

***Gay Community News*—  
The First Gay & Lesbian Weekly  
Newspaper in the United States**

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***Part of a larger research project focused on gay men's  
identities, cultures, and social networks in the  
United States, 1973-1984***

**Overview**

- **The Basics: The First Decade of *Gay Community News* (GCN), 1973-1983**
- **The Real Thing: A Brief Look at One Year of GCN**
- **Characteristics of the Queer Press in the 1970s—GCN and Beyond**
- **Distinguishing Characteristics of GCN**
- **Looking Back: Ironies, Paradoxes, Gratitudes**
- **Situating Myself: GCN 1975-1985, LGBT community organizer, professor, social historian**

## **The Basics:**

## **The First Decade of *GCN* (1973-1983)**

- **GCN emerged out of a fertile, activist community in Boston and its politics and aesthetics were shaped by political movements of the era**
- **Offering gay Bostonians a centralized, weekly calendar of community events provided the initial impetus for GCN**
- **GCN was not the property of a sole individual or controlled by a single publisher; it was owned and managed collectively**
- **GCN's "paid" staff usually received between \$60-\$100 per week; the publication was volunteer-intensive and depended upon community donations**
- **During its initial year of publication, GCN experienced a rapid expansion of geographic focus, from Boston to New England to the Northeast; Eventually attained a national focus.**

- **A typical issue was 16-20 pages of text, graphics, advertisements, photographs, and the calendar of upcoming events.**
- **GCN maintained an overtly Left political editorial stance; this was balanced in part by attracting a range of contributors with diverse political perspectives.**
- **The participants in the day-to-day culture of GCN included a mix of women & men. This was unusual in both the gay press and in gay organizations of the era.**
- **GCN's membership (paid staff, board members, volunteers) was overwhelmingly white, primarily middle-class, yet included important and vocal participation by working-class people.**

# **GCN Content 1973-1983**

- **News**
  - ✓ **Original News Stories (6-15)**
  - ✓ **Brief News Notes (10-16)**
  - ✓ **New England Columns (Random)**
  - ✓ *Did You See?*
- **Features**
  - ✓ **Cultural Focus—Movies, Books, Theatre, Television, Art, Music (3-5)**
  - ✓ **Columnists (1-4)**
  - ✓ **Center Spread (1-2)**
  - ✓ **People, Places, & Flings (1)**
- **Community Forum**
  - ✓ **Letters to the Editor**
  - ✓ **Speaking Out**
  - ✓ **Editorials**
- **Miscellaneous**
  - ✓ **Display Advertisements**
  - ✓ **Classified Advertisements**
  - ✓ **Calendar (Back Page)**
  - ✓ **Masthead**

# **One Year of GCN**

**Volume III. (1975-1976)**

- **June 28, 1975: Marriage & the Military**
- **July 5, 1975: Saxe Brought to Boston**
- **July 12, 1975: Letters to the Editor**
- **August 2, 1975: Quick Gay Guide**
- **October 4, 1975: News Notes**
- **October 11, 1975: Statement of Ownership**
- **November 15, 1975: Frank Talk**
- **November 29, 1975: Contribute to GCN**
- **January 17, 1976: Elaine Noble**
- **February 28, 1976: David B. Goodstein**
- **March 13, 1976: Rhode Island Report**
- **May 15, 1976: Popper Paper**

# **The 70s Gay Press:**

## **GCN & Beyond**

- **What do we mean by the “gay press” of the 1970s?**
  - **Local / national gay news publications (i.e. *The Advocate, San Francisco Sentinel, Gaysweek*)**
  - **Feminist press (i.e. *Off Our Backs, Sister Courage, Sojourner, Equal Times*)**
  - **Local community newspapers (i.e. *East Boston Community News, Allston-Brighton Community News*)**
  - **Progressive news publications (i.e. *The Guardian, In These Times*)**
- **Almost all feminist and gay publications survived on a relatively small base of subscribers (2,500-16,000 copies distributed)**
- **LGBT journalists had to be resourceful in identifying LGBT news; a virtual silence reigned in the mainstream media most of the time.**

- **Significant differences in technology created processes of news gathering, layout, printing, and distribution vastly different than today's.**
- **LGBT organizing of the era primarily focused on local efforts (urban and rural); limited state and national work was taking place.**
- **Cultural work of the period (plays, books, television shows...) rarely included explicit focus on LGBT people or issues**
- **The content of most publications was movement-focused rather than celebrity-focused**
- **Gay publications operated with a clearer sense of external hostile forces than today; All progress on LGBT issues required strategic organizing and activism; Few publications maintained a critical editorial stance on gay organizations**
- **The focus of the gay press was almost entirely on white activists, political issues, and cultural productions; autonomous publishing ventures by LGBT people of color emerged during this period (i.e. Kitchen Table Press, Blacklight).**

