

GAY MAN: I had maybe a record relationship of almost 60 years together, Bruce's memory started going bad in 1984. Fortunately, we have our music together, which we've done over the years. We've written any number of songs. Bruce remembers the melodies very well and the lyrics for the songs.

[MUSIC PLAYING]

When you touch me, when you took my hand, something happened I had never planned.

GAY MAN: Being gay before Stonewall was a very difficult proposition because we felt that in order to survive, we had to try to look and act as straight as possible. The attitude, the general attitude of society, as far as employers were concerned and landlords, all of these people were very hostile. And to protect ourselves, we had to act as rugged and manly as possible to get by in a society that was--

RANDY SIRE: My name is Randy. I was the first openly gay person to appear on radio in 1962 and on television in 1964 as a self-identified homosexual. In the year before Stonewall, people felt a need to hide because of the precarious legal position they were in. They would lose their jobs. There was a great hostility socially speaking in the sense that people found out you were gay, they assume you were a communist or a child molester, or any of another dozen stereotypes that were rampant in the public media at the time.

JERRY FAIR: I'm Jerry Fair, and I'm 80 years old. I started a gay lifestyle in 1948 when I was around 39 or 40. At that time, if there was even a suspicion that you were gay, that you were a lesbian, you were fired from your job and you were in such a position of disgrace that you slunk out without saying goodbye even to the people that liked you and you liked.

You never even bothered to clean your desk. You just disappeared. You just disappeared. You went quietly because you were afraid that the recriminations that would come if you even stood there, protested, would be worse than just leaving.

SYLVIA RIVERA: My name is Sylvia Rivera. My name before that was Brave Rivera until I started dressing in drag in 1961. The year before Stonewall was a hard era. There was always the gay bashing on the drag queens by heterosexual men, women, and the police. We learned to live with it because it was part of the lifestyle at that time, but none of us were very happy about it.

SEYMOUR PINE: My name is Seymour Pine. In 1968, I was assigned as deputy inspector in charge of public morals in the first division in the police department, which covered South Manhattan from 38th Street to the battery, including the Greenwich Village area. It was the duty of public morals to enforce all laws concerning vice and gambling, including prostitution, narcotics, and laws and regulations concerning homosexuality.

The part of the Penal Code which applied to drag queens was section 240.35 section 4-- being masked or in any manner disguised by unusual or unnatural attire or facial alteration, loiters, remains, or congregates in a public--

SYLVIA RIVERA: At that time, we looked at the Arista hotel. We'd sit around, just try to figure out when this harassment would come to an end. And we would always dream that one day, it would come to an end, and we prayed and we looked for it. We wanted to be human beings.

RUD MAHONEY: My name is Rud 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 boys, 90% of the boys, were mafia-controlled. They were controlled because the mafia had the right connections.

There wasn't that many gay bars. It had maybe one, two uptown in the Upper East Side. They would get closed down, and there'd be one or two in the West Side. They'd get closed down. And Midtown, there'd be one, two, three maybe open. As they would get closed down, they'd move around, and they would dump.

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 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 were in for it because what would happen is they would start harassing one of these women and saying, ha, you think you're a man. Come outside. We'll show you.

And the woman would be dragged away. They 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.

RUD MAHONEY: Stonewall-- oh, that was a good one. Just to get into the Stonewall, you'd walk up, and you'd knock on the front door. You'd knock, and they'd blow a door open, and hey, what do you want? A Mary sent me. Good, come on in, girls.

When you walked in to your right was your bar room, no windows. Then 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 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.

SEYMOUR PINE: Well, two guys, and that's very often all we sent in, would be two men could handle 200 people. You 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. This is a power that you have, and you never gave it a second thought.

The drag queen took a lot of oppression, and we were at a point where 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, you were there.

MICHAEL SHERGAR: On Friday night, June 27th, 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 7th 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, miners, 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.

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

SYLVIA RIVERA: You could actually feel it. You really could. I guess Judy Garland's death just really helped us really hit fair.

OFFICER: For some reason, things were different this night. As we were bringing the prisoners out, they were resisting.

SYLVIA RIVERA: People started gathering in front of this 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.

OFFICER: 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, 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 Birdie, 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 into the paddy wagon, and there was this one particularly outrageously beautiful queen with stacks and stacks of Olympia-style, Elizabeth Taylor-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 them down, and then she proceeded to frisk them for the keys to the handcuffs on her. She got them, and she unhanded herself and passed them to another queen that was behind her.

OFFICER: That's when all hell broke loose at that time. And then 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.

RUD MAHONEY: It really did appear that that crowd-- because we could look through little peep holes in the plywood windows. We could look out, and we could see that the crowd-- well, my guess was within five, 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 get them.

OFFICER: 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.

