



The 2015 Southern Decadence Press Party culminated with the unveiling of this year's official poster created by renowned photographer Larry Graham. Southern Decadence Grand Marshals XLI Frankie Fierce, Steven Mora, Marsha Delain, Rip Naquin and Misti Ates recreated the pose live in a musical presentation featuring the official song.

The announcements began as SDGM Frankie Fierce announced the song: "Uptown Funk" by Bruno Mars, DJ JRB's Southern Decadence Pumped Remix, SDGM Steven Mora announced the colors: Lavender, Lime Green & Silver Lane, SDGMs Rip and Marsha Naquin-Delain announced the poster by renowned photographer Larry Graham, and SDGM Misti Ates announced the theme: **Swimmin' with the Gods**

celebrazzi

and Goddesses (calling all Gods, Goddesses, Mermaids, Mermen and all creatures of the sea, swimmin' synchronized).

The standing room only crowd packed GrandPre's in New Orleans enjoying cocktail eats while mingling with the grand marshals and guests.

The giant 44th Southern Decadence end of summer invasion is expected to bring in over 160,000 revelers Wednesday-Monday, September 2-7, 2015.

Keep abreast of everything Southern Decadence at www.SouthernDecadence.com, or follow [www.Facebook.com/SouthernDecadenceNOLA](https://www.facebook.com/SouthernDecadenceNOLA).



Past Southern Decadence Grand Marshals 34 Electra City, 36 Julien Artressia, 35 Tittie Toulouse and Paloma, 39 Venus Santiago, 40 Chad Boutte, 27 Errol Rizzuto, 33 Regina Adams, 40 Aubrey Synclair, and 40 Reba Douglas joined current SDGMs 41 Steven Mora, Frankie Fierce and Misti Ates for the 2015 Southern Decadence Press Party at GrandPre's. (www.SouthernDecadence.com)



Wood Enterprises' Tim Wilson and Chris Ward join MASCARa MC Coca J. Mesa, Wood Enterprises Catherine and proprietor Tom Wood at the finish line for the 16th Annual MASCARa Race raising \$3,250 for the NOCCA Institute. Sponsored by Wood Enterprises and Bud Light, the race has raised more than \$113,904 for this very worthy charity since 2002.



"Generations Forum" – June 16, 6:30-8:30 p.m.

2372 St. Claude, Ave., New Orleans, LA 70117

Sponsored by **NOAGE** (New Orleans Advocates for GLBT Elders) and the **LGBT+ Archives**

Project of Louisiana, this forum will feature a presentation on New Orleans' LGBT+ history followed by a panel of speakers representing multiple generations of the LGBT+ community who will share their perspectives. Refreshments will be provided.

Admission is free and open to the public. At **Café Istanbul**, in the **New Orleans Healing Center**.

For more information, call (504)418-6614.



The winners of the 16th Annual MASCARa Race included Prettiest - Bud Light's Matthew Payan raising \$401, Ugliest - Clover Grill's Maurice Austin raising \$200, 1st Place and Ms. MASCARa Rawhide's Oren Riley raising \$200, Most Money Raised Good Friends' Richard Walker raising \$617, and Miss Congeniality Double Play's Will Antill raising \$465. The race benefits the NOCCA Institute and is held every Memorial Day Weekend with the Hamster Derby at Good Friends Bar, Crawfish Boil at Rawhide, and the race beginning and ending at Clover Grill. Sponsored by Wood Enterprises and Bud Light the race raised \$3,250 for the institute.

Thank you Ambush Readers!
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the real cheese

by Felicia Phillips
Email: fphillips1011@gmail.com
Photo by Hubert S Monkeys

For my second edition I debated ideas in my head for days, tossed and turned at night and still kept coming up blank, rarely at a loss for words. I was beginning to think this was going to be a quick death for my new found career. That was until circumstances at my day job caused me to have to work a triple shift! Yes, 24 hours straight, in the middle of busy season here in what has

become a near Disney Land for adults from all over the world. Surely this could lead to some interesting tidbits worthy of passing on.

