

Boston Pride attracts 100,000 revelers to city

PHOTO: MARILYN HUMPHRIES



HOLY STUMBLING DRAG QUEENS, BATMAN! Gay and Lesbian Pride celebrations attract a more diverse crowd than any other community event, from drag queens trying to negotiate their first pair of high heels, to bankers and doctors, to men and women in full leather regalia. This year's event even attracted this pair of caped crusaders.

by Susan Ryan-Vollmar

Boston's 25th annual Gay and Lesbian Pride Day Parade drew approximately 100,000 participants from around New England to Copley Square to celebrate the last two-and-one-half decades' worth of pride and progress forged by gays and lesbians.

Festivities kicked off at 10 a.m. with the first-ever Boston Dyke March, which attracted close to 500 participants who plastered themselves with neon orange Dyke March stickers that read: "Fatter than Barbie; Butcher than Ken"; and "Hey Newt, Your Sister's Cute." Women (and a few men) gathered at Ruggles Station in Roxbury for the start of the

history-making march and walked their way en masse through the South End to Copley Square in time to join with the Pride Parade.

Organized by an "ad hoc" group of lesbians, who began meeting two months ago, according to Dyke March organizer Miriam Messinger, the Dyke March was meant to give women a place to "feel out and proud" about themselves as well as a way to focus more on the political aspects of Pride.

"We've been celebrating Pride for 25 years as a political event," Messinger said. "But the general gay pride person is trying to depoliticize the event. With the Dyke March we wanted to make the connection with other people who are targeted."

Vi Davis, who marched with

Girlfriends, a group for lesbian and bisexual women of color, said she wouldn't have attended Pride without the Dyke March. "A lot of times I don't feel a part of the community," she said. "But I'm here today because I am a lesbian, I'm a dyke and I think it's important."

Karen Roberts, who joined the Dyke March with two of her friends, was less concerned with politics than she was with having fun. "There's nothing like being part of a large group of lesbians," she said. "I just fall in love with every single woman."

The Pride Parade—which kicked off from Copley Square at noon and wound its way

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100,000 march in Pride

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through the South End, around the Public Gardens and down Embankment Road to Lederman Field behind the Hatch Shell on the Esplanade—included large contingents of marchers from Nynex and the Bank of Boston; a city block's worth of lesbian mommies and gay daddies pushing strollers loaded with diapers, animal crackers, bottles and babies; high school groups from around New England; a gigantic pair of cowboy boots on wheels from two-steppin' gays; and a "Priscilla, Queen of the Desert"-inspired high heel accompanied by the booming notes of Abba.

Michael Burns, a Bank of Boston employee who usually spends Pride Day as a bystander rather than a participant, joined in this year when he learned that the Bank of Boston president would be marching with gay and lesbian employees. "Our company, for the first time, provided support. They gave us our tee-shirts and paid for our banner," he said. "I just thought if they could show that kind of

support, I could walk with them."

Kate Elliott, a student at Bridgewater State College, celebrated her first Pride March Saturday. "It was awesome, it was great," she said as she finished up the march on the Esplanade. "I'm losing my voice from shouting and I'm dizzy from blowing my whistle so much."

Elliott marched with fellow student Bob Lake, who also marched in Pride for the first time this year. "When I was in high school, the whole thing was that I was so alone," he said. "To be out with all these people, it's awesome."

Pride organizers estimated that 130,000 people attended Saturday's parade, while the Boston Police Department pegged the number of participants at 70,000.

Michael Macchio, media coordinator for the Pride Committee, said he was very happy with Saturday's march. "It went very, very well," he said, adding that he was glad the route ended on the Esplanade. "It's a good thing we had a larger field because we never would have fit anywhere else." ▼

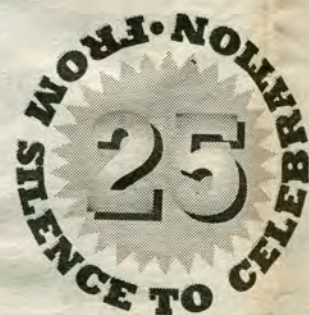


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Clockwise from top right: Two unidentified women enjoy the 25th Annual Boston Pride March — and one another. • **Lesbian mommies and gay male daddies** are becoming ever more abundant at Pride celebrations. • Also on the increase are Pride parade contingents from area companies, like this one from **Bank of Boston** — including the bank's president. • **Tony Hernandez and Gary Sullivan** enjoy the parade. • Marking a first for Boston, 500 lesbians and their supporters staged a pre-parade **Dyke March** of their own before joining up with the main parade.



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