

GLAD Chat



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Volume 22 Issue 1

January 2015

January GLAD Social

The January GLAD social will be held January 10th at Unity Church of Decatur. The Unity Center for Inspired Living is located at 317 W Decatur St 62522. They have reduced their usual fee to \$75.00; we'll try their facilities for a month and see how they meet our needs before booking them for March –December. The doors open at 6:00; we must be off the premises by 9:00. Our speaker will be Michael Burton, openly gay on-air personality of WAND-TV. In addition, a lesbian couple from WAND who recently announced their engagement in the *Herald and Review* have been invited to join us. Please remember to bring a dish and donation to cover the costs of renting the room.

February GLAD Social

The February GLAD social will be held February 14th. In order to celebrate both Valentine's Day and the 22nd anniversary of GLAD, the social will be held at Il Forno at 1423 E Mound in Decatur. The speaker will be Jenny Cogwill who will update us on an LGBT youth group she has formed. Since the room at Il Forno holds only 30 people, we will be taking reservation from the first 28 GLAD members to sign up. Payment can be made in person to Mary Lynn, or a check received by January 30th at GLAD PO Box 3783 Decatur, IL 62524.

The Ritz: Take II

Join us for another evening of dinner, dancing, and good times. A black-tie affair on Saturday, February 7th from 5:30 to 11:00 pm at the Hoo-gland Center for the Arts at 420 S. 6th Street, Springfield. Tickets are \$50.00 per plate and must be purchased in advance.

This includes free parking in the parking garage just north of the Hoo-gland, and a three-course dinner.

For tickets or more information contact Lee Korty, Paula Harris, Jim Barr, Rod Shoemaker, or Brian Sylvester.

UPCOMING EVENTS

Jan 10 6:00 PM

GLAD Social
Unity Church
317 W. Decatur St.

Jan 11 6:00 PM

Just Flicks
Boys Next Door
Central Christian Church
Don Martin leads a discussion of a story about social worker whose job has overshadowed his personal life and who feels it may be time to move on.

Jan 25 6:00 PM

Just Flicks
Do the Right Thing
First Presbyterian Church
Our own **John Poling** leads the discussion of the movie about a multi-racial neighborhood exploding in racism.

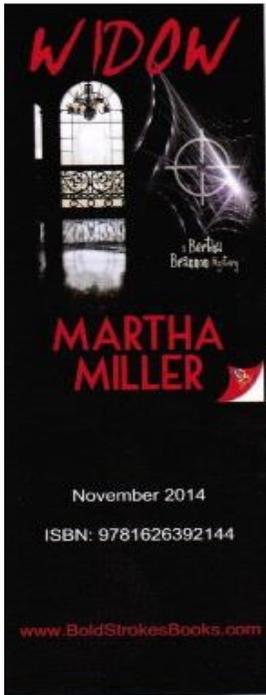
Jan.28 6:00 PM

GLAD Board Meeting
DMH Cafeteria

December Social

Attendance: 25

Donations: \$90.00



WIDOW by Martha Miller

County Judge Bertha Brannon's life blows up when her partner of twelve years, police sergeant Toni Matulis, the love of her life, is killed during a domestic violence call gone bad. Bertha is still trying to accept what's happened when she gets the first of several threatening phone calls. This is followed by one dangerous incident after the next, one dead body after the last. The police are no help, so Bertha starts her own investigation and learns that Toni was working on a case that no one wanted her to solve, a case of corruption that goes all the way to the top.



www.BoldStrokesBooks.com

Please Help

For next month's newsletter, we are seeking submissions of your favorite GLAD memories to commemorate our 22nd year.

Also, we know GLAD members are active in the community. Let us know what you're doing for the greater community and we'll include it in the newsletter.

A Note from the Co-Chairs



We were so delighted to see so many cheerful faces joining us for our GLAD Christmas Social and Gift Exchange.



What a pleasure it was to watch everyone pitch in with setting up for dinner, getting the Christmas tree ready for the gifts, and everything else that everyone worked to accomplish. Working as a team, we can as a group, rebuild the excitement for our monthly Saturday night socials.

Next month's social should be very informative with Michael Burton, a local Decatur News Personality, joining us to give us some insight as to how it is working as a newscaster in Decatur. Michael is a delightful young man and we hope to see a great turn out to welcome him.

As far as the rest of the year..... We have tried to get a variety of programs from entertainment, fundraising, topics of interest to the group, and well, who knows???

Hope to see you all next month.

Memories of Mark Rau

By Jerry Bowman

Mark Rau *Decorating Coordinator*, for CORAL.

An artist of varied mediums, Mark worked for 25 years as a set and costume designer in the theatre and entertainment fields. His experience spread across the country, and included Atlanta, Chicago, Los Angeles, Nashville, and Rochester, New York.

Since his return to central Illinois, Mark designed and created stained glass pieces on commission. Mark also designed and made fine silver jewelry, which he displayed and sold at art fairs and galleries around the state.

Mark retired as Floral Designer and Manager of the Floral Department at Hobby Lobby in Springfield. During the winter months, he taught Floral Design classes.

Mark's association with **The Coalition of Rainbow Alliances** began with the 2006 Twilight Parade Float "Blooming Proud." Since then, Mark served as Decoration Chairman for CORAL's 2007 Mardi Gras Fund-raiser "Blue Bayou," served as Float Co-Chair for CORAL's 2007 St. Patrick's Day Parade, "Salute to the Leprechaun." Mark worked continuously, leaving his unmistakable touch on every CORAL dinner, fund raiser, festival appearance, and parade float entry, since then.

