

CHAPTER 16

DRUMMER: FIRST VICTIM OF THE CULTURE WAR

THE SLAVE AUCTION SPRING OF 1976

The Final Word Published in *Drummer* Ended with .com

- **Born (Again) to Raise Hell: End-Time Christians vs. Satanic *Drummer***
- ***The Advocate* Prejudice Against Leather Culture and Gay Masculine Identity**
- **Leather Contests: International Mr. Leather (IML) Begets Mr. *Drummer***
- **Leather Immigrant: Val Martin, First “Mr. *Drummer*”**
- **John Embry’s Lover from Spain, Mario Simon: “Evita” as “Mrs. *Drummer*”**
- **Photographer Lionel Biron: Social Justice, Gay Liberation, and *The Advocate***
- ***Drummer* Stars: JimEd Thompson, Chris Burns, Scott O’Hara**

John Embry was incorrigible. He wouldn’t have changed if we had put a horsehead in his bed. Nevertheless, Godfather Embry, out in the La-La-Land of LA in 1975, should have paid smarter attention to the enemies and allies who were out there doing what amounted to a practicum in the hateful queer theory practiced by religious fundamentalists. Embry’s shady behavior set *Drummer* up as one of the first victims of the culture-war uprisings by 1970s Christian conservatives like Ed Davis, Anita Bryant, John Briggs, Pat Robertson, and Jerry Falwell who created his Moral Majority mix of church and state in 1979.

Had he gathered his political wits, Embry could have done leather culture a service by rebutting the anti-leather Richard Goldstein at the *Village Voice*, and, in so doing, he might have decided to turn the seventeen-day-old *Drummer* off its own suicidal course of forbidden topics in issues 2, 3, and

4 that alerted the LAPD that gay men in leather were up to something new and wicked. However, in all of *Drummer*, I found only one passing reference to Goldstein's "S&M: The Dark Side of Gay Liberation" in a "Letter to the Editor," titled "Hanky Panky," *Drummer* 10, page 4, proving Embry knew about the article and thought it a joke.

An article on S&M in New York's *Village Voice* the summer of 1975 started the current fad [pennies tied into color-coded hankies so they'd swing fetchingly from your butt at the disco], and they're still laughing about it back in the [*Village Voice*] press room.

In a slight historical correction, the writer of the letter was wrong: the hanky code, with and without pennies, existed for many years coast to coast before Goldstein mentioned it. Proof lies in *Drummer* 1, published before the Goldstein piece, in which editor-in-chief, Jeanne Barney, discussed what I called, deep back in the 1960s when the fad began, the "semaphore of hankies." The point is that Goldstein's vanilla rant required instant refutation by leatherfolk as much as did the rants of the faith-based Fascists rising on the religious right.

Embry may have missed out fingering Goldstein, but he was on the money tagging 1) the LAPD; 2) the anti-leather, and politically correct tabloid, *The Advocate*; 3) the rising Orange-Juice queen, Anita Bryant, who taught the Religious Right its anti-gay tactics continuing into the 21st century; and 4) the grotesque Southern California congressman, John Briggs, who powered up United States Senator Jesse Helms. In 1989, homophobic Helms, funded by his own tobacco state's taxes and Political Action Committees, condemned the premier photographer of leather culture, Robert Mapplethorpe, and dismantled funding of the National Endowment for the Arts in the early 1990s.

However, Embry's purpose for *Drummer* soon revealed itself as business not politics. After he was burned by the lesson taught him by the LAPD Slave Auction bust, he retreated to his "basic default identity" as a mail-order sex-toy salesman named "Robert Payne." For all his process-analysis fiction about S&M written by Payne aka Embry, he seemed not to comprehend the message of the decade's most popular straight book among leathermen, *Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance* (1974), except insofar as he knew the price of the poppers he sold, but not the value of the pages he sold. He never understood the Zen and the Art of *Drummer* Maintenance.

Embry had not conceived of *Drummer* as a cultural or literary or political force. He founded the magazine with its sex stories and photos as attractive

fishwrap around his centerfold mail-order catalogue where he made his real money selling over-priced cock rings, tit clamps, dildos, and poppers retail to subscribers closeted in small American towns. In fact, Embry named his business venture “Alternate Publishing” because his first love was not *Drummer*, but rather his first-intended magazine named *The Alternate* which he founded specifically to compete with *The Advocate*. However, *The Alternate* was more Baby June than Gypsy Rose Lee and it never took off.

Embry was not one of the late-night players at the baths on Folsom where *Drummer* staff and readers were power-fisting Foucault into a higher consciousness just to shut him up and make him scream, “Merde!” Foucault was fifty-four and French, Embry was forty-nine and bourgeois, and I was thirty-six and hustling sex when *Drummer* debuted in San Francisco where Foucault during his tenure in Berkeley had long been a player on Folsom Street.

BORN (AGAIN) TO RAISE HELL: END-TIME ABOMINATION

Also, at the very moment in March, 1977, when Embry was propositioning me to become editor of *Drummer*, I had to consider who Embry was and what political and legal mistakes he may have committed, because a new Christian Fundamentalist book, *The Homosexual Revolution: End-Time Abomination*, written in 1977 by D. A. Noebel, was fanning the flames around the stake at which the onward-marching Christian soldiers like Anita Bryant and John Briggs wanted to burn the kind of sinners who would publish a cultural occasion of sin such as *Drummer*.

What’s the difference between dancing around a May Pole and burning at the stake?

Very specifically aware of the “Satanic” *Drummer*, Noebel wrote:

On April 14, 1976, gay community leaders complained about the arrest of 40 persons in what police called a sado-masochistic slave market [the *Drummer* Slave Auction]. Captain Jack Wilson said the building in which the auction took place was equipped with dungeons and cell blocks. In the dungeons were all forms of chains and articles of restraint. Mark IV Club [4424 Melrose] was maintained by a group calling itself “the Leather Fraternity” [the name of Embry’s mail-order club which he owned separately from *Drummer*] as a private club for homosexuals and sado-masochism cultists.

