



The 1980's Text Exhibit Collection©

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Text Format Exhibit

'If You Remember The 1980's You Probably Were Not There!'

Miss Vanna (Tim Barth) - Performer, Tucson 1980's

The early years of the 1980's quietly began showing signs of something that would later rock the Gay Community in Tucson and around the United States almost to its very foundations with the beginnings of an epidemic of a deadly mysterious illness quickly spreading among Gay Men killing them from a breakdown in the immune system.

AIDS first began appearing as increasing numbers of Gay Men were coming down with a new unknown mysterious disease. Against this background the beginning of 1980 in Tucson there were a total of 330,587 residents within its 98.8 square mile city limits, and by the end of the decade the population topped out at 402,147 residents in 1989 within the 156 square mile city on the day before New Year's.



1984 PWA (Person With AIDS)

As information slowly came in, was collected, and processed by the medical world, that illness, was first named **GRIDS (Gay Related Immune Deficiency)**, but was soon renamed **AIDS (Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome)**. The disease spread very rapidly spreading through the unknowing gay communities in a time when the use of condoms was not a mainstream practice, and the term '**Gay Cancer**' or '**Gay Plague**' could often be heard in the early days of the disease.

Sadly, the first person to be diagnosed and succumb to **AIDS** in Tucson was 29 year old local man Jon Nite a 1971 **Catalina High School** graduate who died at **Tucson Medical Center** on Friday March 4, 1983.

Soon the disease was no longer being transmitted and or carried only by those of the Gay Community, and both Gays and Lesbians very quickly began to combat the spread of the disease with education and activism by founding local support groups, and on the national level with the founding of the **Gay Men's Health Crisis (G.M.H.C.)** organization.

The devastation of **AIDS** increased solidarity between many of the community members in Tucson and brought the plight of all Gay Americans right up to the forefront of the national consciousness of the United States. At first the term used by many gays and others for those who had the disease was **PWA's (People [persons] With Aids)**.

Many outside the Gay World blamed all Gays for **AIDS** and sometimes the discrimination could be very blunt and even very physically violent attacks and murders. Amidst this atmosphere in Tucson the **Private Men's Club-Gay Bath House** near the Davis Monthan Airforce Base at 3820 E. 40th Street doing business as the **The Stables** operated 24 hours a day and soon began posting-mandating safe sex practices under the ownership of Rene Guimond who was originally from Maine and weathered regular unannounced **Pima County Health Department** inspections always with flying colors.



1981 December 1st World AIDS Day First Started

After numerous announcements, on Thursday May 16, 1985 at 7:30pm at the **University of Arizona Medical Center** 2nd floor Dining Room C with a group of just over 30 people in attendance, Bob Henry and Michael Heimbuch founded the **Tucson AIDS Project (T.A.P.)** as the first **Gay Tucson AIDS** core group whose purpose was to solely provide information, support, assistance, and more to the many in Tucson who were then suffering from **AIDS**, knew or took care of someone who was, and or needed the most current reliable information on the disease. The **Tucson AIDS Project** however did not incorporate in the **State of Arizona** as an entity until later on Tuesday August 26, 1986.

The **Tucson AIDS Project (T.A.P.)** group, with one of its founding members a highly visible Craig Bradford Snow soon taking a leadership role, began operations at 3247 E. Speedway Boulevard, and put out the call for volunteers. The week of February 5, 1986, the national group **Shanti Project** had a Tucson chapter that formed, was given a city license, began its organization founded by Mike Griffin, and was soon very active locally in concert with the other agencies later locating to 602 N. 4th Avenue.

Another very active organization in the later 1980's providing education and support in the fight against **AIDS** was **Arizona/Sonora Proyecto S.I.D.A.** located in the **Tucson AIDS Project T.A.P.** office and spearheaded by the ever friendly Frank (Ernie) Perez which focused its efforts on both **Southern Arizona** and **Sonora, Mexico**. The **People with AIDS Coalition of Tucson...** (a.k.a. **PWA Coalition**) began its formation on Saturday October 24, 1987 and was later incorporated as the **Troy Stephenson Foundation** on August 26, 1988.



1981 Around Gay Tucson®

The first **AIDS Walk in Tucson** came together as one event of the **Ethnic Minority Aids Awareness Week's** events on Wednesday October 12 1988 at 5:30PM as a '**Walk For Life' Candlelight Procession** going up **A Mountain** that was put together by all of **Tucson's AIDS agencies**. The following year, on Saturday October 28, 1989 at 10:00AM the **Tucson AIDS Project** sponsored a pledged **10K 'Walk Of Life'** at **Reid Park** with a \$10 registration fee for walkers that included lunch. The event brought in \$2,986.27 and saw 174 very excited walkers of all ages that day.