"I can't draw," Mark told me. "I can see how things go together, but I just can't draw, to show you what I am thinking." And think he did! I could trust that Mark had analyzed each element of the composition we were working on, and when a conflict or a problem arose, Mark could rearrange the elements to provide us with, not only the clearance on an underpass, but the winning edge.

Mark never liked a budget. Each time we worked on a project, we had a stare-down. "Alright, How much do I have?" he'd ask, with his hands on his hips. "You have one roll of Reynolds Wrap and all the Elmers Glue that you can water down from the squeeze bottle," I'd reply.

"Okaaay...I guess I can do it," he'd relent.

Mark always had a collection of fill features, or "graffiti," as he called it and after everyone else had finished with their work, Mark would warn everyone to stand back. He'd dig into his box, and start spreading the stars, the suckers, the dots, or some other concoction that no one else had even considered. When he had finished, he would declare, "Now, it's done."

The noted architect, Phillip Johnson once said, "God is in the details." Having witnessed Mark's incredible care in the work that he produced, I cannot question that remark, nor believe that Mark has not gone on to help a higher power to create more magic for us all.

Mark put on the long-johns last December and served as construction coordinator for CORAL's joint-venture with the Springfield Jaycees creating a new float for Santa Claus. It was to be one of the last creations Mark would give us. Without a whisper of his illness, he joined with those of us who loved him, and demanded the best from us all.

"It's probably my last float," he told me. "I don't want Santa to be disappointed," he said with his sly smile.

Martha [lesbian] Living

Good-bye—Mary Lou

There are a ton of people who knew Smokey better than me. I saw her tending bar and playing disco on weekends for several years, but we didn't really meet until I interviewed her in 1990 for the book that became *Tales from the Levee*. I remember sitting at her dining room table with several others from the old days and talking about the beginning in 1965 and then on and on past the Fifth Street Den, past the show bar out on Mayden Road, up until the Washington Street Den, which was still open at that point. The stories she told me are almost all used in the book in some form. Smokey was a great story teller. The last time I saw her was at the Station House party when the book came out.

In the 1990 interview, she started out saying, "The saddest thing that ever happened on the Levee was when they tore down the Orpheum Theater." She told me a story about her nephew asking if he could build a stage in the Fifth Street bar. She told him he could—I can still hear her saying—"here he came with wood and hammers and nails . . ." and from that time on, she had drag shows and even was on the stage herself from time to time. On show nights the place was packed.

Several people that I interviewed told me about the 1975 murder of a denizen of the bar. When I asked Smokey about it she said, "There was blood everywhere. The killer followed him around the room stabbing him while his roommate heard it from his locked bedroom." They never convicted the man they arrested. Judge Simon Freedman directed a verdict of not guilty, and that was the end of that.



Sugar Bear Show—Smokey's Hello Dolly

There may not have been protection for gays outside the bar, but Smokey cultivated a good relationship with the police and she kept a gun behind the counter in case something went

bad. Along with others, I have experienced the police coming in to Smokey's Den, but that was nothing like, New York's, Stonewall Inn. People were not arrested and hauled away; their names were not published in the newspaper. Smokey kept a safe place for us, all of us. Gays from St. Louis used to come to Springfield because it was illegal to cross dress in Missouri. In those days Smokey provided us with safety and fun and a sort of community where we took care of each other.

After my book was published, a reviewer pointed out something I hadn't seen. Back then we lived just ahead of the wrecking ball that started in 1965 with the destruction of the Orpheum Theater. Many of the people from that era have gone ahead of Smokey. Someday *Tales from the Levee* will become a ghost book, as we die off one at a time.

So long Mary Lou.

Friends of Smokey will be holding a memorial service on Sunday, January 11 at 2:00 p.m. at Elixer, the former Smokey's Den. The address is 411 W. Washington in Springfield. No cover. You are welcome to bring a covered dish.

Farewell, Judy Baar Topinka

By Jerry Bowman

State Comptroller Judy Baar Topinka passed away suddenly on December 10 after suffering a stroke. She had just won re-election in the November election. To many, she was considered an icon for her support of rights for LGBT people and her out and proud display of her respect for the LGBT community. At the same time, it should be noted that she was not unanimously appreciated by activists for LGBT rights.

At a time when Northern Illinois University had established non-discrimination policies to protect LGBT students, there was an effort by campus activists to ban the ROTC from recruiting at the University since the United States Army was still banning lesbians and gays from serving in the military. The effort to remove ROTC from NIU was countered by then State Senator Topinka. That position lost her the support of activists who had been students at NIU.

In 2006, while she was seeking the Republican nomination for Governor, the Secretary of State, the Treasurer, the Attorney General, and the Governor created protection for the LGBT members of their staff through Executive Order. Knowing it would be held against her in the campaign for the Republican nomination, she declined to follow that trend, although there was never any implication that she had allowed any such mistreatment of her staff members. Even so, pictures of her dancing with Rick Garcia, a well known LGBT rights activist, were used against her in the campaign. Because of her support for LGBT rights and women's rights, she did not get the whole-hearted support of the Republican Party and lost to Rod Blagojevich by a sizeable percentage.

She continued to practice fairness toward LGBT citizens. While there may have been some controversy regarding LGBT rights early in her career she was a leader on the non-discrimination bill, the civil union bill and she was tireless in her support of the equal marriage bill. She came to the House floor before the vote and talked to Republican members trying to squeeze out every necessary vote. She helped secure a state loan to build the Chicago LGBT Community Center and was a speaker at the March on Springfield.

Thanks to Rick Garcia for his contribution to this article.