Who provokes cops? Embry was not Thoreau using passive resistance against taxes. He caused his own trouble baiting the LAPD by advertising a “Slave Auction” to Ed Davis who was of an age alarmed by the perils of the words “white slavery.” In the early twentieth century, the urban legend of “white slavery” was a pop-culture term of sexual, and often racial, panic regarding young white women forced into prostitution by nonwhite men, usually Asians xenophobically color-coordinated as the “yellow peril.” (See the camp film, *Thoroughly Modern Millie*, 1967.) At that time, genuine awareness of international sex trafficking was forty years in the future. In addition, Embry turned his private charity function—limited at first to his “Leather Fraternity” members—into an event open to any of the paying public seeking cheap thrills. Without irony, the LAPD charged Embry with breaking a post-Civil War law forbidding slavery.

Embry made himself the Marie Antoinette of gay publishing.

And the gendarmes knew exactly what to do.

PENIS ENVY: HOW INTERNATIONAL MR. LEATHER (IML) BEGAT THE MR. DRUMMER CONTEST

In the following scenario I was an eyewitness because I was the one being recruited to start the first Mr. Drummer Contest. In 1979, Dom Orejudos and Chuck Renslow in Chicago invented their International Mr. Leather Contest out of their previous experiences producing sanctioned AAU physique contests out of their Triumph Gym where they showcased straight bodybuilders for discreet gay audiences. On a sunny afternoon in 1964, I attended one of their contests on the quiet basketball floor of the Lawson YMCA where a half-dozen straight musclemen—likely graduates from Kris Studio—took one step up onto a large wooden box to pose, up close, under a light clipped onto the basketball hoop, moving gracefully in the silence, no music, so that the ten men in the audience, each sitting solo and aloof, in the twenty metal folding chairs might applaud. It was too intimate for me to uncloset myself by filming with my Super-8 camera. Because the contest was so simply produced, it was almost hands-on hot, just as was the new IML, perfectly produced, fifteen years later.

Embry wanted his own huge “production number” to compete with Renslow whom he envied for entering the leather scene in 1950, twenty-five years before the first issue of *Drummer*. He came into my office and told me he wanted me to begin producing a “Mr. Drummer Contest.” As if speaking one of his dialog balloons in a *Drummer* cartoon strip, he said something like: “Lots of guys posing for free. Lots of photos.” Monthly

magazines salivate for fresh material. Filling *Drummer* each month was a huge task, even when Embry plagiarized articles from straight men's adventure magazines. Filling it with original material was even bigger. And that was my job.

He wanted me to produce and manage the first Mr. Drummer Contest, because I was editor-in-chief and he knew from my resume that I had years of experience producing events and the then-popular "happenings" at universities, museums, and in the Folsom Street leather bar, the No Name. Its manager, my longtime pal, the redheaded poet, Ron Johnson (1935-1998), also helped me schedule and videotape oral histories for my *Drummer* column, "Rear-View Mirror." Johnson, a friend and peer of Thom Gunn on Folsom Street, authored many books including *To Do as Adam Did: The Collected Poems of Ronald Johnson*, 2000.

Ron Johnson, with his partner, Mario Pirami, founded the Rainbow Motorcycle Club in 1972. The club's home bar was then the No Name. The RMC, whose especially wild biker membership was by invitation only and more exclusive than the Catacombs, continues to exist rapaciously and below the average gay radar in the second decade of the twenty-first century. In his February 12, 1992, letter to all the RMC, Ron Johnson documented the tradition of Folsom Street performance-art happenings in the early 1970s before commercial leather contests replaced them:

Dudes—

This year marks the 20th anniversary of the club, and it's high time to throw a bash. Our Christmas party was so fine we've got to really rise (or stoop) to the occasion—no?

....One of the things that made the Xmas party such a great success was Lurch as Santa on a beer-shell throne, greeting one and all, and we need again to come up with something so extraordinarily sleazy and daring they'll all talk about it after. Not many now remember the first anniversary RMC party [1973] where Jack Fritscher was the Entertainment Committee. He brought in [to the No Name] three stand-up cages with live, sexy slaves inside. Spotlights! Crowd focus! Promiscuous flagellation! Frenzy! [Plus his live-action cast, three slide projectors, and two Super-8 projectors of his transparencies and leather films]....Where can we go from there?

At the Lone Star [bar], of course...

—Ron Johnson

I recoiled from Embry's rip-off proposal. I did not want to steal thunder from Orejudos and Renslow, two artist-entrepreneurs I had known in my formative leather years in Chicago where my masculine-identified "leather roots" had come out sexually, esthetically, and philosophically in the late 1950s and early 1960s. In 1990, the contentious Embry proved my instincts were correct when he summed up twenty years of his subtle enmity against Renslow on the inside back cover of *Manifest Reader* 12: "The Mr. Drummer Contests have always been more exciting than the International Mr. Leather shows."

In fact, Embry from Arizona, Hawaii, LA, and other push-pins on the map, had no idea that as a gay-leather "medium" I was channeling and evolving the Chicago homomasculinist leather-art scene of Orejudos-Renslow into San Francisco *Drummer*. Embry also did not know of the sexual reach of Orejudos-Renslow who kindly supplied *Drummer* contributor, Sam Steward, with hustlers. As he became a man of a certain age, Steward, profiled in Justin Spring's *Secret Historian*, revealed in *Chapters from an Autobiography* (page 119):

I went into the land where Everyman must eventually go, that of the older human being...romantic encounters...were vanishing.... No question: one had to begin to purchase, or do without—and here again the Chicago studio [Kris] which had [previously] pimped for me helped me enormously. They sent me many young men....

