

# The Gay Blade

**THE  
BLADE** *Serving Gay Men and Women  
throughout the Mid-Atlantic Region*

7th YEAR, NUMBER 3  
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**The** THE GAY NEWSPAPER OF THE NATION'S CAPITAL  
**Washington Blade**

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# Newspaper of Record: 35 Years of *The Washington Blade*

*The first issue of The Gay Blade appeared October 5, 1969. The hand-distributed monthly began thirty-five years of chronicling metropolitan Washington, DC's GLBT community. The Gay Blade/Blade/Washington Blade became metropolitan Washington, DC's GLBT newspaper of record, an indispensable tool for researchers, and a window into GLBT lives as they have been lived in Washington, DC.*

The thought that the newspaper would endure three and a half decades never occurred to Nancy Tucker and Bart Wenger, creators of *The Gay Blade*.

Gay Washingtonians embraced the *Blade* newspaper from the beginning. Clubs that originally only allowed hand-to-hand distribution of the newspaper soon heard from patrons who had missed the delivery man and found they had to allow stacks of the monthly to be dropped off for patrons to collect. When Nancy Tucker announced a meeting to choose her successor in the summer of 1973, so many people showed up for the discussion that two follow-on meetings were arranged. When Pat Kolar's tenure ended, a new group of interested readers showed up to take over. Somehow, even when funds were at their lowest, someone came through to keep it going.

For nine years, the *Blade* was staffed by volunteers. Through the years, many well-known figures in the community have written for it, sold advertising, and helped out. Sometimes the most unlikely people have found themselves at the *Blade*, making

a contribution to the community through their work there.

Local readers are passionate about the newspaper. Everyone, it seems, has an opinion about the *Blade*. Changes in content, layout, name and staff elicit strong opinions and emotions from the community. In 1975, the newspaper's staff were barraged with six months of criticism when the name changed from *The Gay Blade* to *The Blade*. Following Jim Zais's loss in the April 1991 election, the newspaper came in for another round of criticism. Most recently, the changes following Window Media's acquisition of *The Washington Blade* and its New York City sister paper have stirred fresh emotion and criticism.

If this newspaper were to disappear, it would have to be re-invented. Those who voice the most dismay over developments at the newspaper are also the first to argue that it should be replaced with something like the "good old *Blade*" they remember.

It is a community institution.

## Names of *The Blade*

*The Gay Blade*

1969 to 1975

**The Blade**

1975 to 1980

*The Washington Blade*

1980 to ...

## Owners of *The Blade*

D.Y.K. Enterprises

The Gay Blade Inc.

Blade Communications Inc.

The Washington Blade Inc.

Window Media Inc.

Repeated crises in the paper's finances and leadership, and in the larger gay community, challenged Washington, DC's GLBT newspaper of record. In its early years there were few orderly transitions in the *Blade's* leadership. The first planned transition occurred with the late 1978 handover from Chris DeForrest to Don Michaels. The most recent, the May 2001 handover of the *Washington Blade* and the *New York Blade* to Window Media was the first transition in a nearly a quarter century. In this case, the tumult was in the community at large. Local readers worried about 'outside' ownership and loss of local focus.

Chris DeForrest's tenure was invigorated by the local community's reaction against Anita Bryant's attack on GLBT rights ordinances. Under Don Michaels, the fourth editor, the *Washington Blade* was both challenged and invigorated by the AIDS epidemic of the 1980s and 1990s.

#### WHY A BLADE?

In July 1973, as founding editor and publisher Nancy Tucker prepared to relinquish control, she voiced the ambition that nearly everyone who has headed the *Blade* (as it is commonly



Nancy Tucker  
1970

known) embraces:

*"We were founded to be an organ of communication to gay people and to attempt to foster a sense of gay 'community'..."*<sup>1</sup>

Three months later, in a retrospective interview with acting editor Larry Sheehan, she added, "I felt it was very important for gays to become acquainted with one another."<sup>2</sup>

Don Michaels, whose 24 year involvement with the *Washington Blade* ended with the newspaper's sale to Window Media in 2001, recalled in an interview,

*"It was a goal of mine to record what was going on in the community and concerning the community. To be a newspaper of record was the main thing that I was interested in, as were the folks running it when I came along ... Historians a hundred years from now can look back and see all these things going on. They'll look through these articles and get a perspective."*<sup>3</sup>

In February 2002, Chris Crain, Executive Edi-

### FIRSTS IN THE BLADE

*First monthly issue of The Gay Blade*  
(usually appearing the first Monday)  
October 5, 1969, Vol. 1, No 1

*First clubs to carry The Gay Blade*  
**Capitol Hill:** Johnnie's, JoAnna's, the Front Porch  
**Adams-Morgan:** the 1832 Club  
**Georgetown:** the Georgetown Grill  
**Thomas Circle:** the Golden Calf

*First biweekly issue* (appearing on Fridays)  
November 6, 1978,

*First weekly issue* (appearing on Fridays)  
September 10, 1982

*First special edition*  
In the last week of June 1973, *The Gay Blade* published a special two page issue reporting on the arson attack, Sunday June 24<sup>th</sup>, at the New Orleans Metro

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tor for the new owners, explained Window Media's ambition was to

*"respect its [The Washington Blade's] traditions and the newspaper's mission: to fairly and accurately report the news that affects our readers' lives, and to press the same questions that challenged the mainstream when they were first shouted in the streets outside the Stonewall Inn in June 1969."*<sup>4</sup>

## HOW IT STARTED

The motivation to publish *The Gay Blade*, began in the 1950s atmosphere of persecution. In February 1950, State Department Deputy Undersecretary for Administration John Peurifoy announced that ninety-one government workers had been fired or forced to resign after being identified as homosexuals. This initiated the federal government's efforts to purge homosexuals from government employment under the assumption that homosexuals were susceptible to blackmail and therefore represented a national security risk. The use of the Washington D.C. police vice squad to perform surveillance, the prevalence of entrapment as a method of arrest, and the interrogation techniques used to gather information had a devastating impact on not just gay federal work-

ers, but on the entire local gay community. Since any association with identified homosexuals was dangerous, "People were afraid to talk to one another."<sup>5</sup> A climate of fear prevailed.

In the face of this discrimination, Dr. Franklin E. Kameny and Jack Nichols founded the Mattachine Society of Washington (MSW) in 1961. Kameny had been fired from his job as a civilian astronomer employee by the Army for being a homosexual in 1957. MSW modeled itself in part on the Black Civil Rights Movement, picketing the White House, State Department and the Pentagon in an attempt to force the federal government to overturn its policy of firing homosexuals.

Members marched in their finest clothing in an attempt to show that they looked like people the government would want to employ.<sup>6</sup> Many Mattachine members were not in government service. During the 1960s, the MSW evolved from an organization focused almost exclusively on issues of gay employment in the federal government to one concerned with issues relevant to the broader gay community. In 1965, Mattachine "... instituted a number of new committees to establish programs and do outreach to the gay community ... this change was a self-conscious

## *Only issue skipped*

October 1974. *The Gay Blade* skipped its fifth anniversary issue to focus attention on its funding and staffing crises, as announced by editor Larry Sheehan in the September issue, and to regroup after the departure of editor Pat Kolar. In December 1974, editor Chris DeForrest announced that *The Gay Blade* might miss its January 1975 issue if the community didn't contribute financially (he suggested every reader contribute \$1.). DeForrest noted that it cost \$635 to produce the November 1974 issue (the staff were unpaid). The January 1975 issue did appear.

