

[CHATTER]

**RED MAHONEY:** My name is Red Mahoney. I've been hanging out, drinking, partying, and working in the gay bars for the last 30 years. In the era before Stonewall, all of the bars-- 90% of the bars-- were mafia controlled. They were controlled because the mafia had the right connections.

There wasn't that many gay bars. It had maybe 1, 2 uptown in the upper east side. They would get closed down. And there'd be one or two on the west side. They'd get closed down. And midtown, there'd be 1, 2, 3 maybe open. As they would get closed down, they'd move around. And they were dumps.

**JOAN NESTLE:** I'm Joan Nestle, co-founder of what is now the largest collection of lesbian culture in the world. The police raided lesbian bars regularly. And they did it-- they both did it in the most obvious way, which was hauling women away in paddy wagons. But there was regular weekend harassment which would consist of the police coming in regularly to get their payoffs.

And in the C Colony, we had a back room with a red light. And when that red light went on, it meant the police would be arriving in around 10 minutes. And so we all had to sit down at our tables.

And we would be sitting there almost like schoolchildren. And the cops would come in. Now, depending on who was on-- which cop was on-- if it was some that really resented the butch women who were with many times very beautiful women, we knew we're in for it because what would happen is, they would start harassing one of these women and saying, hi. You think you're a man? Come outside, we'll show you.

And the woman would be dragged away. They'd throw her up against a wall. And they'd say, so you think you're a man. Let's see what you got in your pants. And they would put their hand down her pants.

**RED MAHONEY:** The Stonewall, oh, that was good, bra. That was. Just to get into the Stonewall, you'd walk up, and you'd knock on the front door.

You'd knock, and the door would open, and hey, what do you want? Mary sent me. Good. Come on in, girls.

When you walked in, to your right was your bar room, no windows. Down at the far end of the bar was an opening in the wall going into the dance room with the jukebox in that room and no windows is in that room, either. The Stonewall, like all gay bars at that time, were painted black. Charcoal black.

And what was the funny part, the place would be so dimly lit. But as soon as the cops were going to come in to collect their percentage or whatever they were coming in for, from it being a nice dimly lit dump, the place was lit up like Luna Park.

You felt, well, two guys-- and that's very often all we sent in would be two men-- could handle 200 people. I mean, you'd tell them to leave. And they leave. And you say, show me your identification. And they all take out their identification and file out. And that's it.

And you say, OK, you're not a man. You're a woman, or you're vice versa. And you wait over there. I mean, this is a kind of power that you have. And you never gave it a second thought.

The drag queen took a lot of oppression. And we had to-- we were at a point where I guess nothing would have stopped us. I guess, as they say, or as Shakespeare says, we were ladies in waiting just waiting for the thing to happen. And when it did happen, we were there.

- On Friday night, June 27, 1969, at about 11:45, eight officers from public morals first division loaded into four unmarked police cars. From their headquarters on 21st Street and Third Avenue, they headed downtown and then west towards the Stonewall Inn here at Seventh Avenue and Christopher Street. It was the second time the bar was raided that week.

The local sixth precinct had just received a new commanding officer who kicked off his tenure by initiating a series of raids on gay bars. And New York was in the midst of a mayoral campaign, always a bad time for homosexuals. Mayor John Lindsay had good reason to agree to the police crackdown. He had just lost his party's primary and needed a popularity boost. And the Stonewall Inn was indeed an inviting target.

Operated by the Gambino crime family without a liquor license, this dance bar drew a crowd of drag queens, hustlers, minors, and more masculine lesbians known as bull dykes. Many were Black or Hispanic. It was a warm night in New York City and a somber day for many. Judy Garland, who had died earlier in the week, was buried that morning.

It was almost precisely at midnight that the moral squad pulled up to the Stonewall Inn led by deputy inspector Seymour Pine.

**SEYMOUR PINE:** There was never any reason to feel that anything of any unusual situation would occur that night.

**RED MAHONEY:** You could actually feel it, yeah. You really could. I guess Judy Garland's death just really helped us really hit the fan. For some reason, things were different this night. As we were bringing the prisoners out, they were resisting.