I advised Embry not to start a Mr. Drummer Contest because it would sap the company's time, energy, and money. (In the year 2000 at leather-web.com, Robert Davolt revealed that the Mr. Drummer Contest "lost money for at least fifteen out of eighteen years.") I predicted to Embry that the tail would wag the dog. I reminded him every issue of *Drummer* was notoriously behind schedule because of his misguided budgets. The Fourth Anniversary Issue coming up was only *Drummer* 30 which, if published monthly, should have been *Drummer* 48. I told him that for me writing and editing *Drummer* meant everything in political and erotic terms of masculine-identified gay identity. I saw *Drummer* as the wave of the future which I was keenly aware of positioning because I had been one of the founding members of the American Popular Culture Association (1968), and had militated, before Stonewall, for the PCA to include gay popular culture in university curricula.

I told him *no*.

Nobody told John Embry *no* and got away with it.

That look on that “Publisher Dearest” face!

Like the LAPD, I could not be bent to his purposes.

Previous lack of payment of my wages already had me considering leaving *Drummer*, but his never-ending imperial LA attitude was not attractive in laid-back San Francisco where no one wanted to be Embry’s slave. He made a big mistake in his pathetic fallacy. He figured because *Drummer* was about BDSM, he was master of a staff of slaves. As a result, the average length of employment inside the *Drummer* office in the late 1970s was six minutes to six months. When I got my pal David Hurles/Old Reliable hired in to edit *The Alternate*, he lasted ten days before the twisted tag team of John Embry and John Rowberry, both up from LA, drove him out the door with their shenanigans.

As it turned out in the leather timeline, I wrote the leather world’s first article on the first IML in *Drummer* (*Drummer* 31, September 1979). This IML article was also the first appearance in print of my high-concept coinage, *homomascularity*, which I applied to IML.

Embry printed my article because my friend Dom Orejudos/Etienne of IML had sent to me, care of *Drummer*, a dozen free photographs of the sexy contestants. My enunciated title, “The Envelope, Pleez,” was my little sneer at the idea of male beauty contests in general. Nevertheless, I celebrated IML with a bit of philosophy about masculine-identified leather as well as with ironic lines such as “...the hottest twelve contestants this side of the Apostles.”

The feature article was reprinted in the book, *International Mr. Leather: 25 Years of Champions*, compiled by Joseph W. Bean for IML, Inc. and the Leather Archives & Museum, Chicago (2004).

(In 1989, it was not *Drummer*, but the magazine *FirstHand Events*, produced by publisher Jackie Lewis, that became the “official magazine of IML.” See *Drummer* 128 [May 1989], page 86.)

In a zero-degrees-of-separation letter from Boulder, Colorado, October 12, 1988, Dom Orejudos expressed his interest in my translating his drawings from page to screen in the leather-heritage “Video Gallery” artist series I was shooting at Palm Drive Video featuring his peers Rex, A. Jay, Domino, Skipper, and the Hun.

Dom Orejudos wrote:

Hi Jack:...Yes, let’s follow through on discussing the possibility of an Etienne video gallery by you at Palm Drive. I’ve had some ideas in that area (video) for some time now, and I’m sure we could come up with something interesting. I enjoyed visiting with you during

the Mr. Drummer Contest weekend [We were both judges]...I'll look forward to seeing you again....Sincerely, Dom

His last years of illness kept Dom from going forward with the project. Without producing a video of his art, and before the futurism of the internet, he died September 24, 1991. The Leather Archives & Museum, however, had been founded principally to preserve his work.

In 1981, as if the debt-ridden Mr. Drummer Contest were not drain enough, Embry began awarding the sash-rash title, "Mr. Manifest," thankfully without a contest, through his new *Manifest Reader*. In point of fact, his concept "Mr. Manifest" was more a direct imitation of my invention of "Tough Customers" in *Drummer*, because "Mr. Manifest" contestants were asked to submit photos of themselves for free publication. In 1989, he was still plugging his faux "contest" in a full-page advertisement in his "Virtual *Drummer*," *Manifest Reader* 9, page 53.

In the end, International Mr. Leather (IML) had the last word and the last laugh.

The last ad on the last back cover of the last issue of *Drummer* 214 (April 1999) was for the "1999 IML Contest."

And the last word of that ad was the last word printed in *Drummer*: .com.

A TALE OF 2 IMMIGRANTS: VAL MARTIN (MR. DRUMMER) & MARIO SIMON ("MRS. DRUMMER")

Val Martin, as no one has yet analyzed, was swept up as an immigrant pawn in all this. For Embry, Val Martin was the incarnate alter-ego of *Drummer*. Not only was he the star of both *Sextool* and *Born to Raise Hell* in 1975, he was the avatar leatherman whose face and torso graced the covers and centerfolds of several pre-Slave Auction issues in 1975, including issues 2, 3, and 8. For the LAPD, Val Martin was a trophy arrest. He was the figurehead Chief Ed Davis wanted to mount on his wall. He wanted to put the fear of God into all the macho fags in leather bars he couldn't bust fast enough. The LAPD, as did we all, found Val Martin to be "a person of interest."

Val Martin was a world-class stud exuding mystery, romantic risk, and Latin machismo. He was the other side of the American existentialist hard man, the blond WASP, Fred Halsted who had directed him in *Sextool*. The deep, dark secret of his real name, Jeanne Barney, told me was "Vallot Martinelli" which sounded Italian, although he was born in Colombia, South America. He claimed to have been a New York City cop. He had

wanted to join the LAPD, but disliked the homophobia.

Drummer artist Olaf Odegaard explained in his 1984 eyewitness profile of Val Martin in *Connection*:

The door to Val Martin's apartment in Hollywood was open... the master had never before given an interview.... Val grew up on a farm in Brazil [*sic*]. He had 18 sisters and no brothers. He has been married and has two children. An American citizen, he has been in this country for 18 years. He speaks Portuguese, Italian, Spanish, and English. A Cancer, he studied medicine for four years and has worked as a farmer, a handyman, a construction worker, a horse trainer [shades of almost all the Village People]. He spent three years in the army and worked as a police officer in New York City.... One entire wall [of the apartment] contains representations of Val by numerous artists and sculptors.

In LA, Val Martin was a business partner with my pal, Dick Saunders, owner of the throbbing Probe disco chronicled in director Paul Schrader's Richard Gere film, *American Gigolo* (1980).

