Stephenson, and James Henke**. This crew was to remain in place for quite some time and is pictured on our very first full-colored Xmas card produced by Kodak & Co., and whose message was "Thy Rod and Thy Staff." Clever, huh? Ben retired from active service as a bartender, but he remained ROD'S "chief-cook-and-bottle-washer," and in truth, he's been "2nd-in-Command" in his very special way ever since.

Richie Becher's appearance brought with it a new libation in a new position: The "upside-down margarita." Richie would con some dude into lying down on the bar, head out and crotch up (this, of course, was the primary consideration) and pour into his wide-open mouth each of the ingredients in a margarita, following it up with the salt and the lime. The "contestant" was expected not only to swallow the mixture (at least three ounces altogether) without gagging – most had previous practice – but to submit simultaneously to stroking, removal of pants (underwear was most likely not present), licking and other fun things. Sometimes several margaritas were imbibed at one "lying." We have one memory of **Erin "The Braless" Criss** doing one, but you couldn't see much because of those historical breasts. Yes, Mary Metro made her mark in more than one way.

Some nut decided to emulate the "Oscars," and we had a new awards show in January: The **Roddies!** The idea was to pick the dubious achievements, unmen-

tionable behaviors, sexually appeasing gratifications and inexcusable blunderings of the previous year. And this included staff, customers, Rodney's distant cousins and some men off the street. The list of winners is too long to mention here, but try to imagine that every luminary mentioned in this magazine won something, at least once!

In April, we used the Back Bar ("rear bar") to stage our own version of the crucifixion, pulling in some guy and chaining him up to some semblance of a cross. Some thought this in poor taste, but it was definitely ROD'S in its experimental period.

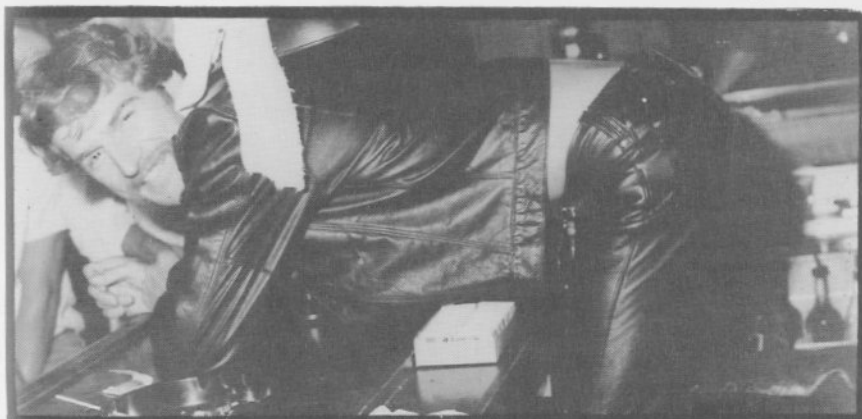
*"During one movie in the back bar, I remember crawling up on the bar and trying to lick the screen." – Ron Geiman*

In May, complete with black sackcloth and dour organ music, Rodney turned 30! And to think that just last year he was only 24 . . . . What made this event ever so palatable was the first real color-coordinated and sun-drenched use of our newly-landscaped Patio. The Patio turned ROD'S into a three-tiered, full-service bar (get it?) – if only during the summer – and we welcomed folks from the neighborhood to phone in their favorite tunes . . . .

Right about now seems the appropriate time to express our thanks to **Ralph Paul, Dan Di Leo, and Mike Williams** of *Gay Chicago*. Rodney was "covergirl" for many an issue of that important publication during our early years, and GC provided photos and stories of countless events at ROD'S. Some of these photos can be seen right here!

*"Who, us? No way. We be fishin'." – Jim Dohr*

In June, we ventured to Chicago for our first bus trip as an official delegation to the Gay Pride Parade. One of the stops we made regularly in Chicago was Man's Country. Mr. Renslow's staff worked with us as though we were family – and, indeed, we were – providing special entrance tickets and seeing to it that Rodney always got his very own "fantasy suite."



Larry Baumann.



Queen Elizabeth-Lewis delivers coronation address to loyal subjects at our 2nd MR. ROD Show.



**best wishes  
from  
dr. steve  
and the  
staff of**



**the  
loading dock<sup>®</sup>**

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In August, we moved the MR. ROD SHOW/CONTEST to the newly-created stage overlooking the Patio. Bruno emceed once again, and "Piano Man," Faron Evans, tickled the ivories for the entertainment. Lewis stole the show, arriving as QE II on the back of Uselmann's bike. We had a helluva contest, and MR. ROD, 1981 was Mark Fons.

We started ROD'S Newsletter in 1981, and now it's in its 9th volume. The Newsletter, edited by Lewis, has been mailed out over the years to as many as 1,200 loyal customers and friends per issue.

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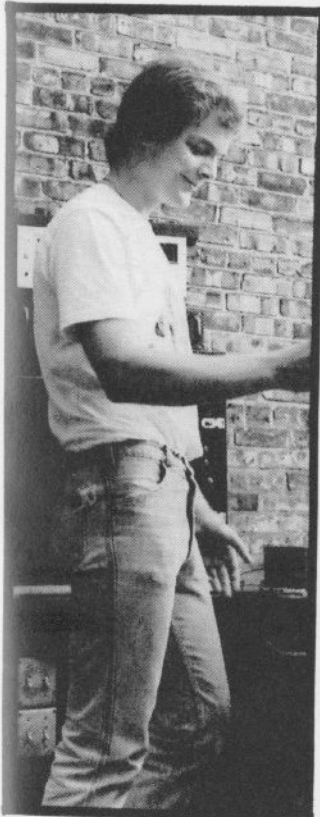
"All the news that fits, we print."

— Newsletter

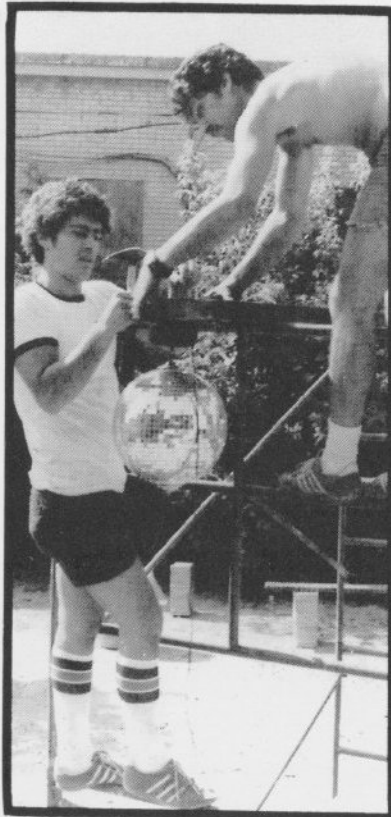
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Labor Day Weekend of 1981 became the model for a series of body parties which would recur in subsequent years. The opener was called the "PITS" Party. It be sponsored by *Midwest Times Magazine*. As you can see, the contestants were chained to a pole, arms over heads, (Ray Jacobson had an especially good time this year!) and were judged on the basis of several base senses. Bruno – he kept showing up in those days – was the emcee, and the judges included the infamous Erin Criss (*Midwest Times*), the gorgeous Jimmy Dohr (Gold Coast), and the inimitable Woody Lorenz (*Midwest Times* and Bulldog Road, Chicago).

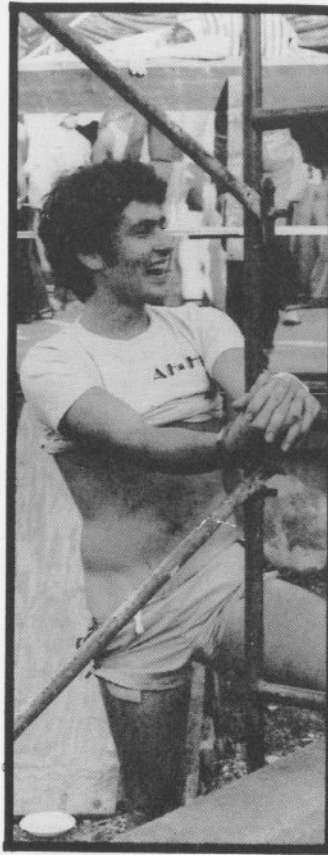
The "PITS" Party provided the backdrop, or lack thereof, for tremendous intrigue. Our own Michelle Dorland, scared to death of the whole ROD'S scene, got the idea backwards and showed up wearing a T-shirt stating "TITS" Party. She claims she didn't understand, but we think she and Erin Criss got together and came up with this "mammary" spoof! The after-PITS activity took place at Uselmann's house, and a



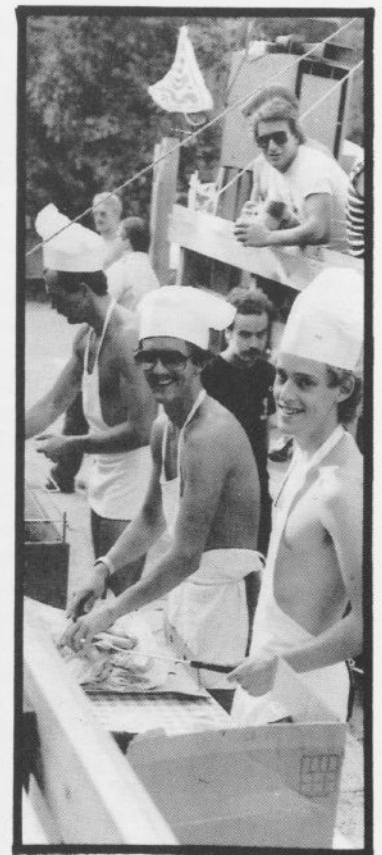
Ben Tester sets up sound for our new patio.



Rodney & Greg prepare the pre-Patio for dancing.



Gay Chicago's "most illustrious" cover girl – handcuffed to scaffolding – pre-Patio.