Toward the latter part of the decade the **Tucson Aids Project** had moved into 151 S. Tucson Boulevard Suite # 252. Tucson's many **Drag Queen's Female Impersonators** along with others of that time period, their fundraiser shows, those attended them, and the many who donated food, usable or sellable items, cash, and their time as volunteers along with funding and support by the **Arizona Aids Trust** located in Phoenix, Arizona infused untold thousands of dollars to help get the program up and keep it running. Toward the end of the decade a number of groups were directly assisting those with **AIDS** in some way. Around town on May 3, 1980 **The Office** a private men's club offering those in the downtown area a private place to relax opened at 345 Toole Avenue downtown.



1980 Rubik's Cube

Just a few of the performers in Tucson during the decade of 1980's were: Candy Plastique Pussy Wells, Miss Brenda Starr, Lady Casandra a.k.a. Dan Dold, Aviva Diamond a.k.a. 6' 5" tall David Wetstein, Mona Littlemore, Sage, Stephanie Price, Penelope, Tamara, Miss Piggy Kermit, Cindy Diamond (David Tharpe), Monte-Jon Gilmer, Kitty Litter (Bill Marlowe), Misty MacCrae, Miss Vanna, Coco Chanel, Portia Darkfire, Alotta Whoremones, Goldie Showers, Lady D, Roxie Harris, Bobby Jo, Laszlo Laton, Eileen Over.

In 1980 the **Graduate Bar** publically offered its 1st Mortgage for sale to the public and began its **Inflation Fighters Meals** as the inflation rate in the United States hit 21.5% in 1982, a Mexican Dress Designer was detained and charged at the San Francisco Airport for being a suspected Homosexual, **Anita Bryant's Anti-Gay Crusade** had fizzled out, **Homosexuals** were being **executed in Iran**, and on January 23, 1980 **Stepps Disco Dinner House** under ownership of Bob Landry and featuring the latest in **New Wave Music** opened at 5861 N. Oracle Road and accepted reservations.

1980, in Tucson also saw the **4th Annual Gay Lesbian Pride celebration** for the First Time as an entire **Week Of Activities** along with its **picnic in Himmel Park** at the end of the week on Sunday June 29. The events were all planned by the **Gay Pride Week Planning Committee (a.k.a. Tucson Gay Pride Committee)** which met at 739 E. 5th Street consisting of Bill North, Abe Marques, Bruce Fowler, Bob Ellis, Sean Wilson, Gary Clark, Esteban C, Gregory, Marcy Davis, and others.

On the night of Tuesday November 27, 1980 the TV show **Busom Buddies** premiered across the nation with a theme of two (2) straight men dressing in drag in order to live and pay very affordable rent in an all-female hotel.

Through the early part of the 1980's, despite its long running battle with the **Internal Revenue Service** for Tax Exempt Status which was constantly being denied, the **Tucson Gay Community Services Center** was still assisting Tucson's Gay & Lesbian Community, holding its regular monthly meetings just off Campbell Avenue at 2919 E. Eastland Avenue, and was the main community resource group for Tucson's Gay's Lesbian's operating Tucson's First **Gay Hotline (phone line)**.

Around Tucson in 1980 the **Hair Tiz Bar** with owners Polly Stadelman and Dave Peppin at 343 E. Toole Ave offered one of its signature dishes, a real mean bowl of tasty '**Cowpoke Beans**' that made you come back for more, along with regular live performances of male dancers and drag shows. **Naughty Nell's Soup Kitchen** owned by James M. (Jim) Tate located at 1927 E. Speedway Boulevard during the time was serving up some of the best **hearty soups** other meals to be found on the planet.



1980 Hair Tiz Bar Part-owner Polly Steadman (R)

At the **University of Arizona** the **Gay Students Organization (G.S.O.)** hosted a week long '**Gay Fest 80**' on campus in February 1980 featuring a concert, talent show, art show and sale, speakers, Gay Lesbian themed movies, and other activities to support their programs.

Downtown, the **Fun TYM Hotel (a.k.a. Mac Arthur Hotel)** at 345 E. Toole Avenue was running a special of a hotel room for 3 hours at only \$6.00, and called it their **Rest Stop Special**, while the **Fun TYM Book Store Adult Theater** at 349 E. Toole Avenue was advertising its **Gay Straight Theatres** movie showings.



1980's Boy George Mr. T

Elsewhere, over at **Rita's Rendezvous Bar** at 3455 E. Grant Road they brought crowds of customers in with their special **\$1.50 All You Can Drink - Weekend Beer Busts** hosted by owners Thom Swanson Mac McGowen and Vinny Ciciarelli on December 3, 1984 who had bought the bar from Rita, then they later sold out their ownership interests to Jim Lefkowitz on December 2, 1988 who later in 1989 with some remodeling renamed the bar as **The Rainbow Room**.



