



Society of Janus: 25 Years

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Foreword

This document chronicles the history of the Society of Janus from its founding in 1974 to the present, and describes its major contributors. It is based on numerous hours of interviews with past and present Janus members, and some material from existing sources. It is split up into three main sections, the 1970s, the 1980s, and the 1990s. The names listed here are for the most part first name only, to protect those individuals who wish to remain private about their SM lifestyle. Remember when reading this document that the views expressed here are some people's perspectives of the events that transpired. Certain quotes or views may not reflect everyone's thoughts of how these events actually took place.

The 1970s

This section consists largely of the viewpoints of a few of the people who were active in Janus during this time. While their recollections may differ in spots, it gives the reader an idea of what the SM "community" in San Francisco was like in those "early days."

BackDrop - The Only Game in Town

In the early 1970s, the only SM "group" in the San Francisco Bay Area was the Backdrop Club. This group catered largely to men and it was a for-profit group. Most of the women in BackDrop at the time were professional Dommies or submissives. Many people with an interest in SM, including Kaye Buckley (an early Janus member and currently a pro Domme in San Francisco) first came there to meet like-minded people. Kaye, who in those days was in a triad relationship with Amber Rae and Jay M remembers those days:

"Our introduction to other SM people was through Backdrop, a club then located in Hayward. As I began to evolve as a player, I started working at Backdrop professionally, first as a bottom, then as a switch. That is how the persona of "Kaye Buckley" came into being. Socially, the three of us were bothered by the het atmosphere, and etiquette (or lack) of the men assuming that if I was a bottom, it automatically meant that I was their bottom, and approaching me as such ..."

"However, to give credit where credit is due. I attribute the first year or so of working at Backdrop and participating in the social activities and events as being the kindergarten of our learning about SM safety, technique, and group dynamics. Robin Roberts (in my opinion) was very good at fantasy play. But it was clear that we needed to get to the next level."

While BackDrop did fill a "need" of some sort, it was clear that some "other" kind of SM group was needed in San Francisco.

The early days

In 1971, Cynthia Slater and her partner Larry Olsen moved to San Francisco from Long Island, New York. Cynthia apparently had long had an interest in SM. Not long after she first moved out here she started doing session work as a professional Dominatrix out of her and Larry's apartment in San Francisco. Although in those days, she didn't refer to herself as being into SM.

Instead she said she was into doing massage. After doing this for a year or two, Cynthia then began to see the need for starting a SM group in San Francisco, one that would stress education and safety about SM. It would also include basic SM information, i.e. "how to play safely, etc."

In 1973, Cynthia and Larry formed what would turn out to be a short-lived group, one that was a precursor to Janus. Amber and Jay M recall that a couple named John and Alice also helped form this early group, a claim that Larry denies. Larry ran ads in the old underground newspaper, *The Berkeley Barb*, advertising meetings about SM discussions. This group lasted a few months, with meetings in Cynthia and Larry's apartment attended mostly by heterosexual couples.

According to Dr. Charles Moser, there is another story about how that first "group" that Cynthia ran got started: "Apparently Cynthia and Larry had dinner with Robin Roberts of Backdrop, and it ended in an argument. Since Backdrop was the only SM organization at that time, Cynthia had to form her own. There was also hassles with TES. They had a lot of rules about pro-Dommes, and therefore did not support Janus in the beginning (due to Cynthia's involvement)."

Cynthia and Larry shared the work of organizing the meetings, trying to draw people out to talk about SM but they burned out on it after a few months. Jay M offers his view of the early days:

"In 1972, Amber and I answered a *Barb* ad by John and Alice which turned out to be SM. She appeared to be acting the dom role in his fantasy, but he was thoroughly into SM as a masochist. He did a good pitch for SM, even explaining, as well as you can in words, about going down as into deeper and deeper water. Had either of them been more of a turn-on and he less pushy, we might have worked something out."

"I mention John and Alice because in 1975 when Cynthia talked about Janus starting as two couples; Larry and herself plus Alice and John, it made perfect sense; sort of a spin-off of the Sexual Freedom League and a try for an SM scene a little like Robin Robert's Backdrop over in Hayward at the time. I agree that Larry deserves his credit for organizing, and by the same token, John and Alice need a mention for their input for SM, even if they were not of much help in organizing."

"In thinking back, early Janus seems to divide naturally into two periods; (1) the original het couple's vanilla time on Taraval St. which died a natural death from lack of enough life to start with and (2) the gay men and Cynthia's heavy SM education group that took off after she moved to Walter St., setting up shop on her own as "The Mistress." Jim Kane becomes the power factor here since he was renting her the flat. When we came in after the middle of 1975 it was almost all gay and going strong."

In 1974, Cynthia got involved with a switchboard called San Francisco Sex Information (SFSI) that offered free non-judgmental sex information over the phone. The switchboard concept intrigued her. She sent a letter to SFSI offering to give sex-positive SM lectures and training to volunteers doing the SFSI training, and as a result became involved with SFSI. She managed to bring several speakers on SM to the training. SFSI got volunteers who were active in various communities. Among SFSI's early volunteers were David Luria (a man who was a counselor, did some SM photography and also started the Bisexual Center in San Francisco), Cynthia, Dossie Easton (an early Janus member), and Pat Califia, who later would play a major role in the San Francisco women's SM community.

The First Reorganization

Several months later in mid 1974, Cynthia announced she was folding this first "group" unless she got some help. Guy Baldwin, a long-time member of the SM scene, convinced her she could get help from the gay male community. These gay men were heavily into the SM scene and wanted to help organize an educational group, one that was very heavy on safety issues. Cynthia was bisexual and liked gay men. In fact gay men would wind up being her usual play partners of choice.

Guy recalls what happened next: "At that meeting, which has since come to be called the Reorganization Meeting, she spoke, asked for help, said she would fold the org if she didn't get it, and we offered to take on some of the burden; she was skeptical of us, but agreed to watch to see if we were serious ... she couldn't believe that the organization would mean as much to others as it had come to mean to her, but we didn't let her down."

Amber Rae, an early Janus member and who had first met Cynthia and Larry at a 1971 New years Eve Sexual Freedom League party recalls those days: "This was the group that was Janus, and Cynthia required that members be into SM AND that they be sex positive! And the men who were members at that time were into SM and sexual and proud of it. It's not that they made an issue of it, you could just tell by their bearing and behavior. Refreshing!"

Larry and Cynthia settled on the name *Janus* for several reasons Cynthia recalls in a 1983 Growing Pains interview: "My partner and I were heavily into mythology, and we wanted to have a mythological-based name. And *Janus* seemed to be the perfect choice."

"There were three basic reasons why we choose Janus. First of all, Janus has two faces, which we interpreted as the duality of SM (one's dominant and submissive sides). Second, he's the Roman god of portals, and more importantly, of beginnings and endings. To us, it represents the beginning of one's acceptance of self, the beginning of freedom of guilt, and the eventual ending of self-loathing and fear over one's SM desires. And third, Janus is the Roman god of war--the war we commonly fight against stereotypes commonly held against us."