In the zero degrees of publishing around Val Martin and *Drummer*, Dick Saunders was the editor and publisher of *Probers*, the newsletter of Probe disco from December 1980-September 1983, and he told me he knows the identity of the burglar-arsonist who got away with setting Probe ablaze on September 21, 1981. Fifteen years earlier, as the homomasculine world began mobilizing toward leather and western gear, thus anticipating in 1965 the 1975 DNA of *Drummer*, Saunders wrote and published the LA tabloid, *Frontier Bulletin Gazette*, from January 1965-October 1969, which Embry read while dreaming up *Drummer*. In our zero-degrees *Drummer* Salon during the late 1970s-1980s, Saunders and I shared for two years—without knowing it—an extremely handsome sex-bomb body-builder lover who hustled each of us on identical rides until the day we compared notes, and it dawned on us, that “his guy” and “my guy” were one guy whom we immediately dumped and sent running for cover back to the Redneck Riviera where he came from.

Val Martin was thirty-six when arrested at the Slave Auction. Born three weeks after me on July 16, 1939, he died at forty-five on April 13,

1985, as inscribed in Jeanne Barney's *Rolodex of the Dead*. She wrote me on September 25, 2006:

When I talked to Val for our piece on bestiality, he was quite forthcoming and said that he'd had no problem screwing poultry or livestock, but that he couldn't make it with a dog because, he said, "They have such bad breath." [That's] absolutely [Barney quipped] one of THE best lines of all time.

Val Martin was, in 180-degree sense, the photogenic and masculine version of Embry's own longtime Latin lover, Mario Simon, who was an immigrant from Spain to LA, and built chunky like Embry. When Mario Simon arrived as a human hatbox with the *Drummer* luggage in San Francisco, Embry announced Mario as "a singer who is famous in Spain for his best-selling disco recordings." Al Shapiro considered working the following line into his satirical *Harry Chess*: "I'm 'famous in Spain' like Jerry Lewis is 'beloved in France.'" Jeanne Barney remembered that Larry Townsend openly jibed Embry by saying, "Give my regards to that 'Puerto Rican.'" And Embry would reply, "The 'Puerto Rican' says hello."

Embry himself revealed in *Manifest Reader* 26 (January 1996) that even when they lived in LA, Mario was not suited for the business of Alternate Publishing's enterprises. Mario shouldered a chip of an attitude about Embry's moving them to San Francisco because show biz is in LA. Mario Simon as Embry's life partner had a right to a certain status and dignity. But, I must confess, the irreverent 1970s staff at Divisadero *Drummer*, thought him a condescending LA attitude queen who had arrived in San Francisco on a *vaporetto* of his own imagining.

One camp image clung to him: being arrested in a splash of sangria at the Slave Auction. Embry later verified the basis of the running joke in *Super MR* #5, page 35: For the event, "Mario...prepared gallons of real Spanish sangria, with red wine and fresh fruit."

Rarely did Mario show up at our office, but when he did appear, he entered the room voice first, swathed in clouds of Hai Karate cologne, dragging his mink. Channeling the iconic 1940s film star, Maria Felix, who was the Mexican Marilyn Monroe, Mario exuded an attitude of petulant entitlement, even though during my editorship he had nothing to do with *Drummer* except parade through the office carrying his Capezio shoulder-bag stuffed with his Toto-like Cairn Terrier named "Mac" whom Embry flew in from Spain. His English was a new and second language, and so not very useful to an American magazine needing a proofreader.

In the summer of 1978, *Evita* opened at the Orpheum in San Francisco before its premiere on Broadway. If Mario had stood in front of the *Evita* poster, he would have disappeared. Later in 1990, type-casting struck, and he appeared, where he always longed to be, in Southern California on stage in Oxnard in a “Music Theater of Ventura County” production of *Evita*. He played Magaldi, the over-the-top tango singer who gives Evita her first leg up singing “On This Night of a Thousand Stars.”

Embry once told me, without any sense of irony, that Mario wooed him and won him on their second date by taking out a guitar and singing “Feelings.”

You just can’t make this stuff up!

(See *Manifest Reader* 26, January 1996, page 52.)

“Mario Simon,” as spelled in his obituary (March 5, 1942–December 12, 1993), was also known as “Mario Simone.” Long after I exited, Embry listed “Mario Simone” on the masthead of *Drummer* 57 (October 1982) as “General Manager” which was optimistic—and, one figures, tax-deductible, with insurance coverage. Benefits were never offered to us workers. *Drummer* 60 (January 1983) featured a quarter-page “house” ad of Mario wearing a leather vest and disco headband; the text read simply: “Leather Disco, Valverde, 14, Madrid 13, Spain.” In 1985, the full inside-back cover of *Drummer* 81 (February 1984) blatted perhaps the worst advertising copy in history with Embry’s flat-footed prose pushing singer “Mario Simon’s hot new song done by a better singer than one hears in pop music these days. It is exciting.”

Produced by Embry’s Wings Distributing, Mario’s “Drummerman” was backed with “Be My Clown”—insert joke here—and was available on cassette through mail-order for \$7.95. *Drummer*’s Tenth Anniversary Party was also the finals of the Mr. Drummer Contest 1985 at the Japan Center Theater. Reporting that event in *Drummer* 85 (December 1985), pages 8 and 10, Embry’s “Social Notes” published a Robert Pruzan photo of Mario Simon, noting: “Mario Simon belts out...the show-stopper ‘Drummerman’... his Wings recording over the huge theater sound system. It was electrifying.”