Ron Glass, Kelly Balliet and Mark Dwyer serve our famous buffet.

bunch of our guys got together – in more ways than one – for a skinny dip in Lake Monona. Some late-night fishermen were in the area when we were apparently reported to the authorities. Asked later what they had seen, they allegedly responded, "Who, us? No way! We be fishin'."

1981 was surely a year for Uselmann to savor. For during that year, he was given a present called, "Boy," a/k/a Barry Boo. This tot biked in (yes, on a bicycle) from nearby Baraboo, having decided that he would make a nice present for almost everyone. He was delivered nude and in handcuffs to Mike's house at the crack of dawn, and – it is said – he loved hot wax. We don't know where "Boy" is right now, but Uselmann thinks he may still be preserved in the closet of Room 109!

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"One Step Above Junk Mail" – Newsletter

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Useless did not get away from ROD'S without a healthy dose of what he'd been dishing out for two+ years. On the occasion of his retirement as manager, he got grabbed, stripped, and covered with chocolate pudding. You might say, he got eaten up . . .

All Saint's Eve – Halloween – was celebrated this year by renting a cattle truck and milking the boys dry at the North Bedford location, where now stands radio station W.O.R.T.

Early to recognize the importance of "keeping one's act clean," Rodney, with the help of Tim Tillotson, authorized STD testing in the bar during the month of November. In Madison, *Nothing to Hide*, a TV program, was aired for the first time, and the Wisconsin State Assembly passed the first gay rights bill, which then-Governor Dreyfus signed into law.



1982

1982, thanks to the jocks among us, proved to be an "itchy" year. During the summer, truckloads of sand were dumped in what is now called "The Back Lot," and volleyballers readied for the chance to practice for triumphs to come. We thank **Ricardo** and the **Cardinal Bar** for their co-sponsorship of the gay volleyball team, "Rod's Cardinals."

The Roddies this year were stolen by Rodney and Jim Dohr, who, having been chosen as "Men of the Year," appeared on stage eating slices of quiche. You have to be old enough to remember the commercial that admonished, "real men" don't . . .

Fires may have been on the minds of the City inspectors, but this was not among the most interesting stories of the year. You've got to remember that there was no New Bar yet. The upper regions of the old Hotel Annex were a sort of shell, and during the early '80s – only those who knew, who were part of the DJ set, or who had binoculars could tell the tale of Uselmann and **Dick Guenther** – not to speak of "guests" – screwing around up there behind all that black plastic. **Donny Dydell**, it's said, blushed when he found out. And, it was dangerous. The floor was rickety, it was frequently cold (never bothered those guys), and work was going on – records skipped beats and visitors tripped over buried forearms. But, the most striking times were when innocent bystanders looked up and saw Useless going to it shamelessly, his famous cheeks slamming to the beat . . .

*"He was no bigger than a Bic Lighter," but he sure was a good kisser!"* – Anonymous

Larry managed ROD'S in 1982, assisted by returning crew **Lewis, Richie, Tim, Mark, Ron, Rocky, and Lynn**. New faces included **Ken Maly, John Kratke, Dick**

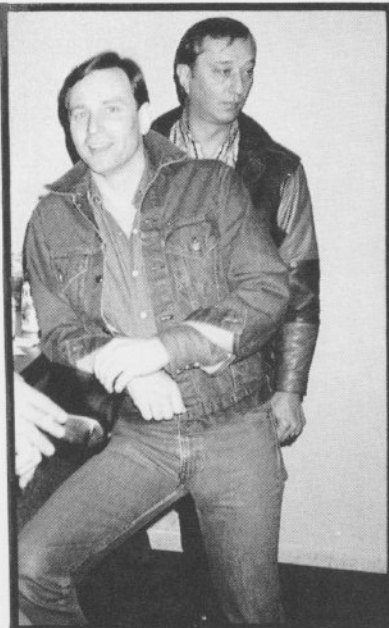
**Guenther (DJ), "Dangerous" Donny Dydell (DJ), and of course, Larry Henke.**

This year, it seemed, everything revolved around summer activities. The Patio was in place. The guys were ready. Greg started to take pictures in earnest. And, so, it turned out, did the press. We're talking NATIONAL press. *In Touch Magazine* did several spreads (you go find your copies . . .), and *Gay Chicago* published numerous articles about us, proclaiming ROD'S . . . "a HOT bar in the midwest." We credit **Charlie & Richard** from Dubuque for giving us the impetus to begin doing our first videos. They provided, in fact, the inspiration for what was to become the New Bar.

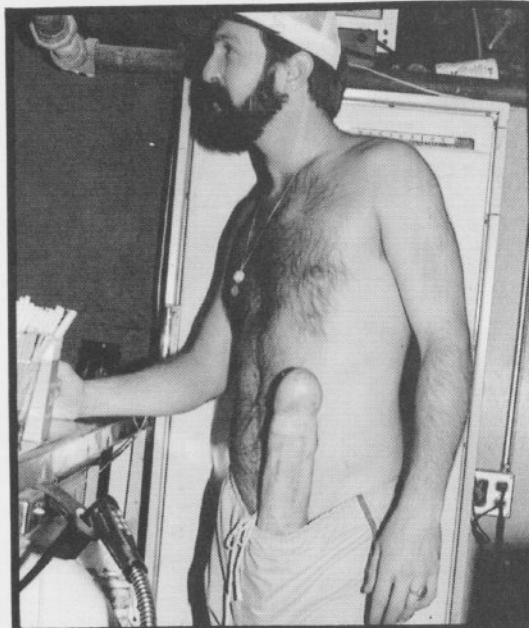
*"A discreet establishment for the discerning gentleman."* – Richie Becher

The 1982 summer theme was "Leis & Leather," and we used it for our 3rd anniversary as well as for the rest of summer's activities. The preeminent newcomer to ROD'S in 1982 was **Larry Henke**. How do we describe him? Designer, technical producer, theatrical craftsman, bon vivant and story-teller, gentleman farmer . . . He's all that and more, but he started out by building us some showers – out-of-doors – for use by jello-wrestlers, mud-wrestlers, and volleyballers. There's a great shot of Rodney being hosed off following one such event.

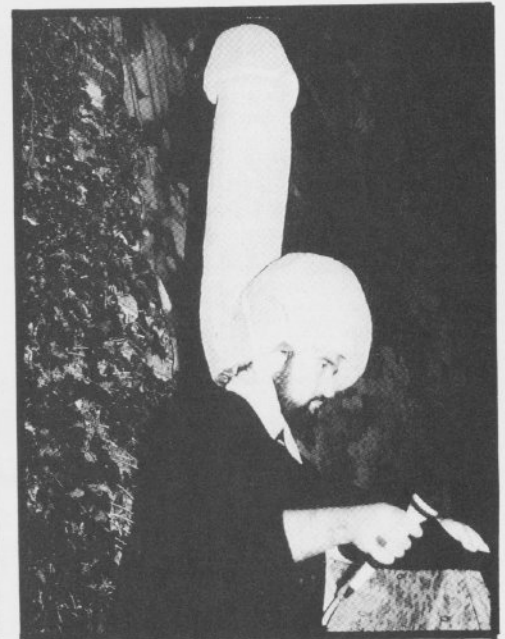
**Ray Burns** was another staff member whose talents are not without note. With modest beginnings in the front entrance, Ray opened and ran our leather/novelty boutique, "Something Different," for two years. If you couldn't find it at "Something Different," you had to go to Chicago!



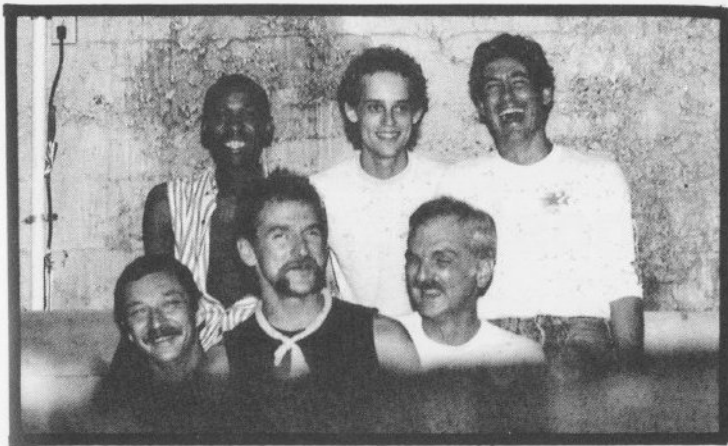
Wayne Bernhagin of the Wreck Room fame and Mac Loror.



Rocky Stephenson – one of our "uninhibited" bartenders – rear bar.



Michael Bruno – MC-extraordinaire – "Penis the Great".



Donny Dydell, Mark Dwyer, Rodney, Rick Murray, Larry Baumann and Roy Spach - Rear Bar.

August's MR. ROD'S SHOW/CONTEST, once again emceed by Bruno, was a smashing success, with the presence of entertainer **Odessa Brown**, a "diva" dubbed by some as the "world's largest female impersonator." She weighed in at about 400+ lbs. and wowed the crowd - wouldn't you get out of the "weigh"? Odessa did make the show, but she didn't quite upstage MR. ROD 1982, **Lash Fritz**, in other departments . . .

Lash Fritz, by the way, was our very first special contestant in Chicago's International Mr. Leather Contest.

Labor Day's party changed from "pits" to "PARTS," thus allowing for greater variety. We remember a long and wide curtain, through which contestants stuck whatever struck their fancies. In those days, the judges not only looked, but tasted - according to the

part being displayed. **Chuck Renslow** and **Ron Ehemann** acted as judges for the "PARTS" party. Chuck could not believe that Madison's "city fathers" would permit on stage nudity! He should have been witness to **Allen George's** birthday champagne enema when it was administered by Rod and Larry in full view of many! Could have been a dis"ass"ter!

