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**SEX PERVERSION, FELLATIO,
AND ENTRAPMENT
LAPD COPS BUST LEATHERFOLK**

As writer, photographer, and leather personality, Larry Townsend exercised real agency as a *macher* in the evolving gay liberation scene in Los Angeles bars and bike clubs. When he and others founded H.E.L.P., its stellar purpose was to bail out gays entrapped in tea rooms and arrested in bar raids by the LAPD. Larry was particularly motivated. In his FBI file, I found he had been arrested three times: for “Sex Perversion and Fellatio” (1963); for “Failure to Register as Sex Offender” (1964), followed by a 1968 ruling that his registration was no longer required; and for “Lewd Conduct” at the 1972 H.E.L.P. fund-raiser that was dismissed for insufficient evidence the same year he published his *Handbook*.

Held at LA’s then-leading leather bar called the Black Pipe, the H.E.L.P. charity event suggested a two-dollar donation at the door. One of the booths on the outdoor patio auctioned off leathersmen for a date to raise money to open a gay Community Center. The LAPD decided this was prostitution. This mini-event was a slave auction that preceded the more famous Drummer Slave Auction raided with a vengeance by the LAPD four years later in 1976. That bust was so traumatic, the ten-month-old *Drummer* fled from disaster in Los Angeles to destiny in San Francisco.

Proving no good deed goes unpunished, the cops targeted their so-called “Black Pipe 21” arrests on the President of H.E.L.P. who was Larry Townsend, and on H.E.L.P.’s board of advisors, including, the astonished political worker at the card table registering voters. (Larry was booked under both his names.) In 1972,

Townsend's and Embry's names appeared together for the first time on the masthead of the first issue of the newsprint magazine combining Townsend's *H.E.L.P. Newsletter* with advertising salesman Embry's small zine-version of *Drummer* which Embry had first published all by his lonesome in November 1971. The new title was *H.E.L.P. Drummer*. The urge to merge flopped because in 1973, Larry was deposed as president by Embry causing Larry to resign as an ex-officio member of the H.E.L.P. board of directors in a drop-dead sarcastic letter he sent to Embry, the new president of H.E.L.P.

So Larry began making competitive moves against Embry to land on his own feet politically. In its October 10, 1973 issue, *The Advocate* headlined that David B. Goodstein, president of the San Francisco Whitman-Radcliffe Foundation, had chosen Townsend as its Southern California representative. At the very moment when Embry was founding Alternate Publishing and *Drummer* in 1974-1975, Goodstein was buying *The Advocate*, and Townsend was becoming founding president of that Hollywood Hills Democratic Club which was the first openly gay political club in LA.

In fact, the then really quite groovy Black Pipe bar itself, owned by Dwayne Moller, the chairman of the Tavern Guild political resistance, was a virtual All-American leather-fraternity house bothering no one out on La Cienega near Venice in West LA, a deserted light industrial area similar to San Francisco's South of Market. *The Advocate* headlined "Massive Bar Raid," September 12, 1972. Morris Kight and the leatherish Reverend Troy Perry, helped raise bail for Larry and the others; and H.E.L.P. carried the costs. The charges against Townsend were dropped and the last defendant cleared on June 21, 1974, one year before that hybrid *H.E.L.P. Drummer* with its Personal Ads morphed into Embry's stand-alone *Drummer* magazine.

When *Drummer* was ten-months old, the LAPD repeated the scenario of harassment at the Black Pipe in Chief Davis's infamously political raid on the *Drummer* charity Slave Auction at the Mark IV Bath, 4424 Melrose, on April 10, 1976, when forty-two leatherfolk, including Jeanne Barney, were arrested and charged variously with solicitation for prostitution and with

breaking a nineteenth-century law forbidding “slavery” under the penal code title, the “Infringement of Personal Liberty.” When the stormtroopers handcuffed Jeanne, they asked her if she was a drag queen. She said, “If I were a drag queen, I’d have bigger tits.”

Not to blame the victims, but, insider truth be told to history, the Slave Auction was a premeditated excuse by Chief Davis to bust the fag magazine that couldn’t itself be busted because of freedom of the press. Christian conservative Davis loathed the monthly contents Jeanne and John purposely chose to publish in those first issues glorifying gay outlaw bikers, inter-racial sex, fist-ing, bestiality, piss, necrophilia, coprophagia, prison rape, inept cops, and unsolved sex murders. They taunted him in print as “Crazy Ed.” They tried to be provocative, and they succeeded, and suffered from the stress of courtroom drama for three years, the entire time I was editor. While they tried to be debonair in print about the severely homophobic abuse, the emotional trauma of that night stayed with them till they died. Larry, who rallied to their emotional support, was lucky he had not attended the Slave Auction because at that moment he and Embry were not speaking.

In a nicely autobiographical interview for the Leather Archives & Museum in the 1990s, Larry told Joe Laiacona writing as the leather author, “Jack Rinella”:

Fortunately for me, we [Embry and he] had a falling out before the Slave Auction. Otherwise, I would have been there and would probably been arrested [along with Embry, Jeanne, Terry Legrand, and Roger Earl, and forty others]. We [Embry and he] had a terrible squabble.

So, boycotting Embry, Larry spent the evening of April 10 practicing slavery in his own photo-studio dungeon at his home on Sunset Plaza Drive above West Hollywood where many a bound-and-gagged and grateful slave experienced an S&M session feeling Larry’s greatest hits while his component-stereo speakers boomed out Mahler’s *Sixth* as well as his *Ninth*. (The leathersex was mostly mutual masturbation with, if his arrest record reveals anything, fellatio.) He described his “playroom,” and his marital

relationship analogously, in a scene in the *Handbook*, Chapter 2, “The M or the S?” It began:

I pulled into my garage and led Ronnie down the darkened pathway to my “playroom” [which he went on to describe in detail in Chapter 9, “Booze and Drugs”]. As my friend of eight years [Fred Yerkes] is not interested in leather, I have made the lower den into a convertible arena [which later became their television room].

Writing ostensibly about the mixed-marriage of another half-leather couple with whom he said he had just dined, Larry, who was often writing autobiography projected fictitiously on others, wrote in loving code about his own perfectly happy mixed-marriage profiling the vanilla Fred, and what Larry thought Fred thought about Larry’s fame:

I remember, after I left that night, I continued to think about Len’s account [of leatherman Len’s vanilla husband] and I began to appreciate Augie [Fred] as I never had before. He was a sexually active guy, with no particular interest in leather or S&M. Yet he accepted Len’s involvement, probably taking a vicarious pleasure in his friend’s [Larry’s] exploits...perhaps some pride in his reputation among the other leather people. [Larry loved his reputation.] It simply wasn’t his thing, and by choice he went another route. It was for this particular pair of guys, a completely satisfactory arrangement. Each had found the proper counterpart for his own emotional needs. Perhaps it was pure dumb luck, or maybe it was a matter of being mature enough to know when they’d found a good thing. Whatever the reasons, Len and Augie [Larry and Fred] had found the answer. So have many others.