Eyewitness Jeanne Barney assessed the Embry-Simon vortex that twisted the psychology of both the LA and San Francisco offices where Mario Simon treated all the staff including Barney, Shapiro, Rowberry, and me, like dirt. “Mario,” she said, “was only into the psychological sadism that he could inflict on others. He would leave John home alone while he went out dancing with the other Latinas.” In that email dated September 24, 2006, Jeanne Barney recalled:

Mario Simon was an arrogant, pretentious queen. I never liked him, but tolerated him for John's sake; and Mario was not shy about exhibiting his fierce jealousy of me and my longstanding relationship with John. Consider the contrast: John's Own True Love, about/for whom he was/is writing *Epilogue*, was fair but not blond. His successor was dark-haired, but had a similar name: hmmm, Dr. Freud. (Number 1 was Don Briggs and Number 2 was Don Britt.) I think that John took up with Mario because Mario was the only person who would have him. When Don Briggs got sober at AA, he left John. Don Britt, who was also an alcoholic, left John for Vince Lumbeau, a local realtor—and a REALLY HEAVY TOP, as opposed to John. The only types John really didn't like were milk-skinned redheads [which may explain Embry's dismissive attitude to my milky-red lover, David Sparrow who worked freelance as a *Drummer* photographer]. Otherwise, I think his main criterion was that they were breathing.

At the northwest corner of 11th Street and Folsom, photographer Jim Stewart managed the *Drummer* bar and swimming pool which had been Allan Lowery's Leatherneck bar and became Embry and Simon's "The Plunge." Stewart whom I had met in 1974 when he was manager of a popular movie theater, and responsible for all of its receipts, was an eyewitness of what it was like doing business with Embry and Simon at *Drummer*, and how hard it was to be paid. Rumors alleged that *Drummer* funds were often deposited in Mario Simon's name and that Mario Simon, perhaps behind even Embry's back, had secret accounts whose total, according to Rick Leathers, who managed the office for Embry for eleven years, went allegedly to Mario's relatives in Spain. Jim Stewart wrote to me on September 21, 2007:

Dear Jack,

Working for John and Mario at the bar was a trip. Their heads didn't really seem to be into running a bar/swim club. Their ideas seemed to fit more into Southern California than San Francisco, South of Market. For instance the leather shop had one mannequin to display leather harnesses, etc. It was a surfer boy. I convinced John to let me trade it in for two male mannequins that looked more like they belonged in a San Francisco leather bar. John would sometimes call meetings of the bar staff for suggestions. However, he was very reluctant to follow through on any of them.

Either the two of them had no head for finance or they were working very close to the bone or both. I used to walk the previous night's cash receipts, complete with register tapes, paid bills, etc., over to *Drummer* offices on—was it Natoma?—in a bank bag. John would either say, “Just put it down over there,” or, “Just give it to Mario.” In either case I never saw anybody ever count it to verify what was what. It sure was not like I had been taught by the scrupulous Butterfield Theater Chain when I managed the Campus Theater in Kalamazoo. One must remember that when I worked for John and Mario in 1980-1981, these were the days before banks had widespread computer use and instant deposit.

When payday rolled around, Mario would take the cash and deposit it in a branch bank way out in the Avenues [out by the ocean far from South of Market] just before John would write the paychecks. If you took your paycheck to the main branch downtown, the record of the deposit would not have been received and the account would be underfunded to cash the paychecks. If you waited a day or two, and all paychecks were cashed, someone usually came up short. John would apologize and sometimes cash it himself, or tell you to go back to the bank again as Mario had just made another deposit. What a way to run a business. Well, Max Morales and I finally figured out what was happening. We'd try to predict Mario's moves and would get on Max's BMW motorcycle and go over to the branch bank in the Avenues to cash our checks. An added bonus of going to the bank in the Avenues—there was a great butcher shop just across the street from the bank—much better than anything I could get at the Dented Can grocery South of Market.

Let me know if I can help you with anything else with your book endeavor. Since I have seriously started writing, I realize how much work is really involved.

—Jim Stewart

Meanwhile, back in 1976, Val Martin on the cover of *Drummer* was a “Wanted Poster” to LAPD Chief Ed Davis.

Drummer became a brand name by hiring Val Martin who had the Universal Appeal of his face, his body, his name, his genial personality, his porn-film celebrity from Fred Halsted's *Sextool*, Terry LeGrand and Roger Earl's *Born to Raise Hell*, and his public appearances at popular leather venues where crowds cheered his charisma.

Val Martin was *Drummer*.

After a three-way conversation including Embry, Al Shapiro, and me, we three alone agreed unanimously that Val Martin was the logical hot guy to be the first Mr. Drummer at the CMC Carnival, November 1979.

We *appointed* Val Martin to the title.

Two years later, contestants *competed* for the title.

The drum iconography of being a “Drummerman” began in 1977 with a series of publicity photos shot with no contest in mind. In these centerfold photos in *The Best and the Worst of Drummer*, pages 40-41, each nude model is shot with a large marching drum posed over his genitals. The 360-degree-sides of the drum are cleverly pasted with covers of early *Drummer*. The caption reads:

There have been many “Drummers” [guys carrying a drum] since the magazine first took shape. When *Drummer* was a newspaper years ago, a drummer [nude and posed like the aggressive drummer in the American Revolution painting of three men carrying flag, fife, and drum] by [photographer] Pat Rocco graced its editorial page. Much more recently [for photographer Hy Chase], sex superstar Jack Wrangler posed, wearing nothing but a drum. Ken [a model shot by Dave Sands] grabbed up the drum at the Pleasure Chest in our [First] Anniversary Issue. Chuck Quinlan, winner of “Mr. Groovey Guy” and “Mr. CMC Carnival” [shot by Rob Clayton] posed for us as well. [All the models happened to be white.] Then Mr. USA [who happened to be African-American and unidentified] posed for us during a session with [British actor and photographer] Roy Dean [1925-2002, who was much published in LA *Drummer*, including his cover of Val Martin body-painted by Cliff Raven for *Drummer* 8 (September 1976)].

Val Martin’s image branded *Drummer* visually in the 1970s.

