



# Lesbian and Gay HISTORICAL SOCIETY of San Diego

# NEWSLETTER

"Preserving and Teaching Our History"

## Mike Passante and the San Diego Pool Association: A Commitment to Community

by Sharon K Parker

Recently, LGHSSD was a grateful recipient of funds raised by the San Diego Pool Association (SDPA) at its annual Celebrity Allstar Broomstick Tournament. The \$1,300 donated to the LGHSSD was due in large part to the efforts of Mike Passante and his long involvement with the SDPA. Mike shared information with me about the SDPA and his involvement with the San Diego LGBT community.

Mike explained that the San Diego Pool Association (SDPA) began in 1978 as a way to bring business into the bars on Monday nights. The first sponsors were Brass Rail, Shadows, Club 540, Nickelodeon, Diablos, and Barbary Coast.

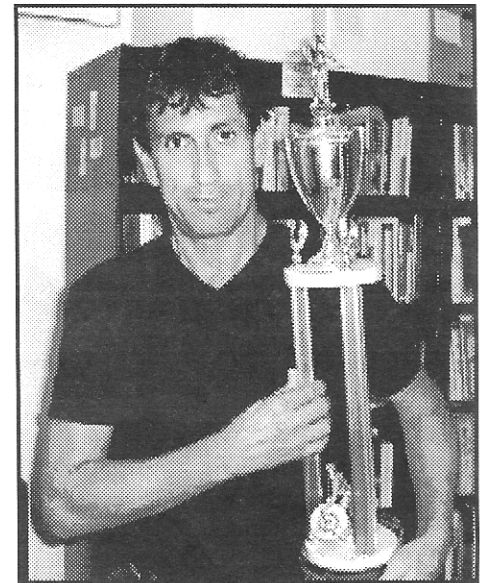
The group originally called itself Stick Stokers, and grew within a couple of years under the leadership of David Hackney into 32 teams.

Mike joined in 1980, having moved here from Tucson, and played out of Saloon 3 on Fern St.

In the early 1980s the group changed its name to the San Diego Pool Association and under the leadership of Fred Harris strengthened the league's rules and by-laws.

I asked Mike why the SDPA has lasted so long. He attributes its longevity to the ability of its board to adhere to its bylaws, its commitment to preserving its history, and in maintaining its programs and traditions.

As the AIDS crisis began to take its toll on the league's membership, Mike felt the need to have the SDPA help raise money for those in need. Along with board member Doyle Fisher, they started the Celebrity/All-Star Broomstick Tournament. Since 1985 the Tournament has raised over \$30,000 for nonprofit organizations. Over the past 18 years Mike has



Mike Passante holding the 1984 West Coast Challenge IX Team Championship trophy. He was captain of the Mr. Dillons team.

(Photo 2002)

served 16 seasons as board member, 11 of those as president, and he is responsible for many changes to the

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## See Bonnie Zimmerman's Lesbian Herstory Slideshow

### "Amazons, Dykes, and Women Loving Women"

**What:** A fundraiser for LGHSSD.  
\$10 donation, \$5 for students.

**When:** Sunday October 13<sup>th</sup>, 7: p.m.

**Where:** Joyce Beers Community Ctr.

The LGHSSD is pleased to host "Amazons, Dykes, and Women Loving Women: A Lesbian Herstory Slideshow" by Professor Bonnie Zimmerman. This lively and entertaining program chronicles the lives of many significant women throughout history.

While including material from her several previous showings during the past decade, Bonnie has added much new material. Those who have seen previous versions will want to return to savor it once again

Bonnie is a professor and gradu-

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## President's Report

by Sharon K Parker

Fifteen years! What does this number evoke? Are we somewhat through the "growing pains" as we enter our teenage years on the way to adulthood? Or is it simply another milestone in our growth?

This year marks the 15<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the LGHSSD (in December).

From our early days in Jess Jessop's apartment, to our varied and expanded collections today, we reflect on the changes that have taken place in our organization and the community.

Another of the events celebrating its 15<sup>th</sup> year is National Coming Out Day. What began as a "movement" in 1987 (on October 11<sup>th</sup> each year) to encourage people to take that next step is now a celebrated milestone in LGBT communities.

Many of us commemorate this day by wearing a button or other LGBT-identified apparel. And many choose to come out to at least one more person – an important step forward, not only for oneself, but for the greater community (the "ripple" effect).

October is also Lesbian and Gay History month. Our history is built and strengthened as we live our

daily lives in an open manner. Our visibility aids in our educational efforts, not only to the greater communities, but also to one another.

As part of Lesbian and Gay History month, LGHSSD will once again have a display in the San Diego Public Library downtown (the main branch, at 8<sup>th</sup> and E streets). The theme of the exhibit is "LGBT Heroes of 9.11." It looks at the commonality of all of us as citizens who have faced and dealt with this tragedy.

We look to the future, and the need for all of us to remain vigilant about collecting our personal and community histories. We urge you to volunteer, become a member, and support us in our efforts to preserve San Diego's LGBT history for generations to come.

*Happy NCOD and Lesbian and Gay History Month!*

## Passante

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league's operation.

The San Diego Pool Association hasn't been Mike's only involvement. In 1986 he served as both commissioner of the San Diego Greater Softball League (now America's Finest City Softball League), and as publisher, editor, photographer, writer, and paperboy for what Mike claims to have been our nation's first gay and lesbian sports publication, *San Diego Scores*. The 20-24 page publication, printed twice a month, strengthened Mike's community involvement and led to his being chosen as Mr. Gay San Diego in 1986.