At this time, Janus meetings were held at Cynthia and Larry's place, which by now was a rented house. In fact, Guy recalls that Cynthia "took him in" in December, 1975 and helped him recover from a bout with hepatitis in that house. Usually Cynthia was the only woman present at the meetings, along with several gay men and occasionally a straight male. Even in the early days, Janus had very strict rules about confidentiality and it was run as a very ethical, above-board group. The first official Janus program that was held was a social at their apartment on Aug. 23, 1974. The people attending that first 'social' were Cynthia and a group of men, most of whom were gay males. Janus was at that point an "underground" group and Guy remembers being startled by how fearful the straight men attending that meeting were about the cops coming in and "busting" them for holding a SM meeting. Guy recalls that the gay men there had been attending SM events for years by 1974, so the meeting was 'no big deal' to them. and said so. He also mentioned that the local police had known for years about gay male SM events that took place in SF and as far as they could tell the police weren't upset by any of it. Guy recalls the early days:

"Prior to the re-organization, mostly those who showed up were middle class het folks with almost no experience of any kind; they were very scared, talked almost not at all; made no contribution to the conversations (Cynthia just talked on and on

mostly as she tried to draw out people). Following the re-org days, there were lots of gay men who started to show up and a few lesbians. It was I who introduced the talent pool of gay players into Janus, and I got my buddies to show up and let the het folks see what it was like to be in a room of real players with real experiences. This emboldened the het folks to begin to talk about their fantasies and what little experience they did have and to begin to attend some of the technique meetings. They were like kids in a candy store for the first time. It was so much fun to introduce those people to 'real' play and other perverts who were plenty willing to talk openly about this stuff."

Larry has a slightly different version of how Janus first came into being. As he recalls, "The truth is this: The original idea was mine. We had been doing so many off-the-wall things, so I decided that we might as well put ourselves out there, up front and honest. I had been in every movement, black rights (before I met Cindy), gay rights, sexual freedom, you name it, but I had never seen as closeted a culture as the SM community. We were already public, so we decided "Why not?" ... There was no group before that. Before that Cindy was "working" as a dominatrix while she was my bottom. We lived with a large number of cats on Oak Street, across from the Panhandle and right next to the Good Earth Commune: 1921 Oak, as I recall. The founders were Cindy and me. There was absolutely nobody else involved in running Janus up until Cindy and went our separate ways. Our first meetings were held at our flat on Taraval (3419 Taraval, as I recall)."

Among the early contributors to Janus included Jim Kane, who besides being Cynthia's landlord, would always give a message spelling out safety precautions at every meeting in the early years, no matter who the presenter. Other contributors included Jim's slave Ike Barnes, Bobby Smith (the elder), Tom B. Smith, Skip Navarette, and John Pfliederer (with whom Cynthia played; there are slides at the San Francisco Gay Lesbian Historical Society Archives of their scenes together). John was a bisexual pro Dom who mostly played with gay men. Others deserving mention include Gene Webber, Murray Eddleman, Ron Johnson, and Don Miesen (who over the ensuing years would contribute a lot of his time and energy to Janus). All of these men gave programs for Janus in the early days. Kaye has this to say about the early days:

"Getting involved in Janus, and learning from gay men and women, opened up a whole different level of energy exchange for all of us. No longer were we caught up either as individuals or in our Triad in the rigidly stereotypical roles that het men and women seemed to insist upon. There was a new freedom in the ways we related to each other within a group context and how people related to us. The gay men brought imagination, turn on and sensitivity into their play which had been lacking with most of the het players. Instead of the top approaching the bottom for a play scene, the protocol was for the bottom to approach the top and ask for a scene. That took a lot more guts on my part as a bottom, raised my level of self-esteem and made the interaction more open and honest."

Programs apparently varied widely in those early days. Before the reorganization happened, the programs tended to be very introductory; much along the lines of an orientation group for newcomers or novices. After the reorganization happened and the talent pool grew (thanks to Guy), Janus began having specific topics around techniques, both physical and emotional. Topics in those days included dungeon tours, enemas, uniforms, role-play scenes, negotiation, dungeon safety, whipping/flogging technique, and basic rope bondage. In the words again of Guy: "We

didn't have anything for advanced players till maybe '76 - i.e. no breath control, advance bondage, fire play, cutting or long-term sensory deprivation or blood sports)."

However Jay M recalls the first meeting that he, Amber and Kaye went to in 1975 as not being introductory but being somewhat advanced. As he recalls, it was an early if not the first "Ask the Doctor" program:

"Doctor Earl stood up to present. He was a tall well-built man, so comfortable, both as an MD and SM top, there was no possible question who was running that scene. I still remember his opener, "As a doctor I have to tell you the things we're going to talk about are contra indicated. But since we're going to do em anyway -- let's see how to do it safely."

"This was no orientation meeting. The requirement for admission was to be already committed to sex and SM. The exhibit of the evening was a full sized x-ray of a guy's ass with three billiard balls stuck up it. Impressive! Everything came out all right because a nurse remembered some old o.b. forceps, but Earl had made his point. Don't put any thing up that you can't keep a hold on to pull out. It goes in easier than it comes back out. The presentation included the structure and shape of the colon, how to hold your hand, bend your wrist and other nitty-gritty's, and much much more."

Larry offers his opinion of those early days and tends to agree with Guy about the program topics:

"Cynthia and I held loosely organized (actually totally non-organized) meetings at our home during that time. We were in the process of feeling it all out and seeing in what directions Janus was going to go. It never entered our minds that it would amount to much more than a few people getting together to just share our experiences and ideas about the SM scene. At that time Janus was, more than anything, a group of people who were coming together so that each person would not feel alone and weird."

"The primary function immediately became one of offering a safe place where people could meet other people of the same mind, fears, and feelings of isolation. It was a place where there were other people who were like yourself, proof that you were not alone and that others of the same proclivities were nice, normal people, and so were you. We made sure that our meetings were no more than a number of people hanging out in the same way other people got together and hung out. Things had to be loose, and we had to make these meetings totally un-threatening. Basically, someone coming to their first meeting discovered that we were like everyone else. We sat around and rapped, we had coffee and snacks, we talked about anything that came up. We were a group of plain ordinary people who just happened to be SM oriented."

Jay M as previously mentioned and Noni Howard (who was among those present at the reorganization meeting where Janus was first "formed") both recall almost exclusively gay males attending the early Janus programs. Noni recalls that between 1974 and 1978, that she and Cynthia (and Kaye, Amber, Dossie, and later Gayle Rubin and Pat Califia) were probably the only women that attended Janus programs and that Janus really didn't get "totally organized" until around 1978.