SYLVIA RIVERA: I remember someone throwing a Molotov cocktail. I don't know who the person was. But I saw that, and I just said to myself in Spanish, I said, oh my gosh, the revolution is finally here. And I just started screaming, freedom. We're free at last. It felt really good.

OFFICER: There were a couple of cops stationed on either side of the door with their pistols in combat stance aimed in the door area. Couple of others were stationed in other places behind 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. I know I was frightened, and I've been in combat situations, and there was never any time that I felt more scared than I felt that night. And there was no place to run.

NARRATOR: When the Moral Squad officers barricaded themselves inside the Stonewall, Deputy Inspector Pine put in a 10-41 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.

JIM FORAC: Once the tactical police force showed up, I think that really excited us a little bit.

MARTIN BOYCE: My name is Martin Boyce. In 1969, I was a drag queen known as Miss Martin. I remember on that night when we saw the riot, all of us drag queens, we linked arms like the Racquets 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 nellies.

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 they're aware of the street. It was a police, I believe, a cop 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 in that, 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 labeled me as a butch. I remember on that night, I was in the gay bar, a woman's bar called Cookies. We were coming out of the gay bar going to 8th Street.

And that's when we saw everything happen, 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.

SYLVIA RIVERA: But here the screen is going completely bananas, jumping and hitting the windshield. The next thing you know, a taxicab was being turned over, and the cars were being turned over things. Windows were shattering all over the place. Fires were burning around the place. It was beautiful. It really was.

MAMA JEAN: I remember one cop coming at me hitting me with a 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 Southern gal. 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 went to kill him. At that particular minute, I wanted--

SYLVIA RIVERA: 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 fight alongside them everyday, and I know who they were.

SYLVIA RIVERA: A lot of heads were bashed, but it didn't hurt their true feelings. They all came back for more and more. You could tell that nothing could stop us from that time or at any time in the future.

MICHAEL SHERGAR: 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 flyers distributed on street corners touted the night as the hairpin drop heard around 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.

GAY MAN: Oh, 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 the 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, just in the periphery looking. Observer, clearly an observer, clearly longing to have that courage to come out. And 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 3 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.

OFFICER: 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 their identities were made known. We were now dealing with human beings.

JIM FORAC: My name is Jim Forac, and I'm in the mid-sixties along with Abby Hoffman and Jerry Rubin. I was one of the founders of the movement. I remember the third night of the riots. There was this meeting called by Mattachine Society at St. John's Church on West on Waverly Place. We went, and Randy Wicker was running the meeting.

RANDY WICKER: For 10 years, I've been going on television as Randy Wicker, a respectable homosexual dressed in a 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 of 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.

Evelyn Hooker was a sociologist, I believe. Randy introduced her, and she got up, and she suggested that we should have a candlelight march, that we should turn the other cheek because gay people were really different, and 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.

JERRY FAIR: 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 30s know about their grandmother. I have a great granddaughter who, at the age of 10, learned that grandma Jerry 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 yentas in the building know that Jerry's a lesbian.

OFFICER: 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, in 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 for 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.

MICHAEL SHERGAR: Remembering Stonewall was engineered by Spider Bloom. It was produced by David Isay with a grant from the Pacific and National Program Fund. I'm Michael Shergar.

Today I'm a 38-year-old drag queen. I can keep my long hair, I can pluck my eyebrows, and I can work wherever the hell I want. And I'm not going to change for anybody. If I change, then I feel that I'm losing what 1969 brought into my life, and that was to be totally free.

[MUSIC PLAYING]

How can I ever close the door and be the same as I was before? Darling, no, no, I can't anymore. It's true, there it is, love.

JIMMY CARPER: Yes, the fabulous Trinity with Judy Garland cover of *the Man That Got Away*. Trinity also does an advice column in one of the gay mags, *Ask Trinity*.

BOBBY: Advice or vice?

JIMMY CARPER: Well, I think it's just advice. Before that, we had duality with standup, a nice anthem for the community, and started that with *Angels from Yolanda and the Plastic Family* from her CD, *Welcome to Yolandaworld*. And this is a wonderful CD from this drag queen who's from New Hampshire and is doing quite well, as a matter of fact. And it's a really good CD.

You've been listening to *After Hours*, Queer Radio with Attitude on KPFT Houston and KEOS College Station. I'm Jimmy Carper. Bobby is here. Chris is here. We're about to end it all for this Saturday night.

BOBBY: We hope.

JIMMY CARPER: We hope. Well, we've got some music going out, and I do have a quote, that I'm trying my best to quote at the end of every show, because it's something that Sarah uses at the end of her segments, and I really like it. It's from Abby Hoffman, and it goes like this.

"When decorum becomes repression, the only dignity free people have is to speak out." Good night, folks, and going out with this song by Jeff Krasner, title cut from his CD, *Maybe*. No, it isn't. Oops, it's, *Go Down Easy* from his CD, *Maybe*.