1980's Controversial Movie "Cruising"

Around Tucson in 1980 the very controversial movie **Cruising** starring Al Pacino opened at the **El Con and Oracle View theatres** on February 15, 1980 to packed audiences. **Pleasure World Adult Book Stores** had four (4) locations around Tucson, with their **Arcades at .25 cents**. In 1980 Tucson had **two MCC Churches**, one for English Speakers **Truth Chapel MCC** which met in various locations with Reverend Buff Fisher, who was later replaced by Reverend Randy Hill, and received its charter as a full church on Sunday July 26, 1981, and another one for Español Speakers **Santa Cruz MCC** later re-named **Familia de la Santa Cruz I.C.M.** which met at 349 W. 35th Street with Reverend **Bernardo (Bern) David** who would later in the decade be privately fighting a courageous battle with cancer and passing away on Tuesday August 30, 1988 at 12:40am at the **University Medical Center**.

Jointly a **memorial service for Reverend David was held at MCC/Tucson** along with **Cornerstone Fellowship** and **Integrity** on Sunday September 15, 1988. Around town the **Stockade bar (a.k.a. Club Europa** section inside which did the Drag and other Shows) a leather-western bar located at 2308 N. Stone Avenue brought in the crowds with .35 cent a glass draft beer shows also in the **Europa Club** section.

Jekyll's - Last Culture Bar at 1455 N. Miracle Mile Boulevard featured a massive disco dancing floor with a capacity of 500 people, also featuring live cabaret shows nightly, along with its share of hustlers. By the end of July of 1981 **Jekyll's** had been sold and operated as a **straight country western bar**.

September 12, 1981 saw the first non-alcohol non-political non-religious Gay Lesbian group **Great Outdoors** founded by Phil Black David Johnson which offered fun outdoor activities, March 27, 1982 welcomed the first local attempt to target the needs of Gay Youths under the age of 22 with the founding of the first youth group named the '**Gay Youth Group**' by Richard Bloom which first met in various places and later at the **Stone Avenue Temple a.k.a. Temple Emanu-El** built in 1910 at a total cost of \$4,712.54) located at 560 S. Stone Avenue which later lead to other youth groups and numerous name changes as well as changes of its moderators.



1981 IBM Home Personal Computer

Amidst an unemployment rate locally of 9.5 % in May of the year, the **Tucson Gay Pride Festival** in 1982 normally held in June at **Himmel Park**, was not held that year and instead in response to the nationwide call to **Fight the Oppression of Gay People**, the Pride Weeks Main Event was a one hundred thirty (130) mile **Civil Rights March** from Tucson to Phoenix which kicked off with a rally first at the **Pima County Courthouse** and another later at **El Presidio Park** at 7:00PM on Saturday June 19, 1982 with the march involving camping overnights along the seven (7) day route.

The **Civil Rights March** ended in a two (2) mile walk down Phoenix main streets to the **Arizona State Capital Building** in Phoenix on Saturday June 26, 1982 for a joint protest by Gays and their allies from Phoenix, two (2) chartered bus loads of the Tucson Gay Community, other Arizona communities, along with those Gays from other states. **Gay Christian Outreach Services of Tucson** provided support and security along the route.

As part of the **Tucson 1982 Pride Week** activities a '**Pride Fair**' was held as a fundraiser for sponsoring the local marchers was held at **Michaels** bar located at 140 S. Kolb Road on Sunday June 20, 1982.

Saturday June 9, 1984 brought the founding of the **Old Pueblo Business And Professional Association (O.P.B.A.P.A.)** as Tucson's first non-political organization of Tucson's Gay Lesbian business professionals by Bruce Hyland who also served as its first president and Merle Yost who also served as the group's first secretary. **Tucson Square Dance Club** formed at **Tramps** bar located at 616 N. 4th Avenue on August 11, 1984. Across town at the old venue of the long closed **Stonewall Tavern Inn**, the cozy **Back Pocket** the **Joshua Tree Disco's** bars were operating side by side at 2921 N. 1st Avenue opening daily at 11:30AM under the ownership of Bob Bishop Sr. Just off of Stone Avenue.

Dales Graduate Bar owned by Dale Yount, who was the first known **Gay Heart Transplant Recipient** in the United States, at 23 University Boulevard opened at noon every day serving up food, drinks and fun with a mixed drink served for .90 cents.

Owner Dale Yount suddenly died of heart failure later in 1981 and upon the reading of Mr. Yount's will revealed that Ronald D. Templeton had inherited the **Graduate** bar which he then went on to run until 1991. At 2505 N. Stone Avenue, the **Book Cellar Adult Movie Arcade** welcomed patrons from 8:00AM to 3:00AM daily with their motto, '**See Why We Are Different.**' The **New Age Gentlemen's Club** met regularly with weekly activities and a potluck dinner along with a presentation every Friday night. Meantime, around the nation it was on August 1, 1981 that **MTV** presented its first television broadcast.