## *First public service notices/ warnings to the community*

"Blackmailer at Work in Dupont Circle Area" November 1969 warning from the Mattachine Society of Washington

## *First regular community organizations listings*

March 1971 in "Organization Phones", which became "The Swishboard" in February 1972

attempt to combine political activism with service to and affirmation of the gay subculture.”<sup>7</sup>

The ongoing legal battles involving local litigants as well as the shift to a community focus led some MSW members to the realization that the emerging gay community needed a newsletter. In particular, the decision in *Norton v. Macy* that homosexuality was not, by itself, a cause for dismissal, and the Civil Service Commission’s decision not to appeal the ruling, created a slightly more open environment. Although it did not end discrimination against gay federal employees, it was a victory.

Kameny wanted members of the gay community to know their legal rights, and a newsletter seemed to be an appropriate way to inform them.<sup>8</sup> It was into this new openness that *The Gay Blade* emerged.

#### BEFORE THE GAY BLADE

In the late 60s, DC’s Mattachine Society broke ground for distribution of a local gay and lesbian publications by approaching local restaurants/bars for distribution of its own ‘local’ newsletter, *The Insider*, and of *Gay Is Good* buttons. *The Insider*, edited by Eva Freund and Richard Schaefer, provided both gay movement news and local news to

metropolitan DC’s gays and lesbians in 1969 and 1970.

The newsletter carried a roundup of national gay movement news and issues, occasional book reviews, and a “market place” listing of gay-friendly businesses in the area. The September 1969 issue called for readers to submit “news articles, book, movie and play reviews ... eyewitness reports of pertinent events, letters to the editors, and analyses of the current scene as you see it.”<sup>9</sup> Indeed, much of the early content of *The Gay Blade* proved to be remarkably similar to *The Insider’s* content.

During its brief life, Mattachine’s newsletter established the distribution model and prepared local clubs and their patrons for the advent of a truly local community-focused periodical. Schaefer and Freund regularly noted in their newsletter the increasing receptivity of businesses to distribution of *The Insider*.

The Mattachine newsletter also reflected radical developments in gay activism by celebrating Stonewall and predicting in the August 1969 issue that

*“It is quite possible that the homosexuals in the street may well make obsolete much of what the present homophile movement is doing. For*

#### *First classified ads*

(“no sex ads, please”)  
December 1969 – three ads

*Meg Christian advertising guitar lessons at \$5 per hour*

*Bob Tedd Motors in Fairfax VA offering special attention for gay clients*

*Wigs for men and women from Tony’s Wigs*

#### *First letters page*

November 1974, page 2

#### *First regular column of community organizational events*

“Community Notes” in January 1975

#### *First national news regular section*

The “Wrap Up” section appeared in June 1975, becoming “National News Wrap Up” in July 1975.

#### *First regular horoscope*

January 1975, by L. L. West

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*better or worse, militancy is here.*"<sup>10</sup>

## [THE GAY WORLD OF 1969 WASHINGTON, D.C.](#)

In 1969, the word “gay” hadn’t yet acquired the male association it would later have. Everyone was ‘gay’, variously described as ‘gay men’ and ‘gay women’ until well into the 1970s.

The world into which *The Gay Blade* was launched was still a careful world where pseudonyms were the order of the day for those who feared losing their job, status or housing if their homosexuality was known. Although Nancy Tucker used her own name as editor of *The Gay Blade*, Bart Wenger, a government employee and Mattachine member, used the name ‘Art Stone’ on the masthead of the *Gay Blade*, in Mattachine, and as distributor of the new newspaper. Wenger remembers “I had a government job at that time and I was afraid I could lose my job.”

The year was a transition from a more intimidated past to a determinedly out future. In Adams Morgan, the 1832 Club pushed the envelope of restaurant regulations (there were officially no ‘bars’; only restaurants were licensed to sell alcohol), with its balcony “waiting area”, screened with chicken wire, where patrons could stand with their drinks. Since the

summer of 1968, club owners’ reluctance to allow same-sex dancing had been undermined by the success of dance floors, first at JoAnna’s ( a new lesbian bar) and then at the Plus One (the first ‘super club’ for gays). That same year the Regency Baths opened as the first gay bathhouse since the McCarthy era.

Gay organizations were appearing more and more frequently, joining Liz Taylor’s Oscars drag group (1961) and Mattachine (also 1961). A regular house party at 4011 14<sup>th</sup> Street had coalesced into the Metropolitan Capitolites (known as the MCs) social club, joining the Pinochle Club and the Group of Washington as African-American alternatives to segregated gay DC. In 1969, the MCs opened the city’s first new (since the fires of 1968) African-American gay club, the Zodiac Den, on Riggs Rd NE. The city’s first gay motorcycle club, the Spartans, had formed in 1968 and would soon be joined by more.

What gay Washington DC lacked as organizations and community institutions formed was a medium of social communication.

## [CREATING THE GAY BLADE \(1969 – 1973\)](#)

Because the Mattachine constitution did not allow for a social out-

### *First entertainment section*

“Nite Life” appeared in the September 1975 issue and quickly grew to a multi-page entertainment section of news and reviews each month. In early 1976, it was retitled “Nightlife”

### *First women’s news section*

“Of Interest to Women” began in late 1973. In March 1975, it became “Women’s Notes”

### *First religion section*

In July 1975, the “God and Gays” column debuted

### *First Women’s News editor*

L. L. West, March 1975

### *First Calendar Editor*

Ford Singletary, November 1975

### *First paid full time employee*

Don Michaels, April 1977

### *First health column*

“The Gay Health” began in January 1978

reach document, the leadership made the newsletter independent by appointing two editors, only one of whom was a member of the society. MSW approached Nancy Tucker, a journalist and former Mattachine member, to serve as co-editor with Mattachine member Bart Wenger, known at the time by the pseudonym "Art Stone". At the first meeting of the newsletter volunteers, 15 people put together the first issue in an afternoon.

As staff dwindled to Tucker and Wenger, with occasional contributors, the two divided the tasks. Nancy Tucker took responsibility for articles and layout and Bart Wenger handled distribution. For the first issue, they printed 500 copies and distributed them at the handful of gay bars in Washington D.C. Volume 1, number 1 was mimeographed and filled one side of a piece of colored mimeo paper. The tag line in the title banner emphasized both the periodical's independence and its dedication to community: "An Independent Publication Serving the Gay Community".