I manage a small guest house just outside the Quarter and that in itself is rarely boring. Adding to my own rather colorful nature, without naming the particular guest house, it is a very bright pink, same color pink as a common medicine for upset stomachs. Anyone who works in the hospitality industry here in New Orleans can affirm that there are two basic kinds of visitors who come to our more than fair city, one the type that comes to experience the music, the art, the food, the whole culture; type two are the ones that come to get trashed and I mean sloppy drunk, sharing their bodily fluids with Bourbon Street as their own booze induced right of passage, even if they are old enough to buy said booze with a senior citizen discount. Now the really fascinating thing is the only difference between the two very different types is a Hurricane from Pat O's or more likely a Hand Grenade that of course most visitors seem to think is a requirement that they must have as soon as arriving. Even the most cultured seem to lose all sense of dignity and moral turpitude after some of our alcoholic concoctions cross their lips.

Now that I've given you a glimpse into what are our typical guests all seem to have in common, I can tell you about my 24 hour shift, which will be condensed, as I have a chicken roasting in the oven and you know I like my meals! Coming on at 3pm things were calm. But within a few hours I get a feel for what could come, as two of the guests, a younger couple, male looking perfectly normal the whole time, but female going into room much the same, only to come out in a tutu, g-string, sequin bra, and a wig that a few queens would have fought for. Actually this isn't uncommon at all, but what was uncommon was that the couple would return nearly hourly only long enough for her to do a complete costume change, wig, shoes and all. After the fourth time I started daydreaming about Cher heading back out on tour! It was still pretty calm, and I only had one check in left due to arrive at 1am, I start to think about napping.

This is about the time that another middle aged couple decide to head out

to the Quarter, after wishing them a good evening, the lady stops and asks if I would be here all night, looking directly at my desk. I told her, well yes I will be on premises but might not be right at the desk, she then asked well where will you be? I pointed to the room right across and said taking a nap in there. A few hours pass, I decide to take my nap and quickly dose off.

Only being asleep for a short time, I hear a voice at my door, whispering are you awake? It's the middle aged lady, I get dressed answer the door only to see her weaving to and fro with a cigarette in one hand and a lighter that she kept flicking in the other, she mumbled incoherently something over and over, the only chance I had of understanding her would be if I could locate Paloma to translate. It was then that I see that the lighter was not working, meaning she wanted a light, in a non smoking hotel lobby of course, I told her where the closest store was and excused myself back to the room, as soon as my head hit the pillow she was at the door again, this time I got that she was trying to tell me she had a lighter in her car, GREAT! Except her car was behind our locked gate that I had to let her into. By this time I gave up on the nap as the late check in was due to arrive, he did right on time smooth check in, I'm done for the night. I decide I'll leave my contact number, cab home, walk my dog, sleep for 4 hours and head back for morning shift. Cab driver who I will just call Muhammad as not to profile was fast and pleasant, home in 5 minutes. As soon as I lay down, phone rings, it's the first couple informing me that they locked their keys inside their room, on my way I respond. Call cab and this driver I will call Muhammad #2, seemed as nice at first until he drove complete opposite direction of the address I just gave him. When I questioned him, his response was everybody has a different route to get places, by this time I was fresh out of Hail Mary passes and went off, he had no clue what he had just done. Needless to say once I finished with him I'm pretty sure he grabbed his passport and headed to back to the Holy Lands. I get to the hotel to meet the guests locked out only to see the male was no longer the normal guy as before but the hand grenades had kicked in, as he was wearing bits and

pieces of all her previous costume changes, if it wasn't 3 in the morning I would have been amused, they were apologetic enough and I shook it off and decided just stay and get those couple of needed hours of a sleep so I could function the next shift. Hit the bed with the debate in my head of whether or not to use my experiences of the evening for this article, was going to just sleep on it, when I get one of those annoying emails notifications of a Facebook post. I had posted much early about being on hour 15 of the 24 hour shift, and at 3:49am to be exact **Ambush** Editor and Chief, Southern Decadence GM XLI Rip Naquin himself posts that's the Real Cheese! God himself couldn't have given me a greater sign of validation!