People started gathering in front of the Sheridan Square Park right across the street from Stonewall. People were upset. No, we're not going to go. And people started screaming and hollering.

**SEYMOUR PINE:** One drag queen, as we put her in the car, opened the door on the other side and jumped out, at which time we had to chase that person. And he was caught, put back into the car. He made another attempt to get out the same door-- the other door. And at that point, we had to handcuff the person. From this point on, things really began to get crazy.

**ROBERT RIVERA:** My name is Robert Rivera. And my nickname is Birdy. And I've been cross-dressing all of my life.

I remember the night of the riots, the police were escorting the queens out of the bar and into the paddy wagon. And there was this one particularly outrageously beautiful queen with stacks and stacks of [INAUDIBLE]-- with this tail style hair. And she was asking them not to push her. And they continued to push her. And she turned around, and she mashed the cop with her high heel.

She knocked him down, and then she proceeded to frisk him for her-- the keys to the handcuffs that were on her. She got them. And she undid herself and passed them to another queen that was behind her.

**SEYMOUR PINE:** That's when all hell broke loose at that point. And then we were-- we had to get back into the Stonewall.

**HOWARD SMITH:** My name is Howard Smith. On the night of the Stonewall riots, I was a reporter for the *Village Voice*, locked inside with the police, covering it for my column. It really did appear that that crowd, which we could look through little peepholes in the plywood windows, we could look out. And we could see that the crowd-- well, my guess was, within 5, 10 minutes, it was probably several thousand people, 2,000, easy.

And they were yelling, kill the cops, police brutality, let's get them. We're not going to take this anymore. Let's go.

**SEYMOUR PINE:** We noticed a group of persons attempting to uproot one of the parking meters, in which they did succeed. And they then use that parking meter as a battering ram to break down the door. And they did, in fact, open the door. They crashed it in.

And at that point was when they began throwing molotov cocktails into the place. It was a situation that we didn't know how we were going to be able to control.

**RED MAHONEY:** I remember someone throwing a molotov cocktail. I don't know who the person was. But I mean, I saw that. And I just said to myself in Spanish, I said, oh my God. The revolution is finally here. And I just started screaming, freedom. We're free at last. And it felt really good.

**HOWARD SMITH:** There were a couple of cops stationed on either side of the door with their pistols, like in combat stance, aimed in the door area. Couple others were stationed in other places behind like, a pole, another one behind the bar, all of them with their guns ready. I don't think up to that point I had ever seen cops that scared.

Remember, these were pros. But everybody was frightened. There's no question about that. I know I was frightened. And I'd been in combat situations. And there was never any time that I felt more scared than I felt that night. And I mean, there was just-- there was no place to run.

- When the moral squad officers barricaded themselves inside the Stonewall, deputy inspector Pine put in a 1041 call, an emergency help request which can only be placed by a high-ranking officer. That call was mysteriously canceled. And the telephone inside the Stonewall went dead. It took nearly 45 minutes for the riot police to get to the Stonewall and rescue the moral squad from the smoldering bar.

**RED MAHONEY:** Once the tactical police force showed up, I think that really excited us a little bit more.

**MARTIN BOYCE:** My name is Martin Boyce. In 1969 I was a drag queen known as Miss More. I remember on that night when you saw the riot police, all of us drag queens, we linked arms like the Rockettes, and sang the song we used to sing.

(SINGING) We are the village girls. We wear our hair in curls. We wear our dungarees above our nelly knees.

And the police went crazy hearing that. And they just immediately rushed us. We gave one kick and fled.

**RUDY:** My name is Rudy. And the night of the Stonewall, I was 18. And to tell you the truth, that night I was doing more running than fighting.

I remember looking back from 10th Street. And there on Waverly Street, there was a police-- I believe on his cop, and on his stomach in his tactical uniform and his helmet and everything else, with a drag queen straddling him. She was beating the hell out of him with her shoe, whether it was a high heel or not, I don't know. But she was beating the hell out of him. It was hysterical.