Wenger spent the next four years driving *The Gay Blade* around the city in his white Volkswagen bug. At the outset, he remembers, "I had to pass it out by hand to individuals in the clubs" because owners wouldn't

allow piles of the newspaper to be left behind in their establishments. The first *Blade* distribution list in the November 1969 issue listed only six businesses that accepted *The Gay Blade*: JoAnna's, Johnnie's, and the Front Porch on Capitol Hill; the 1832 Club in Adams Morgan; the Georgetown Grill; and the Golden Calf on 14<sup>th</sup> Street NW. As demand grew for the city's only guide to the gay community scene and customers missed seeing Wenger personally, pressure built for clubs to take delivery of parcels of *The Gay Blade* monthly. Soon *The Gay Blade* was distributed in parcels from Wenger's Volkswagen to more than a dozen clubs around the city.<sup>11</sup>

One of Tucker's goals for the newsletter was to produce something that would

*... engender a sense of community. I felt it was very important for gays to become acquainted with one another. Publicity encourages self-confidence, it creates self-respect."*<sup>12</sup>

In other words, *The Gay Blade* was created in part to challenge the fear created by the federal government's attack on the gay community.

During Tucker's tenure as co-editor from 1969 to 1973, *The Gay Blade* was published monthly, first in

*First legal column*

"The Blade's Barrister", January 1978

*First local news column*

"District Update" from January 1978

*First AIDS obituary*

July 1, 1983 for William 'Dirk' Diefenbach of the Eagle

*First Obituary section*

April 18, 1986

*First AIDS Digest section*

February 14, 1986

1<sup>st</sup> Washington DC Filmfest

In October 1984 *The Washington Blade* organized gay DC's first GLBT film festival to celebrate the 15th anniversary of the newspa-

Washington, D.C., then in Arlington, Virginia, and later back in Washington, as Tucker moved.<sup>13</sup> She often was the only person working on the publication, doing everything except the offset printing itself. Tucker kept the paper alive in those early years. She recalls, "The Blade was first in mimeo-

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graph form, but then I converted it to offset printing, gradually changing it from a single 8-1/2 by 11 sheet to multiple 8-1/2 by 14 sheets folded in the middle (what I called the “Baby Blade”, because it was so small).”

Tucker adds, “The Blade reported Mattachine news initially because that was the only organization in town and thus the only source of news/information. As other organizations came along or as I became aware of them, activist and social groups alike, I reported on them. These changes happened early on, during my tenure.”<sup>14</sup>

Tucker and Wegner never incorporated the newspaper. Beginning in mid-1973, the masthead listed the ownership as “D.Y.K. Enterprises”, pronounced “dyke enterprises”.<sup>15</sup> It wasn’t until late 1974 that the newspaper finally incorporated in Washington, DC, as Blade Communications, Inc., a non-profit corporation.

Tucker’s leadership was not without its personal challenges. In the heady atmosphere of early 70s lesbian feminist separatism which saw ‘gay activism’ as male-identified, Tucker encountered repeated demands that she abandon *The Gay Blade*. She recalls, “When the women’s movement came along, with few exceptions, the lesbians in ‘gay’ organizations in the

D.C. area left them and formed or joined women’s/lesbian organizations.” She herself left the Gay Liberation Front, but stayed with the newspaper. “As a woman, and as the editor of the *Blade*, I had a lot of pressure put on me to leave the Blade, to get out of the “gay” movement and into the women’s movement. I resisted this pressure, and attempted to the best of my ability to focus the *Blade* on news and information for everyone in the community, men and women alike. Thankfully, my successors did the same (maybe because the second editor – Pat Kolar – was also a woman).”<sup>16</sup>

Under Nancy Tucker, the newspaper took on a number of its defining features. The third issue, December 1969, carried the first classified ads (the first ad advertised guitar lessons given by Meg Christian) and, like *The Insider*, notices of gay-friendly businesses. From the outset, *The Gay Blade* refused to carry sexually-oriented ads, whether personals or services. Pat Kolar continued the policy, as stated in *The Gay Blade’s* advertising policy, July 1974 that “At the present time we not accept implied or blatant solicitations for sexual relationships.” The first personals ads did not appear until January 1976 (under Chris DeForrest’s editorship)



## THE FIRST ISSUE

The one page *Gay Blade* of October 1969 featured notices about

- the first gay group blood donation organized by Mattachine at the Red Cross on Monday October 13th. Donors received “Gay Is Good” buttons.
- a warning against porn sold by The Homosexual Research Assn. in Los Angeles
- a warning about blackmailers in the Dupont Circle area
- an offer of Mattachine support for people needing draft counseling, people undergoing security checks, and people being blackmailed
- the *Blade’s* roommate referral service
- the new book *The Same Sex* in local bookstores
- formation of the Gay Liberation Front in New York City
- news of a speech by Dr Kameny at AU on “The Homosexual Dilemma:



and it was not until January 1978 that the first ads for sexual services appeared in the classified under the heading “Escorts, etc.” Ads for local bathhouses and for gay pornographic cinemas such as the Metropole and the Cinema Follies began appearing in the mid-70s, also under Deforrest.

True to its goal of being a medium for community events and organizations, *The Gay Blade* created both calendars of local events (from

July 1970; the calendar ran on the first page until November) and phone contact numbers for local organizations which ran under the heading “Swishboard” from February 1972. In late 1973, under Pat Kolar, the paper added a women’s calendar: “Of Special Interest to Women” as a companion to the regular calendar.

The newspaper carried public service notices and political news from the outset. Tucker recalls that for a time, Mattachine was “the only source of news/information.” *The Gay Blade* played an important role in educating the broader GLBT community about its rights and about threats to the community and individuals. The Dupont Circle blackmailer, first noted in *The*

*Insider*, was the subject of repeated *Gay Blade* warnings and articles. The authorities’ reluctance to hold the blackmailer for any length of time appears to have exasperated the newspaper’s writers. Early issues of the newspaper carried frequent notices of how to handle police interrogation.

In the spring of 1973, *The Gay Blade* carried full page “Gay

Law” explanations of what was legal and illegal, of personal rights, and of ways to handle arrests and interrogations in DC, Virginia, and Maryland. This public service information was written by Dr. Franklin E Kameny of the Mattachine Society.

Tucker’s departure precipitated several months of financial and editorial uncertainty as editorial leadership passed among Larry Sheehan, Ted Hardee, and finally Pat Kolar. Tucker has noted that she fully expected Pat Kolar (a pseudonym for Pat Price) to take over. “My understanding was that it was going to be Pat,” recalled Tucker.<sup>17</sup>

Tucker had tried to prepare for the transition by calling a community

**“an organ of communication ... to foster a sense of gay community”**

**-- Nancy Tucker**

meeting on July 26, 1973 at her apartment in the basement of Dr. Kameny’s home on Cathedral Avenue. Community response at the time was so strong that subsequent meetings were held on July 2<sup>nd</sup> and July 5<sup>th</sup>. The meetings led to a new group of writers and organizers willing to lead *The Gay Blade*.

Tucker recalls, “when I turned over the Blade to Pat Kolar and the others, I conducted for them a session where I walked them through all the different kinds of organizations there were in the D.C. area at that time – activist groups like Mattachine (which was down to just Frank Kameny at that point), social groups (including black, leather and drag social groups), self-help groups like A.A., etc.”<sup>18</sup>

In the four years that Tucker and Wenger tended *The Gay Blade*, they created local demand strong enough to see the publication through editorial, financial, and organizational crises.