In February of 1976, Cynthia and Larry broke up. It apparently was an especially bad breakup, because after it happened, Cynthia referred to herself as being the founder of Janus, never again mentioning Larry's name. She also apparently never again mentioned John and Alice as helping form Janus.

In June 1975, Janus first started having regular officer business meetings. The first officers were Cynthia, Dossie Easton, Jeff Novalew, and Richard Brower. Since official records of business meetings were not kept until the early 1980s, it is virtually impossible to know what that meeting or other early business meetings were like.

Dossie stayed in the organization until 1979. She was the one that first suggested Janus have officers, in 1975 or so. She became Cynthia's lover after Cynthia broke up with Larry and they remained lovers for nine months. After they broke up, Dossie described her relationship with Cynthia as being "sometimes friendly, sometimes sexual, sometimes hostile." As Dossie recalls, Cynthia could be the type of person that, if you broke up with her, as Dossie put it, "you ceased being part of her circle." Dossie also recalls being Cynthia's companion to parties at the legendary Catacombs in the late 1970s. Cynthia usually took a woman along with her to these parties, so that she wouldn't be the only women attending them, as they were normally all men at the parties. In 1979, Dossie moved to Santa Cruz and stayed out of touch with what was happening with Janus for many years.

Larry did put out the first newsletter called Growing Pains back in June, 1975. He recalls: We (Cynthia and him) published "Growing Pains" from the apartment. It was typeset by hand and at a friend's typesetting business (Terrific Graphics was the company). This was after I had a short spell of publishing an SM "magazine" called "The Slave Mart". That didn't last very long."

While there were a couple issues of Growing Pains, it only lasted a couple months and wouldn't be revived until 1978 or 1979 when Mark I. Chester "resurrected" it.

The Benevolent Autocrat

During this time period (mid to late 1970s), there was a bisexual male in San Francisco who went by the moniker The Benevolent Autocrat. Don Miesen, who became a Janus member in the late 1970s would dedicate his essay on SM called *What is Sadoomasochism?* to him and considered the Benevolent Autocrat his mentor.

While he never apparently became a Janus member, he spoke highly of the group and knew Cynthia and Larry. In some ways, the Benevolent Autocrat was a SM pioneer. In lectures he gave at Stanford University and other colleges in the mid 1970s, he spoke about SM as matter of factly as you and I might discuss sports or cooking.

These lectures were done at a time when SM was still very taboo. The Benevolent Autocrat by his own admission had been doing SM since the late 1940s. He ran ads looking for SM partners in the *Berkeley Barb* (the sex advertising section of the *Barb* became *The Spectator* in 1978) and did this from the late 1960s through the late 1970s. The ad he ran went something like this:

Slave wanted: Live-in possible in downtown San Francisco with Benevolent Autocrat, (age, weight, height), Telephone 656-2537 anytime.

The calls he got in response to his ad were probably around 80% men. He would respond by asking their age, height and weight, how long they "had made this scene," and so forth. The

Benevolent Autocrat had made several livings by the mid 1970s. Starting out in the hotel business, he became an insurance salesman, and later ran an advertising agency. He also had several interests other than SM including church organ music and movies.

He also had started and been involved with the Sexual Freedom League in the 1970's. He preferred calling himself "ambisexual" instead of "bisexual." While most of his "slaves" were men, he did occasionally have female slaves and even trained a few women to become female Dominants. Sadly, little else is known about this man. While his contributions to Janus were none or minimal, he deserves a footnote in this history as being a true SM pioneer.

The Second Reorganization

In 1976 (though according to Jay M, this happened much sooner), Cynthia was again getting burned out with running Janus. Even though a few others supposedly were helping with running Janus, they eventually grew tired of doing the work, and it fell back to Cynthia. She again grew tired of doing everything. Janus went into a form of limbo for a few months. Cynthia recalls this in a 1983 *Growing Pains* interview: "Janus was in limbo for something like six to eight months, and then I started getting calls from people who wanted to have Janus back ... So we set up a planning meeting, and I think twenty people showed up. We decided to adopt a membership format this time, wrote up a brochure and set the date of our first meeting."

Cynthia still was responsible for most officer positions, including Coordinator, Recording Secretary, Treasurer, and Program Coordinator among others and in the winter of 1976-77, gave 30 days notice she was quitting most of her officer positions. At that point, Skip Aiken, who later wrote the essay "*Don't Close the Closet Door Because There's Leather Inside*," which appears in the Orientation packet Janus sends out to prospective members was elected Coordinator. Others volunteered to take on other officer positions.

Cardea

Around this same time Cynthia grew concerned at the small number of women members Janus had. Janus had only 4 or 5 female members and 45 or so male members. She even had a women only program in July 1977 called Fantasy to Reality. At Cynthia's request, and as part of a Janus outreach to attract potential female members, Amber, Jay Magus, and Kaye Buckley organized a women's rap group (called Cardea). This was the first women's SM group in San Francisco. Cardea was set up as a safe place where women could find out more about SM as a stepping stone leading into Janus.

Kaye recalls how they chose the name: "The name Janus comes from the Roman patriarchal times, as the two-faced god to whom all gateways were sacred. We chose Cardea to be the female counterpart of the male god Janus, coming from the same Roman area, though before the patriarchy had taken hold."

Jay M offers this explanation of how they chose the name Cardea:

"The obvious choice for a name was to look up the Roman God Janus for his female predecessor. He was a first God, of portals and beginnings and comes down to us as JANuary. ... In later days He was reduced from His primacy (except on the calendar) to become the father of Jupiter, and then a porter and door keeper."

"In *The White Goddess* by Robert Graves, he explains that the Latins worshipped The White Goddess as Cardea. "White" does not refer to race but to primacy as in, from which others are derived, like the full moon at Her midnight zenith. Graves also notes that Cardea and Janus are calendar gods and at last all this "first" business makes sense..."

"After the time of the Gods, Cardea and Janus get reduced to *cardo*, Latin for hinge. This expands to Cardea as the quiet unchanging center around which all else turns ... The Old Gods may have been disposed of and their temples covered over with churches but the energies they represented was/is revived in Janus and Cardea."

Cardea meetings were held at different members' houses. Several were held at Dossie Easton's house. Josh recalls one of the last (if not the last) meeting taking place at his and Karen F's apartment. Amber recalls the group:

"To cover our membership fee(s) when we first joined (Janus), Cynthia asked us to start a women's "rap group." (they were happening around that time). An outreach for women members was seen as desirable and Cynthia obviously had enuf to do without that too. So we started Cardea. Kaye and I led the group physically, while Jay (the other part of the triad) provided background support, ideas and modus operandi."

"For the first two meetings, or maybe it was three, we actually tried to do a rap group, but it was just too repetitive and boring for us; so we started doing demo meetings. This worked! And we attracted quite a few women members (and I believe got the whole procedure of demo meetings going in Janus as a byproduct). After I think, a year and a half or two, Kaye and I burned out on all the meetings and prep work and offered the leadership to whoever would volunteer to take over. Since no one did (volunteer, that is), after a few more meetings, we just discontinued what we had started, facetiously, as a women's auxiliary group to Janus and turned into its own entity. Its original goal had been realized."

