

Bay Windows

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NEWSPAPER ROOM

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new leaders, with no
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Women take to the streets for their own march

Numbers are halved from last year as 400 attend the 1997 Dyke March

by Loren King
Bay Windows staff

The 400 women who descended on Copley Square June 14 for the third Dyke March were a boisterous bunch: chanting, drumming, waving signs, their clothes emblazoned with stickers that blended political statements with rebellious humor: "I was a teenage lesbian," "Lesbian recruiting officer," "My child was lesbian of the month at St. Mary's Prep School."

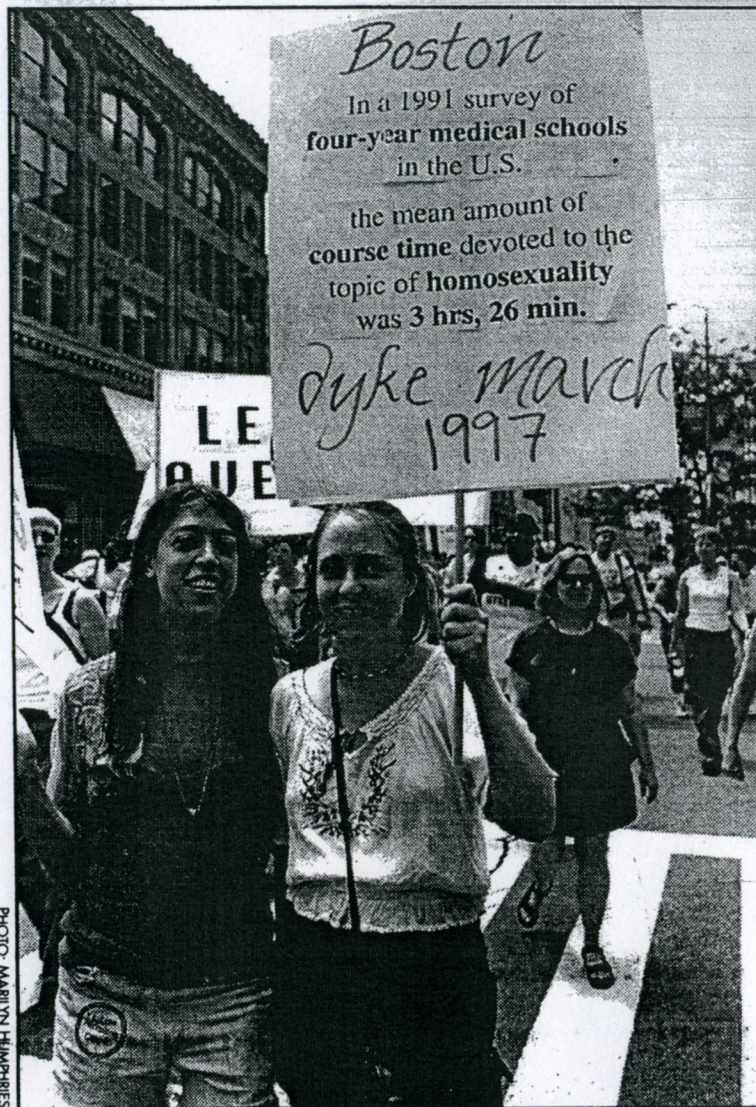
Organizers said at the outset that they expected a smaller turnout than the 800 women who participated in the 1996 march. That's because for the first time, the Dyke March took place on a separate date from the annual Boston Gay Pride March (the Dyke March remained on the second Saturday in June, the date normally reserved for Pride. But

this year, Pride was moved to June 7). For the past two years, the Dyke March took place in the morning before merging with the larger Pride parade. The event drew 500 women its first year, 1995, and 800 women last year.

Whether they sported shaved heads and nose rings or gray hair and baseball caps, many women at this year's Dyke March said that although they had attended Pride, they liked the notion of a separate event that highlighted political activism.