#### [THE KOLAR YEARS \(1973–1974\)](#)

Pat Kolar’s leadership of *The Gay Blade* (from mid-summer 1973 to September 1974) has left a lasting and unpleasant memory with subsequent leaders of the newspaper. Don Michaels, who became Managing Editor in January 1978, recalls “Her

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[Pat Kolar's] editorializing was considered rather over the top, which is why Chris [DeForrest] and the others who came along decided to adopt a no editorial policy. When I became editor I continued the policy which remained in place until Window Media took over."<sup>19</sup>

Kolar's tenure came during a period of lesbian feminism in Washington, DC and local activism that secured major advances in civil rights and culture for the gay and lesbian community. In Washington, lesbian feminist separatists had established the Furies collective and published a newspaper explaining their philosophy. In the spring of 1974, radical lesbians took over a panel discussion of homosexuality at the annual APA convention in Ann Arbor, forcing Bruce Voeller and others from the stage and challenging Frank Kameny's right to speak. The period was also the beginning of a powerful local women's music movement that was to transform the nation.

Local lesbian feminists made a major contribution towards passage of Title 34, Washington, DC's human rights law, in the summer and autumn of 1973. Passage of Title 34 was a major local and national milestone in defense of gay and lesbian, women's,

and other civil rights. It established the grounds on which activists and civil libertarians fought commercial discrimination in clubs (straight and gay) which employed "carding", the practice of demanding multiple IDs from people that clubs sought to exclude.

In 1971, under Nancy Tucker's leadership, *The Gay Blade* had given

**Kolar's activism meant a loss of advertising and distribution sites in exchange for an editorial activism that was rarely seen again over the next two and a half decades**

attention to picketing by a community coalition, the Committee on Open Gay Bars (COGB), at the newly opened Lost and Found club which openly excluded African-Americans, women, and female impersonators. The front page story recorded the club manager's assertion that since his customers were bigots he was simply giving them what they wanted. Tucker's follow-up on the story recorded terms of the agreement between the Lost and Found and the COGB.

Two years later, in the wake of Title 34's enactment, Kolar accused the Lost and Found of again discriminating. The charge led to a heated rebuttal in *The Gay Blade* by Lost and Found owner Donn Culver who accused Kolar of a "personal vendetta".<sup>20</sup> Kolar's activism extended beyond the Lost and Found: in 1974 she was one of four gay and lesbian complainants to the DC Human Rights office citing discriminatory carding at the newly opened gay disco Grand Central. The Grand Central complaint resulted ultimately in closure of the club. Both Donn Culver, of the Lost and Found, and Glenn Thompson, of Grand Central, banned distribution of *The Gay Blade* from clubs they owned (a ban that lasted at Thompson's businesses until the purchase of *The Washington Blade* by Window Media in May 2001).

For the newspaper, Kolar's activism meant a loss of advertising and distribution sites in exchange for an editorial activism that was rarely seen again over the next two and a half decades. In the tempo of the time, however, her resistance to perceived discrimination was hardly unique.

As noted, Kolar's editorials and

activist stance created a long-lasting wariness of editorial activism. Years later, Don Michaels remarked, "...we didn't do *Blade*-generated editorials. I wanted people to read our news articles without feeling as through the editorial I wrote the week before colored the perceptions of the reporter writing the news article."<sup>21</sup> Michaels recalled "Chris and the others who came along decided to adopt a no editorial policy. When I became editor I continued the policy which remained in place until Window Media took over."<sup>22</sup>

Under Kolar, the newspaper took major organizational and editorial strides forward. In July 1973, *The Gay Blade* added its first business manager, John Hogan. The July 1974 issue saw the periodical begin to truly look like a newspaper as a major change in layout and style took hold. Printing and distribution had grown from 500 copies of the first edition in 1969 distributed at a handful of sites to more than 4,000 copies distributed at 35 sites. Though staff were unpaid volunteers, by November 1974 costs of printing and distributing the monthly had reached \$685.

#### [THE DEFORREST YEARS \(1974 - 1978\)](#)

With Kolar's departure, *The Gay Blade* entered another period of

editorial uncertainty. Income and volunteers were also both down. Larry Sheehan, a writer under Kolar, was acting editor in the autumn of 1974. In September, faced with funding and staff shortages, Sheehan announced that, for the first and only time, *The Gay Blade* would not publish. In the announcement, Sheehan appealed for "the financial support of the numerous businesses of the gay community".<sup>23</sup> As a result there was no fifth anniversary issue of the newspaper.

November 1974 was a transitional moment in the newspaper's history. When *The Gay Blade* reappeared in November, under the temporary leadership of business manager Mike Bonner, it had a greatly expanded list of contributing staff, among them Chris Deforrest and L. L. West, and a new corporate name as The Gay Blade Inc. For the first time, the staff also had workspace outside of their personal apartments. In the autumn of 1974, *The Gay Blade* moved into the Community Building at 1724 20<sup>th</sup> St NW.

Deforrest (a pseudonym used by Joseph Crislip, a government employee) became editor by December

1974 and saw the struggling newspaper through a transitional period to a more professional layout and appearance, wider use of bylines, and sounder finances. Don Michael, who first worked at *The Blade* under Deforrest, recalls

*"The legend as passed on to me is that Chris and two others showed up at a volunteers meeting in - I think - Sept. 1974 and when the two or three people doing the paper at the time realized Chris and the others were serious about volunteering they walked out saying they had had enough. If you track the history you'll find that there was no October 1974 issue of The Blade. Being newcomers Chris and the others had no idea how it was run so they decided to suspend publishing until they could figure it out. The Blade resumed publishing in*

*November and Chris remained editor until I took the job*

*sometime in 1978 when he decided to leave."*<sup>24</sup>

The newspaper wasn't out of the woods yet. In the December 1974



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issue, Deforrest warned of the continuing crisis and appealed to readers for contributions of at least one dollar. He noted that 9,000 copies had been distributed in the previous month and hoped that each recipient would send in a dollar.<sup>25</sup> The January 1975 issue did appear, so someone must have responded.

Since the October 1969 issue, October had marked the first issue of each new volume. In January 1975, the volume and issue sequencing abruptly disappeared from the title banner, without comment, and did not return until the April 1975 issue when the numbering returned to the masthead as Volume 6 Number 4, following a calendar year sequence.<sup>26</sup>

The June 1975 issue marked the demise of the newspaper's original name, *The Gay Blade*. The staff learned that a paper in New York had the rights to the name Gay Blade. So as not to lose the recognition the name already had, the newspaper became simply *The Blade*. The name change caused controversy. Some readers believed that the loss of the word "gay" from the title threatened to reverse the openness and visibility of the gay community.

Editor Chris Deforrest moved *The Gay Blade* towards a more professional appearance and set it on a

sounder footing for the future. *The Gay Blade* incorporated as a nonprofit corporation under the name Blade Communications, Inc. It was managed by an eight member board of directors comprised of staff members, freelance contributors, and community leaders elected by the staff. The board met every two weeks to make policy decisions and discuss story ideas.

