

The Bay Area Reporter's

**BAR TAB**

Nightlife Guide

# RED HOT SUMMER FUN



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★ **DEBAUCHERY** ★  
★ **LEATHERNECKING** ★

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On the Cover: A Red Meat gogo stud raises temperatures at Club Eight. photo: Georg Lester.



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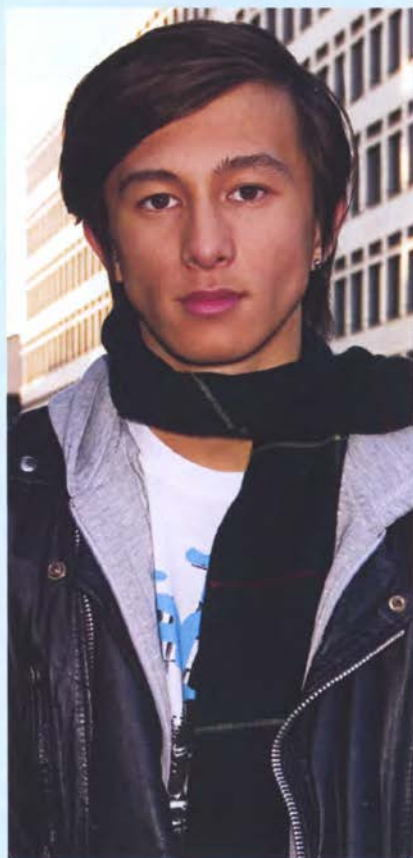
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# LEATHERNECK❧

• by Dr. Jack Fritscher

**B**archeologists excavating SoMa bars will find a swimming pool hidden under the northwest corner of 11th and Folsom streets. Since the 1960s that magnet spot has drawn dozens of spunky sex businesses from the Drummer Key Club to Oasis. In the early 1970s, underwater pool lights, dancing blue, lit legions of fully clothed men who paid 25 cents to jam hard on into the outdoor patio for standup sex at the Covered Wagon after-hours club.

In June 1977, my housemate Allan Lowery stoked that hot pool to boil when he opened his subversively named Leatherneck Bar. He asked me to partner; but as much as managing 1970s wild bartenders sounded as delicious as owning Roman gladiators, I kept my job editing *Drummer*, and instead commissioned Jim Stewart's candid photos of the Leatherneck for *Drummer* 18.

The night its doors opened, the 'Neck became the peer of vintage theme bars like The Tool Box, The No Name, and The Brig. The Leatherneck was one of the best bars of the Titanic 1970s when our speeding first-class party cruised on, unaware of the iceberg of HIV that lay ahead. So this is a real tale of the City and how the boys in the band played on.

With Stewart, author of the memoir *Folsom Street Blues*, as his contractor, Lowery designed his bar as a performance-art set, complete with whipping post, bondage cross, dungeon rack, shoeshine, and stocks as props. Leatherhead customers could spontaneously act out S&M scenes near the long front bar, in maze cubicles and around the pool.

Four USMC murals by A. Jay, *Drummer's* art director, further incited the fraternity of homomascuine men into leather, uniforms and exhibitionist fetish sex. Lowery hired four of the hottest barmen in town who, like emerging Palm Drive Video star Chris Meyerovich, discounted drinks to customers flashing USMC tattoos.

Eager "recruits" swarmed the Leatherneck to act



Jim Stewart from the book *Gay San Francisco*.

Leatherneck bar owner Allan Lowery (center) with Chris Meyerovich (rt.). Across the bar sits staffer Rocky, while an unidentified friend works below.

out theme-bar manhood rituals denied us by the military. The muscular doorman, Bill Essex, one of the first gay San Francisco deputy sheriffs, very believably enforced the leather-uniform dress code, and kept close watch on the pickup trucks, motorcycles, and ever-ready sex vans rockin' with "curb service."

Inviting what virgins were left in 1977 San Francisco, I wrote in *Drummer*: "Don't worry if you're going down South of Market on your first visit. You're safe. The action is totally consenting. In some bars, S&M means 'Stand and Model.' S&M at the Leatherneck means 'Sensuality and Mutuality.' What happens is what you want to happen. Sure the 'Neck's a beer bar with country music and wall-to-wall shit-kickers, but up-front macho ain't no pose."

In 1979, the Leatherneck finished its wildly popular two-year run when, through no fault of the stand-up Lowery, it crashed into a giant iceberg of cocaine and sank like the Titanic into that sparkling blue pool. That swimming hole has since been covered with a wooden dance floor exactly as in *It's a Wonderful Life*. And it was. Wonderful. If you didn't weaken. \*

**More info about Leatherneck**  
at [www.JackFritscher.com](http://www.JackFritscher.com).

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SoMa history book *Gay San Francisco*