**MAMA JEAN:** My name is Mama Jean. I'm a lesbian. And I guess you would label me as a butch.

I remember on that night, I was in a gay bar-- a women's bar called Cookies. We were coming out of the gay bar going toward 8th Street. And that's when we saw everything happening, blasting away, people getting beat up, police coming from every direction hitting women as well as men with their nightsticks, gay men running down the street with blood all over their face. We decided right then and there whether we were scared or not, we didn't think about it. We just jumped in.

**RED MAHONEY:** But here the street has gone completely bananas, jumping and hitting the windshield. And next thing you know, the taxicab was being turned over. The cars were being turned over things. Windows were shattering all over the place. Wires were burning around the place.

It was a beaut-- it was beautiful. It really was.

**MAMA JEAN:** I remember one cop coming at me hitting me with the nightstick in the back of my legs. I broke loose, and I went after him. I grabbed his nightstick. My girlfriend went behind him. She was a strong son of a gun.

I wanted him to feel the same pain I felt. And I kept on saying to him, how do you like the pain? Do you like it? Do you like it? I kept on hitting him and hitting him.

I was angry. I wanted to kill him. At that particular minute, I want--

- I wanted to do every destructive thing that I could think of at that time to hurt anyone that had hurt us through the years.

**MAMA JEAN:** It's like just when you see a man protecting his own life, they weren't the queens that people call them. They were men fighting for their lives. And I'd fight alongside them any day, no matter how old I was.

**RED MAHONEY:** A lot of heads were bashed in. But it didn't hurt their true feelings. They were all came back [INAUDIBLE]. And I think that's when you could tell that nothing could stop us at that time or at any time in the future.

- The media covered the riot extensively. The "Daily News" featured it on its front page. There were reports on all the local television and radio stations.

By the next day, graffiti calling for gay power had appeared on buildings and sidewalks all over the West Village. Hastily worked up fliers distributed on street corners touted the night as the hairpin drop heard round the world. And the next night, thousands of men and women converged on the West Village. They came here back to the Stonewall to see what would happen next.

While trash cans were set on fire, stones were thrown, and sporadic fighting broke out between police and gays, the more than 400 riot police milling around the Village ensured that the previous night's violence would not be repeated. But on this night, for the first time, gay couples could be seen walking hand in hand or kissing in the streets. Just by being there surrounded by reporters and photographers and onlookers, thousands of men and women were proclaiming to themselves and the rest of the world that they were gay.

And the crowds grew and came back the next night and for one more night the following week. What happened here on those nights helped to usher in a new era, both personally and politically, for gay men and lesbians.

- When Stonewall happened, Bruce and I were still in the closet where we had been for nearly 40 years. But we realized that this was a tremendous thing that had happened at Stonewall. And it gave us a feeling that we were not going to be remaining closeted for very much longer. And soon thereafter, we did come out of the closet.

**JENNY PUZO:** My name is Jenny Puzo. In 1969, I was in the convent. I was in the Sisters of Charity.

And when Stonewall hit the press, it hit me with a bolt of lightning. It was as if I had an incredible release of my own outrage at having to sequester so much of my life. I made my way down. I seem to recall in subsequent nights being down on-- kind of just in the periphery looking, observer, clearly an observer, clearly longing to have that courage to come out.

And it was a matter-- as I recall, it was only a matter of weeks before I left the convent and started a new life.

**HENRY BAIRD:** I'm Henry Baird. In 1969, I was in the US Army, a specialist three stationed at Long Binh Post near Saigon in Vietnam. I remember I was having lunch in the army mess, reading the armed forces news summary of the day. And there was a short paragraph describing a riot led by homosexuals in Greenwich Village against the police.

And my heart was filled with joy. I thought about what I had read frequently, but I had no one to discuss it with. And secretly within myself I decided that when I came back stateside, if I should survive to come back stateside, I would come out as a gay person. And I did.

**SEYMOUR PINE:** For those of us in public morals, after the Stonewall incident, things were completely changed from what they had previously been. They suddenly were not submissive anymore. They now suddenly had gained a new type of courage. And it seemed as if they didn't care anymore about whether they were-- whether their identities were made known. We were now dealing with human beings.