I adored Val Martin’s homomascuine sexiness personally and professionally. He was a sweet man, and very hot and sensual at pot parties and orgies at his apartment near Folsom Street. As a photographer, I lensed him on several occasions, including the Fritscher-Sparrow coded fisting photograph of him and his partner, Bob Hyslop, on the cover of *Drummer* 30. On May 20, 1979, I also shot 35 photos of the Martin-Hyslop duo for the black-and-white “Spit” centerfold of *Drummer* 31 in which Embry published my work, but credited the photos to David Sparrow who was not even present at the Sonoma County shoot north of the Golden Gate Bridge. Without

permission, Embry reprinted one of my photos of Val Martin in *Drummer Rides Again* (1979), page 45, and again spitefully credited “David Sparrow.” Long after Embry departed *Drummer*, I shot a second “Spit” photo series, featuring Palm Drive models Goliath and Thrasher, for the color centerfold of *Drummer* 148 (April 1991) which Tony DeBlase, after selling *Drummer*, also published as the cover of his *DungeonMaster* 47 (January 1994). Building that *Drummer* 148 issue on the “rough sex” idea I had suggested when he asked me for a theme, DeBlase featured my *Drummer* story “USMC Slap Captain” and reviews of two of my roughest videos, *Slap Happy* and *Rough Night at the Jockstrap Gym*.

Four years before Val was “Mr. Drummer,” he was the first “Mr. Leather” chosen at the Hawks’ Leather Sabbath, Halloween 1975, at Troopers’ Auditorium, Los Angeles.

That event was emceed by another immigrant, my longtime friend, Peter Bromilow (1933-1994). We met as playmates through Jim Kane in 1969. He was a strapping tall leatherman and British stage actor who had played in many films, including the role of the butch knight, Sir Sagamore, in the film, *Camelot* (1967). A friend of the film’s star, Vanessa Redgrave, Bromilow came to Hollywood to shoot the musical at Warner Brothers in Burbank, and he never left. He appeared in many films including David Lynch’s *Wild at Heart* (1992). He often visited me in San Francisco and we loved to hang out midday at a little lunch-and-beer-bar with outdoor tables, sitting among the returning fishermen on the sunny boat docks in China Basin, south of South of Market before its charm gave way to urban developers. Peter’s wicked wit made him a popular LA leather personality and event emcee. In his Hollywood apartment where we smoked cigars, drank wine, and had sex, he had hung a poster-size framed photo of his very longtime friends, Vanessa Redgrave and Glenda Jackson, both in period-drag costume for their film, *Mary Queen of Scots* (1971). The duo had signed it: “Dear Peter, From two Queens to an even bigger Queen! —Vanessa and Glenda.”

The LAPD vice squad, connecting circumstantial dots, drew a target on Val Martin’s back. His face had been on the back cover of *Drummer* 2 and on the front cover of *Drummer* 3 which reported his leather coronation by the Hawks motorcycle club. *Drummer* 3 also condemned the LAPD for raiding the fundraiser at the Black Pipe bar. Val did not work for *Drummer*. He had nothing to do with *Drummer* editorial policy and he had done nothing illegal, but the LAPD had a price on his head because he was the “recruiting poster” for the kind of new masculine queers that the cops saw walking out of the bars—and into the pages of *Drummer* which recruited

even more butch faggots into the new leather bars that mystified the cops, who thought they owned masculinity.

These “threatening” homomasculine gays were not the usual femme and drag stereotypes that homophobes love to hate because if they can define us as “men wanting to be women,” then they can abuse us the way they abuse women.

FRED HALSTED, THE SLAVE AUCTION, AND *THE ADVOCATE*

When the LAPD arrested forty-two people at the Drummer Slave Auction at the Mark IV Health Club, only four were formally charged: Val Martin, John Embry, Jeanne Barney, and Douglas Holliday, an accountant not directly connected to *Drummer*. Fred Halsted, as an auctioneer with Val Martin, was also arrested and thrown into the same holding tank as Embry.

That was a *Drummer* reader’s fantasy: to be locked by angry cops into a cell with the S&M sex beast, Fred Halsted.

Whereas Embry seemed traumatized in his raging anti-LAPD editorials, the more cerebral Halsted, who belonged to the Libertarian Party, wrote a coherent narrative of the arrest, of the wild media coverage, and of the gay community aftermath. In his editorial in *Package 2* (September 1976), Halsted roused and roasted *The Advocate* 189 (May 5, 1976) and *The Advocate* 190 (May 19, 1976) for what he perceived as its non-supportive, shameful, bourgeois, anti-leather stance virtually siding with the LAPD. Halsted accused publisher David Goodstein and *The Advocate* of using “Gestapo-like” pressure to make the wild gay leather community conform to the pretentious bourgeois standards of *The Advocate*.

No wonder the cash-sniffing Embry hated the corporate-scented *The Advocate*. He disliked its anti-leather policy, but, worse, he envied David Goodstein for every penny *The Advocate* earned. Embry’s successor as publisher, Anthony DeBlase, continued his own sparring in the ongoing feud with *The Advocate* over its anti-leather and anti-male policies. In *Drummer* 126 (March 1989), page 4, DeBlase wrote an impassioned editorial against *The Advocate* for publishing its latest anti-leather propaganda, “Of Inhuman Bondage: Why I Left the World of Sadoomasochism,” penned by a “Jake Drummond” whose very pornstar-sounding byline name also *sounded* like a queen’s backhand swipe at the *Drummer* name itself.

GOODSTEIN’S ATTITUDE, ANXIETY, AND ANDROPHOBIA

When the cover of *The Advocate* 185, March 10, 1976, featured the coming

out of football star, Dave Kopay, publisher David Goodstein wrote a very naked editorial about his own queasy reaction to Kopay's homomascularity. His essay was an anxious queen's Manifesto of Masculine Ickiness published exactly one month before the April 10, 1976, Slave Auction raid for which *The Advocate* blamed the victims.

In his attitude, Los Angeles' David Goodstein at *The Advocate* was a pair with New York's Richard Goldstein at the *Village Voice*. Forgetting Stonewall, both demanded politically correct gay behavior. Goodstein's public statements exposed the 1970s toxic climate of anti-male and anti-leather prejudice among the dominant and privileged queen culture promoted by *The Advocate* which presumed its own evangelical and fundamentalist queer self was review-proof.