1982 was a year of travel. Larry & Lewis went around the Wisconsin area, sleeping among the natives at 1101 West. And, as if that weren't enough action for the Fox Valley, Rodney and Tim spent a weekend at the paper Valley Hotel in Appleton. They were kicked out of the pool area for lack of appropriate clothing - none. The boys repaired to their room, tricks in tow, and, following the usual protocol, pretended there was a wall between the two king-size beds. Tim went at his duties in his usual, conservative manner, enjoying things immensely, until he happened to look over at Rodney and his partner. Rodney had almost exhausted his repertory and was at the time filling his boyfriend with a candy cane. Tim promptly lost his hard-on and fell out of bed, laughing.

Rodney's travels in 1982 are noteworthy because of his demanding presence at every "contest" within a 500-mile radius. Among others, Rod judged International Mr. Leather (Chicago), Mr. Windy City (Chicago), Mr. Bulldog Road (Chicago), Mr. and Ms. Gay Wisconsin (Milwaukee), and several distant events in Michigan.

Madison had its share of milestones during the year: The Madison Gay Theatre Project was founded; the Pirate Ship, as we had known it for two decades, closed to the gay community; *Out!* Newspaper was founded; and a new gay bar, Sam's, opened here on Regent Street.



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**Parabens e  
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pelos dez anos!**

**Lewis & Terry, Michelle and Lynn**

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on your Tenth Year  
From Mark and all your friends  
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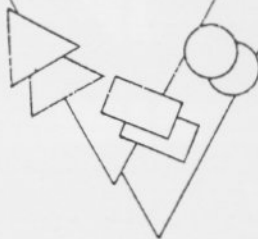
*the rage*



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**Best Wishes from  
staff of the  
Back East**

1983

# ROD'S

1983

1983 was the year of the chocolate Thespians. This will be clearer as the saga of 1983 continues . . .

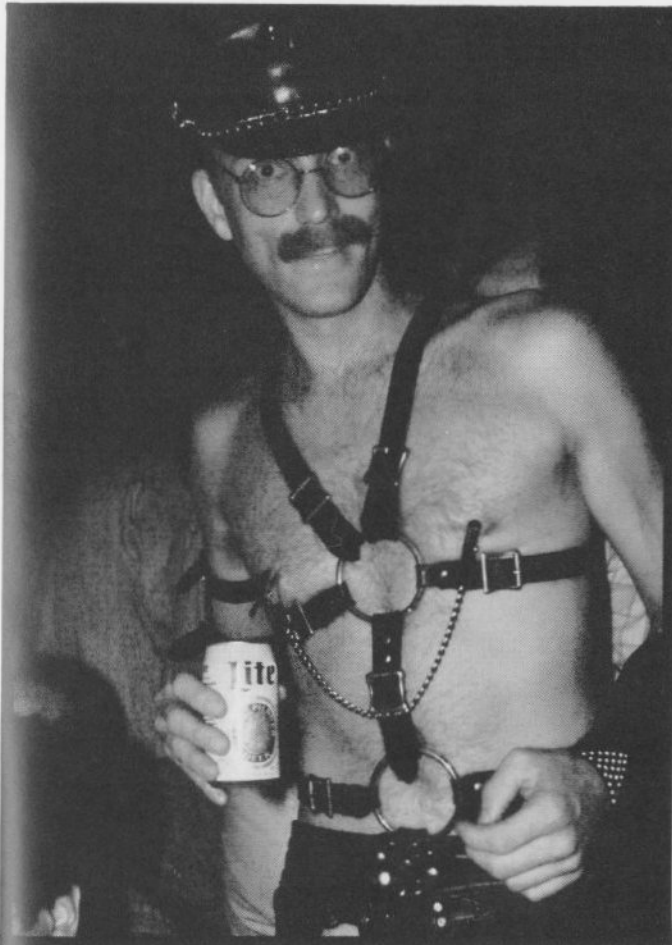
Uselmann no longer managed ROD'S, but his hand was still in the proverbial crotch. On more than one visit to Chicago's Gold Coast, hundreds of dollars of Godiva chocolates were provided by us and for us, and yet another tradition was born. Fanny May wouldn't do; it had to be Godiva. And, having invested that kind of money in sweets, they had to be smeared, rubbed, and melted into equally delicious body parts, whence they were licked off. Needless to say, boxes of the little yummys started appearing in the Hotel, and ROD'S customers were soon treated to Chicagoland fare.

Larry managed ROD'S in 1983, to be followed later in the year by Kelly Balliet, a newcomer, but rife with enthusiasm. Lewis, Richie, Tim, Mark, and Rocky returned to their posts. Additions to ROD'S family this year included Joe Cameron, Steve Leiser, Bill Heidt, Jack Jarden, Louie Trumm, Bob Moore, and Tom Kohl.

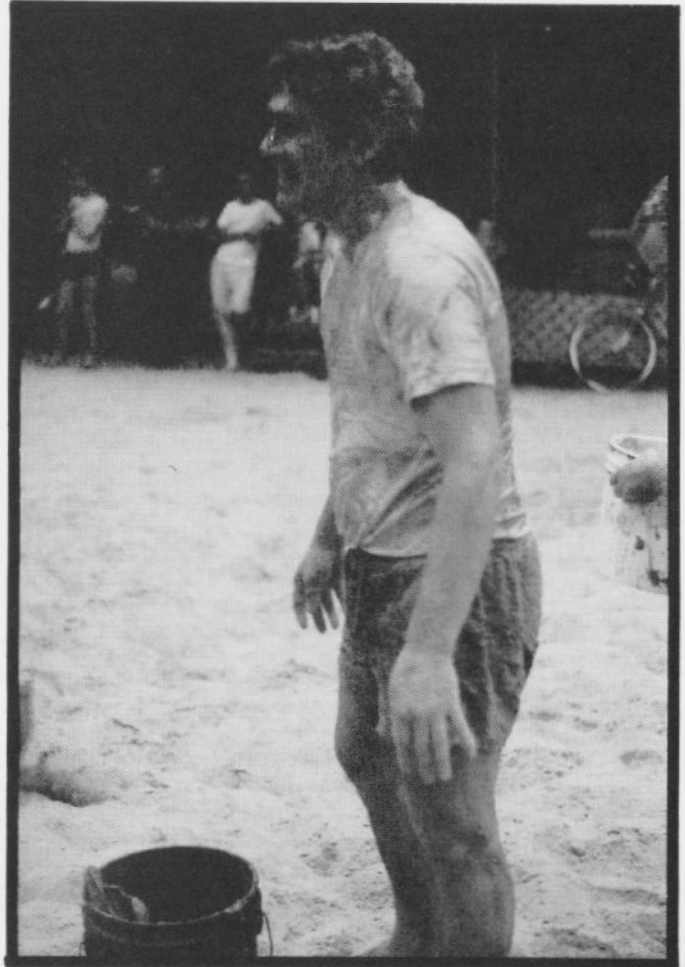
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*"The front bar on Sundays was like a moving grope." — Terrence Gilles*

---



Al Krause in full leather "there's a nazi in here with his butt hanging out . . ."



Rodney, the mud wrestler.

This was the year of specials. Monday was 2-4-1, all night; Tuesday was skin night; Wednesday was jock night; Thursday was button night (see 1979 . . .); and Sunday, although it had been beer bash almost from the beginning, brought in new hoards of hunks with the addition of more outdoorsy activities and an afternoon buffet (courtesy of Ben), as good or better than the ones Mom makes. Both daily specials and Sunday menus have changed over the years, but they remain some of our most popular drawing cards.

Another 1983 innovation was the pirating of the back room of the Barber's Closet for a dance area. Donny spun the disks. We hosted a M\*A\*S\*H Party on the Patio that year, too, and HOT Paul Parker was our entertainer. The Patio's contributions to the bar's popularity continued to grow. It was important for Rodney to speak directly to God about the weather, and he did. But to be on the safe side, a rule was posted, and all staff memorized it and could recite it verbatim: "The sun always shines on ROD'S Patio; consequently the use of the words rain, storm, wet, and moisture are and always will be grounds for immediate dismissal."



In 1983 the first mention of AIDS occurred in our *Newsletter*, although back then the disease had no name; it was referred to as the "gay cancer," among other things. Sadly, we've made mention of it all too often since then. The State epidemiologist reported one death from AIDS, four confirmed cases, and 26 suspected cases in Wisconsin.

"Daddy's Day Weekend," in honor of the more traditional Father's Day, was initiated this year. We rented a hot tub for the entire weekend and brought back the incomparable **Odessa Brown** to entertain all the "daddies."

---

*"The Sling Room? Oh, yes, Allen George rented it for a few months." – Anonymous*

---

One of the most memorable events of 1983 – and another tradition that persists to this day – was the production of ROD'S Miracle Thespian Company, (named by resident "Thesaurian," Lewis, and spearheaded by theatre buffs, **Larry Henke** and **Bill Heidt**. Bill truly deserves special mention here for "above and beyond" service, for always being there when called upon, and for being one of the truly good sports that we have had the privilege to work with over the years). Costumed by **Ray-Ray** (whose costumes are legend) and directed by **Pam** (she almost got divorced this summer), the very first production was *Cum in the Wind*, with no apologies whatsoever to Margaret Mitchell! The cast consisted of ROD'S staff members and **Mr. Allen George** in the starring role of Scarlett O'Hara. Allen has played every heroine since Scarlett (and even played a hero once) much to the delight of audiences. As it turned out, some of the "bits" we used for that first production turned up in every subsequent one: High heels, watermelons, and "white" flour (to throw in Allen George's face). *Cum* almost went before it came, though, as a fierce storm blew up, pelting the Patio and stage with rain and winds of very high velocity. Madison was having a mini-tornado, and it struck us. We had to move the production into the Club de Wash to finish it, as patrons were hanging on to the hastily-constructed plastic covering, but to no avail.

The summer theme for 1983 was "Carnival." We hired a carnival company complete with dunk tank, test-your-strength, dildo ring toss (that didn't come with the carnival...). The anniversary cocktail party was decorated, as it had been since the first year, by our wonderful friend, **Tom Wilkie** (R.I.P.). Tom was one of ROD'S greatest fans, and one of his projects that never came to fruition was the construction of a giant quilt composed of squares made entirely of underwear!