So till next time dahlings, I'm Felicia Phillips, the Cheese Queen Of New Orleans.

the "official" dish ...from 4

Buzzy's. His past six or so birthday parties have turned into charity fundraisers, the last raising \$4,500 in three hours. Frankie is always involved with charity fundraisers such as a sponsor of Gay Easter Parade, performed or hosted at Southern Decadence events, was a host of Halloween New Orleans twice, and a lieutenant for Southern Decadence 2014.

Keep abreast of everything Southern Decadence at www.SouthernDecadence.com, or follow [www.Facebook.com/SouthernDecadenceNOLA](https://www.facebook.com/SouthernDecadenceNOLA).

2015 Gay Appreciation Awards Voting Online ONLY June 2-8

The 28th annual Gay Appreciation Awards voting is set for Tuesday, June 2 through Monday, June 8 online only at www.AmbushMag.com/GAA.

Only one ballot per person is allowed. Installed spam filters will delete any cheating ballots thus disqualifying those participants from receiving an award.



Sponsored by **Ambush Mag**, the awards thanks those in the Lesbian Gay Bisexual Transgender Community who are often not recognized for the outstanding services and efforts they perform. These individuals and businesses have made the LGBT Community into the viable, successful and powerful community it is today.

The 28th GAA Gala is set for Saturday, July 18, 8-10pm, at Oz, 800 Bourbon Street. The 2015 winners are

announced at this event. VIP Tables with four seats are \$200 and are very limited. All proceeds benefit Southern Decadence 2015. Contact Rip Naquin for table reservations at ripna@ambushmag.com or 504.522.8049. Door admission is \$10.

Award categories up for public voting include:

- Circuit Party/Event of the Year
- Gay Mardi Gras Ball of the Year
- Hair Salon of the Year
- Neighborhood Bar of the Year
- Buzzy Fanning AIDS Award [organization/individual doing outstanding service in the AIDS arena]

- Bitch of the Year
- Show Club of the Year
- Donnie Jay Performing Arts Award [play, chorus or theatrical group/no individuals]

- Restaurant/Deli/Coffee House of the Year

- Dance Club of the Year
- Bartender of the Year
- DJ of the Year
- Leather Bar of the Year
- Cheridon Comedy Award
- Fly Fashion Glamour Award
- LGBT Business of the Year [no bars/restaurants/delis/hair salons]

- Leather Person of the Year
- Transgender of the Year
- Lesbian of the Year
- Gay Man of the Year
- Marcy Marcell Entertainer of the Year: [female/male impersonator/drag star or entertainer]

In addition, the Board of Directors presents the Lifetime Achievement Award. The Board of Directors includes Lisa Beaumann, Teryl-Lynn Foxx, and Rip and Marsha Naquin-Delain.

The Top 5 Finalist in each category will be announced in the next edition of **Ambush**. One of those 5 is the winner which is announced at the GAA Gala on July 18.

Grand Reveler I, Jeff Palmquist, to Host Burger Bash for LGBT+ Archives Project

Grand Reveler I, Jeff Palmquist, of the Krewe du Rue Royale Revelers, will host a "Burger Bash" fundraiser for the LGBT+ Archives Project of Louisiana on Wednesday, June 10, at Café Lafitte in Exile.

Veteran Lafitte's bartender Jeff Palmquist, a three time GAA winner for Bartender of the Year and current Lieutenant to SDGMs XLI, Rip and Marsh Naquin-Delain, will donate and grill the burgers, which will sell for \$5.