"The energy here is different," said Jing Marcos, 22, of Cambridge who attended last week's Pride festivities as well as the Dyke March for the past three years. "It may be a matter of semantics, but it is different."

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Julie Falis, left, and April Horton were amongst the 400 lesbians and their supporters who marched in the streets of Boston June 14 for the third annual Dyke March.

A year later, still no closure in Mass. killings

The wheels of justice turn slowly for men arrested in three 1996 murders

by Fred Kuhr
Bay Windows staff

The weekend of June 14-16, 1996, was a particularly violent one for eastern Massachusetts' gay and lesbian community.

In the early morning hours of Father's Day last year, two gay men were gunned down in a residential area of Boston's heavily gay South End neighborhood.

Two days earlier, a gay man was murdered in Taunton because of an alleged sexual advance on the man arrested in the killing.

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Dyke March draws 400 June 14

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"Pride just feels too mainstream. It doesn't feel like a rally or a voice for women," said Amy Smith of Jamaica Plain. "I got tired of seeing so many corporations like banks in the parade."

Her friend Michele Mizejewski, also of Jamaica Plain, said "something is missing" from Pride. "There's not really a place for political lesbians in the parade. The energy here is so different."

Beth Hastie, 27, of Jamaica Plain helped create the Dyke March in Boston three years ago, modeling the idea on Dyke Marches in New York City and Washington, D.C., she said. Hastie said the theme of this year's event, "Lesbians demand health care access for all," grew out of a desire to make the march have some political relevance. For her, health care access is a personal issue, she said.

"Living with HIV makes me see health care issues in a different way," Hastie said, citing problems with access to protease inhibitors and the lack of health insurance for many. "I just went to a national conference on women and HIV. There has been little testing done on women and protease inhibitors; women's specific conditions haven't been studied."

The health care message was carried on dozens of signs. Nicole W. Fyvie of the Lesbian AIDS Project of Massachusetts (LAPM) handed out flyers with statistics on them about women's risk for HIV transmission and other information. "We are here to show our support and to demand better health care access for lesbians and all women," said Fyvie. "Women with HIV are diagnosed later, so they start getting treatment later which means they die sooner."

After congregating in Copley Square where they distributed signs and flyers, the marchers began their trek down Boylston Street at 12:30, led by an escort from the Boston Police Department. Sgt. Norman Hill, the police department's liaison to the gay and lesbian

community, was part of the escort. Hill also estimated the crowd at about 400 and said there were no incidents or problems during the march.

Eight members of Moving Violations, the female motorcycle-riding group, led the marchers, followed by several women carrying a huge red "Dyke March" banner. Another banner declared, "Dykes Rule." There were contingents from the Lesbian Avengers, the Cambridge Women's Center, LAPM, the National Organization for Women and the Batucada Belles drumming group. The ebullient crowd hoisted signs with slogans like "Health care is a right not a privilege," and "Celebrate! Demonstrate! Pride is Political!" that emphasized the grassroots activist nature of the march.

Susan Trotz, another of the march organizers, said of the decision to hold the Dyke March on a date separate from Pride: "We wanted a day when the visibility of lesbians was not superseded by the corporate visibility of Pride...Pride is great for celebrating, for coming out. But hundreds of thousands of people come to Pride and make no demands. We need to develop some strategy."

Linda Schworm, who said she hails from suburban Boston, said she likes attending both the Dyke March and the Pride celebration. "Pride is more of a party. This has a political focus. It's more in-your-face and we don't want to lose that," she said.