---

*"I almost broke a tooth trying to tear off some kid's swimming suit." – Terrence Gilles*

---

Other firsts for 1983 included the MAGIC Picnic laser light show, construction in the stair tower area (including the DJ booth) which would become the New Bar and, in the community, the formation of the 10% Society and the performance of the Madison Gay Men's Chorale in New York City. The "Consenting Adult Bill" was signed into law by the Governor.

The 1983 MR. ROD SHOW/CONTEST was held with **Brian Blied** (**Sass**) as emcee, and to complete the carnival motif, we hired magician, **Dan S.**, to entertain. MR. ROD 1983 was **Eric Charon**, whose "Indian Fire Hoop Dance" almost cinched his crown. Eric was not the only

talent in the Show that year, though. **Allen Krause** appeared on stage with a chocolate dildo up his ass and with jumper cables clamped to his tits. But, that was Allen – up for anything. We should have a contest between him and **Ray B.**



Spaghetti wrestling – Jim Slattery adds the sauce.

Since the first MR. ROD SHOW, Rodney insisted on lots of "flashes," but more importantly, lots of water. Water fights, slides, Patio fountains, and hoses were a staple. There were times – mud – and jello – wrestling, to name two – that water was not only fun, but a necessity. It's "hard" to imagine what some of those mud pasted dicks might be like today without a dose of water... But we digress. Eric stayed around long enough to paint a stylized ROD'S logo, which still decorates the depths.

September came and brought with it this year the "P Party." We'd already done "Pits" and "Parts" and decided to open things up to almost anything beginning with the letter, "P." This, of course, lends itself to more "water sports," if you happen to have been swiggin' beer since noon. There was lots of peeing at the "P Party," but notorious **Joe Cameron** seems to have taken the "P" award for this year. He arrived complete with a toilet. Things got out-of-hand and, to this day, no one is really sure whether what was found in Joe's toilet was "creamy peanut butter" (as advertised) or whether a rather smelly prank had been perpetrated!

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*"Erin would remove her bra in the car before we went in; with the size of her breasts, she needed a well-made bra, and they didn't come cheap..." – Ron Geiman*

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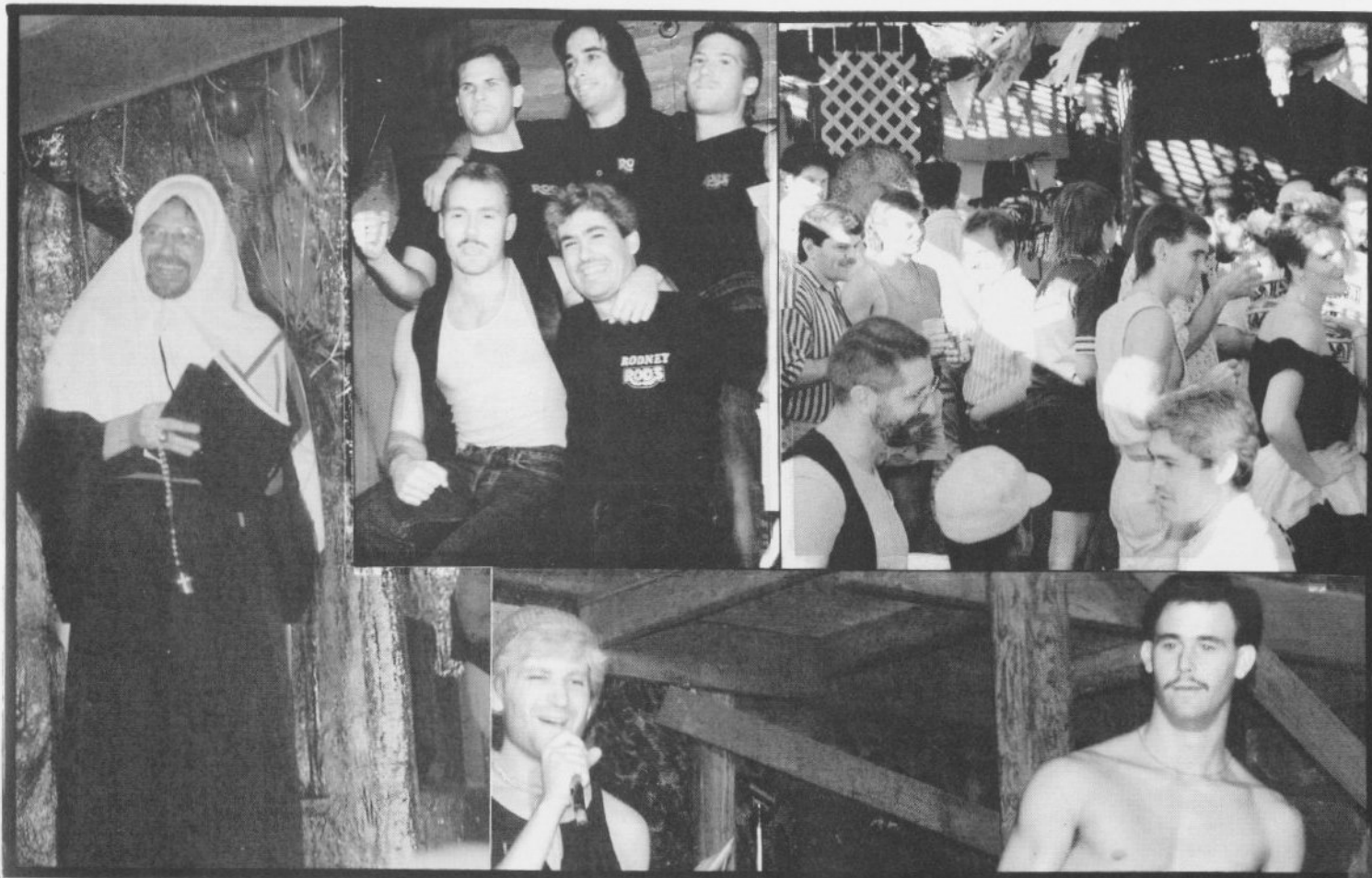
Halloween drew rave reviews, as the ever-inventive Greg wrapped the entire Patio in heavy-gauge plastic (where was it during the *Cum* tornado?) and heated the thing with liquid propane heaters, allowing us the use of our outdoor space as late as late October! It made it a lot easier to get a drink at the bar, especially if you were wearing hoop skirts. The after-bar party was again held at the Warehouse on E. Wash.

---

*"After-bar decorations, such as my inspirational graveyard, ferris wheel and 40' bridge over a bottomless pit, were too successful to be reviewed by the State Journal." – Larry Henke*

---

Our annual holiday cards were more innovative (and, this year, dangerous) as we coerced the staff into dropping their pants, climbing up on the roof, in October, with antlers strapped to their heads. 1983's card was one of the most popular with the customers. The staff vowed to get even.



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**Jim Slattery**



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1984

# ROD'S

1984

Kelly managed ROD in this momentous year, assisted by returning resident pigs **Larry, Richie, Joe, Mark, Rocky, Jack, Ray, and Donny.** Lewis retired from active duty, as did others whose names aren't mentioned here. Newcomers included **Doug Fletch, Roger Spoentgen, Dan Fogel, Philip Cary, and Carl Anderson.**

We held a poster contest, and **Kirk Panikis** won for his pen-and-ink drawing of one hunky dude who cleverly captured the flavor of ROD'S. We mailed it to all gay bars listed in the Ferrari guidebook.

We did "Christmas in June" on the Patio with **Odesa** (now up to about 450 lbs.), and we did "Daddy's Day" with the hot tub. **Ray B.** almost burned out his shop, "Something Different," with increased interest in cock rings, and STD testing continued in the sling room. Lewis claimed that "sticking that little wire up his dick was a breach of his privacy" – this is the same guy who loitered around the sling room the year before with a cigarette lighter in hand?

---

*"Doug Fletsch arrived in town pretending to be a straight boy from Rockford."* – Ray Burns

---

The highlight of early summer had to be ROD'S Miracle Thespians and their production of *The Wizard of Rod's*. **Larry Henke's** stagecraft and **Pam's** direction provided a truly remarkable "fairy tale." **Allen George** played Dorothy, and this tale was correct right down to the ruby slippers. Of course props always disappeared no matter how hard we tried to keep things together: Dorothy's house, the wicked witch's valium bottle, and several varietal dildoes have been reported as missing to the FBI.

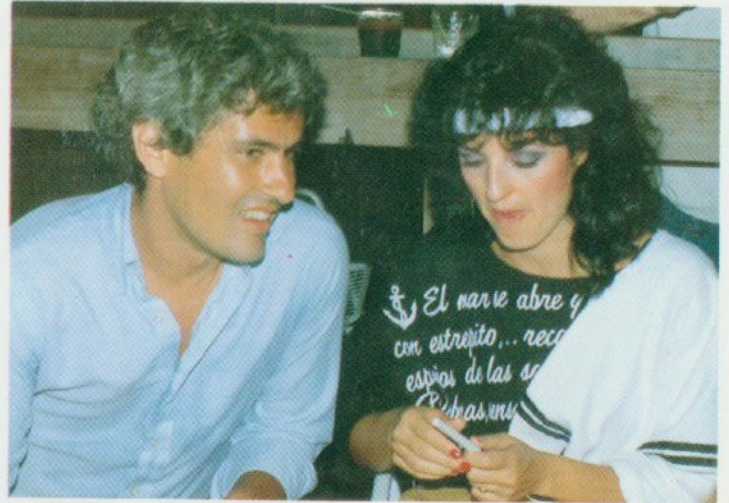
In the midst of summer's merriment, a number of significant events took place: *In Step* magazine, **Ron Geiman's** carefully-crafted new piece, took its place for the first time on our newsstand. In Chicago, Bulldog Road opened, and Rodney showed up a day late for opening night! Rodney and star Rodettes, **Joe and Danny,** took a summer jaunt to Douglas Dunes in Michigan to help celebrate their anniversary with hosts, **Karl and Larry.**

---

*"Do you have to have a 'stiffie' in order to try on a cock ring?"* – Pam

---

The night before the MR. ROD SHOW/CONTEST, we brought in **HOT Pamala Stanley,** whose hits, *I Don't Wanna Talk About It,* and *Coming Out of Hiding* were on the charts big! **Larry Henke's** production notes of her show remind us that the special effect flash pots somehow got switched around, so she almost got blown up when she was to come out of an "exploding locker." The MR. ROD SHOW/CONTEST this year was emceed by **Rick Murray,** with entertainment provided by last year's favorite magician, **Dan S.** MR. ROD 1984 was **Terry Westemeier.** Stage Manager Henke bore a lot of grief during most of his most successful shows at



Rodney chats with Pamala Stanley.