**JIM FOURATT:** My name is Jim Fouratt. And I'm, in the mid '60s along with Abbie Hoffman and Jerry Rubin, I was one of the founders of the yippie movement. I remember on the third night of the riots there was this meeting called by Mattachine Society St. John's church on Waverly Place.

We went, and Randy Wicker was running the meeting.

**RANDY WICKER:** For 10 years, I'd been going on television as Randy Wicker, the respectable homosexual dressed in dark suit and tie, explaining to people that most homosexuals look like everybody else and behave like everybody else. And when Stonewall began happening, you had chorus lines of queens kicking their heels up at the police and bonfires burning in the corner trash baskets and throwing bricks and stones at the police. I was horrified because this violated everything that we thought of as responsible behavior, that this was not the way respectable citizens behaved.

**JIM FOURATT:** Evelyn Hooker was a sociologist, I believe. Randy had introduced her. And she got up, and she suggested that we should have a candlelight march and that we should turn the other cheek because gay people were really different, we were really nice, and we had to show how nice we were and stop all this rioting because people were going to get hurt.

I remember I stood up. And I said, no, we are not going back. And people felt the same thing I felt. And we marched out of that room. And that was the night that the gay liberation front was born.

**JHERI FAIRE:** Today I live in a senior citizen apartment building. What's different now is that I can be free. I have a daughter who's a senior citizen, and my son is 58.

They know about my homosexuality. My three grandchildren in their thirties know about their grandmother. I have a great granddaughter who at the age of 10 learned that Grandma Jheri was a lesbian. And she thought that was most interesting. And yet, I still don't have the personal courage to not care if these [INAUDIBLE] in the building know that Jheri's a lesbian.

**SEYMOUR PINE:** Well, I retired from the police department in 1976. 20 years have passed. I'm going to be 70 in a few months.

I still don't know the answers. I would still like to know the answer. I would like to know whether I was wrong or whether I was right in ever thinking that there was a difference and ever thinking that maybe you shouldn't trust a homosexual because something is missing in his personality.

**JOAN NESTLE:** The archives of lesbian culture, which surrounds us now and was created four years after Stonewall, owes-- at least from my part-- its creation to that night and the courage that found its voice in the streets. That night, in some very deep way, we finally found our place in history, not as a dirty joke, not as a doctor's case study, not as a freak, but as a people.

[MUSIC PLAYING]

- Whoa. In the background, Pamela Stanley coming out of hiding. I thought that would be a-- I know it's old. Hey, I know it's old.

- But then--

- Hey. Hey. But I thought it would be a great song to wind up there remembering Stonewall, history of the Stonewall riots.

- And for all the people that are going off this week.

- Yeah. They're going to--

- Without a--

- Yeah, yeah.

- --hate ya' hate ya'. No. I wish I was you.

- Well, you've been listening to "After Hours," a continuing tradition on KPFT Houston. The--

- I'm your echo.

- "After Hours," the most popular show no one knows about.

- The show.

- There we go. Hey. This has been Jimmy and Sarah.

- Gee. No. It's-- what is it?

- Sarah Gee.

- (WITH SPANISH ACCENT) Sarah Gutierrez.

- Whoa. I hate when they do that. They put this heavy accent on your name that like, I can't pronounce. You're Sarah Gutierrez.

- Gutierrez.

- I'm sure of that. I am sure of that, honey. Can we spread that around? Can I write that on tea room walls?

- Uh huh.

- OK. So we'll see you next week. We'll be here. And so will Jewel.

- Jewel.

- It's Jewel's night. Jewel's night out. You know what that means.

So until next week, have a good one, Houston.

- Ciao.

[MUSIC PLAYING]

[MUSIC - JUDY GARLAND, "NEW YORK, NEW YORK"]

- Start making your plans to be in New York City the weekend of June 26, 1994. People from all over the world will be celebrating the 25th anniversary of the Stonewall riots and participating in the largest human rights demonstration the world has ever seen, demanding human rights for all gays and lesbians worldwide. For more information you may contact your local Stonewall 25 Houston chapter by calling Jim Ewing at 528-6835. See you in New York.

[MUSIC CONTINUES]