1985 Around Tucson®

On the eastside of town, **Michael's**, a Disco bar under owner Michael Yeomans opened Friday July 10, 1981 at 140 S. Kolb Road. Keeping the Tucson, Phoenix, and Arizona Gay Lesbian Community informed, the weekly **Arizona Gay News** featured Local, Arizona, and National Gay related news articles by its Publisher George E. Rederus, his business partner Editor Robert "Bob" Bailie Ellis, along with Gary Neil Clark as Art Director and Jim Meyers as the publications Phoenix Sales Representative operating as **B.G. Publications** located in Tucson.

The publication ceased operation on March 4, 1983 due to inadequate income to support its printing and operation costs. Phoenix investors stepped forward and seven (7) days later on March 11, 1983 they produced **The New Paper** aka **New Paper** which came out twice a month on Tuesdays with a Phoenix orientation owned and published by Terry Harrison and Tony Valdez doing business as **TNT Publishing** featuring Robert 'Bob' Bailie Ellis as editor, Gary Neil Clark in Arts Entertainment, and Tony Valdez as the Phoenix Representative.

In ongoing business negotiations a group of Phoenix investors doing business as **Bang Publications/Winged Graphics** soon bought out the assets of **The New Paper**.

That business group on July 8, 1983 began publishing as the **Attitude** which came out as a weekly publication with its initial front page having a photo of a young sexy Marlon Brando amidst the very competitive competition from the **Western Express** a bi-weekly Gay publication based in Phoenix and covering the Southwest including Tucson which started in 1981 and ended with its July 5, 1996 issue #380 under the ownership of **D R Publications Incorporated** (Don Pintacura Rob Speir) with William E. 'Bill' 'Ma' Finley as its Tucson Sales Representative.



1980 The Blues Brothers Movie

The **Attitude** publication ran for almost a year without being profitable and ceased publication after 35 issues with its last edition on June 13-26, 1984. Shortly after, **The Observer** (a.k.a. **Observer**) started up under the ownership editorship of Bob Ellis, with Gary Neil Clark in Production Graphics with its first issue on July 18, 1984. Nationally, after losing a court case in May of 1984 **Disneyland** in Anaheim California began **allowing Same Sex Dancing** at its theme park.

In the early part of the 1980's, singer and **Anti-Gay Crusader Anita Bryant** of **Anita Bryant Ministries** often called the daily **"Radio Of Hate Show"** was finally running out of steam and contributions from the public as she bitterly announced, *"My enemies continue to persecute me, the radio stations won't even let me sing or play my songs anymore ... Everyone lets Jane Fonda do shows for free, but they charge me top dollar."* **The Habit**, a **Private Gay Men's Club** with an annual membership fee of \$10.00, opened in 1983 at 925 E. Fort Lowell Avenue, also operating with fun packed shows was the **Club Europea** located at 2308 N. Stone Avenue.

As the 1980's hit its mid-point in 1985, the U.S. Government officially announced there were seven thousand (7,000) cases of **AIDS** in the United States, and that 5,244 of them were men. On January 18, 1985 the **Hotel Congress Tap Room Bar** officially came out as **openly welcoming Gay Customers**, although it had already been a mixed bar at times for many years. Then surprisingly, by May 1, 1985 the **Hotel Tap Room Bar's** owner Isidro Chavez had completely **reversed himself and openly no longer sought and discouraged Gay Customers**.

The **Arizona Gay Bar Owners Association** was formed in the 1980's to better make a united front against police, government, and private citizen's harassment against Gay Bars and their patrons along with keeping up on laws effecting their businesses. **Collettes West** bar located at 2849 N. Stone Avenue under ownership of Collette Barajas advertised itself as **'A Womans Bar Where Everyone Is Welcomed.'** Later in October of 1985 **Collette's** bar morphed into **Simone's** bar while at the same time **Ruby's** bar located at 2512 E. Grant Road, a **Womyn's Feminist** bar, had a very loyal following on Tucson's expanding East Side.



1984 Video Arcade Tucson

Downtown at **Tramps** bar which opened on Friday May 11, 1984 with its Russian River California owners David Rainey-Jason Malonee-Jim Morrison in what had previously been the **Balcony Saloon**, and prior the **Mrs. O' Leary's Cow** bar was located downtown at 616 N. 4th Avenue letting everyone know it was '**Not Only A Bar, But A Way Of Life**' along with its welcoming wood log cabin style interior and infamous saddle that hung over the dance floor.