Bradley Cutler, Michael Erwiler, Eddie Dugan, Rodney, Erin Criss and Dan Di Leo.

ROD'S: "Shows started inevitably late, because costumes, lights, sound, video, judges, VIP.s, water, flashes, and most importantly, cocktails all had to be in place and ready to go simultaneously. This was especially a problem when dealing with trained animals (magician's pigeons, for example) and untrained customers – mostly the entire front row."

In September, "**Cheri's Back East**" opened, **Ms. Becker's** new bar on Wilson Street. This was a place where we could enjoy each other's company, fun, and fellowship. We held our first lottery, the "Fly Away," whose grand prize winner was **Gordon Byom.** September wouldn't be September without something about "P." This year, Labor Day Weekend was a "PIG



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Party." There was a live pig, but people were allowed to compete, and there were some amazing likenesses – both in looks and behavior!

Before taking leave of this year, we should return to the Sunday Beer Bust. Not only had it become so popular that it drew an unusually-confused crowd from the parking lot beyond, but it had become safer. In what way? **Ben Tester** sums it up best when he describes summer/fall after-bar activities in the prehistorical period of the late '70s: "We played outside, in full view, no fence, no nothing, and prayed it wouldn't rain. That would mean everyone's grabbing for plastic to try to catch the abrasive water before it flooded the basement." This was true. There were many "water sports" parties in those days produced by Ma Nature.

In the summers of the '80s, folks got tired of being served beer from plastic cups and began bringing personalized containers. Some of our guests took those warm Sunday afternoons quite to heart. It's said that **Tom Van Boxtel** would leave Beer Bust every hour on the hour, return to his car to change, and reappear in a new and even more stunning mushroom cap.

The Halloween Party in 1984 was a special treat. **Larry Henke's** ferris wheel (it really worked!), and **Greg's** spectacular organization turned our well-used warehouse into a super party space.

In 1984, M.A.S.N. was started by **Chas. Pope**. Its history has become part of ours, and we salute him for his foresight! Also that year, the 10% Society sponsored its first "Out and About" Series, the Brady Street East



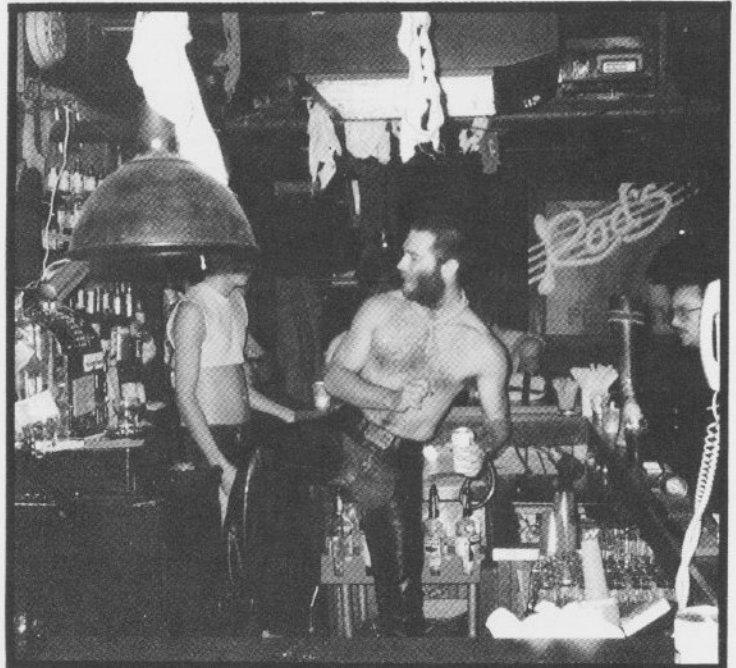
Kelly Balliet – all dressed up for the patio shift.



"Mrs. Lupner" offers Tany and egg salad sandwiches to the crowd!



Dean Hanke enjoys our Anniversary feast.



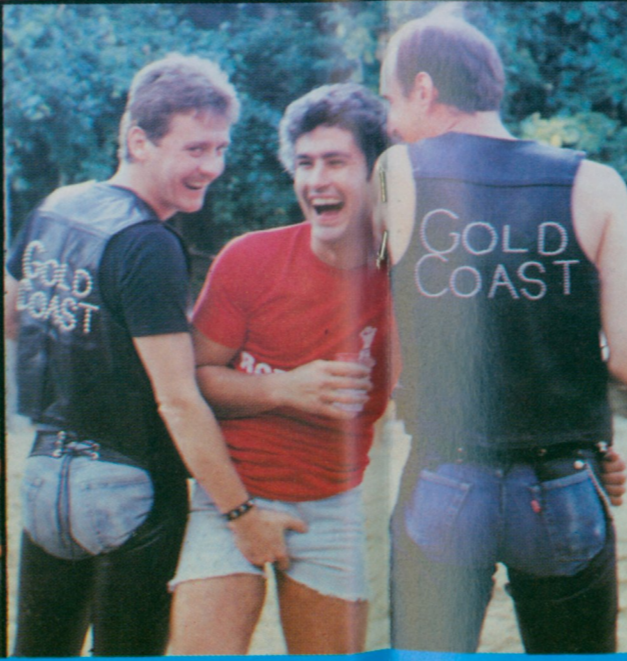
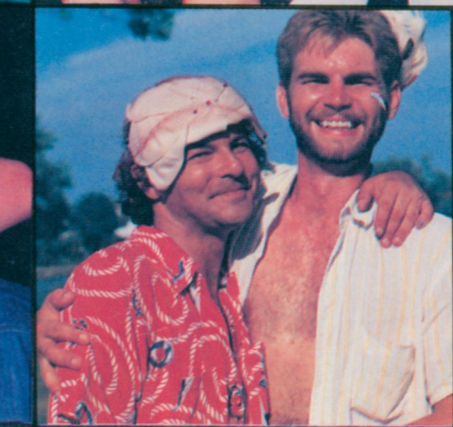
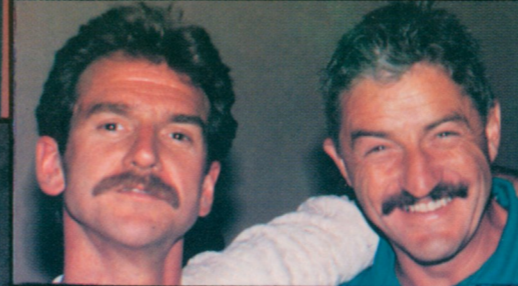
Philip Cary "works the bar".

(STD) Clinic in Milwaukee celebrated its 10th anniversary and the Milwaukee AIDS Project was founded.

Holiday time produced an enchanting card – still in demand by many customers – depicting a toy store set, complete with wooden soldiers, rocking and riding horses, G.I. Joe guys, clowns, jacks-in-the-box, and even a wounded soldier. The card's greeting was, "Yule Love Our Toys!" New Year's Eve was hopping – the first with both ROD'S and the New Bar open simultaneously. Even the Patio saw some action as we bade goodbye to 1984 . . . .

*"Is there anything that's never been done at ROD'S? Yes, there's never been a live birth." – Michael Bruno*







Together we make Wisconsin party!  
Club Two Nineteen salutes  
Rod's on their  
10th Anniversary



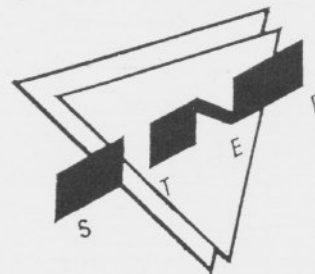
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10 years

...of LAUGHTER  
...of PARTYS  
...of MEMORIES

*And 1989 marks our 6th  
year working together.*

*Here's to the future!*



*Ron Geiman, Publisher*



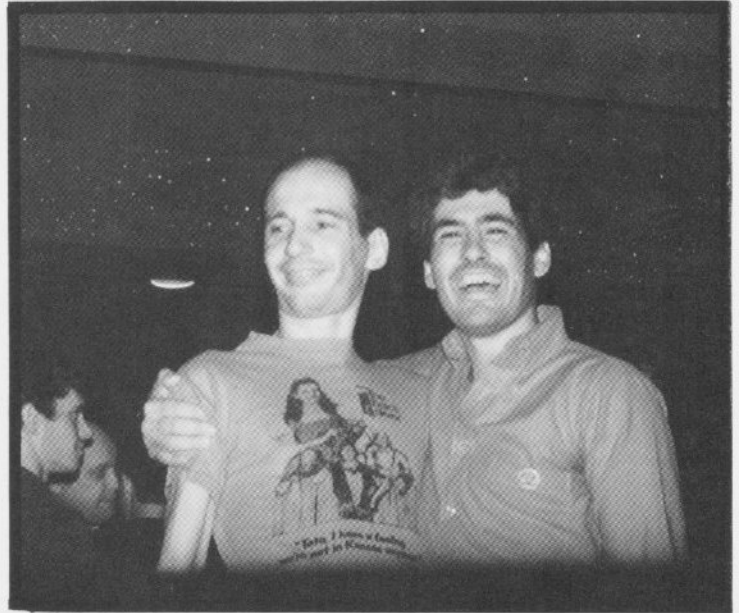
1985

1985 found Doug "Sluggo" Fletsch in the driver's seat, with Kelly, Mark, Joe, Roger, Larry, Rocky, Bill, Phillip, Donny, and Carl in their saddles again! New-comers were Kraig Miller, Karl Pegelow, Darren Wernsman, and Jeff Webster. Karl reports that his initiation rite as a new bartender consisted of Roger and Joe pissing all over him in Rod's bathroom, at the center urinal.