The first year of Deforrest's leadership, 1975, brought new sections that became standard features of

**By 1976, *The Blade* had 358 paid subscriptions and was distributing 10,000 copies in D.C. and Baltimore.**

the newspaper. Although there had been reviews of local cultural events for several years, *The Blade* created a special section, entitled "Nite Life" (from September 1975). "Nite Life" (retitled "Nightlife" in 1977) quickly grew to a multipage entertainment section of reviews, announcements, and comment, the foundation of what later became *The Point*. L. L. West created the first horoscope (January

1975). Local news and organizational coverage filled the "Community Notes" section (January). In March, West became Women's Editor of *The Blade* and the "Of Special Interest to Women" section created under Pat Kolar became the "Women's Notes" (complementing the "Community Notes"). Underscoring the importance of local current and coming events, Ford Singletary became Calendar Editor in November 1975.

The first full page display ad, an advertisement for Miss Gay America, appeared in April 1975. The business community discovered that *The Blade* was a good way to reach the gay community. As the number of distribution locations grew *The Blade* had to continue to increase advertising revenue in order to remain a free publication. By 1976, *The Blade* had 358 paid subscriptions and was distributing 10,000 copies in D.C. and Baltimore. Under Deforrest, the newspaper began a classified page, which from January 1978 began carrying ads for sex services. December 1977 brought color to the front and back pages in the title banner and occasional headlines and advertisements.

In late 1975, the newspaper tried expanding its market to Philadelphia, adding 3 staff members in that

city. *The Blade's* tagline in the title banner reflected the broader market area by replacing "An Independent Monthly Serving Greater Washington, D.C." with the new line "Serving Gay Men and Women Throughout the Mid-Atlantic Region." January 1976's masthead lists three staff members and four contributors, among them Chuck Goldfarb who would later relocate to DC. The Philadelphia experiment didn't last and by early 1976 staff in the city were no longer listed. In September the newspaper's tagline changed to the more local "Serving Gay Men and Women Throughout the Washington-Baltimore Area", which lasted until *The Blade* became a biweekly in November 1978.

In the summer of 1976, Lou Chibbaro Jr., now the longest serving member of the newspaper's staff and is its *de facto* institutional memory, began writing for *The Blade* under the pseudonym "Lou Romano". At the same time as he debuted on the newspaper, Chibbaro also did interviews and announcements under the same pseudonym for the local gay and lesbian radio program *Friends*. Although later banned by Don Michaels, pseudonyms and first names were still acceptable both on the masthead and on signed articles in the Deforrest years. The editor himself used a

pseudonym.<sup>27</sup>

Though *The Blade* avoided open editorializing under Deforrest, headlines and choice of material for articles made the paper's views obvious. In the midst of a pre-bicentennial crackdown on gay and other clubs, Deforrest was not shy of calling harassment "harassment" in front page headlines: "D.C. Police Harass Private Gay Clubs."<sup>28</sup> The following year, as Anita Bryant's campaign to rescind gay rights ordinances gained strength, front page headlines charged "homophobia" and promised a "roast" when Baker came to DC.

Deforrest briefly handed editorial management to Richard Rhodes in late 1975 but by the spring of 1976, Deforrest was again both publisher and managing editor again. Steve Shifflet, a contributing writer in 1977 stepped up as associate editor late in the year.

#### THE MICHAELS YEARS (1977 - 2001)

In April 1977, *The Blade* hired its first paid staff member, Don Michaels, at \$317 a month.<sup>29</sup> With Michaels' employment, work at *The Blade* became a full-time daily operation instead of a weekend/evening exclusively volunteer effort. *The Blade* moved quickly to salary more volunteers, and by 1979 it had five paid

employees.

Initially listed on the masthead as operations and business manager, Michaels became managing editor under Deforrest in January 1978.<sup>30</sup> During Michael's tenure, *The Blade* underwent significant growth, coped with the challenges of the AIDS epidemic and changed from a bi-weekly to a weekly, and from non-profit to for-profit status.

In 1977 *The Blade*, and the local gay community responded to attempts to rescind Washington DC's human rights law that protected sexual orientation. The newspaper provided coverage of the nationwide campaign by conservatives as well as the local response in Washington, DC.

In 1977, Anita Bryant spoke for those working to repeal the recently passed Dade County, Florida human rights ordinance and similar statutes protecting sexual orientation. Bryant, ex-beauty queen and spokesperson for Florida orange juice, became the voice of Save Our Children, a conservative religious group. In late 1977, Save Our Children brought the campaign to Washington, DC in an attempt to overturn the four year old District of Columbia Human Rights Law, Title 34.

The law, enacted on November 16, 1973 was one of the first in the country to extend civil rights protec-

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tions to sexual orientation in employment, housing and public accommodations. Washington, DC's GLBT activist community organized to oppose attempts to repeal or alter the human rights law. A June 1977 demonstration opposing Bryant's cause drew 300 people to a rally in Lafayette Park. In January 1978, 3,000 people gathered to demonstrate against Bryant's visit to D.C. to perform for the National Association of Religious Broadcasters. The tenfold increase in demonstrators in only nine months signified a greatly increased awareness within the D.C. Gay community on the issue of civil rights and a willingness to get involved. *The Blade* chronicled the issues and the anti-Bryant reaction with headlines celebrating the anti-Bryant movement.

The following year, 1978, brought as many changes as the earlier 1974 transition. At *The Blade* Don Michaels moved up to managing editor in January. Over the next two years Michaels was joined by staffers who were to play significant roles in *The Blade's* editorial leadership, Steve Martz and Lisa Keen. Chris Deforrest

ended his four year tenure at *The Blade* in September 1978, leaving Michaels at the helm.

The newspaper added another local news section, "District Update", a "Gay Health" column and a legal column, "The Blade's Barrister" beginning in the January 1978 edition. In the summer, the staff moved to roomier offices in another suite at 2430 Pennsylvania Avenue NW. Of greater importance for news coverage (and more timely coverage) and revenue, the nine-year old newspaper



became a bi-weekly with the November 6, 1978

issue. The first biweekly issue saw the division of the paper into two separate sections: the front news section and a Community Focus section which included the calendar, the gay organizational directory, the "Blade Barrister", and other local news.

*Blade* news articles and the letters column provided greater coverage of the emerging African-American gay political groups in the late 70s and the early 80s. Though black social

clubs, a central part of African-American gay social life, had received little coverage since Nancy Tucker chronicled the Metropolitan Capitollites in the early 70s, *The Blade* did provide details of the new National Coalition of Black Gays and the DC Coalition of Black Gays in 1978 and 1979. The contrasting candidate ratings by the DC Coalition and the Gay Activists Alliance in the 1978 mayoral election received front page attention. The paper had aggressively covered "carding"<sup>31</sup> issues as they affected African-Americans, women, and female impersonators in the 70s but the social centers and activities of the city's African-American gay majority were virtually ignored. After Sidney Brinkley created *Blacklight*, the city's first African-American gay monthly periodical (and one which provided ample coverage of the black gay social scene) in August 1979, *The Blade* placed occasional advertisements and annual congratulatory display ads. Brinkley was to serve as *The Washington Blade's* West Coast correspondent in the 90s.

With advertising revenue accruing at biweekly rather than monthly intervals, the staff of *The Blade* decided in the summer of 1980 to re-incorporate as a for-profit corporation. Beginning with the

October 10, 1980 issue, the newspaper's masthead listed ownership by The Washington Blade Inc., with offices at 930 F St.<sup>32</sup> At the same time as the new incorporation, the staff launched another design and name change: *The Blade* became *The Washington Blade*. Staff members felt *The Blade* was too truncated a name and wanted to include the location of the paper in the title.