All proceeds will go to benefit the LGBT+ Archives Project of Louisiana. The mission of the Archives Project is to promote and encourage the protection and preservation of materials that chronicle the culture and history of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, & Transgender Community in Louisiana. More infor-

[continued on 12]



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on stage

June 5 & 6 Devin Dixon

Canelo

June 12 & 13 Allesio and Canelo

Friday, June 5

New Orleans Bears beer bust

Friday, June 12

Lords Of Leather beer bust

Father's Day weekend

Saturday, June 20

Lords of Leather

Who's Your Daddy contest

Rocco Steele will be here all
weekend long

Porn Star

Rocco
Steele

Porn Star
Devin
Dixon

Porn Star
Allesio

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moments in gay new orleans history

by Professor Frank Perez
E-mail: f.perez@sbcglobal.net
Photo by: Larry Graham, GrahamStudioOne.COM

“The Saga of Ferris LeBlanc’s Mortal Remains”

On June 24, 1973, Marilyn Downey went to bed in her San Jose, California, home and had a dream. In it, her doorbell rang and when she answered the door she saw standing there her brother, Ferris LeBlanc, whom she had not seen or heard from in years. Forty-two years after the dream, she has still not seen or heard from Ferris and until a few months ago she had no idea whatever became of her brother.

Originally from Michigan, Marilyn and Ferris grew up in a tight-knit family of thirteen siblings in California. Ferris fought for his country in World War II in the D-Day invasion and at the Battle of the Bulge. The family loved Ferris very much and never minded that he was gay. In fact, Ferris would often bring his lover Robert, and later Rod, to family gatherings. Such acceptance was highly unusual in the 1950s and 1960s.

But then, in 1970, Ferris suddenly disappeared and seemed to drop off the face of the earth. His partner at the time, a man named Rod, was controlling and abusive and the couple had incurred no small amount of financial debt. In 1973, Rod’s murdered body was found in a ditch in Oakland, California. When Ferris’s family learned of the murder, they theorized that perhaps Ferris had gone into hiding for fear of his own life. His nephew Skip Bailey also suspected he may have been embarrassed about his relationship with Rod and how he was manipulated into borrowing money from the family.

But these were merely guesses and suppositions. Marilyn and Skip and the rest of the family just didn’t know what happened to Ferris. They would wonder often about his fate for decades. Then, in January, 2015, just before Marilyn went to Tucson, Arizona, to visit her son Skip, she received a call from her brother who told her he had learned on the internet that Ferris died in a fire in New Orleans in 1973.

Upon arriving in Tucson, Marilyn informed her son Skip of what she had just learned and Skip began scouring the internet and discovered the horrible tragedy of the Up Stairs Lounge arson. On June 24, 1973, an arsonist had set a fire at the Up Stairs Lounge, a gay bar in the French Quarter. As a result of the fire, 32 people died, including Ferris LeBlanc. An arrest was never made and the case remains officially unsolved. It was the deadliest fire in New Orleans history and the deadliest crime against gays and lesbians in U.S. history.

The bodies of three of the victims were never identified and several of the bodies were never claimed, most notably the Reverend Bill Larson of the local Metropolitan Community Church, whose family was ashamed of his sexuality and released his body to the MCC. Ferris LeBlanc was identified by a ring he was wearing but his body was never claimed. His and the other three unclaimed bodies were buried by the city of New Orleans in a Potter’s Field.

Skip continued gathering information. He ordered the only two books ever written about the fire—Johnny Townsend’s *Let the Faggots Burn* (2011) and Clayton Delery-Edwards’ *The Up Stairs Lounge Arson:*



Ferris LeBlanc WWII photo

Thirty-Two Deaths in a New Orleans Gay Bar, June 24, 1973 (2014), and he ordered a copy of Royd Anderson’s short documentary film *The UpStairs Lounge Fire* (2013). He also reached out to other filmmakers who are working on documentaries about the fire, Robert Camina and Sheri Wright.

As soon as Marilyn and her son Skip and his wife Lori learned of this they immediately planned to claim Ferris’ body and bring him home. They had already planned a trip to New Orleans to celebrate Marilyn’s 85th birthday. For decades, it has been assumed that Ferris’ family didn’t claim his body because they were ashamed of his

spotlight features

Bar Review: The Black Penny

by Frank Perez, f.perez@sbcglobal.net

Just before Mardi Gras earlier this year, Bert West and Ed Diaz opened The Black Penny in the building that formerly housed the Ninth Circle, 700 N. Rampart.