*"Michelle was desperately afraid."*  
 — Michelle Dorland

Drugs played a role in our lives which disturbed Rodney, so he asked members of the staff to confine their use of them to locations outside the Hotel. This is not to say that everyone indulged, but the problem had to be addressed, and Rodney was never one to mince words. All in the spirit of fun, some of ROD'S most famous fans from out-of-town, took their "toot-toots" across the street to the railroad station. **Jim Dohr** delights in telling the story to this day!

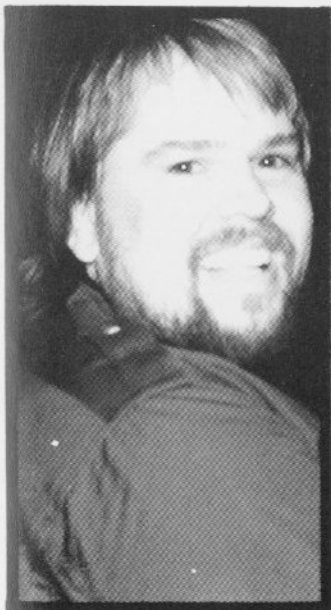
The theme for 1985 was "Lumberjacks" — all sorts of men trying to play Paul Bunyon. But before we get into the summer activities, we should take a look at our trip to the annual Gay Pride Parade in Chicago. This year, we put our money where our mouth was and built a float for the June parade on the theme, "Safe Sex." The float's architect, **Larry Henke**, was delighted that it won a prize for Madison and ROD'S. The float was eye-catching — black and white to match the printed logo — and captured the attention of parade-goers with 300+ balloons with condoms attached flying about. The Gay Pride Weekend was very special for us in 1985, because Rodney won the very first *Gay Chicago Magazine* "Friend of Chicago Award."



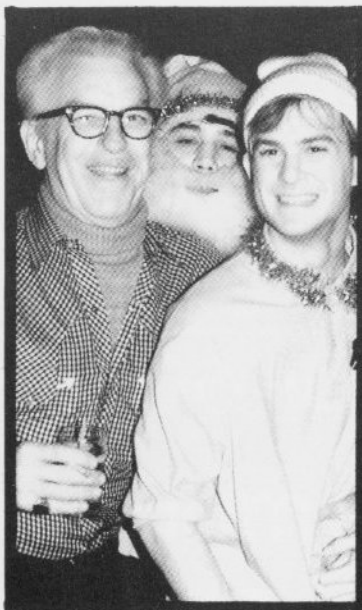
Our dear friend, Eddie Dugan, with Rodney (at a Paradise Party).



Kraig Miller, Karl Pegelow and Cheri Becker go to the movies in the rear bar.



Chuck Rodocker (Touché) enjoys one of his frequent visits to Rod's.



Jim Atkins with Karl Pegelow and Jeff Webster at Christmas.

Veteran parade-planner and float-builder, **Larry Henke**, looks back on our years with the following comments: "We may not have had the flashiest float, but we always had one of the best!" This was obviously demonstrated by the number of times we won prizes.

The *Miracle Thesians'* production of *Cinderfella* had people rolling in the aisles, as usual, with **Allen George** in the title role. The "watermelon toss" was invented that summer, and Allen still waits in terror every time he steps on stage.





Ski Trip to Devil's Head.



Rod's 1985 Christmas card.



Our First entry in Chicago's Gay & Lesbian Pride Parade-Play Safe.



Shelly, Larry, Tina, and Jeff partying!

In July, our friend **JJ O'Connell** opened a new bar, "The Shamrock," just off the Square. In addition, The New Harvest Foundation was founded, and George Segal's "Gay Liberation" sculpture was brought to the Madison Art Center. In Milwaukee the 9th Annual Gay Softball World Series was held, and Wisconsin opened free HIV tests at twenty-nine sites. Governor Earl signed the privacy provision for HIV testing into law.

ROD'S celebrated its sixth anniversary in 1985, and our dear friend, **Eddie Dugan** of "The Bistro" and "Paradise" in Chicago, sent us six dozen roses. Eddie was a person who never failed to remember us and always celebrated with style! He had a lot of creative incentive, too, from people like **T.L. Noble** and **Ray and Lou!**

---

*"At an after-bar party at my house, we handcuffed Tom Van Boxtel in the bathtub, put in the stopper, and peed on him, filling up the tub." – Terrence Gilles*

---

The MAGIC Picnic brought with it once again the annual Midwest Invitational Volleyball Tournament. We take this opportunity to thank **Rollie C., Terrence Gilles, Bill Couillard, and Jeff Pintar**, who worked very hard over many seasons to make it successful! The Volleyballers have added to the ambiance of our special place!

**Sass DuBois (Brian Blied)**, was our host again this year, and he got good marks except in one department. Larry Henke says it best, "Sass never could start a chain saw. It was a mistake to try." MR. ROD 1985 was **John Roether**.

**Michelle Dorland**, fear in her heart, did act as a "cocktroid" for some of our events, serving VIPs on the New Bar Balcony, and she eventually graduated to subbing as a bartender in ROD'S main bar.

Overshadowing the Labor Day "Parts II" Party and the Halloween Party, loomed the spectre of AIDS. **Larry Baumann** was diagnosed in 1985, and our Holiday card was aptly titled, "What better way to spend the holidays than with friends?" Friendship was to become a precious commodity, indeed, but we never lost our penchant for the humorous, the outrageous, the risque, and the novel . . .



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**Congratulations &  
Best Wishes,  
Rodney!**

Jess, Brad, Marty, David, Warren & Phil



1986

Ringin' in 1986 was the job of **Roger Spoentgen**, our new captain. Returning to the lifeboats were **Joe, Mark, Kraig, Karl,** and **Philip**. Newcomers included **Rick Jahr, Andrew Bednarek,** and **Michael Vaughn**, DJ. (Listing Mike Vaughn as a newcomer is a bit erroneous, since he'd been doing it routinely for some time, but he started doing regular gigs in 1986.)

We went the jock route in January, beginning the year with a fashionable ski trip. Moving into May (it was a long winter), we did "Old Bartenders Week." **Mike, Ben, Lewis, Kelly, Richie, Ken, Doug,** and **Philip**, all returned to the front bar for a stint at bartending, and for many, a miserable experience with the new register. Most of the guys donated their tips to M.A.S.N., a magnanimous gesture, indeed.

---

*"When I was young, the Dead Sea wasn't even sick yet." – Uselmann*

---

The Miracles put on a helluva show this year: *Snow White and the Seven Tiny Inches*, starring that black actress in whiteface in blackface in the title role of "Snow." The cast had, for once, a legitimate reason for complaining that their knees were killing them . . .

The Chicago Gay Pride Parade found us as present as we could possibly be. We took the Hotel to Chicago. **Larry Henke's** ingenuity and **Greg Scheel's** willingness to let go of the building for a weekend were all it took. And, we won FIRST place! Speaking of Greg, we should have given him more and better press each year of ROD'S historical mystery tour, but he works so hard and tends to blend into the background so well that his presence often goes unnoticed. However, Greg is more than his flamboyant wardrobe and his concern for the destruction of the Patio – he did practically build it himself, after all – he is very much a part of the visual history of ROD'S.

In Madison, **Jay Hatheway** (*Among Friends*) filed a complaint with the Equal Opportunities Commission against Stevens Point and Green Bay Newspapers for anti-gay discrimination in advertising. And, a gay student, **Matthew Alexander**, was elected UW-Madison student body president.

1986 was our "Golden Anniversary" – the seventh year celebrated on the seventh day of the seventh month! Our chef created the largest ROD'S logo ever out of a 100-pound block of ice! We had one of our most sumptuous buffets ever, and friends sent flowers for days. Our friend, **Bart Lombard**, however, never thought much of flowers. He concocted a shrine to Rodney, complete with altar and candles. The photograph that graced it was one of Bart's favorites, from his personal collection. Bart helped us celebrate many special events over the years, and truly, they would not have been the same without him!

The MAGIC Picnic, by now drawing over 1,000 people from all over the midwest, was very special this year. Rodney was in the midst of coaching the annual "high



Larry Henke's prize-winning entry in the Chicago Gay & Lesbian Pride Parade—a masterpiece.

heel race" when he looked up to see an airplane buzzing the park complete with a banner proclaiming, "Touché/Chicago Loves ROD'S!" **Chuck Rodocker** had thought up a dandy this time!

---

*"Love Your Old Friends and Your New Friends. Please Practice Safe Sex!" – ROD'S Newsletter*

---

In August, our friends from Milwaukee came over and put on a fabulous production of *Dames at Sea*. This helped set the stage for the annual MR. ROD SHOW/CONTEST. Before we describe this year's spectacular, a brief digression is in order. Our friend **David Boyer**, manager of Carol's Speakeasy in Chicago, had been a regular fan of our summer special events. This year, he brought with him a portable toilet, arguing that trying to piss at ROD'S, standing in long lines and crossing one's legs was more than a body could take.

---

*"Joe Cameron woke up in his round bed, his mouth duct-taped closed." – The Committee*

---

We turned **Larry Henke** loose for the MR. ROD SHOW. This year's theme was "art deco," and Larry came up with an up-one-side-and-down-the-other "tour de force." A real working elevator! While cast, crew, and our star entertainer, **Judy Tenuta**, went about their business, and co-hosts **Eddie Dugan** and **Sass Dubois** made us laugh, Rodney was waiting in the wings to play his "bit part." He was to take the eleva-

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This is one **QUEEN** wishing you  
a Happy Tenth Anniversary!