Pat Calafia came into the scene through Cardea. Kaye Buckley recalls having first met Pat at a place called The Bacchanal in Berkeley, in the late 1970's. "I saw an attractive young blond woman with short hair. Cynthia pointed her out as "someone who was interested in SM." I walked up to her, shook hands and said, "Hi, I'm into SM and we're starting a women's outreach group. Are you interested?" (And of course she was, and the rest is history.)"

The Bacchanal was a lesbian bar that broke the rules by allowing an event called "Sex Week" where they screened erotic lesbian films, and had lectures on various topics. That included hosting some presentations by leather dykes.

Amber and Kaye got Pat to join Cardea. As Amber recalls, Pat showed courage in doing this as in the late 1970s, it was very "politically incorrect" to be a lesbian and also be into SM. Pat may have also been instrumental in bringing other women into Janus and of course over the years has been a figure of major importance to the SM community.

Pat has this to say about Cardea: "I became involved with Janus through **Cardea** which was established to try to make women more comfortable and introduce them to the group. The first meeting I attended was on Kaye and Amber's houseboat in Sausalito. Over time I gradually got more involved and eventually became one of the people who sent out **Cardea** mailings and organized programs. I believe I first hooked up with Cardea in 1976. They advertised in the

Berkeley Barb, and a friend of mine saw the ad and passed it on to me. At the time I joined Cardea, I was a lesbian separatist who had little or nothing to do with men. But there were not very many social options or political outlets for SM people. So I became involved with Janus."

Pat also describes why Cardea was so important:

"Going to Janus meetings could be pretty intimidating for women in the 70s. There was no published information about SM, or very little. The club was full of gay guys who ignored most of the women there, and straight submissive men who were looking for mistresses. Some of these guys did not have very good social skills and harassed new women who came to Janus with too many offers or demands to play. This was especially awkward for lesbian-identified women. **Cardea** fulfilled an important role by making a safe place where women curious about the scene could come and talk to one another without any social or sexual pressure."

Pat became a co-coordinator of Janus in June of 1978; the other co-coordinator was Skip Aiken. By then, Janus indeed had more of a balance of men and women. The idea behind having co-coordinators was that one coordinator could learn the job while helping the other more experienced co-coordinator. Another co-coordinators' rule was that one coordinator be male and the other be female. This rule was set up to ensure that women would have an equal voice in Janus. Co-coordinators were elected every six months. This policy went on until the late 1980s.

One of Pat's big projects was getting Janus to march in what was then called the 1978 Gay Freedom Day Parade. Pat comments, "We convinced Janus to march, for the first time, in the Gay Freedom Day Parade. This was enormously controversial. We got hassled by parade monitors and had to really argue for our right to be in the parade. The mainstream gays were used to having raucous floats for various leather bars, which played dance music and had cute boys dancing on them, but they were not used to a political group like us."

Josh also recalls the first time Janus marched in the Pride Parade. The Janus contingent would be marching in the parade in back of a group called Woman Against Violence in Pornography and the Media (WAVPM). A woman named Dex had agreed to be chained spread-eagled to Skip Navarette's jeep. However, as soon as they had Dex chained to Skip's jeep, a parade monitor ran up to the Janus contingent and told them that they couldn't do that, as apparently WAVPM had complained that Dex's being chained constituted "violence against women" and demanded they take her down off the jeep.

So Dex was unchained and Skip then offered to be chained to the Jeep. However, according to WAVPM, this also constituted "violence against women," since Skip's being chained also somehow represented women. A parade monitor again approached the Janus contingent and told them if Skip wasn't taken down off the Jeep, that once the contingent started the parade, they would all be arrested. So Skip was also taken down off the Jeep.

Noni Howard says that leather was definitely still "in the closet" in the late 1970s and recalls that any open display of SM at the Pride parade was definitely not allowed. She recalls trying to lobby to get several SM-friendly people as co-chairs of the Pride parade during this time, along with lobbying for several years to get the pride parade directors to change their "anti-SM" philosophy, but being unable to do so.

Dr. Charles Moser also recalls the Pride parade organizers' reluctance in the late 1970s and early 1980s to including SM/leather groups in the parade:

"There was a lot of resistance from the Parade organizers because they thought that the SM contingent was getting too much publicity (and was too sensational). One year the front page of the *Chronicle* or *Examiner* was a woman tied to the hood of a car that was the Janus float. There was also a lot of conflict with WAVPM and "Take Back The Night" organizations that thought SM was promoting violence against women. I remember going to parade meetings for several years to argue for SM inclusion. We always won, but it was not easy."

Janus in the late 1970s and into the 1980s, according to Pat Califia had a "desperate kind of atmosphere. It seemed as if only a handful of people were willing to put forth energy to keep the group going. People used the group to try to find play partners and that was about it. They did not want to take responsibility for planning programs, doing mailings, etc. And above all they did NOT want to be publicly identified with the group. So it was always just two or three of us struggling to find enough time in our busy lives to keep Janus alive."

Pat contributed to Janus in other areas, in planning programs, doing mailings, getting other people interested in being officers, and providing what she calls "some basic political education for the membership."

She recounts her frustration with doing a lot of the work of the group in that time period:

"It was hard going because so many of the people in the SM community then were rather damaged and fringe. Just pushing the notion of safe play was an uphill battle sometimes. Getting people to have enough self-esteem that they could separate consensual from nonconsensual activity. A lot of members were program vampires who came to the educational events but never incorporated any of that information into their personal lives; they wanted Janus to put on a series of sex shows that they could jack off to. It was pretty depressing. But I did it because I thought that it was the only way to make things better. We had to start by just dealing with where we were at in that moment, and build on that foundation."

"If you had told me in 1976 that someday the SM community would be able to mount an international fund-raising campaign like we did for Countdown on Spanner, or have a conference like Living in Leather, I would have laughed at you. We were too few, too weak, too self-hating, too disorganized for that to seem possible just 20 years ago."

Pat also goes on to describe what the leather community was like for women in those early days. She, Cynthia and Gayle Rubin, another longtime scene member, would go to gay leather bars and "hang out" with the men there.

"The women who were doing SM community leadership in the 70s did more than just go to the leather bars and talk to people. We played there. A lot of the bars had back rooms then. It was one of the few public places where you could strut your stuff. And it was one of the ways we made contact with leathermen. They could SEE that we were into the same thing that they were into. Some of them were pissed off about this but a few of them thought we were interesting and a good time, and became allies."

"It was pretty intimidating to walk into a bar packed wall to wall with big guys in full leather, handcuff a couple of girls together, and go to work on them, but when it went well it was also really fun and exhilarating. You should also know that there

were a lot of leather bars or clubs that tried to keep women out. They would make up bullshit rules like we needed 3 pieces of picture ID. That was when it really helped to have gay male allies who would see us outside and say, hey, don't be an asshole, let her in."