West and his crew spent months renovating the property and the result is a beautifully appointed space with a warm, relaxed atmosphere and a staggering array of craft beers from around the world. Cocktails are also available, as is a limited but excellent wine selection. And all of this at more than reasonable prices. You will not find better customer service anywhere in the city.

Old barge boards adorn the walls above the bar and the plaster has been removed along the St. Peter Street wall to expose original brick. Comfortably chic booths have been added and the restrooms are completely new—and, I might add, the cleanest I’ve found in the French Quarter. There is no juke box and the music is played at a conversation-friendly level.

There is a certain authenticity about the Black Penny, a feeling that harkens back to the years when genuine neighborhood bars, frequented by locals and residents, permeated the Quarter. And even though it’s only been open a few months, it is easy to assume the place has been open

for a hundred years.

But is it a gay bar? Nes and yo. In this day and age, the question is almost irrelevant—like asking how many corners a circle has. The bar has both gay and straight regulars and one of the bartenders is gay. Owner Bert West answers the question this way, “It’s just a bar and everyone is welcome.”

That sentiment is certainly evident at the Black Penny. This is an outstanding venue with great people, good music, and affordable booze. It’s definitely worth checking out. The Black Penny is located at 700 N. Rampart Street.

sexuality, but this is not the case; they simply did not know what happened to him.

Their first order of business was determining exactly where Ferris was buried. This was difficult because the graves are unmarked. It has long been assumed that he and the other unclaimed bodies were buried at Holt Cemetery, but this assumption was wrong. Anderson’s documentary includes footage of the burial and after visiting Holt Cemetery, Skip, his wife Lori, and Marilyn began to suspect the burial took place in a different cemetery.

Skip began contacting City Hall to find out more information and immediately hit a brick wall. The bureaucrats were initially nonresponsive and unhelpful. The City Cemetery Office told him they have no record of indigents, but the coroner’s office did keep such a record—but those records were destroyed by Hurricane Katrina. Skip persisted in his search and eventually learned that Ferris and the others were buried at Resthaven Cemetery. Skip recalls, “Finding out where he was buried was the biggest challenge.”

Upon visiting Resthaven, the family discovered that the six acre area where indigents were buried was closed in with a

fence, which was locked with a padlock. Lori said, “It looked like a cow pasture.”

Skip contacted the city again to request the gate be unlocked so they could enter the area but again he met resistance. And again his persistence paid off. Mayor Landrieu’s Chief of Staff, Ms. Brooke Smith, agreed to have the gate unlocked and the grass mowed so the family could visit the burial site.

Although they will not be bringing Ferris home to California, his family was at least able to visit the cemetery and thereby gain some closure. Marilyn, Skip, and Lori want people to know that Ferris was loved deeply and had they known of the tragic events that took his life, they would have claimed his body when he died. They are also looking for any information about Ferris’ life. If you knew Ferris, or have any information about him, please contact me and I will put you in touch with his family.

As I concluded my interview with Marilyn Downey I asked her if there was anything else she wanted to add. She replied, “I’ve been waiting 42 years for my doorbell to ring and I’m glad I finally now know Ferris won’t be ringing my doorbell.”

Madison Faile Exhibit to Debut at Steve Martin Fine Art Gallery June 6

by Frank Perez, f.perez@sbcglobal.net

“Castaway,” an exhibit featuring the work of artist Madison Faile, will premiere at the Steve Martin Fine Art gallery on June 6.

Faile is a mixed media artist and hails from Montgomery, Alabama. He moved to New Orleans earlier this year. He studied at Troy University where he earned a B.F.A. in art history and has worked in a number of art galleries including the Stonehenge Gallery in Montgomery and the A.K.A. Stella Gray gallery in New Orleans.

Faile has loved to create art since he was a child and describes the creative process as “better than sex.”

The event, which will feature a dozen or so of Faile’s new works, will take place on Saturday, June 6, from 6 to 9pm. The gallery is located at 624 Julia Street. “Castaway” is part of Julia Street’s June art walk. (Painting Summer’s Day by Madison Faile)