Although the bar had had a good popular run, due to unpaid vendors and creditors at 9:07AM on October 23, 1985 the **United States Federal Bankruptcy Court, Arizona District** officially declared **Tramp's** bar legally dead and sold the remaining assets off to investors Dan Elenz, Mark Elenz, Sandy Elenz, Ed Thibeault, and Phil Turlan who quickly re-opened the bar as **It's 'Bout Time** which soon became known simply as **IBT's** featuring a sunken bar and very popular events-shows.

Starting in 1984 the **Tucson Women's Commission** put out a directory listing four hundred sixteen (416) Woman owned and operated businesses in Tucson.

The **Fineline Disco** bar owned by Phil Hahn who later sold his interest to Dick Plowman, at 101 W. Drachman. The **Fineline Disco**, originally opened on Wednesday July 8, 1981, with their motto of '**A Place For Every Body**' entertained locals with its **Disco** and regular booking of many great local and out of town shows on their **theatre style stage**.

By mid-1981 the **FineLine** also opened **The Underline** bar downstairs within the complex that was once a hotel, and later re-opened the space yet once again as **Outrageous**, a dance and show bar.



1983 Michael Jackson Thriller

A state government sting operation by the **Arizona Liquor Board** using underage teens and hearsay evidence was conducted in early 1984 at the **Fineline** bar resulting in twenty four (24) charges against the bar which almost bankrupted the club, resulted in layoffs of Gay employees, and started a legal battle later settled in court when Judge J. Richard Hannah threw the case out of court ruling that the charges were both unsupported and erroneous.

In July 1985 it was announced that **Arizona Gay** the first Gay weekly hour long television show in the United States that was produced and aired locally in Tucson by Gary Neil Clark and Stan Phalp was ending after just over nine months due to financial problems.

December of 1985 saw the **Tucson MCC Church's** Reverend David A. Gunton its board of directors threaten to suspend all their free advertising and any contributions to the **Observer** publication because of it publishing of a gallery's artwork of male frontal nudes in three (3) of its issues.

Quickly many members of the Tucson Gay Community began flooding the **Observer** publication with letters in support of publishing the gallery's artwork.

Ironically, it was the **original MCC Church** itself in its early days in Los Angeles that had **regularly advertised heavily** in *The Advocate Magazine* to reach out to Gays in 1968 which often **featured photos of nude men**.

In 1986 the winner of the **1986-87 Miss Gay Tucson Pageant** held at the **FineLine Disco** aka **Fineline Disco** was controversially won by Stephanie Price (Steven Salgado) of Phoenix who had previously lived for twenty (25) years in Tucson and was a resident of Tucson at the time of his contest application mailed to the events franchisee James B. Curl Jr. d.b.a. **JBC Productions of Phoenix**. But, Price/Salgado had then moved to Phoenix shortly afterward.



AIDS In The 1980's

The **Tucson Lesbian and Gay Pride Committee (T.L.G.P.C.)** changed its name to **Tucson Lesbian/Gay Alliance (T.L.G.A.)** and **changed its bylaws** to encompass not only the **Pride Week** activities but to also act as a political activist and community information committee with Jack Stockslager as chairman and members including Debra Broner, Bob Ellis, Gary Clark, Kevin Masters, and others.

The **Tucson Desert Leathermen Club** (see **Desert Leathermen-Candi Trowbridge Collection Exhibit**) (see **Bill Finley Collection exhibit**) was founded in early November of 1986 and very actively sponsored numerous fundraisers, presented variety and other shows at various bars, along with its many '**Road Trips**' around Arizona and to other states, in addition to many other varied and memorable fun club events for its members.

RumorHazzit (a.k.a. Rumors 2222) bar under the ownership of Bruce Pegg at 2222 N. Stone Avenue also featured many live wild and fun shows for the LGBT Community including the **1986 Tucson Knight Owls (T.K.O.)** sponsored **Annual Closet Ball** won by Linda Fizdale.

Nationally, the **Anti-Gay Crusader Anita Bryant** was gone from the national pulpit and TV Show **Evangelist Jerry Lamon Fallwell** the **son of a former Tennessee Moonshine Bootlegger** and the **grandson of an Atheist** had taken Anita Bryant's place **calling for the end of "Any and All Homosexual Rights"** and asking for large cash donations through his **Moral Majority Campaign** against Gays and Lesbians that met a demonstration when visiting Tucson on March 21, 1985.

By 1988 Fallwell's ideas were falling out of favor with millions of U.S. citizens and the contributions coming in slowed down to a trickle with his '**Moral Majority**' effort officially folding up during his **1989 speech** in that '**Most Religious Of All American Cities**' that Fallwell was then visiting..... **Las Vegas**.