Pat later became less active in Janus and helped formed Samois, the first lesbian SM group in the Bay Area. Samois lasted for a couple years. They put out a book about the lesbian SM scene in 1981 called *Coming to Power*. Samois lasted until 1983. After Samois disbanded, the Outcasts were formed by Gayle Rubin among others. That group "disbanded" approximately two years ago and then the Exiles was formed, which exists today. For a history of the Outcasts, read Gayle Rubin's essay on the group in the book, *The Second Coming: A Leatherdyke Reader*, edited by Pat Califia and Robin Sweeney, available from Alyson Publications.

The 527 Club

In the late 1970s through the early 1980s Janus program meetings were mostly held at a location on 527 Bryant in San Francisco called the 527 Club. There was a back room called the Godfather Room, where program meetings were held. Speakers had to compete to be heard over an ice machine located just behind the room in the back kitchen, which periodically would start making and mashing ice!

Since then Janus has had meetings at numerous locations, including the Catacombs, Shotwell Meeting House, the MCC on Eureka St. in the Castro, locations on Harrison Street, sex clubs like EROS and the Power Exchange, and currently Fort Mason.

A flogging program was held in the early 1980s at what had been a Hamms' brewery (with the flogging demo done at the bottom of a beer vat!) Noni Howard, who was the Program Director at the time of the program done at the Hamm's brewery, recalls doing a flogging scene with another Domme and their respective female "submissives" at this program. Apparently there were nowhere to sit and the only way to reach the bottom of this vat was by stepping down ladders to the bottom of it.

While there obviously have been a number of interesting program spaces over the years, none of them have ever again been at a space like the 527 Club where the program presenter had to be compete to be heard over loud operating machinery close by.

Orientations

Usually the first Janus event a person goes to is an Orientation meeting. These meetings (open to current members and orientees) usually take two to three hours and are currently held on either the first Friday evening, Saturday, or Sunday of the month. The first half of the meeting discusses general rules and information about Janus. Current members talk about their experiences as Janus members. Then there is a break of about fifteen minutes. In the second half of the meeting, current members and the orientees break off into small discussion groups and then reconvene as one main group and the orientees then talk about why they are interested in joining.

The current orientation format has existed for the past several years. The format has changed little over the years since the early 1980s. Back in 1982, Noni was the Orientation Secretary.

The orientations at that time were held at a place known as the Xanadu Pleasure Gardens. This "space" had what was then the largest hot tub in any building in San Francisco, 20 square feet around. There were also peacocks that could be seen walking around the gardens. The Gardens also had hot showers, and smaller bathing areas. Noni recalls the orientations allowed for "the possibility of sensuality and sexuality in a consensual, caring atmosphere." Noni also managed Xanadu at the time and managed other "party spaces" in the 1970s and into the early to mid 1980s.

Noni's orientations were always popular as she would employ her own 'format' for them. She recalls those orientations: "My basic scenario was in a nutshell you're alone, you've got time, you have not brought toys, go through the house; find things, all kinds of things in the house, that you can use as "SM toys." She would divide up the room into groups of two people of either sex and told them to imagine being at home and having only two hours to find any basic household implements they could use to create an SM scene with. These items would not include any SM toys; but would strictly be household items. As she puts it, "People always found a number of SM type items in their houses."

Not only did this help take some of the emphasis away from doing SM only with specific toys and make it so people could relate more easily to SM, it also helped the participants to get to know each other a little better. Her orientations became quite popular as members who had recently joined kept coming back to later orientations because they enjoyed this exercise so much. There also would be 'play parties' after the orientations, since Xanadu was set up to be a 'party space.' Eventually Noni stepped down as Orientation Director and the orientation format changed.

One recent Orientation custom was started by Phil D three or four years ago. He started the practice of having the group split up into smaller discussion "sub-groups," (composed of one or two current members and three or four new members) which gives orientees a chance to ask questions about Janus.

New member orientations, which first started happening in the late 1970s, like Janus program meetings and parties have had numerous locations over the years including the Catacombs, Shotwell Meeting House, 58 Caselli St, Frank J's house (where I had my orientation!) and they are currently held at Fort Mason in San Francisco.

The late 1970s

Around 1978, a number of long-time members joined Janus who are still around today, including Gayle Rubin, Josh and Karen, Dr. Charles Moser, Jay Wiseman, Bill B and Robin S. Don Miesen, a long time Janus member and contributor also became active in Janus during this time. Robin was a Janus Co-coordinator in the early 1980s. She also was and still is involved along with Bill B in running the SM (Service of Mankind Church, (a SF Bay Area female dominant, male submissive group which started in 1980) and Essemian Society (another female Dominant, male submissive group in San Francisco). In an interview in a bondage magazine called Woman/Slave from 1980, she describes Janus:

The Society of Janus exists to provide educational information about how to play safely, as well as providing moral support. If you are into SM and you have just come out of the closet, we'd like to help you feel good about it and educate you as to how many different kinds of SM there are.

Mark I. Chester, now known as a long-time SM photographer became one the co-coordinators of Janus at this time and remained a member for three or four years. Among Mark's contributions to the group included 'resurrecting' the *Growing Pains* newsletter. Growing Pains had been defunct since about the mid 1970's when Mark joined Janus. Mark had heard there had been a publication called *Growing Pains*, but no one either had heard of it or had a copy or could remember anything about it. Initially Janus was opposed to spending any funds to support the publication. Mark wrote it, laid it out, and Xeroxed it and had it sent out to other members. Following Mark as Growing Pains editors were Don Miesen, then Mark Joplin, Jay M, and Lynn Willis.

Folsom Street Fire

Mark I. Chester was also involved in one of the worst fires to ever hit San Francisco on July 10, 1981. It was the largest fire in San Francisco since the 1906 earthquake and destroyed half a 1/2 block of Folsom Street. It also destroyed the living quarters of several other community members, including Mistress Carol and Lady Cassandra, two local pro Dommies. Mark was living in an apartment on Folsom Street at the time and the fire literally stopped at his door. The San Francisco fire chief publicly stated that there were torture chambers in the area and that he expected to find dead bodies in the rubble, chained to beds. Firemen fighting the fire were quoted as saying that they smelled burning meat. The Folsom Street fire was called the world's first SM fire.

The firefighters found Mark's apartment and playroom. He describes what happened next:

"Firefighters and police officers were seen trooping up in groups into my apartment. The mayor of the city, now California's Senator Feinstein, came through for a personal look-see. And most importantly, the print and TV media were invited to tour and film my apt. The entire area was so tightly secured by the San Francisco police and fire departments that it was impossible to get in without their permission and a personal escort. But when I was escorted back into my apartment, only hours after the fire was put out, I was shocked."

