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October 4 & 5, 2013
Contest:
Saturday, October 5
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PORTRAITURE

Larry Graham

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moments in gay new orleans history

by Frank Perez
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"Killer Tricks"

What do you think of when you hear the phrase "safe sex?" Most of us would probably (hopefully) answer "condoms." And yet as great as that response is, disease is not the only danger we face when we "hook up." Let's talk about serial killers.

Probably many of us could relate horror stories of crazy people we regret sleeping with: the clingy, the needy, the psychotic, the jealous, the addicted, and the sticky-fingered; but have you ever considered that your next trick might want to literally kill you?

It's happened before. In the spring of 1977, a headline in the *Times-Picayune* read "Quarterites Ask Protection from Slasher." A serial killer targeting gay men was on the loose in the lower French Quarter. In a span of two months, four gay men were stabbed to death in their homes. The killings began on St. Valentine's Day when Robert Gary was murdered in his apartment. The killer struck again on March 21 when he stabbed Jack Savell and yet again on April 1 when he killed Alden

D. Delano. The last victim, 77 year old Ernest Omer Pommier, was the only one to put up a fight, a fact evidenced by the 50 plus stab wounds that riddled his body. At the time, there was some dispute over Pommier's sexual orientation. In all four cases, there was no sign of forced entry into the victim's homes.

On April 13, based on a tip from two drag queens, New Orleans police arrested 16 year old Warren Harris, Jr., for the brutal beating of a French seaman outside of a motel. The details of the police investigation are unclear but ultimately, Harris was also charged with being the "French Quarter Stabber" and was convicted in three of the murders. Harris had dropped out of school after the eighth grade and drifted into a life of petty crime. In 1974 he was confined to a state youth institution for theft and drug use. At the time of his arrest, Harris was living with a transsexual roommate. This fact has caused many to speculate that internalized homophobia was the motive in Harris' killing spree.

When Harris was arrested, the gay

community in the French Quarter breathed a collective sigh of relief, but that relief was short-lived for several years later another serial killer targeting gay men surfaced. In the summer of 1984, five gay men were bludgeoned with a hammer, three of whom died. Eugene C. Davis, the owner of Gregory's Lounge, was found naked and dead in his home on Dauphine Street on May 31. Bruce Richardson, who also owned a gay bar, was murdered on June 28. Jerry Beeson, long-time bartender at the Galley House, was beaten but not killed on July 1. John Bryant Hooper, a banker, was found naked and dead in his home on July 5. Another unidentified man was also beaten in his Bourbon Street home. As was the case with the Harris murders, there were no signs of forced entry in the hammer murders. The hammer killer was never apprehended and the murders remain unsolved.

Based on what criminologists know about serial killers, namely that there is almost always a sexual component involved, it's reasonable to assume (and statistically probable) the hammer serial killer was gay. What we don't know is whether or not he was homophobic. There have been cases in which heterosexual serial killers have targeted gay men, but these cases are exceedingly rare.

Self-loathing, closeted serial killers are, of course, an extreme example

of the harmful effects of homophobia. Much more common are non-serial manifestations of homophobic violence. The gay bashing murder of Fernando Rios in Pirate's Alley in 1958 stands out in New Orleans gay history but there have been others. Consider, for example, the case of Joseph Balog.

Early one Thursday morning in November of 1993, 23 year old Joseph Balog and a friend were walking along Dauphine Street in the French Quarter when they were attacked by four men who taunted them with gay slurs. That Balog and his friend were not gay made no difference to the vicious mob. Balog was stabbed in the chest, back, and hand before being found lying on the sidewalk along St. Phillip Street. A Quarter resident out walking his dog found Balog bleeding to death and barely conscious. He was then rushed to Charity Hospital where he died. His friend managed to escape the bloody attack. The following night, Linn-Todd Soldani and others organized an anti-violence rally and a candlelight march to the sight of the slaying. The police eventually arrested Ronald Graves for the murder but at trial the jury was dead-locked.

Unfortunately, haters like the homophobes responsible for Balog's tragic and senseless death are not as rare as serial killers. Society has certainly come a long way in recent years, but homophobia is still very much alive and well—and deadly dangerous too.



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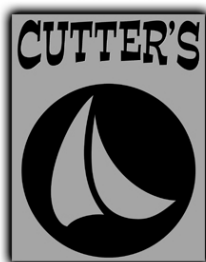
10-6 @ CHICAGO @ NOON

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HOMEMADE BRATWURST
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and Bridesmaid Opal**



**Vickie & St. Anna's Episcopal
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Marsha & Rip**



Marsha, Mr. Carl & Rip



**Marty & Koo with Rip &
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Jim May**



**Lords of Leather Capt. Gary
Vandeventer, Opal & Tim Lott**



Lance, Jeff, Larry & Randall



**Corner Pocket's Michael Elias
& Rip**



Marsha & Trevor Santos



**Michael Sullivan, Arthur Severio &
Kookie Baker**



**Ambush columnist Tony & Mom
Dawn Leggio**



Ambush's delivery girl Miss Billy



**Kenny Walker & NO/AIDS Task
Force CEO Noel Twilbeck**



**Michael's On The Park's Scott,
Paul, Scott & Mike**



**Southern Decadence Grand
Marshal Tami & Paul**



**Barbara Ella, Deja Deja-Vue' &
Mike Cookmeyer serving
wedding cake**



Electra City & Tittie Toulouse



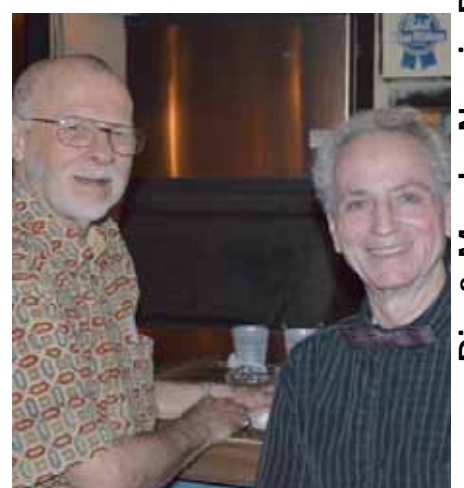
**Party hosts Mike & Deja with
Rip & Marsha**



**Ambush columnist Frank Perez
with Jeremy & Jerry Scavo**



David & Rhonda Roget



Mike Durocher & Kenny Walker

Rip & Marsha Naquin-Delain's Wedding Reception @ Michael's On The Park ~ New Orleans ~ Photos by Tony Leggio, Darwin Reed

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