R. J.





Dangerous Donny Dydell mixes them up!



Halloween after-bar scene: Warren, Rodney, David Keyser and Bradley.

tor down and appear on stage to greet the contestants and crown this year's MR. ROD. The entire show went flawlessly, and all twelve contestants made their descent via elevator. During the customary applause, Rodney entered the elevator, and, as if by magic – foul play, perhaps – the ropes controlling the contraption got all tangled up. Rodney free-fell the last ten feet, and when the elevator doors opened, the audience viewed a less-than-composed “star.” He survived. MR. ROD 1986 was **Troy Pfeiffer**.

---

*“Golly, it's windy here; I'll never keep my skirts down.” – Sass (on his move to Chicago, 1986)*

---

Labor Day brought a funny new twist in entertainment. **Ms. Bonnie Bitch**. Bike trips, to Goodland park, and bus trips, to hear **Patti LaBelle**, kept us from getting cabin fever early. A real innovation was the transformation of ROD'S back room into a pool room. This space has been tremendously popular, and in the winter, has taken the edge off crowding in the rear bar. Also new this fall was ROD'S version of the *Dating Game*, a special on Wednesdays.

---

*“Could we please get this 'Bette Davis Blowing League' over with?” – Rodney Scheel*

---

At holiday time, we put together a super card – a giant Christmas Tree made completely out of twinkling lights, crawling its way up the Patio wall, but we never saw the picture. A photographic error prevented our sending out our usual gala holiday greetings.

***Congratulations Rod's, on ten great years!***

***Here's lookin' at another ten***

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1987

In 1987, the **Kraigatola Too-Many** swept into power. Like his mideast namesake, he had an agenda. Fortunately, he permitted **Rodney** to stay on, along with former aides, **Mark, Karl, Rick, Donny, and Andrew**. New veils in 1987 included **Joey Tovar** (this is a long story, for Joey's not really a new face, but he took on many new responsibilities. **Craig Uhl, Tim Journalien, Randy Breunig, Brian Miles**), and **Mark Love**.

Kraig's talents blossomed before our very eyes. He hosted the 1987 "Roddies" show and was so "fab" that **Missy** returned in February to emcee the *Dating Game* and to host our Mardi Gras Party.

---

*"How did such a butch bar end up employing a 'drag queen,' and such a large drag queen at that?" – Rodney, on the occasion of Kraig's 1987 24th birthday roast*

---

Since 1986 was not kind to us in the holiday card department, we sent out a gorgeous Valentine's Day greeting card and wished you all a "Mary" Christmas. Rodney never looked so good in those tacky little boxers with hearts and arrows on them!

1987 was a year of mixed emotions, of grief and triumph, of gains and losses. We lost **Eddie Dugan**, our dear friend from Chicago, and our own **Larry Baumann**. Larry's courageous battle with AIDS was truly inspirational. He made himself available to many organizations and media exchanges over the last two years, while he was physically healthy enough to do so. We were also stunned by the sudden death of **Ray-Ray Krenn**, a long-time Hotel employee and costumer for all our shows, plays, and especially, with his friend, **Priscilla**, for our semi-annual fashion shows. In 1987 we also lost **Doug Wells**, our part-time DJ and long-time friend, to AIDS.

In 1987, the Wisconsin Division of Health announced 150 confirmed cases of AIDS. The National Association of Black & White Men Together held its annual conference in Milwaukee. *OUT!* ceased publication and was more or less replaced by Milwaukee-based, *Wisconsin Light*. City alderperson, **Jim McFarland**, came out publicly, the fourth openly gay, elected official in Madison. Jim wasted no time becoming the chief sponsor of "alternative family" legislation for Madison. In Dubuque, there was a successful Gay Pride Parade, without the violence of previous years. An ad offering help to gay teens appeared in the Stoughton, WI High School newspaper; a home for PWAs was established in Milwaukee; and The United, here in Madison, celebrated its 10th anniversary.

In May, Rodney turned 35! This came as quite a surprise to many of us, especially those who knew him when he opened The Back Door in 1972 – Warren, for example. But to others, it was the opportunity to roast him, toast him, and otherwise insult him to the hilt! Friends from Madison and far and wide came "to pay their respects." Speeches, flowers, videotapes, wild



R. J. Chaffin and Michael Glenner – havin' some fun tonight!

production numbers, and just enough controlled substances to make for a wild and crazy night. Most of this Rodney will deny to his grave, but, fortunately, we have all manner of records of the occasion. The "pièce de résistance" was a videotape, produced by **Michael Glenner**, of Take One in Chicago and entitled, "Rodney Birdie." This tape is cherished to this day because many of Rod's best friends, even so butch a number as **Chuck Rodocker**, were coerced into drag routines! **Shelly Rosenbaum** quipped, "When Rodney goes to Chicago, he has to take his friends with him because he can't remember anyone's name. "Happy Birthday, Rodney!"

---

*"He's the only guy whose underwear was removed by the City Fathers because it wasn't fireproof." – Jim Dohr*

---



Men's Room Bartender Exchange – Bart, Jamie, Joey, Sue "K," and Rodney.



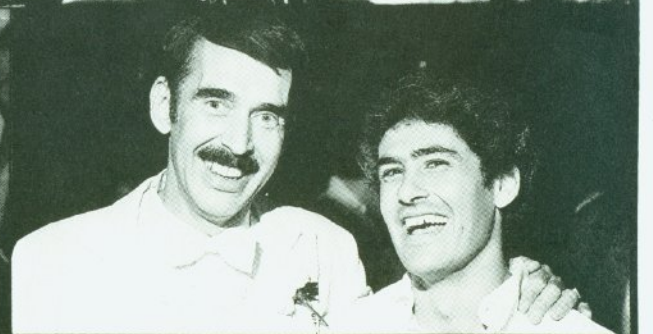
**Rodney**  
**For All The Years**  
**And All The Tears –**  
**For All The Fun**  
**And All The Friends –**  
**And All The Parties**  
**And All The Joy –**  
**For All The Sharing**  
**And So Much Learned**  
**Thanks**  
**Jeff & Pam**



**Happy Tenth**  
**to**  
**ROD's Bathroom**

**Heir to the Ice Cream**  
**Empire of Northwest Indiana**

**Bart**





---

*"When I met him at the tubs six years ago,  
he was so wrinkled, all I could do was  
iron him." – Bart Lombard*

---

Gay Pride Parade Weekend in Chicago in 1987 was a veritable worldwide event, at least as far as ROD'S was concerned. The theme for the year was "Strong, Proud, United," and our "Globe" opened up to show that we were all that and more. We were a judges' favorite!

The Thespians put on their rendition of *The Three Little Pigs*, starring three of our favorite porkers, **Kraig**, **Karl**, and **Allen George**. It was, as usual, a dramatic coup . . . **Larry Henke** pulled the thing together using parts of previous floats, scenery, ROD'S back fences, as well as rotting planks and tree trunks gathered from **Randy Alexander's** latest development.

**Allen George** played a man for the first time in his theatrical career.

Bartender exchanges were a really big deal in 1987. We went back and forth to the Wreck Room, Loading Dock, Men's Room, and 1101 West in Appleton. They were all special, though we thought we'd not survive one or two of them. We thank especially **Tony Canfora** for his welcome to 219 in Milwaukee; he was as good a host as always. We hope to do more bartender exchanges in the future, with George and the folks at "La Cage" and "Dance . . . Dance . . . Dance . . ." and some of our other midwest friends.

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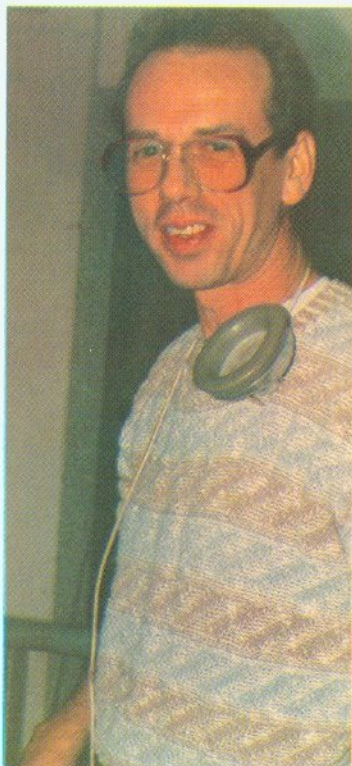
*"Brian Miles will be in charge of cleaning  
Kraig's cage." – Rodney*

---

Summer was a period of entertainment at ROD'S. **Ms. Ginger Grant** entertained for our 8th anniversary, and **Ms. Bonnie Bitch** for the 4th of July. **Ms. Odessa Brown** was back for the MR. ROD SHOW/CONTEST, and the **Minneapolis ATONS** returned in the fall.



Dr. Steve Rempas speaks to Chicago's finest.



Tommy Parks – guest DJ and close friend.



Harold, Joey, Kraig, Karl, and Brian set up the Anniversary Party on the patio.



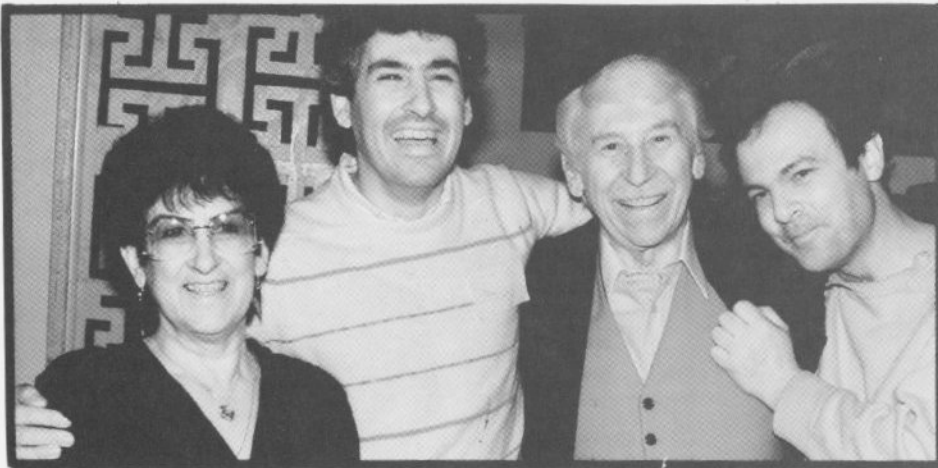
Tony Canfora (Club 219), Karl Peggelow, Ron Geiman (*In Step*), and Cheri Becker (Back East) at the 219 Bartender Exchange.