At the same time as it changed its name, the newspaper adopted the distinctive title banner, including the distinctive pen motif, and re-arranged the paper's content. The "Community Focus" second section folded back into the news section of the newspaper. The new second section, "Preferences" focused on entertainment news, as the earlier "Nightlife" had done. A final change to *The Washington Blade's* delivery of the news came in September 1982, two years after the new incorporation, when the biweekly finally became a weekly newspaper, appearing every Friday.<sup>33</sup>

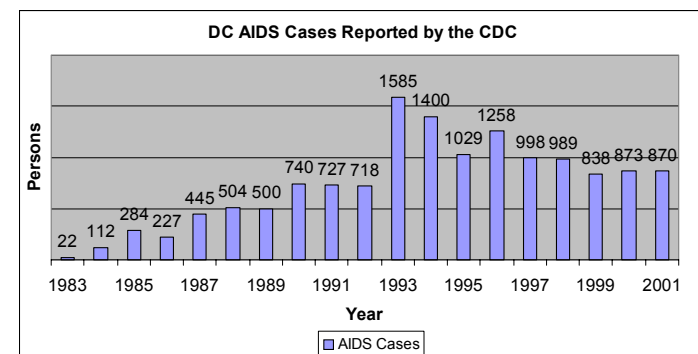
AIDS challenged *The Washington Blade* to find and present the very latest and most accurate information about the epidemic. In the early 80s the struggle for the *Blade*, and for the health community in general, was to both understand the new disease and to warn the reading public.

Publisher Don Michaels has pointed to the AIDS crisis as forcing the *Washington Blade* to emerge as a resource to disseminate the ever-breaking news about this new disease and remain in a constant mode of production. The effort strained the *Blade's* resources, but honed its hard news skills. AIDS motivated the community and the staff they poured resources into supporting the work of the *Washington Blade*, allowing the paper to produce vigilant coverage of the early epidemic. Michaels remembered "We were pretty small then. Lisa and Lou and some freelancers put in a lot of long hours. There was constant breaking news."<sup>34</sup>

*The Washington Blade* alerted readers early on to the appearance of a new health challenge in 1981. For four years, its health column, then written by Dr. Richard DiGioia, served as the primary medium for sharing news of symptoms, possible causes, and potential medical treatments. Initially the burden of reporting was carried by Janis Kelly, Lou Chibbaro, and Dr. DiGioia.<sup>35</sup> In early 1983, *The Washington Blade* took a more com-

prehensive look at AIDS and some of the issues it raised when it ran a six part series by Margot Jane Fromer dramatizing the illness, consequences, and issues of AIDS.

The newspaper chronicled every step of the Whitman-Walker Clinic's response to the AIDS crisis, noting the creation of task forces, housing for persons with AIDS and other developments. As the local



community struggled to cope with the burden of caring for persons with AIDS, *The Washington Blade* kept a wary and critical eye on policy and political issues, particularly local funding shortfalls, federal research funding, and the insurance crisis of the mid-80s. Unfortunately, many of the local voluntary organizations escaped the paper's notice as it fo-

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cused on wider issues.

Nonetheless, many in the community credit *The Washington Blade* for finally waking up the community to the threat of AIDS through Lisa Keen's award-winning series dramatically tracking the slow demise of local lawyer Ray Engebretsen. The series opened its story in mid-March 1985 under the headline "When the pretending stops". Over the next five months, Keen reported on Engebretsen's increasing frailty and finally his death. Keen's articles gave a face to the illness and to the personal and social costs of HIV and AIDS.

The newspaper itself occasionally became part of the AIDS story, as happened late in the 80s when ACT UP picketed the newspaper's Ninth St NW offices. Michaels reported the invasion of the *Blade*'s offices when ACT UP demanded to talk with him and Lisa Keen. "I walked away and left them in my office," he said.<sup>36</sup>

In the early 80s, the newspaper had begun giving more coverage to community organizations in special profiles. Local news sections and the entertainment sections focused primarily on 'hard news' and didn't lend themselves to chronicling social institutions. However, emerging African-American organizations such as the Sapphire Sapphos, Faith

Temple, and the ENIK Alley Coffee-house gained exposure through this greater attentiveness to institutional and organizational development. In the late 80s, *The Washington Blade* was providing profiles of new organizations such as ENLACE in the Latino gay community and the new youth organization SMYAL.

For the newspaper's fifteenth anniversary in 1984, *The Washington Blade* sponsored the city's first gay and lesbian film festival. The International Gay and Lesbian Filmfest ran from October 12<sup>th</sup> to October 15<sup>th</sup> at the Biograph Theater on M St NW in Georgetown, one of two 'fine arts' theaters in the city. The event was the newspaper's first venture into sponsoring a local social or artistic event. Susan Hyde, organizer of the fest, brought together nine films for the festival, including a sneak preview of *Before Stonewall*. Film historian Vito Russo also appeared and received an award.

By 1985, the team that was to lead the newspaper for the next sixteen years was largely in place. Michaels continued as publisher. Lisa Keen became Managing Editor. At the end of 1988, Keen became Senior Editor, with Mark Sullivan as Managing Editor. The next major evolution in editorial leadership came in October

1995 when Kristina Campbell, who had joined the paper as a news representative, became Assistant Editor (following Sullivan as Managing Editor in 1999). The Michaels - Keen team led *Blade* coverage of local and national issues, and creation of *The New York Blade* (in 1997), until the sale of the newspaper in 2001.

Coverage of the City Council special election of April 1991 earned *The Washington Blade* a backlash over accusations of biased coverage, but reinforced the editors' longstanding 'no editorials' policy. The race between Jim Zais, an openly gay man, and Jack Evans in a special election for the Ward 2 Council seat became a heated campaign that revealed fissures within the GLBT political community. Some community members charged Evans' supporters with disloyalty to the gay cause. When Zais narrowly lost, Paul Kuntzler, a long time gay activist in Democratic Party circles, lambasted the *Blade*'s coverage in a full page advertisement in the *Blade*.<sup>37</sup>

*The Washington Blade* gave the race far greater coverage than the *Washington Post* or other local news sources, portraying the race as essentially between Zais and Evans, though others also ran for the seat. In a period of three months, the newspaper



provided coverage in depth of both candidates' position and background. *The Washington Blade* took the unprecedented (in its history) step of commissioning a poll of voters by Mason-Dixon Opinion Research. Publisher Don Michaels wrote the cover story of poll results<sup>38</sup>. The poll showed "a virtual dead heat for the Council seat."<sup>39</sup>

Senior Editor Lisa Keen's point by point rebuttal<sup>40</sup> of Kuntzler's criticism of *Blade* coverage provided details of the newspaper's coverage of both the Evans and Zais campaign, down to the column inches of coverage. Keen also reiterated the newspaper's longstanding aversion to editorials and endorsements. Critics had longed for an endorsement of Zais, but since the Kolar years *The Washington Blade* had remained steadfast in its aversion to editorial positions. "We strive to be a vehicle by which all sides can get the objectively presented information they need to form their own opinions about things. To do that, it is only common sense that we stay out of the news ourselves, and just report it," she wrote.<sup>41</sup>

Among the major stories of the mid-90s was the death of transgendered woman Tyra Hunter. Critically Injured in a traffic accident at 50<sup>th</sup> & C SE on August 7, 1995, Hunter

was denied treatment by emergency medical technicians following their discovery of male genitals. The death outraged the GLBT community and brought sharp pressure on the Fire Department and the city government both to investigate the incident and to take reform measures.