Reverend Jerry Falwell 'Moral Majority' Founder

Around Tucson the non-profit group **Sources Unlimited** provided an **information and referral service phone line** for the Gay Community, **Cable TV** started to become very popular in homes across the city, news of the death of the highly popular Campy Over The Top 300 pound Transvestite actor **Divine** (a.k.a. Harris Glenn Milstead), and of **Disneyland** in Anaheim, California being sued yet a second time for **denying Gays the right to dance together** at their theme park reached Tucson.

The **Cornerstone Fellowship Church** met regularly at 3333 E. Grant Road, the **3rd Annual Fiesta de Mayo** was held at the **Joshua Tree/Back Pocket** bar's large rear **dirt parking volleyball area** as the annual fundraiser to help defray the costs of the **Annual Gay Pride Picnic** and other Gay Pride events, the **Governor of Arizona**, a **Mormon auto dealer**, **Evan Mecham**, who kept **very Anti-Gay and Other Minorities 'personal views,'** was **removed from his office** by the **Arizona State Legislature** in Phoenix, the first college Lesbian Sorority in the United States was founded at UCLA, the **3rd Annual Observer/Community Fundraiser** to cover its costs along with the **TOGA** and **C.A.T. Awards** was held at the ballroom of the **Americana Hotel de Tucson** located at 1601 N. Oracle Road.



Tucson Lesbian Co-Op met each 2nd Sunday of the month for potlucks at various locations, a newly diagnosed **AIDS** patient shared his feelings in local publications, with the motto **Being Gay Isn't Easy** **Gay counseling** and other services were being offered by **Jewish Family Service** to all regardless of their religious beliefs, the **Tucson Tanners Nudist Group** were seeking new members, the **Transsexual and Lesbian Support Group** met regularly for potluck meals, support, games, ping pong, and social interaction.

With pressure building from the **Gateway Merchants Association** due to continued prostitution and other problems in the area during and before in 1986, by February of 1987 the business group had successfully persuaded the **Tucson City Council** to rename the North / South section of Miracle Mile running one and one half (1.5)miles from Drachman Avenue north up to Grant Road to Oracle Road instead, but kept the name Miracle Mile on the East / West section between the freeway off ramp and the new Oracle Road section (north of which had been named Route #77). The adjoining section of the I-10 (Interstate Highway) freeway passing through that area of Tucson was completed in 1966.

Originally conceived, planned, and advertised in August of 1987 as the “**Drag Queen Wars Mud Wrestling Contest**” at **Rumorz Bar** with proceeds to be donated to the **Shanti Foundation**, and patterned after the highly successful “**Mud Wrestling Events**” at bars like the **Stonewall Tavern Inn** located at 2921 N. Stone Avenue out in its very large dirt parking lot, by September 2, 1987 had evolved into a “**Drag Queens Wars Jell-O Wrestling Contest**” hosted by the highly popular Aviva Diamond at the same bar venue. The fundraising contest was held in two (2) parts, with the 2nd part allowing anyone in the audience to challenge anyone in the bar to an open **JELL-O Wrestling Match**.



Jell-O Wrestling

On Saturday July 2, 1989 the **Shanti Foundation**, originally founded by activist Michael Griffin, held a **JELL-O Wrestling Event** as one of the **1989 Gay Pride Events** and exclusively as their own fundraiser named the **1st Annual Reno Memorial Classic Jello Wrestling Extravaganza** at the **Rumor Hazzit** bar (a.k.a. **Rumorz**) located at 2222 N. Stone Avenue.

On the cool clear sunny Sunday February 7, 1988, forty three (43) people including leaders of all Tucson's Gay Organizations and Gay Businesses as well as Members of the Gay Community met at the **Unitarian Universalist Church** at 4831 E. 22nd Street to discuss establishing a 2nd (second) Lesbian and Gay Community Resource Center to fill the void left by the **Tucson Gay Community Services (G.C.S.) Community Center** which had closed down.

During the meeting Wayne Blankenship, a former **University of Arizona** student Co-Editor of the **Arizona Daily Wildcat newspaper** living at 355 N. Court Avenue, who was then a co-facilitator of the **Tucson Gay Youth Group** which was later re-named the **Tucson Lesbian & Gay Youth Group** suggested the name **Wingspan** might be used if a new community resource group was indeed formed. After the meeting all the attendees were treated to a mouthwatering **steak barbeque with baked potatoes** and cold **Michelob Light beer**.

A second meeting was then scheduled for Sunday February 21, 1988 at the **Matrix Community Services & Amity Incorporated's** heroin and other drug addictions programs joint facility located at 1030 N. 4th Avenue. Both drug addiction programs had already first began sponsoring the **Tucson Lesbian/Gay Youth Group** on August 8, 1987 with its co-facilitators Wayne Blankenship, a quiet sincere very active man, and Renee Berry.