In 1985 Mike worked alongside Eagle owner Dixie Strobel and attorney Tom Homann to overturn a 1941 ordinance prohibiting pool playing from 2 a.m. to 6 a.m. Vice officers were raiding both the Eagle and the

Hut to shut down the tables after 2 a.m. This practice was thought to be more gay harassment than simply enforcing a city law. The City Council agreed and overturned the ordinance.

In 1986, angry over the near fatal accident involving a close friend and a drunk driver, Mike appealed to the Alcoholic Beverage Commission (ABC) to enforce the illegality of "free" beer. Several bar owners, in an attempt to attract customers, had resorted to giving away draft beer. The competition became fierce, and before long free draft beer was flowing seven days a week. Within 48 hours after it was brought to the attention of ABC, the beer war ended.

Until recently, Mike was longtime executive director of Pets Are Wonderful Support (PAWS), an organization that helps people with AIDS and other illnesses take care of their pets. He has also published and dis-

tributed AIDS education posters.

Mike's abiding interest has been his matchbook collection. He has collected hundreds of them, not only of San Diego gay bars and businesses, but those throughout the nation. When he started going to gay bars in the early 1970s, he collected match-



A page from Mike's matchbook collection.

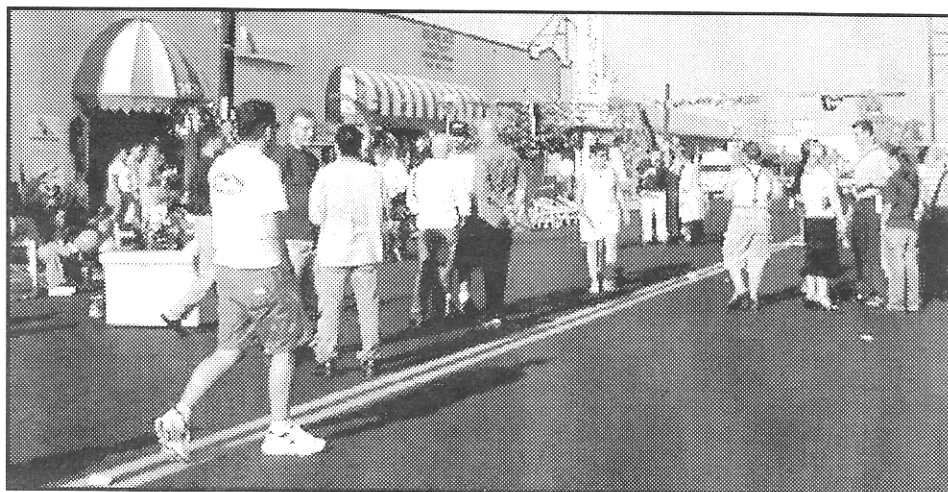
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# Bienestar Celebrates Its First Year

Bienestar San Diego marked its one-year anniversary with a block party in North Park. Serving San Diego's Latina/o LGBT community, the San Diego chapter is one of seven in southern California. It provides counseling, HIV support, and other social services.

At the celebration there was a festive air of pride, accomplishment and camaraderie. The facilities are inviting and have been largely decorated by its clients.

Bienestar's Executive Director, Carolina Ramos, was Grand Marshal at this year's Pride Parade.



Bienestar block party at 3020 North Park Way, August 10, 2002.

## Passante

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books because he thought they were interesting. But he soon realized that they form part of an historical record, especially for bars that have closed.

Mike has donated much of his San Diego, San Francisco, and Los Angeles matchbooks to the LGHSSD. They are mounted on cardstock and filed in binders. He framed another San Diego collection which will eventually be displayed at the Center.

Throughout my wide-ranging interview with Mike, it became clear

that he is passionate about volunteerism. He has a dream – for one of our LGBT institutions, perhaps the Center, to create a community honors program for volunteers. One day each year this program would gather *all* the volunteers from *every* organization in the community under one roof and recognize their selfless efforts.

I asked Mike if he had it to do over, would he do anything differently? He responded with an emphatic "no," "I know I have a reputation of being opinionated and seemingly mad about almost every-

thing. But as an idealist, I can't help it. I refuse to see life as it is and choose instead to see life as it ought to be. I'm proud of the fact that after 22 years of serving my community that my integrity and devotion have never wavered."

What's next, I asked Mike. After 13 years of living with AIDS, and just turning 50, he said he has again opened up a new chapter in his life. He has returned to the workforce as client relations coordinator for Hillcrest Pharmacy on 4th Avenue.

## Bonnie Zimmerman

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ate advisor in the Women's Studies Department of San Diego State University. She is a renowned author and co-author of such books as *The Safe Sea of Women*, *Professions of Desire*, *The New Lesbian Studies*, and *Lesbian Histories and Cultures*.

Help us celebrate LGBT History Month by attending the Lesbian Herstory Slideshow. And remember, it is *not* for women only. The 90-minute

program begins at 7:00 p.m., Sunday October 13<sup>th</sup>, at the Joyce Beers Community Center in Hillcrest's Uptown District. The entrance to the Joyce Beers Center is on Vermont Street, north of University Ave., between the Aladdin and Terra restaurants.

Bonnie is offering the slideshow as a fundraiser for the LGHSSD. It is a bargain at \$10 (\$5 for students).



Bonnie Zimmerman, SDSU Professor of Women's Studies