

"If a man does not keep pace with his companions, perhaps it is because he hears a different drummer. Let him step to the music which he hears, however measured or far away."

Henry David Thoreau



GETTING OFF

Drummer, along with the San Francisco leather community, was saddened to hear of the death of Hank Diethelm, owner of The Brig, both long time institutions on Folsom Row. Even more shocking were the details of his death: strangulation, blows to the head, body handcuffed to a dentist's chair in his basement, five separate fires set throughout his house. An eye witness happened along to report seeing the suspect loading up Hank's car and driving off.

The police have arrested the suspect, impounding the car and the loot, according to newspaper reports—which themselves kept the SM aspects of the case down to a roar. We still don't know all the details. Whether games went too far and the surviving player panicked, or whether Hank was chosen to be done in, we can't say. But we can't think of a more unlikely victim. What we do know is that Hank is gone and will be deeply missed.

Along with leather and The Brig, Hank loved his home, opera, the theatre, and was a collector of antiques and silver. He quietly and generously supported many causes in the community, including sending three men to Chicago each year for the Mr. International Leather Contest. He made his money in the leather community and he returned much of it in many different ways.

I like to remember that whenever Hank would call on another bar in the area, he would personally pick up all the beer bottles on the street along the way and leave the returnable empties with the bar he was visiting, both to keep neighborhood pressure down and not to arrive empty-handed.

Hank Diethelm was a good and decent man, his bar has always been well-run and gives every indication of continuing as a memorial to the man who made it the epitome of leather bars in San Francisco. His quiet and generous leadership on Folsom Row will be remembered for a long time to come.

A well-planned and moving wake was held Sunday, April 17 at The Brig. His friends came from all around to drink a toast to Hank and what he stood for. The San Francisco Board of Supervisors sent a proclamation stating that they had adjourned early out of respect for him. The floral arrangements brightened the dark barroom, the music was dynamic but classical and the mood subdued but friendly.

Just the way Hank would have liked it.

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Cover: Who will fill the Mr. Drummer chair? Photo of Rene by Jim Moss. Opposite page: Paul Manenti, winner of the 1983 Mr. Northern California Drummer Contest, and on his way to the June finals. Photo by Jim Wigler.

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VOLUME 7/NUMBER 63/APRIL 1983