

IN PASSING

HARVEY MILK AND GAY COURAGE

Less than two hours ago, San Francisco supervisor Harvey Milk was shot to death, reportedly by an ex-cop. Two years ago, I watched that ex-cop, stripped to the waist and out to prove himself one more time, in his last Golden Gloves bout. Old Reliable David Hurler, who often covers sports-and-street action for us, and DRUMMER photographer David Sparrow, also watched this ex-cop, Dan White, beef-up his own macho for the cheering crowd of cops, firemen, and Golden Gloves fight fans.

ALL-AMERICAN FANTASY COP

Dan White is the ex-cop of fantasy: athletic, goodlooking, clean-cut, and God-fearing. Harvey Milk was the "avowedly homosexual" politician of reality: intellectual, liberal, masculine, and not a gay politician so much as a political person who happened to be gay.

Ironic: on the surface, the all-American conservative, straight WASP cop murders the New-York-born liberal, gay politician. Right in City Hall. Right on the very location of all those *Dirty Harry* movies. Once again, life imitates art.

SUICIDE PROTEST

Two months ago, Milk returned home from his supervisory duties to find that his lover, Jack Lira, a Latino in his twenties, had hanged himself after taping the paperback of the TV miniseries *Holocaust* to the door.

The Jew cut the Latino down and held the dead boy while the WASP media watched for a crack in Milk's composure.

Lira's suicide served rather to firm up Milk's personal resolve to campaign heavily against California's anti-gay Prop 6, which Dan White, a recognized homophobe, apparently supported. Milk's Prop 6 victory three weeks ago was his last.

AVOWED SEXUALITY, INDEED!

Funny: within two hours, the media instantly dropped "avowed homosexual" references to Milk, and called him — finally and simply: "San Francisco Supervisor Harvey Milk." Death, the great leveler, made Harvey safe to handle. No way now for him to turn on anyone and deny his homosexual roots, or, worse, get arrested copping plain-clothes dick in the City Hall john. Milk broke the limp-wrist stereotype. Reporters, unsure how to label him, protected themselves with the "avowed" label. Has any reporter

ever referred to, for instance, Dan White's "avowed heterosexuality"?

Just as the rest of America has trouble saying the very words, *homosexual* or *gay*, so the media has trouble referring to the specific roles and specific styles within the alternative lifestyle of our generic homosexuality.

Mayor Moscone, also shot and killed allegedly by White, had *wife and children and family*. Harvey Milk had, gulp — how *does one label* the surviving men related to the gay deceased in the extended families of friendship we all move through? Some of them are closer than even wife or children.

Lots of people have trouble with the particular relationships within the love that once dare not speak the name it now campaigns under.

And when you don't have the word for something, you usually aren't able to really "handle" that thing.

If you don't understand something (through at least use of a stereotyped label), then the primitive reaction is to punch out at it with guns and gloves not so golden.

"COME OUT," MILK SAID

With Milk, we have come out of our closets into society, politics, business, and religion. Family, friends, and the public can now deal with not just our sexual differences, but with our many samenesses. How is a gay business person, after all, different from a straight business person? "Coming out of the closet" means we must reassure straights as to how similar we are while we educate them to understand our mutually respectable preferences.

In DRUMMER 24, we wrote in "Castro Street Blues" of the tourists moving like troops through occupied territory: "Buses often drive picture-taking tourists through the Castro. Gay photographers snap back through the bus windows at the lowans dressed in their polyester Anita-wear. Cameras are the guns of our time. SFO supervisor Harvey Milk's Castro Camera," the article ironically concluded, "develops the film."

DRUMMER's David Sparrow was in City Hall at the time of Milk's shooting. Within minutes, Harvey's body, shot twice in the head and three times in the chest, was wheeled past Sparrow and out to the coronor's office.

"Harvey said," Sparrow recalled from an earlier press interview, "that if he did a good job, people wouldn't care if he were green."

SEEING

Harvey donated his body to science. Perhaps some straight will see through the gift of his eyes. Milk "did a good job," so maybe the recipient will not care if he was green or gay.

The fact is: Harvey Milk helped us all see.

He saw and he said and he was killed. Our struggle must not cease with either his death or our recent victory. The scary thing is that if they can get Harvey, who was known, they can still get any of us who are just statistics on a VD board.

Almost immediately after the double murder, someone placed a small bunch of flowers on the City Hall steps. The handwritten note, unsigned, read dimly: "Prayer will do no good at all, because nothing is sacred."

ANTI-GAY?

No matter how the media denies any anti-gay motive, we know such motivation can hardly be measured. Is it simply easier for us to live with the programing that the assassin shot a supervisor who only "happened" to be gay? On the other hand, perhaps, we only hunger for a martyr to symbolize our plight in this country at this time. All that notwithstanding, in the annals of straight and gay history, Harvey Milk is assured, by his life-acts, by his untimely death, and by our need, of a place in our heads and hearts as a genuinely gay, genuinely political, and genuinely human martyr.

LIFE GOES ON

The essential lesson of "assassination politics" is that we cannot grieve too long, or else our enemies who are rejoicing will move in and we'll lose the opportunity Milk gained for us. The essential maneuver in politics is not to let anything get out of control for very long. The king is dead? Then, "Long live the king." We, quite obviously, must find ourselves another Front Runner.

We must continue courageous! DRUMMER is dedicated to fun, fantasy, and fetish. But between the lines lies some social conscience, or, at least, we like to think, some recording of our gay social history.

JACK FRITSCHER