"Boxes with hundreds of my sexual photographs had disappeared. Many other photographs had been destroyed. Much of my radical sex gear, hoods, restraints and a collection of hand made long lash whips had been stolen off the walls. Even posters that ridiculed or criticized Dan White (who is the ex-firefighter and supervisor who had murdered Supervisor Harvey Milk and SF mayor George Moscone in 1978), Richard Nixon, Diane Feinstein and a poster of one of the Popes dead laying in state, selectively disappeared from my walls. My personal belongings were vandalized, destroyed or simply disappeared."

"What I am describing are crimes. I believe they were allowed because I was gay, poor and into a non-standard lifestyle. While I received a great deal of support from my friends, I was unable to mobilize the artistic, gay or leather communities behind me. I was told repeatedly (even by other leathersmen) that I deserved what I got for daring to be who I was and doing the work that I was doing."

Two weeks after the fire, a performance gallery in San Francisco called the 544 Natoma sponsored a photographic exhibition of Mark's work. The media had called Mark's playroom a "torture chamber," so the show included many photographs of hard cocks taken in his playroom.

"I titled the show, 'Between a Rock and a Hard Place - images of male sexuality.' Mark remembers. "It was my way of responding that no matter what they called me or my space, the energy that truly emanated from it was hard dick energy. And in the end, I believe that the authorities and media trampled my rights and committed crimes against me in a hysterical response to being confronted with a space overflowing with radical hard dick energy. I titled the images with the occupations of the individuals in the photographs. The message of course was that radical sex and radical hard dick energy, crossed all lines."

Mark later successfully sued the city of San Francisco, though his suit took two or three years to come to trial.

Around this same time, 1980 or so Don Miesen wrote his essay on SM called *What is SadoMasochism?* Both an abridged version and the full version are included in every orientation package Janus sends out to orientees. The full essay also appears on the Janus web site at <http://www.soj.org>. Don had written several versions of this in the late 1970s, 'fine-tuning' it until he was satisfied with it. He later revised it a little two or three times in the mid 1980s. Almost twenty years later, it still captures and well describes the experience of what SM is. The essay is divided into fifteen sections. Here's a small excerpt:

SM is the neighborhood kids playing cops and robbers, and the contented excitement of the victim--all tied up and the center of attention. SM is when the belt hits--first it stings, then it's warm. ... SM is erotic play based on deliberate roles of domination and submission. SM is fun play and also serious play, because we consciously choose our roles of domination and submission according to our actual erotic fantasies.

The 1980s

Changing of the Guard

In the early 1980s, the membership was starting to change. Meetings that had been attracting mostly primarily gay men started attracting more heterosexual men as they began to hear about Janus. They began attending programs in larger and larger numbers. Up to that point Janus had being a group of primarily gay men. Occasionally, a few couples and bi and straight women attended programs too. The 15 Association, a gay men's group started around 1980 and drew off gay men. Also, the people that had actively 'recruited' gay men for Janus began to disappear. While it wasn't until the mid 1980s that Janus became a group mostly of "straights," the gays (and the lesbians as well) had stopped attending quite some time before. Noni recalls at that point, Janus "became unfriendly to anyone other than heterosexuals."

Fakir Musafir, a Janus member almost from the start (and with Jim Ward, Doug Malloy, and photographer Charles Gatewood were the people who started the modern day piercing movement i.e., "modern primitives") recalls giving a program on Spirituality and Piercing around 1983 at California Hall. It was one of the best attended programs Janus had put on up to that point. He recalls that "in the middle of the program, one man dressed in all leather suddenly stood up and yelled "This isn't SM!" and stormed out the door." It's Fakir's opinion that the gay males didn't like the "broader view of SM" that Janus was starting to portray in its programs as well as the influx of straight males that started attending Janus programs.

Fakir also believes that the "essence of Janus" was lost during this time. This "exodus" was something that distressed Cynthia greatly. Cynthia felt strongly that Janus should remain a pansexual organization, one that attracted gays, straights, and bisexuals. Guy Baldwin offers his thoughts on why the Janus membership changed:

"I came back to SF in 1978 for two years and could see some big changes in the organization already after only being away for 2 ½ years. One thing that I noticed was that there were more women and some really arrogant and predatory het men, which turned off gay men a lot. We had a place to go back to, the women, both lesbian and het did not. It is no accident that it was about this time that the women's groups began. And soon, we would begin to get ill; it was already starting to happen in '80.

Another problem (and this has been a chronic problem not just with Janus, but probably with virtually every SM group of mixed gender and orientation in existence) is that usually there have been many more men than women interested in SM. This is especially true of male submissives looking for a Domme, because these men are the largest 'group' of people that belong to a SM organization. And most of them as Carol T. puts it "don't know how to behave." While women in our society have been "taught to wait," the men who were Janus members in the 70s, 80s, and even into the 90s didn't have the reasonable social skills.

As Carol says about the 1980s Janus, "Guys were sloppy; they didn't know how to say please, they didn't know how to be friends, while the women had been taught the commandment, thou shalt not ask." So women attending an event might have to deal with men who would immediately fall to their knees upon seeing a woman, assuming she was a Domme. If the woman said she was a sub, he might try to pressure her into setting up a time to play! This sort of experience scared off women from attending future Janus programs or parties.

Even though men in Janus in the late 1990s for the most part have learned better social skills and the number of female Janus members has steadily increased in the last few years, 'pushy' men are still occasionally a problem in Janus.

Hey Lady Take A Dare

There were repeated attempts in the 1980s to solve the problem of "too many men, not enough women" at Janus programs by trying to attract more women to the group. One attempt was the *Hey Lady Take A Dare* ad in 1982. Noni Howard, along with Don Miesen wrote the text for the ad, and Noni provided the illustration for it.

The idea for the ad came out of a informal discussion at a Janus program meeting where the idea for a "women's recruitment program" was brought up. Janus members at the program were concerned about the male/female imbalance at Janus programs. Noni, along with a woman named Sandra and her husband James comprised this committee. Noni created a flyer with the headline, "Lady Take A Dare" and had 500 copies of the flyer printed, in different colors. The ad's idea was directed at women and flyers were placed on billboards and telephone poles throughout the San Francisco area. The ads did work as Janus had an increase of female members during that time.

Another ad, this one in *Common Ground* (a local "New Age" free magazine that is published quarterly) appeared in 1989. The ad was sort of a spinoff of the Lady Take a Dare ad and the text started off with the question "Hey Lady: afraid that your fantasies of being tied up aren't

politically correct?" It is unknown whether this ad attracted new female members or not, but it shows evidence of another attempt to bring more women into Janus.