*The Washington Blade* played a prominent role in the GLBT community's pressure on Fire Chief Latin and the city government by prominently featuring continuing coverage of local investigations of Hunter's treatment and death. The newspaper again offered continuing coverage in depth during the 2002 reaction against the murder of transgendered youths Stephanie Thomas and Ukea Davis.

The second half of the 90s saw new directions for the newspaper. In 1995, weekly issues of *The Washington Blade* began appearing on the Internet at [www.washblade.com](http://www.washblade.com). The online version of the newspaper offered opportunities for additional advertising revenue and

another medium for readers to communicate with writers and editors. Two years later the *Blade* owners partnered with New Communications to create a sister paper in New York City, *The New York Blade*. Michaels admitted "The *New York Blade* was never successful financially." But, he added, "We brought our hard-nosed, hard news approach up there because we felt that's what gay New Yorkers wanted ... We felt it was appreciated by a lot of people in New York."<sup>42</sup>

#### THE WINDOW MEDIA YEARS (2001 - )

The May 25, 2001 issue of *The Washington Blade* startled the area's GLBT community with the announcement that the 32 year old community chronicle had been sold to Window Media, a group of gay publications that included the *Southern Voice* and the *Houston Voice*. Publisher, Don

Michaels, Associate Publisher James Lamont, and Editor Lisa Keen sold *The Washington Blade* and *The New York Blade* to Window



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Media LLC for a reported \$3.6 million.<sup>43</sup> Michaels and Keen retired from *The Washington Blade*. Chris Crain, Executive Editor at Window Media's *Southern Voice*, became Executive Editor of *The Washington Blade*, with Kristina Campbell continuing as Managing Editor.

The news owners' first significant departure from previous practice was revival of the editorial. The first editorial in over two decades appeared in the May 25, 2001 edition. Chris Crain, now editor of both the *Southern Voice* and *The Washington Blade*, explained the new owners' views. By mid-summer the newspaper's editorials, commentary columns and letters to the editor had been combined in a new "Forum" section.

The first challenge to the new owners' authority came a few weeks later, in early June, when *The Washington Blade's* staff sought a vote on unionizing. The staff asked the help of the Washington-Baltimore Newspaper Guild in organizing the vote on union representation after the new owners declined to recognize the Guild as the employees' bargaining representative. William Waybourn, President of Window Media, commented "We simply don't see it as necessary at this stage. We've owned the *Blade* for only two weeks now and we'd like

those who want to form a union to get to know us first."<sup>44</sup>

The Guild petitioned the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) for a union representation election. After weeks of discussion and accusations of intimidation, the newspaper staff voted 10 - 8 against unionization in a July 20, 2001 vote. Window Media weathered the challenge amid charges of intimidation and filing of unfair labor practices charges with the NLRB.<sup>45</sup>

Major changes to the format, content, and leadership of the newspaper came early in the following year. In February 2002, Window Media altered the layout and appearance of the paper, creating a new title banner and deleting a number of longstanding sections of the newspaper, among them *Community Notes* and *Metro Notes*. The disappearance of local news alarmed a number of *Blade* readers and researchers who saw it as further homogenization of the content of all Window Media publications. An initial diminution of column inches devoted to local stories was remedied by creation of a "Local Life" section and the return of local news stories to the beginning of each edition. One of the more popular innovations was creation of multiple and detailed event calendars spaced throughout the publication. Less than a month after

the layout and content changes, Kristina Campbell and Lyn Stoesen, the last editorial staff from the Michaels years, left the paper.

The year saw establishment of identical organization and design templates for all publications owned by Window Media. Common ownership also presented opportunities for economies of scale. Editorials by the executive editor often appeared in simultaneous editions of *Southern Voice*, *The Washington Blade*, and other members of the group. Window Media increasingly used the same national news articles and commentary columns throughout their publications.

In the summer of 2003, Window Media brought homogeneity to the online editions of its publications. The four remaining newspapers in Washington, DC, New York, Houston, and Atlanta followed identical style sheets, organization, and layout online. Variations between the publications appeared primarily in the "Local Life" section and calendars. Color was used to distinguish the sites online with blue the color of *The Washington Blade*, bright red the color of *The New York Blade*, purple the color of the *Houston Voice* and a more muted mauve-like red for *Southern Voice*.

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The owners of Window Media have seemed to be a lightning rod for revelatory, and often hostile, reporting. In 2002, stories appeared repeatedly suggesting that Window Media was in financial trouble.<sup>46</sup> Not surprisingly, a number of the stories were published by the *New York Blade*'s competitor *Gay City News*. Amidst the closing of the group's New Orleans paper and cutback in the frequency of the *New York Blade*, *Gay City News*, and *New York Press* reported that the previous owners of the newspaper had sued Window Media for payment as had investors in Window Media itself.<sup>47</sup> The *Washington City Paper* published accounts of cost-cutting, lay-offs, and content disputes at *The Washington Blade*.<sup>48</sup>

The *Washington Blade* *reflects many of the changes in Washington's Gay community. In October 2004, as the Washington Blade celebrates its 35<sup>th</sup> anniversary, it is still the GLBT community's primary medium for news about the gay community. As a resource for the history of the community, The Washington Blade itself offers a number of interesting topics for further research. Unfortunately, the lack of an easily available index to thirty-five years of issues of The Washington Blade only complicates the researchers' task.*

# Newspaper of Record: 35 Years of *The Washington Blade*

## ***EDITORS of THE BLADE***

1969 to 1973

Nancy Tucker.

Bart Wenger was initially listed as co-editor, but later as distributor of the newspaper.

1973 to 1974

Pat Price, aka Pat Kolar.

1974 to 1978

Joseph Crislip, aka Chris De Forrest.

1978 to 1981

Don Michaels, Managing Editor

1981 to 1984

Steve Martz, Managing Editor; Don Michaels, publisher.

1984 to 1995

Lisa Keen, Managing Editor; Don Michaels, publisher.

1995 to 1999

Mark Sullivan, Managing Editor; Lisa Keen, Senior Editor; Don Michaels, publisher.

1999 to 2001

Kristina Campbell, Managing Editor; Lisa Keen, Senior Editor; Don Michaels, publisher.

2001 to 2002

Chris Crain, Executive Editor; Kristina Campbell, Managing Editor.

2002 to ...

Chris Crain, Executive Editor; Kevin Naff, Managing Editor.

# Newspaper of Record: 35 Years of *The Washington Blade*

## ENDNOTES

<sup>1</sup> *The Gay Blade*, July 1973, page 9.

<sup>2</sup> *The Gay Blade*, October 1983, page 1.

<sup>3</sup> Sean Bug, “Hard News—Former Blade Publisher Don Michaels,” *MetroWeekly*, April 18, 2002.

<sup>4</sup> Chris Crain, “The ‘new’ Blade”, *The Washington Blade*, February 1, 2002, page 30.