As the women marched along Boylston Street, onto Charles Street and up Beacon Street toward the State House, many onlookers waved or watched while others aimed their video cameras on the marchers. Turning onto Park Street, past the dozens of tourists milling on the Common, the crowd made its way toward City Hall Plaza. There, the Batucada Belles played while the Lesbian Avengers put on a fire-eating display. Many of the participants formed a circle and engaged in a "speak out" relating their own



PHOTO: MARTIN HUMPHRIES

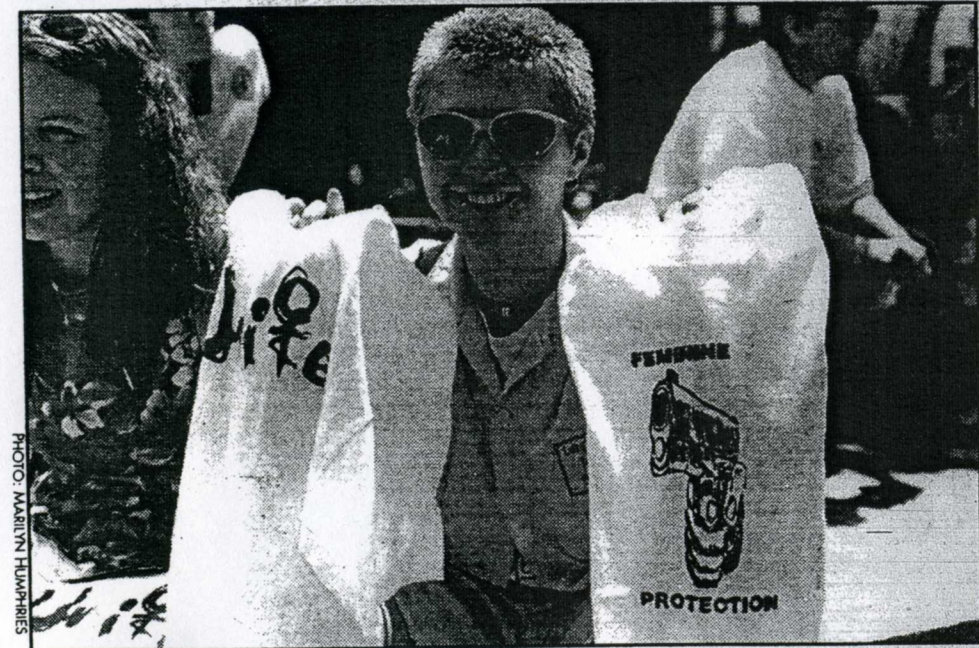


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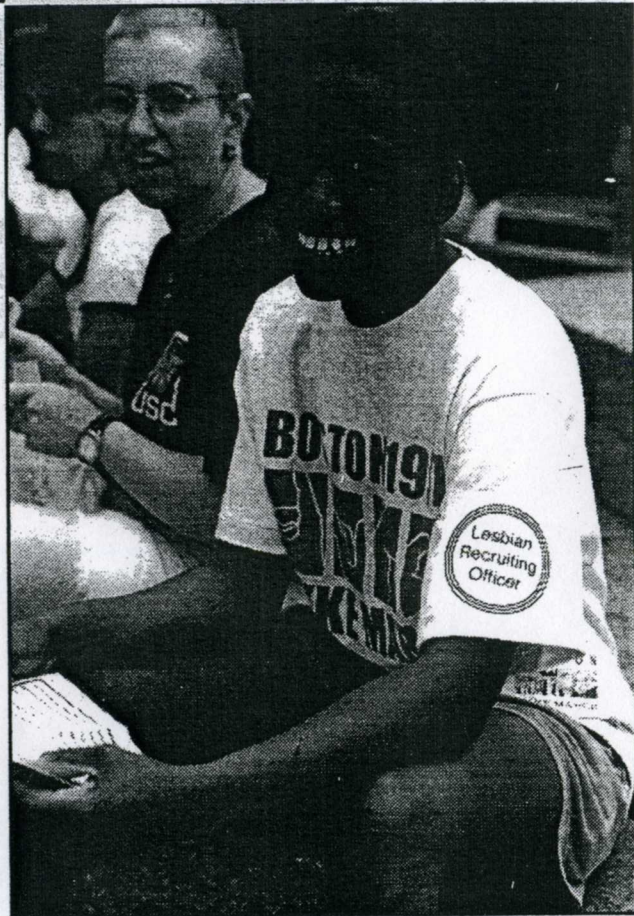
experiences around health care issues.