**Dr. Steve Rempas'** after-bar party was a whopper this year. The halls of the Inn on the Park were so jammed with people that the smoke alarm kept going off due to cigarettes! These parties were so popular that at one time we had to hire a security guard to try and keep "uninvited guests" away. It didn't work.

In August, the MR. ROD SHOW/CONTEST was emceed by **Kraig Miller** and **Mr. Michael "K"**. **Larry Henke** constructed a believable space ship. We thank, too, **Tommy Parks**, for his work on sound, not just at this event, but over many years. Tommy is one of Chicago's finest, and he has always found time to spin for us – we appreciate it! MR. ROD 1987 was **Carl Cliver**, and he went on to compete in the International Mr. Leather Contest in Chicago in 1988. Also in August we sent greetings to M&M in Milwaukee on the occasion of its anniversary.

We were inventive in 1987, under the dictatorship of **Kraig Miller** and his associate, **Mark Mueller**. Sunday Sundown Sundance Socials came into being, and people started crawling up and down stairs to "mingle." The Bette Davis Bowling League got reorganized. And, we ended the year with a true first (legally . . .): New laws permitted us to stay open all night long on New Year's Eve – 24 hours straight, or rather gay. This was an evening to be gotten over in stages . . .

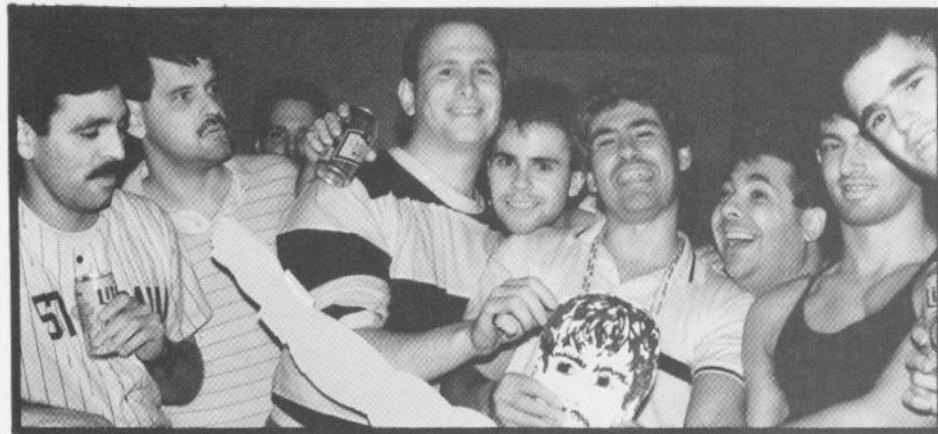




Jo and Doc Scheel (Rodney's parents) enjoy the staff Christmas Party with Rodney and Ray-Ray.



The Three Little Pigs: Kraig, Karl and Brian.



Bartender exchange with the Men's Room – late night at the Loading Dock.



Rick Jahr, Kraig Miller, Bart Lombard, Rodney and Karl Pegelow. (Men's Room/Loading Dock exchange.)



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1988

1988 was ushered in under the capable – depending on whom you ask – leadership of **Kraig Miller**. Kraig celebrated his 25th birthday on April 11 and was feted with a round-trip ticket to the city of his dreams . . . (Rockford). Returning in supporting roles this year were **Karl, Mark, Rick, Joey, Donny, Craig, and Brian**. Newcomers were **Bill Woodard, Wayne Thompson, and Joe Miller**.

Winter was not too lively, but come April, things started to pick up. We held the first MIL-MAIDS Bowling Tournament here in Madison, and in May, we went to Chicago to watch our own **Carl Cliver (MR. ROD 1987)** compete in the International Mr. Leather Contest.

When we returned home, Rodney took a few months off for a "stress break," and when he returned in July, we were more than glad to have him back. We realized in rapid order than running the Hotel isn't as easy as he always made it look.

**Larry Henke** put his wizardry to work for us again, and we took the Hotel Washington "Frightfully Proud" haunted house to Chicago for the Gay Pride Parade. The Miracle Thespians put on a humdinger of a production of *Jack and the Dongstalk* – alas, without the services of dear **Ray-Ray**.



Cast and crew – "Jack and the Dongstalk"

July brought back **Bonnie Bitch** over the 4th of July Weekend and "Homo Hacienda" was the theme for our 9th Anniversary Party. A special anniversary treat was the appearance of our friends **RJ Chaffin** and **Gary Chichester** of Chicago. They appeared as "marsupials" with little aprons bearing the inscription, "Just Say No!" We had a piñata with candies, and some bimbo "decorated" the Patio with fake dog turds and all manner of disgusting things.



Our entry in Chicago's Gay and Lesbian Pride Parade "Frightfully Proud!"



Woody Lorenz (*Midwest Times*, Bulldog Road, Crazy Mary's) loves Rodney!

We visited the Names Project Quilt in Chicago and were humbled. We also sewed panels ourselves in memory of **Larry Baumann, Eddie Dugan, and Doug Wells**. At the end of the month, we held the 16th annual MAGIC Picnic and the annual invitational volleyball tournament.

Fresh from recent appearances at Chicago's Windy City Contest and the *Gay Chicago Magazine Awards*, our MR. ROD show entertainer this year was **Rudy de la Mor**, complete with incomparable hats and bejeweled arms. Rudy's comedy was ethnic, sexist, and gay, but was seldom offensive, because his sensitivity and warmth grabbed our audience head on. And, speaking of grabbing our audience, the MR. ROD SHOW was emceed by **Kraig Miller** and **Sass**, two of our best known girlfriends . . . .

---

*"Yes, folks, come on down and help dispel the myth that Kraig Miller is really Judy Tenuta in drag!"* – Sass

---

MR. ROD 1988 was **Jay Strappe**. August was also the month we had the **TNT Dancers** on the Patio: Another dynamite night!

Labor Day came and went, and in October we found a new location for our Halloween Party, Turner Hall. Greg did a masterful job, as always, of putting together a party for lots of people in the middle of the night. We also had a very unusual bartender exchange with "**Uncle Al**" of Your Place in Milwaukee.

The end of the year holiday card was truly a novelty: The inventive and ingenious Rodney "touch" came up with a dial-a-matic card that allowed you to match various holiday "bodies" with the heads of each of our staff members. No wrong answers, and many people came up with some very creative combinations!



1989

# ROD'S

1989 and Beyond



"The current, friendly, helpful and energetic staff of Rod's ready to serve you through the next ten years of Rod's unforgettable history . . ."

As he told us in his letter up front, Rodney does not intend to stand idly by following ten years of success. Oh no, he's got plans. 1989 and the decade of the '90s will bring new ideas, new faces and lots of fun, all of which are based on the many ties that bind ROD'S customers and staff together. The cast of characters for the immediate FUTURE will be George Kelly, Manager, and the following hunky guys (and, of course, Pam) pictured above: Kraig Miller, Karl Pegelow, Mark Dwyer, Rick Jahr, Joey Tovar, Dennis Griffith, Allen George and Rodney. We'd also like to take this opportunity to thank Brian Miles and Joe Miller, two guys who work very hard for us. And Bradley, thanks to you for all your love and support.

Part of 1989 – ten full days, to be exact – is devoted to the 10th Anniversary Celebration. Although we had many, many highlights during the celebration, the two that jump out at us are the kick-off party featuring Pamala Stanley on Friday, June 30. And, of course, our festive cocktail party on Friday, July 7, featuring an old friend, comedian and "man-for-all-seasons," Michael Bruno! These are two "gala" events!

We want all of you to be part of ROD'S future . . . As you read and digest the past, think positively, be of good spirit, and stay in touch. You'll not regret it.

# ROD'S

ROD'S  
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636 West Washington Avenue  
Madison, Wisconsin 53703  
©1989

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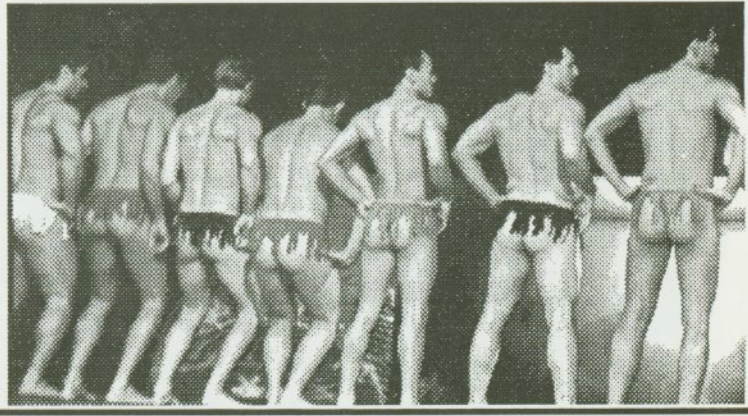
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*(Scarabaeus sacer)*

# santa

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I will show you things you have never seen  
I will do to you  
what no man has ever done ..."

"te llevaré a sitios que tú nunca has ido  
te enseñó cosas que tú nunca has visto  
te haré cosas que ningun hombre te ha hecho ..."

私はあなたを未知の場所へおさそいして  
御覧になったことのないものをお見せします  
そして今まで経験したことがない  
チャンスをさし上げましょう....