One Foot Out Of the Closet

In 1980, KQED-TV, the San Francisco Public Broadcasting channel, produced and ran a documentary on BDSM by Phil Bronstein called "One Foot Out Of the Closet." This was the first time in San Francisco that any television program showed viewers what the 'real world of SM' was like. It did however show that there were people into BDSM and they were probably no different than any other group of people. As Kat Sunlove puts it, the documentary "cracked open the bubble of the underground." The documentary was supposed to run two or three times. However the program was on such a taboo subject it was only shown once. This in spite of an article the next day in the San Francisco Chronicle that reported overwhelmingly favorable calls to the KQED switchboard in response to the documentary.

Also in 1980, Boyd Stephens, who was the San Francisco County Coroner gave a program on SM health education at Janus in October of that year. Jay Wiseman, who attended that program recalls that the program was an "astoundingly enlightening talk. He (Boyd) was one of the first health professionals willing to do SM health education and got soundly crucified for it. He really was a hero." Indeed, after Boyd's program there were calls by Dianne Feinstein for Stephens' resignation. However Boyd held firm and refused to step down. He remains the San Francisco county coroner to this day.

The Specter of AIDS

In June of 1981, a magazine called *Morbidity and Mortality Weekly* announced the mysterious presence of a form of pneumonia in five otherwise healthy gay men. The July 3, 1981 *New York Times* published an article on what was called "the Gay Cancer." Two days later *Morbidity and Mortality Weekly* announced an outbreak of Kaposi's Sarcoma among 26 gay men in the United States. This "gay cancer," as it was known then, would not only devastate the gay and gay leatherman communities throughout the 1980s, but would also forever change the SM community in terms of how people did SM, SM play parties and how the gay, lesbian and straight communities all related to each other.

Rapid Release

Rapid Release is now part of the Janus newsletter. It is a calendar of SM events occurring locally. It was started by Herb C, who was the Janus Communications Secretary from March, 1982 to January 1984. Originally it was separate from the Janus newsletter and was mailed in the middle of the month. Herb C says about it, "The postage wasn't much to send them and Janus members liked getting mailings. Since the business meetings in those days happened in the first week of the month, *Rapid Release* was designed to bring members up to date on the business meeting happenings." *Rapid Release* was usually mailed around the 15th of each month and would also list upcoming events. In the late 1980s, Dan R (the *Growing Pains* editor at the time) combined it with GP, feeling there wasn't any point to having two newsletters a month go out to members.

In the early 1980s, Janus had members not only in the San Francisco Bay Area, but also a few in other areas including Los Angeles. LA apparently had a "satellite" chapter of the NYC group TES in the mid 1970s, but the people running it "burned out" on doing the work involved in running the group. Herb C noted that out of the 240 to 260 total members at the time, 12 to 15 members lived in the LA area. He wondered why there wasn't a group in Los Angeles. As he puts it, "There was a large population in southern California, creative and affluent, people involved in the show business industry, and every aspect of the avant-garde was there, and was representative of bizarre lifestyles." At the time LA did have very private groups, as well as gay male and motorcycle groups. On the day of the SF Gay Pride Parade in 1982, he met with Josh S to discuss this and formulate the plans for starting a Janus chapter in Los Angeles.

Josh and Karen F and Herb agreed there was a great opportunity to get the LA people together in a group. They both discussed the possibility of a "national and possibly international Janus, with Los Angeles being the starting chapter. The LA chapter would be the start of a Janus "empire," with chapters in other cities eventually to follow. Herb wrote up a flyer advertising the new group, but then had to decide where to distribute it. Herb had a list of Janus members in LA, since he did the mailings for *Rapid Release*, and managed to compile a list of 100 addresses, some from the Janus membership list and some from other sources (friends and other Janus members). He also decided to run ads in local newspapers, including the *LA Free Press*, which was a counterculture newspaper in Los Angeles, similar to the *Berkeley Barb*.

Another reason Josh and Karen felt strongly about creating a LA Janus was the opportunity to make friends and network with kinky folk from another city. Josh and Herb made numerous trips to Los Angeles to attend orientations, programs and meetings of members of the two Janus chapters (called pan-Janus meetings). To this day, even though LA Janus is long gone, Josh and Karen remains friends with several of the early LA Janus members.

Herb also wrote up a proposal for what LA Janus would and wouldn't be. LA Janus would be a social and educational SM group, open to people of all sexual orientations and preferences, with regular monthly meetings. He sent a mailing out to 110 to 120 people. Thirty-five people from this list expressed a strong interest in attending a meeting. Over the summer of 1982, Herb spent time and energy ensuring LA Janus would become a reality.

On October 23, 1982, the first ever LA Janus meeting took place in the Los Feliz area of Los Angeles. Twenty-three people showed up at that meeting. Herb had gotten permission at the July Business Meeting to go ahead and set everything up.

Four Janus members (Herb, Josh and Karen, and Vince P) attended the meeting, driving down to LA in a 1967 Cadillac. Herb led the meeting, which actually was an Orientation, and others contributed significantly as well. Josh and Karen recalls that the meeting took place in a "fairly full living room." The people in attendance took a vote, resolved to organize the chapter and selected officers. Eighteen people attending the meeting committed to becoming members of LA Janus.

The LA Janus Coordinator, a gentleman named Jerry B immediately got started promoting the new chapter, posting flyers in local leather bars and wherever else he felt was appropriate. Jerry B. had been their original "point guy" in LA. Among others who were instrumental in getting LA Janus off the ground were Bob Flanagan and Sheree Rose. Bob would later become one of the people in favor of LA Janus splitting off from SF Janus. Another influential person in the early

LA Janus days was Bill S, who later became the LA Janus coordinator and remained as Coordinator for four years.

The next LA orientation took place in November, 1982, (which Herb also attended) and by January of 1983, 30 to 35 people were attending meetings. The first LA Janus program was on Rope Bondage and was held at Bob and Sheree's house in LA. It happened sometime in either late 1982 or early 1983. By January of 1983, records of the organization (membership, expenses) were being kept.

One of LA Janus' first problems occurred when Herb found out Jerry was charging different prices for women than for men. This is a practice some other SM groups, including the PEP groups run by Nancy Ava Miller, have employed in the past for various reasons. Herb immediately contacted Jerry and told him that doing this was not acceptable and to please stop it, which he immediately did.

Another problem that faced LA Janus in the early days was one that SF Janus was facing, which was that gay males who had originally attended meetings stopped doing so. Their reasons for doing so included that they "somehow felt they didn't fit in and that they had their own groups and social structure." So, like SF Janus, LA Janus quickly became an organization primarily made up of heterosexual men and a few bisexual women. There was also a rumor going around in the early days that the people in LA helping to organize the chapter were unfriendly to gays; however this rumor was never confirmed.

Guy B has this to say about the rumor:

"I never felt particularly welcome there, although I did teach for them a few times. Plus which, it is important to remember: SF is a city of liberated risk-takers and LA is a much more conservative place; there were (and are) fewer gay-tolerant het men here than there are in SF, so yeah, we weren't very welcome; the major exception was a guy down here named K.O. (Ken Oldham, now dead, who was active and taught a number of classes for the group) I was not active in LA Janus; I was in graduate training then and had no time for it."