On June 5, 1988 **St. Francis In The Foothills Church** located at 4625 E. River Road north of Tucson in Pima County became the first fundamental church in Arizona to be a **reconciling church** (one that has decided to embrace the Gay and Lesbian Community into its active membership). The reconciliation was formally celebrated later at an event that took place on Friday night August 26, 1988 with Gay and Lesbian organizations speakers from **Temple Emanu-El** - Abby S., **Cornerstone Fellowship** - Rada S., **Dignity** - Michael D., **Integrity** - Bruce A., **M.C.C. Tucson** - Reverend Nita T-W, **Shanti Foundation** - Natalie Perry, **Tucson AIDS Project** - Craig Snow, **Wingspan Lesbian Gay Community Center** - Samara L., and for **St. Francis of the Foothills** - Liza S.

The **Wingspan** group and the **University of Arizona Women's Center** co-sponsored a **Womyn Loving Womyn Weekend Retreat** held north of the city in Pima County's Oracle area on Saturday Sunday October 22-23, 1988. The **Tucson Lesbian Gay Community Chorus** with director John Kissler and manager Jim Ehrlich (originally organized as the **Tucson Gay Lesbian Community Chorus**) which met at the **Stone Avenue Temple** building (then being rented by the **Tucson Metropolitan Community Church**) at 560 S. Stone Avenue became the first of its kind in Arizona as it announced it was forming on September 21, 1988 followed by a name change to the **Tucson Metropolitan Community Chorus**.

The chorus second performance '**Struttin Down Broadway**' was presented to a very enthusiastic crowd on May 19, 1989 at the **Unitarian Church** located at 4831 E. 22nd Street at 8:00PM with tickets \$3.00 in advance \$4.00 at the door. The singing group's first public performance was at the **AIDS Fair '89 in Phoenix**, Arizona on April 1, 1989. Tucson's first celebration of '**National Coming Out Day**' on Tuesday October 11, 1988 was organized to start with a 30 minute press conference at **Himmel Park** by the small **Wingspan** group along with administrator Wayne Blankenship who lived at 355 N. Court Avenue.

The fledgling **Wingspan** group rented a desk in a small windowless one room office space from the **Tucson Women's Commission** located at 240 N. Court Avenue (the property originally the office of the **Arctic Ice Company** that supplied blocks of ice citywide before refrigeration for ice boxes and owned by the 1888 Tucson Councilman businessman Royal A. Johnson (see 1800's) with the structure also serving as his business family home in the later 1800's).

Numerous building occupants followed later over the years until the property was donated to the **Tucson Women's Commission** in 2000 by the **City of Tucson** against the backdrop of public pressure including phone calls and letters to do so).



Tucson's first October 11, 1988 **National Coming Out Day Motorcade Press Conference** at **Himmel Park** consisted of a motorcade of 32 automobiles that drove for one (1) hour along a busy Speedway Boulevard and through mid-town neighborhoods with many of the participating cars colorfully decorated with streamers, flowers, and signs with riders festively interacting with the public in other cars and with nearby pedestrians.

That night at **Collette's** bar the **Wingspan** group sponsored a party in celebration of the day complete with entertainment. In May of 1989 the **Tucson Lesbian/Gay Alliance (T.G.L.A.)** released the **Pride Week** schedule of events that first kicked off with the **Annual Traditional Pride Picnic At Himmel Park** on Sunday June 25, 1989 from noon to dusk that offered free beer (50 kegs were ordered with 47 of them being used and 3 of them being returned full) and soft drinks along with inviting all of Tucson's Gay Lesbian groups to set up booths at no charge for their groups on a first come basis.

As part of the week of Pride Events the **Wingspan** group, that had just set up a **phone hot-line** and first began being listed in the July 1989 phone book as a community resource in the local **Weekly Observer** publication on **August 23, 1989**, hosted the very popular local political cartoonist David Fitz Fitzsimmons to speak on Thursday June 29 and the **Moth Ball Dance** the next day on Friday June 30, 1989 with a cover charge as a fundraiser for their group.

The **second (2nd) 'Walk For Life'** going up 'A' Mountain in a **Candlelight Procession** in Tucson was co-sponsored by the **American Red Cross, Amity, Borderlands Theatre, Chicanos Por Cuasa, El Proyecto Arizona-Sonora, El Pueblo Neighborhood Center, El Rio Neighborhood Center, Information Referral Services, La Frontera Center La Mesilla, LLEGO, People With AIDS Coalition of Tucson, Pio Decimo Center, Pima County Health Department, Santa Cruz County Health Department, Shanti Foundation of Tucson, Tohono O'Odham Health Department, Old Pueblo Trust, Traditional Indian Alliance, Tucson AIDS Project, Tucson Lesbian Gay Alliance, Tucson Minority Consortium on AIDS, and Wingspan** and was held on Thursday October 12, 1989 just one week after the 14 acre size **Names Project AIDS Quilt** including **panels from Tucson** had been unfolded in Washington D.C. in view of the Whitehouse.