A reductive banner carried in the 1977 Gay Parade in San Francisco exposed the androphobia of the gender war's insensitivity in ignorantly and cruelly lumping gay white males in with straight white males: "No more power to white male supremacists straight or gay." Of course. But *Drummer* in the 1970s was not about the supremacy of anyone's race or gender; its humanist goal was to declare that masculine-identified gay men were equal to feminine-identified gay men, to separatist lesbians, and to everyone riding the sliding scales of gender.

In this same Slave Auction Spring of 1976, iconic photographer Lionel Biron wrote his eyewitness essay, "*The Advocate*: Capitalist Manifesto," exposing Goodstein's own separatist and divisive quotes published in his "Invitational Letter" for his "*Advocate* Invitational Conference" which he chaired at the Chicago Hyatt Regency Hotel on March 27, 1976. In *Gay Sunshine* magazine, Biron revealed the kind of gay conformity that the assimilationist Goodstein wished to enforce.

To celebrate his first anniversary as publisher of *The Advocate*, David Goodstein wrote a controversial article on the Gay Liberation Movement in his "Opening Space" column in the January 14th [1976] issue of that paper. In the wake of the article, George Whitmore, editor of *The Advocate* Humanities/Literature section, resigned. Dave Aiken, David Brill, Arnie Kantrowitz, Vito Russo and Allen Young, all regular contributors to *The Advocate*, joined Whitmore in criticizing Goodstein's column in a letter to the editor published in the February 11th issue. The New York Gay Activists Alliance [G.A.A.] also responded to the column in the statement, "In Defense of the Gay Liberation Movement: An Open Letter to David Goodstein and *The Advocate*," adopted at its January 22nd

general meeting....[because Goodstein had written such divisive diktats as] “We must find ways to keep the emotionally disturbed members of our community [e.g.: sadomasochists] out of center stage roles and on the counseling couches where they belong....[And]... Most gay organizations are nearly always insolvent and dominated by people [e.g.: Embry at H.E.L.P.] who took them over from more responsible persons [Larry Townsend] through hysterical attacks on their integrity. These are the spokespeople whom our majority shuns....[And]....The most obvious examples of this new pride are the many new, well-lighted, expensively decorated bars and clubs [advertising in *The Advocate*] that are rapidly replacing the dingy toilets of old [e.g.: leather community bars featured in *Drummer*].”

Goodstein’s article was not idle rhetoric. His remarks provide the firm ideological base from which he intends to operate as a self-declared “practicing capitalist” [*Advocate* No. 156]. Anyone who would doubt this, should take note of the invitational letter sent by Goodstein to a select “group of like-minded people,” [*sic*] and announcing “The 1976 *Advocate* Invitational Conference.”.... [In addition] Goodstein’s “Opening Space” column is nothing less than a “Gay Capitalist Manifesto.”

Gay Sunshine, No. 24, [in its article “*The Advocate*: A Turn to the Right?”] reported how Goodstein, after purchasing *The Advocate* in the fall of 1974, shifted “the basic editorial position from dead center to somewhere between conservative and reactionary.” During the past year, *The Advocate* has been transformed into a show place of white, middle-class gay America. Features on travel, fashion, and entertainment suggest an affluent, carefree lifestyle in which *gay* means little more than fun and chic. Editorial statements, lashing out at the Gay Liberation Movement [and at leather culture], have promoted a myopic gay politics whose sole end is the passage of gay civil rights legislation, as if all will be well with gay America once anti-gay discrimination laws are enacted. Consequently, news items dealing with gay liberation spokespeople and organizations have been tailored, or censored, to conform with this editorial policy.
—Excerpt from Lionel Biron, *Gay Sunshine*, No. 28, Spring 1976

Even though Goodstein felt compelled to present Dave Kopay in *The Advocate* cover story (March 10, 1976), what comes through in his editorial is Goodstein’s inability to be existentially inclusive of the range of masculinity in his vision of the gay 1976 world dominated by rich sweater

queens skilled at exclusion. Perhaps proof lies in the subtext of Goodstein's editorial through analysis of some of his precisely felt sentences, quoted for analytic rebuttal below, wherein he codified internal evidence of anti-male bias in *The Advocate*. Was he abused by athletes in high school? Was "David Badstein," as he was often pegged, stuck in a high-school panic as he struggled with the reality of the adult sportsman Dave Kopay?

Goodstein flailed emotionally even as he was trying to manipulate Kopay's butch image to his own ends in the civil war over gender-identification in the new gay culture that he was trying desperately to control and commodify through his corporation. He knew the power of the press belongs to him who owns one. He intended to influence generations of queens to come.

David—not Dave—Goodstein sang the following aria about Dave—not David—Kopay:

...Dave [Kopay] spent three days with us. He was an unsettling and disturbing presence. We concluded the discomfort we felt was healthful to our consciousness ...His effect on us was different from his effect on them [the professional sports establishment]—almost the opposite, in fact. His directness and delight in the virtues of "manliness" and athletics are as unusual [inside *The Advocate* bubble] to our jaded [*sic*] movement psyches as Matlovich's defense of his presence in Vietnam. [Even as Goodstein inched forward around Kopay in LA, the Olympic athlete, Dr. Tom Waddell, in San Francisco ran ahead and invented the Gay Olympics aka Gay Games that would change the athletic image of homosexuality.] We had to learn to handle a [homomasculine] point of view different from the conventional gay movement wisdom [said the conventional publisher in a decade of riotous social change].

Once we got used to Dave's restlessness, and our own [Were Dave and David both uneasy in the gender war?], we concluded that he personifies, in a slightly exaggerated [*sic*] way, the emerging gay mover and shaker. [Goodstein, always a cheerleader for the "exaggerated ways" of drag and effeminacy, was wary of what he perceived as a competing "exaggerationist" male profile over at *Drummer*.] He is different from the people [Goodstein is self-referential] who heretofore have moved gay liberation forward....