# **Distinguishing Features of GCN**

- **First weekly newspaper**
- **Mix of women and men: staff, volunteers, contributors; strong feminist content**
- **Collectively owned and managed**
- **Activist-focused**
- **Explicit links to feminism, anti-war, civil rights, anti-nuke, prisoner rights movements**
- **Challenge to journalistic objectivity**
- **Critical discussions of advertising policies, content, and editorial positions took place during collective meetings, everyday life, and in the pages of the paper**
- **Increasingly strong attention to international LGBT issues**
- **Target of harassment & violence: Bullets, burning, and Brill**

# **Looking Back:**

## **Ironies, Paradoxes, Gratitudes**

- **The Persistence of Key Controversies:**
  - ✓ **Defining the Parameters of Community (Susan Saxe, NAMBLA, Bar Life)**
  - ✓ **Bisexuals and Transgenders**
  - ✓ **Specific Sexual Practices and Cultures**
  - ✓ **Electoral vs. Radical Politics**
  - ✓ **Military & Marriage**
- **Impact of the Closet on the Q Press**
- **Our Trajectories as Q Activists, Journalists, and Individuals**
- **Closeted Mainstream Journalists**
- **Making the World Safe for Gay Republicans?: Who Was *Not* Present**
- **GCN's Long-term Influence on My Life**

**Matthew Perry**

**Annette Gagne**

**Darius Dappletree**

**Dennise Brown**

**Bill Damon**

**Diane Bellavance**

**Steve Blevins**

**Jacqui Mac**

**Xenia Williams**

**Skip Rosenthal**

**Kevin McGirr**

**Tom Myles**

**John Kyper**

**Ian Johnson**

**Bill Shawcross**

**James Fishman**

**John Graves**

**Regina Kahney**

**Nancer Ballard**

**Susan Henderson**

**J.D. Sitler**

**Mike Callen**

**Nancy Williamson**

**Mikhail Itkin**

**Robert Rosenberg**

**Tony Russo**

**Walta Borowski**

**Allen Stewart**

**Charles Bonnell**

**Allison Platt**

**Lisa Schwartz**

**Sheri Barden**

**Don Shewey**

**Margo Schulter**

**Rose Flower**

**Lynn Rosen**

**Thom Willenbacher**

**Janet Cooper**

**Allen Young**

**David Brudnoy**

**Tony Caporaletti**

**A. Nolder Gay**

**Nancy Wechsler**

**Joe Abreu**

**John Mitzel**

**Tommi Avicolti**

**Suzanna Themis**

**Rick Paquette**

**Michael Bronski**

**William Kissinger**

**Joe Leo**

**Manuel Angelo**

**Avid Brill**

**Neil Miller**

**Brian Allen Goodrich**

**John D'Emilio**

**Beacon Tours**

**Chaps**

**Styx**

**Other Voices**

**Ports of Call**

**Sporters**

**Copley Flair**

**The Cuttery**

**Koala Bear**

**The Mailbox**

**Champagne Lnge**

**Club LaGrange**

**Greenleaf Florist**

**Janus Counslng.**

**Salon DeJon**

**NGLTF**

**Owl's Nest**

**Curry Copy Ctr.**

**Together**

**Ahab's**

**Korner Kitchen**

**Peasant Stock**

**1270**

**15 Landsdown St.**

**Art Cinema**

**Mitchell Croppers**

**The House**

**Charles Playhouse**

**Donald Williams Electrolisis**

**North Station Cinema**

**South Station Cinema**

**Flea Market Cyclorama**

**Champagne Lounge**

**The Governor Collins Inn**

**The Charles Playhouse**

**Paperback Booksmith**

**Metropolitan Community Church**

**Gemell's Restaurant**

**Counseling Alternatives of Boston**

**David's of Newport**

**Pallotta Flowers**

**The Other End of the Leash**

**Dennis Paquette Life Insurance**

**Bread & Roses**

**Grolier Book Shop**

**Randolph Country Club**

**The Wonderful Land of Oz**

**The Citadel**

**The Paulist Center**

**The Boatslip**

**Store 24**

**Lester's TV**

**GCN Advertisers**  
**Volume III. (July 1975-June 1976)**

**Select GCN Writers**  
**Volume III. (July 1975-June 1976)**