The highly talented **University of Arizona** Dance Professor Choreographer Doug Nielsen produced and directed two (2) dance concerts as **AIDS Fundraisers** in 1988-1989 for the financially struggling **Tucson Aids Project**, around **Tucson the Boomers Cafe Espresso** located at 500 N. 4th Avenue offered both good food local entertainment.

The former straight bar '**Someplace Else**' located at 1239 N. 6th Avenue in the early part of November of 1989 was purchased by co-owners Michael Bennett and Peter Sittig who quickly re-opened it for a quiet test run on Saturday December 9, 1989 as a classy Gay bar, cocktail lounge, and restaurant named **The French Quarter** with its Official Grand Opening coming later on Sunday January 14, 1990, and by the end of 1989 the number of Gay related groups organizations had grown very substantially from what had been available in 1980.

Along with the end of the decade of the 1980's passing into history was the highly popular local bartender **David Reno Gannon** who had been instrumental in organizing a **1987 Mud Wrestling Match** which by the date it was held had been turned into a **JELL-O Wrestling Match** died of **AIDS** in Tucson on April 10, 1988, on October 2, 1985 at 8:37AM the popular and closeted Hollywood Gay Actor **Rock Hudson** died of **AIDS**, the former Vietnam War Hero of three (3) combat tours and Air Force **Sergeant Leonard Matlovich** who was discharged for being Gay and later became a **Gay Rights Activist** featured on the cover of **Life Magazine** in 1975 died of **AIDS** on Wednesday June 22, 1988 at 9:43PM.

Former athlete Dr. Tom Waddell who in 1982 helped start the first **Gay Olympics** which was forced to drop the word Olympic and instead used the name **Gay Games** died of **AIDS** on Saturday July 11, 1987 at his home, the FBI's former ability to hide their secret files on Gay Groups they had infiltrated and spied on between 1959-1989 was made public, both **Rabbit Ears** and **Roof Top TV Antennas** that had since the start of television been '**must haves**' were becoming obsolete, openly gay entertainer **Liberace** died on February 4, 1987 of **AIDS**, the founder of numerous Gay bar's **Damrons Gay Guide** businessman Bob Damron who died in 1989 of **AIDS**, the man who took the **Advocate** (which had originally started out as a local groups Los Angeles Gay **photocopied newsletter**) nationwide as a magazine investment banker David Goodstein died of **AIDS** in 1985, **porn star John Holmes** died of **AIDS** on Saturday March 12, 1988.



Gone by midnight 1989 in Tucson were the Gay bars **Jekyll's** - **Last Culture Bar** - **Hair Tiz** - **Club Europea** - **Stepps** - **Rita's Rendezvous** - **FineLine Disco** aka **Fineline Disco** - **Michael's Disco** - **Stockade** - **The Underline** - **Tramps** - **Simone's** - **Ruby's** - **Outrageous**, the **Tucson Gay Community Services Center**, **Santa Cruz Metropolitan Community Church**, **The Stables Private Men's Club Baths**, **The Office**, **Pleasure World Bookstores** with their 4 locations.

Also gone were Hollywood Actor World War 2 Veteran **Lee Marvin** who **lived at his ranch just outside Tucson and came out in support of the Gay Rights Movement** in a 1969 **Playboy Magazine Interview** dying of a Heart Attack on August 29, 1987, the '**Arizona Gay**' TV Show, **Moral Majority Campaign**, **Arizona Gay News (a.k.a. A.G.N.)**, the **Attitude**, the **New Age Gentlemen's Club**, and the **days of un-protected sex** being considered even remotely safe.



1980's LGBTQ Equal Rights Protest

Many celebrities during the decade of the 1980's either announced, were openly, or at least flirted with their Gayness or Bisexuality, including Madonna, Sandra Bernhard, Lily Tomlin, Mick Jagger, Paul Lynde, Elton John, Liberace, Melissa Etheridge, Boy George and David Bowie to only name just a few.

That while hundreds of thousands of men, women, teens, and preteens all across the United States **'Came Out'** and at times **'Stayed In The Closet'** as mixtures of acceptance, rejection, bullying, and welcoming were personally experienced by each one of them.

At the stroke of midnight on December 31, 1989 with a population within its 156 square mile city limits of 402,147 people Tucson stepped right into the 1990's along with their many different New Year's Resolutions.

The 1980's Exhibit Collection©
Tucson Gay LGBTQ Museum And Library



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