<sup>5</sup> David K Johnson, *The Lavender Scare: The Cold War Persecution of Gays and Lesbians in the Federal Government* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004), page 156.

<sup>6</sup> Nancy Tucker, first editor of *The Gay Blade*, remarked in an email messages, September 8, 2004, “One of the chants used then was ‘2-4-6-8, gay is just as good as straight.’” The emphasis was on being the same as everyone else, except for our sexual preference. There was a dress code at these early pickets that began to break down at the July 4<sup>th</sup> picket that happened ‘immediately’ after the Stonewall riots in 1969.”

<sup>7</sup> David K Johnson, *The Lavender Scare: The Cold War Persecution of Gays and Lesbians in the Federal Government* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004), page 194.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, page 207.

<sup>9</sup> *The Insider*, September 1969, page 1, column 2.

<sup>10</sup> *The Insider*, August 1969, page 1, column 2, editor’s note.

<sup>11</sup> With the change to a larger format in 1973, the newspaper parcels became too large for his vehicle, Wenger commented in an oral history, September 25, 2004.

<sup>12</sup> *The Gay Blade*, October 1973, page 1.

<sup>13</sup> Attachment to email message from Nancy Tucker, August 23, 2004.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>15</sup> “I used the DYK Enterprises as a joke (yes, it stood for ‘dyke’).” Nancy Tucker in an email message September 8, 2004.

<sup>16</sup> Attachment to email message from Nancy Tucker, August 23, 2004.

<sup>17</sup> Nancy Tucker in email message dated September 8, 2004. “Since I pretty much had hands off after the turnover, I don’t know what the inside politics were after the new group took over.”

<sup>18</sup> Attachment to email message from Nancy Tucker, August 23, 2004.

<sup>19</sup> Email message from Don Michaels, August 31, 2004.

<sup>20</sup> “Lost and Found Reply to Gay Blade,” *The Gay Blade*, January 1974, page 4.

<sup>21</sup> Sean Bugg, “Hard News—Former Blade Publisher Don Michaels,” *MetroWeekly*, April 18, 2002.

<sup>22</sup> Email message from Don Michaels dated August 29, 2004.

<sup>23</sup> *The Gay Blade*, September 1974, page 1.

<sup>24</sup> Email message from Don Michaels dated August 29, 2004.

<sup>25</sup> “Crisis,” *The Gay Blade*, December 1974, page 1.

<sup>26</sup> Numbered issues did not reappear on the title banner until August 1975 when the notation was “6<sup>th</sup> year Vol. 8”. “Vol.” was corrected to “No.” in the September issue.

<sup>27</sup> Under Don Michael’s leadership, pseudonyms were banned. For a period of nearly five months, from September 1978 until the February 15, 1979 issue,

journalist Lou Chibbaro, Jr. was double listed under both his name and his pseudonym “Lou Romano.” Chibbaro had used the pseudonym to avoid any appearance of a conflict of interest with his day job. As an interviewer on the *Friends Radio* program on WGTB he had also used the pseudonym. The October 1978 issue of *The Blade* carried an article on page 4 by Lou Chibbaro, Jr. and an article on the facing page (5) by Lou Romano.

<sup>28</sup> *The Blade*, March 1976, page 1.

<sup>29</sup> Michaels recalls “... the exact figure was \$317 – before taxes! The paper did pay people for articles. I think Lou and others who did news reporting and/or style type articles got \$10 — \$15 an article at the time. And I used to get \$.50 to \$2 a delivery stop, depending on where it was. There weren’t too many \$2 stops in those days (i.e., VA & MD). But I did get a whopping 15 or 20% commission on ad sales. The bad news as there weren’t many willing advertisers. Be we hung in there.” Email message from Don Michaels August 31, 2004. Michaels was initially hired for a part-time office position.

<sup>30</sup> Michaels became publisher in 1981, a position he held for the next two decades.

<sup>31</sup> By the end of the decade, *The Blade* had advertising sales staff in Washington, D.C., Baltimore, and New York City.

<sup>32</sup> The practice of excluding unwanted customers (on the basis of race, gender, class, or appearance) by demanding multiple forms of identification was known as “carding” and had first been covered by *The Gay Blade* in 1971 when community organizations picketed the newly opened Lost and Found club for carding practices.

<sup>33</sup> The newspaper had moved to 930 F St NW in January 1980 when the 2430 Pennsylvania Avenue building was slated for conversion to an apartment hotel. *The Washington Blade* remained on F St. NW until early 1986. From 1986 to 1992, it was at 924 G St NW. It moved to 1408 U St. NW in 1992.

<sup>34</sup> The first weekly issue appeared September 10, 1982.

<sup>35</sup> “The Blade marks 30 news-filled years,” *The Washington Blade*, October 29, 1999, page 5.

<sup>36</sup> Kelly wrote the first articles reporting CDC investigations in 1981. Chibbaro reported both the medical and political aspects of the emerging disease. Dr. DiGioia first discussed compromised immune systems in a January 22, 1982 article in the health column.

<sup>37</sup> The Blade marks 30 news-filled years,” *The Washington Blade*, October 29, 1999, page 5.

<sup>38</sup> “Open Letter to the Gay Community Regarding Jim Zais’ Defeat,” *The Washington Blade*, May 17, 1991, page 11.

<sup>39</sup> Michaels had known Zais since Michaels’ studies at the University of Buffalo where he had taken a political science course taught by Zais. On moving to Washington, DC in 1976, Michaels was introduced to Lou Chibbaro by Zais, an introduction that led to Michaels taking the position at *The Blade* in 1977. Sean Bugg, “Hard News – Former Blade Publisher Don Michaels,” *MetroWeekly*, April 18, 2002.

<sup>40</sup> Don Michaels, “Poll shows Zais and Evans neck-and-neck,” *The Washington Blade*, April 26, 1991, page 1.

<sup>41</sup> “Placing the blame for Zais’s loss: *The Blade* responds,” *The Washington Blade*, May 17, 1991, page 10.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>43</sup> Sean Bugg, “Hard News – Former Blade Publisher Don Michaels,” *MetroWeekly*, April 18, 2002.

<sup>44</sup> Duncan Osborne, “Creditors Stab at New York Blade,” *Gay City News*, September 13, 2002, page 1.

<sup>45</sup> “*Washington Blade* Employees are Seeking Union Ties,” *GayToday*, June 8, 2001, [www.gaytoday.com](http://www.gaytoday.com).

<sup>46</sup> “Guild Files Unfair Labor Practice Charges Against Blade,” press release, June 6, 2001, the Washington-Baltimore Newspaper Guild. Also, “Washington Blade Employees Vote Against Unionization,” press release, July 24, 2001, the Washington-Baltimore Newspaper Guild.

<sup>47</sup> Duncan Osborne, “Creditors Stab at New York Blade,” *Gay City News*, September 13, 2002. Also, Osborne, “Window Financial Strains Pre-Date *NY Blade* Purchase,” *Gay City News*, September 20, 2002.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.* and Christopher Carbone, “Dull Blade,” *New York Press*, Volume 15 Issue 18.

<sup>49</sup> Brian Montopoli, “Blade Runners,” *Washington City Paper*, April 12, 2002.