

# Lewd acts decried in gay march

By Don Aucoin  
and Geeta Anand  
GLOBE STAFF

Mayor Thomas M. Menino and several members of the gay community yesterday denounced the nudity and sexually suggestive actions of several participants in the Gay Pride Parade last Saturday.

Declaring that "I will not tolerate it," Menino warned that anyone making such displays in future marches will be arrested.

But City Council President James M. Kelly demanded to know why arrests were not made Saturday.

Some witnesses cited displays such as a man who walked on stilts while naked and two topless women who fondled each other while on a bed.

Sabrina Taylor, a principal organizer of the parade, said those who caused the controversy had not registered to march and did not represent the spirit of the event. Taylor vowed to help police track the offenders down, calling them "the Rosie Ruizes of the Pride Parade," a reference to the runner who committed a hoax in the 1980 Boston Marathon by jumping into the race near its end and crossing the finish line first.

The 19th annual Gay Pride Parade, which wound through the



# Lewd acts in gay march decried

## ■ MARCH

Continued from Page 1

streets of the Back Bay and the South End, drew a crowd that police estimated at more than 100,000, the largest ever for the event.

Although Menino said he didn't believe anyone could be prosecuted for lewd behavior at the weekend parade, Lt. Robert O'Toole, a spokesman for the Boston Police Department, said that if identified, offenders could face a charge of open and gross conduct.

Kelly said the City Council will hold a hearing on the issue, and councilors will ask the Boston Police Department whether officers providing security at the march "observed said conduct, and if so, who determined that the law against nudity and open and lewd conduct ... not be enforced."

Asked why police had made no arrests at the parade, O'Toole said he did not know whether the officers saw the displays. Even if they had, officers would have had to make "judgment calls," O'Toole said, on whether to make arrests.

O'Toole likened it to an officer witnessing someone smoking marijuana at a rock concert and weighing the seriousness of the offense against the possibility of causing a "near riot" by plunging into the crowd to make arrests.

"What you've got is a nonviolent crime being committed in front of you," he said. "In situations such as that, there isn't a hard-and-fast 'lock 'em up' rule."

The episodes at the Gay Pride Parade were brought to public attention yesterday in a column in the Boston Herald by Joe Fitzgerald, in which he criticized both Boston newspapers for failing to report questionable conduct at the parade.

The renegade marchers met with hostility from some in the crowd, according to one person who marched.

The suggestive displays were denounced by numerous members of the gay community, who lamented that it could set back gay rights ef-

forts.

"It definitely sends the wrong message to have that sort of thing going on in public, in a parade," said Mark Goshko, a Boston attorney and gay political activist. "These people ruin the positive aspects of the march for everybody else. And this is not a time to be creating negative public perceptions."

Arline Isaacson, cochairwoman of the Massachusetts Gay and Lesbian Political Caucus, said: "Ninety-five percent of the marchers were very traditional, very average, some might even say boring."

"This year there was a very large contingent of parents and an emphasis on families," said Isaacson, who marched in the parade with her infant daughter. "It's distressing to think that greater attention is being given to the exception, the minority, than to the majority of the marchers."

Menino, who marched in the front of the parade but said he did not see the episodes that others complained about, declared himself "very concerned about what happened."

"There's 100,000 people there, and the actions of a small few are ruining the whole thing," he said. "There's little children and families out there. I will not tolerate it. It really ticks me off."

Taylor, cochairwoman of The Pride Committee, which organized the march, called the episodes "a really big disappointment."

"There are so many issues this community has to deal with - same-gender marriage, adoptions - but displays like this take away from everything and really set us back," she said.

That was the view of many members of the gay community who denounced the displays as counterproductive tactics that harked back to an era when shock tactics were part of the gay rights movement. Nude or semi-nude displays have occurred at previous Gay Pride Parades, but have been greatly toned down in re-

cent years under pressure from the gay community, according to O'Toole.

"I would hope most people would see this isolated incident for what it is: a throwback to an old way of thinking," said Abner Mason, a construction manager at the Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority and a gay activist. "It doesn't represent the behavior or thoughts of the vast majority of gay people, who believe that type of extreme, extreme behavior is unhelpful, dumb and silly."

Members of The Pride Committee are scheduled to meet tonight with representatives of the mayor's office and the Police Department to discuss guidelines for next year's march.

Kelly said during an interview yesterday that "all I want is to establish reasonable standards of dress and behavior."

"I am not opposed to the Gay Pride Parade," he said. "I just don't think people should be hugging and kissing as they lie naked on a mattress."