To many, the athlete is a turn-on [*Drummer*]; to others a turn-off [*The Advocate*]. I confess that I belong to the latter group [but, of course!]; I have always preferred admiring jocks from afar [rather

than seducing them as at *Drummer*] to the smell of the gymnasium up close [which “smell” *Drummer* was selling monthly as a fetish of “jockstrap culture” evidenced in the “Gay Sports” issue of *Drummer* 20, January 1978]. Jocks get what they want in our culture. [A jealous fantasy?] They are the favored few in most American schools. We alleged intellectuals [Goodstein’s self identity] resent [note the angry word] the power of brawn [worshiped at *Drummer*]. Kopay brought back many painful memories of growing up. [Or of not growing up.]

...He is used to taking what he wants. [Cue Blanche DuBois! “Oh, Mister Man!”]

Dave Kopay intends to change society’s perception of gay men. [This was also the mission of *Drummer*.] His own perceptions, I forecast, will not only unsettle the straight community [who dismiss gay men as effeminate], but a great many gay people [wary of the rise of homomascularity] as well....

Enjoy *The Advocate*!

—D. B. Goodstein

In a victory for *Drummer*, forty years after this 1976 feature, the pop culture world of kink finally overwhelmed *The Advocate* which surrendered its anti-leather tradition in its breathy feature, “30 Kinky Terms Every Gay Man Needs to Know.” Ignoring forty years of *Drummer* roots, boots, and brutes that helped create the 21st century of Kink.com and *Fifty Shades of Gray*, *The Advocate* published thirty designer photos visualizing leather basics such as the hanky code, flogging, fisting, nipple torture, water sports, safe words, S&M, and CBT illustrated with a witty photo of an egg squeezed between the jaws of a machinist’s metal vise.

If gay life was a giant ballroom (and it kind of is), kinky leathermen have been lingering [more like *crusading*] in the back, in the shadows, for generations. But thanks to the internet and porn giants like San Francisco-based Kink.com, fetish play has stepped onto the main floor over the *last decade*....[This] will help you navigate Scruff profiles.... *The Advocate*, February 12, 2016

HALSTED, THOMPSON, BURNS, AND O’HARA

Fred Halsted published his Slave Auction feature, “Slaves,” in the first issue of his magazine, *Package* (July 1976), and he editorialized further against

The Advocate in *Package 2*. On his masthead, Halsted listed *Drummer* contributor, Bob Opel, as photographer, and, as his production manager, JimEd Thompson, who in 1988 died in the saddle while he was the associate editor of *Drummer*. In a valedictory, as a famous leatherman in a famous leather couple, Thompson (1946-1988), with his lover, porn star Chris Burns (1958-1995), appeared in a two-shot on the cover of *Drummer* 120 (August 1988) which published JimEd Thompson's obituary.

In the zero degrees of very cool *Drummer* contributors who did not outlive *Drummer*, I had met and played with JimEd Thompson in LA in 1971 when he began publishing his bondage magazine, *Action Male*. His later lover, Chris Burns, who was one of my Palm Drive models, was a sweet and athletic madman hustler. In fact, the short blond Scottish-American pornstar, Burns, was often confused with another player in the salon around *Drummer*, the short blond Irish-American pornstar, Scott O'Hara (1961-1998), who singlehandedly and very foolishly "squealed" and alerted cops nationwide with his accurately detailed list of the addresses of America's cruisiest truck stops and toilets in his magazine, *Steam*. That's another story confirming the idiocy of two very indiscreet publishers who got their readers arrested: "Embry and O'Hara, Who Adored Each Other, Together Again!"

I was connected to *Steam* insofar as *Drummer* salonista Scott O'Hara bought one-time rights to several of my photographs of Donnie Russo to print on the cover of the rate cards O'Hara mailed to advertisers. Blonder than an Easter Peep, the twinkie-punk O'Hara's claim to fame was his penis which had won a gay-bar award as the biggest in San Francisco. As a demanding bottom, he had been photographed for both print and videos at *Drummer*, and a photograph of him by Mark I. Chester appeared in *Drummer* 137, page 18. The last time O'Hara and I chatted was by chance when we were suddenly thrown together shuffling along in the crowd heading into Marines Memorial Auditorium to hear Gore Vidal speak in conversation about his new book *Palimpsest* in 1995.

With the blond pornstars Burns and O'Hara, a certain twinkie freak-show circled *Drummer* which preferred hard leather boys to creamy twinks. Chris Burns had a voracious butthole famous for hoovering up what wasn't nailed down. Scott O'Hara was a one-trick pony famous for sucking himself off. In 1987, David Hurles, reconnecting to the *Drummer* mystique where I had launched his career as Old Reliable Studio in *Drummer* 21 (March 1978), hired Chris Burns for a shoot. From my archives, I noted that on November 2, 1987, David Hurles wrote about Burns in his *Unpublished and Confidential Journal of Old Reliable Hustler Videos* which he typed on blue paper and bound with a red plastic comb:

Burn is the correct word. I don't know why I ever wanted him, with the baggage he had to carry, enveloper of fire-hydrants and small vehicles, lover dead of you know what! But I not only paid him about \$250 PLUS air fare, but he partied the night before, gave me the bum's rush to get done, was hung-over, did not follow directions, had no personality, did not get a good erection...and no one bought his pix. Older than God.

A month later on December 5, 1987, I wanted to see if I could fire up in the black-belt karate instructor, Burns, the burn that had eluded Hurles. I shot him on location in his San Francisco karate studio at 317 10th Street, next door to Stompers Boots, for the Palm Drive video, *Karate Kock Warrior*. Looking through my viewfinder, I saw what Erich von Stroheim saw in Norma Desmond descending the staircase in *Sunset Boulevard*: the protoplasm of a living ghost. He was a sweet man, but his sex appeal had died. His videos for both Old Reliable and Palm Drive sold, literally, zero copies. He had starred in over a hundred videos, and his career was dead of overexposure. In 1994, the power bottom Chris Burns, made mystical as a martyr by illness and drugs, begged me in a recorded conversation to videotape the elaborate S&M suicide he fantasized for himself as his *Götterdämmerung* way to seize control of his death.

I declined.