Despite the political nature of the event, there were many who came for the camaraderie. Debbie McKenzie, 35, who wore a "Queer Mom" sticker on her shirt, said she was attending her first Dyke March. "This is like a celebration of women separate from the main

Pride march," she said. "Sometimes women's concerns get lost or they are not taken seriously." McKenzie added that she "wasn't sure what to expect" at the Dyke March and that it was "hard to come to it alone."

"But now I'm not feeling alone and that's good," she said. ▼

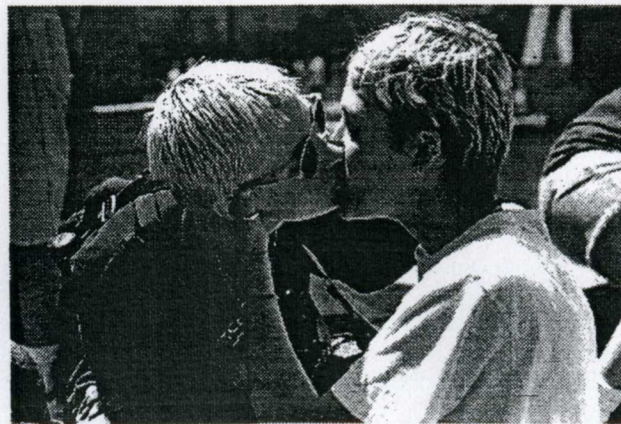
Dyke March 1997



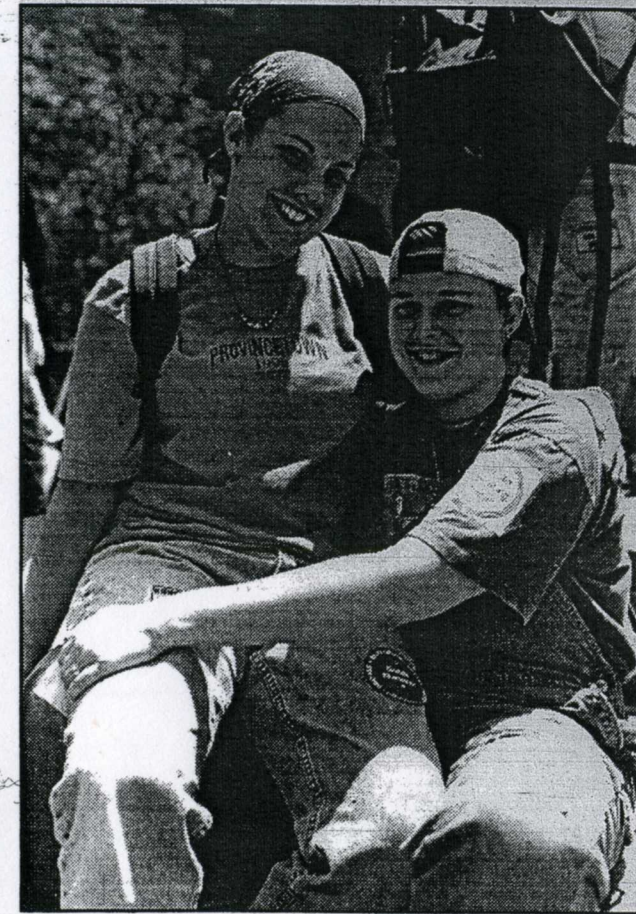
Debbie McKenzie of the Cambridge Women's Center, sporting a shirt sleeve identifying her as an official "lesbian recruiting officer."

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Melissa Burt and Tamara Gooding



Emily Hastings and Brittany Pangborn

(All photos by Marilyn Humphries)