LA Janus grew rapidly, Herb refers to the group in those days being a "Frankenstein," thanks to some creative people in the organization and some well-attended and good program meetings. Another problem in the early days was how money was divided up. Herb recalls, "LA Janus didn't have reasonable rules of contact with regards to how money in the chapter was spent. There was no accountability."

Even though some LA members had paid their dues, very little money was being sent back to San Francisco (when LA Janus was a chapter, ALL dues were sent to SF Janus). This was one reason, along with several others why LA Janus eventually split with SF Janus. In fact, within a year of LA Janus' first forming there were already people in the organization who wanted to secede from Janus, saying that "We're already a bigger and better organization than you."

There were conflicts about money between the LA chapter and San Francisco, but JB, the LA Coordinator did keep in touch with SF Janus about this and other LA Janus issues. After he left however this contact was lost.

Over the next several months, the members of LA Janus grew increasingly frustrated with the way they felt the main chapter was handling their operations. They felt their money wasn't getting spent as they wanted, the newsletter was being put together with little or no feedback from LA Janus members (and they resented paying for a newsletter they had no feedback in creating) They

felt their other concerns weren't being heard. Another important issue was that Los Angeles is a city totally different from San Francisco, not only in its culture, but also its BDSM scene. People in southern California are for the most part more "party-oriented" than "education-oriented" as people in San Francisco were at that time and LA Janus felt stifled in that regard as well.

Frank J suggested that officers from both chapters sit down at a meeting and try to work out their differences. This meeting became known as the "pan-Janus" meeting. The first occurred in early 1985. Frank J felt very strongly that the two Janus chapters should stay together no matter what. This policy would later put him and others who felt the two chapters should stick together very much at odds with those (Karen M, Steve K and Dan R) who later felt equally strongly that the LA Janus chapter should be allowed to secede and form their own group. From 1986 through 1988, several pan-Janus meetings were held, both in San Francisco and Los Angeles to attempt to work out the differences between the two chapters.

Instead, things got worse. LA Janus officers became more and more negligent about filing and sending reports, and in November, 1987 flat out refused to send any to the SF headquarters. As people on both sides of the LA Janus 'issue' became more and more entrenched, determined that their argument was the correct one and as the months went on, it became more and more of a "civil war." Frank J and others I interviewed for this history told me of business meetings held during the mid to late 1980s that dragged on for hours as people argued their points about LA Janus back and forth. Frank J and also Stacey D spoke of the "gruesome threesome" (the aforementioned Karen, Steve K and Dan R) who were for LA Janus becoming their own group.

Business meetings during this time would go on for hours. Karen recalls meetings being a kind of "face-off" between this "gruesome threesome" in favor of splitting the two groups (herself, Steve and Dan R) and the three who felt strongly the two groups should stay together (Frank, Stacey D, and Sharon). When votes on motions regarding Janus were taken, the outcomes of each motion depended on the number of people left to vote! Some people would tire of the 'marathon meetings' and would leave the meetings before they were finished.

The tension between Karen and Frank grew worse as well. Karen recalls attending a Janus orientation at Frank's house during this time. After the orientation was over and the "socializing" time began, Frank walked up to Karen and told her to leave his house right away! Karen felt it was her right to be at the orientation, since she was a Janus co-coordinator at the time and that some new orientees might have questions about Janus that Karen would be able to answer. Karen discussed the matter with Betsy D (Janus Orientation Secretary at the time) and she asked Frank if it was true. Apparently Frank "gleefully admitted" to it and the matter was brought up at a future business meeting. Karen describes what happened next:

"The next business meeting passed a motion that a 30 minute socializing period following the orientation was an intrinsic part of the orientation, and that everyone attending was invited to stay for it. In fact, the motion went so far as to say that everyone still there should leave together at the end of 30 minutes so no one was singled out for special treatment either positive or negative. I don't remember the numbers for and against the motion, but it was almost unanimous. There was a strong sentiment that socializing between the members and the orientees was an important part of the process, and also that the host of an event did not have the right to use his position to play favorites or attack his enemies."

In spite of this debate going on within Janus, most Janus members, other than the Janus officers at the time either didn't care about this issue or didn't want to be involved in the political battle.

Chris S, who was Cynthia's last lover puts in succinctly when he says "I didn't care about the politics. I just wanted to party!"

In 1987, one final attempt was made to resolve the differences between the two Janus chapters, after Frank J issued a plea to "save the groups." A committee of six people, three from each from both chapters was formed to try and resolve the issues and then report back to both groups. However this 'committee' endured harsh criticism from both groups and was unable to make much progress.

There were also rumors that the committee did certain things to create animosity between the two groups. Among them was that the committee wanted to create a complete list of members for the two chapters, which raised issues of confidentiality. As Steve K remembers it, they did do one good thing, which was to tell LA Janus to find a new name for their group.

At the 1987 (and final) Pan-Janus Meeting, both sides talked but were unable to resolve any of the issues. Frank J reportedly wept after the meeting, as he and other "pro-national Janus" people watched their "dream" of a national Janus fall apart. Josh later reportedly quit Janus because of the way this issue finally turned out (though Karen M recalls that he actually walked out of a Janus business meeting around this time), with LA Janus splitting off to form its own group. Emotions were running high after this final meeting. Karen recalls a big confrontation happening between her and Frank after this final meeting had adjourned. Many of the people who had attended the meeting were still milling around the main entrance to the building where the meeting had taken place. Frank and Stacy D walked up to Karen and the other two "pro-LA Janus split" people and demanded that Karen turn over control of the Janus checkbook to the ICC (the inter-chapter group created to resolve the crisis). If she refused, Frank threatened to go to the bank where Janus had its checking account was located and "contest the SF Janus officers' right to run the organization," that is he would dispute the "legitimacy of the leaders" of Janus, by saying that the people controlling the account didn't have the right to run the group. Karen recalls everyone who witnessed Frank saying this considered it a serious threat. Karen chose not to turn over the checkbook to Frank and to this day considers it one of the "bravest things I've ever done in my life." As it turned out, Frank apparently chose not to follow through on his threat and the incident was never discussed at any subsequent business meetings.

Two or three months later, a vote was held among the Janus members as to whether or not LA Janus should be allowed to split from Janus and form their own organization. The vote was overwhelmingly in favor of LA Janus splitting. As part of "terms" for splitting from Janus, LA Janus could keep the name Janus for one year and then had to change their name. In late 1989, after a contest among its members to come up with a new name, the group that had been known as LA Janus was now called Threshold. It continues to this very day and Janus has a "reciprocal agreement" (members of either group can attend Threshold or Janus program meetings or parties and pay member rates) with them.

Elizabeth W, Janus co-coordinator during this time may have been one of the "casualties" of this 'civil war.' In mid 1988, she stepped down as co-coordinator because she had grown tired of the battle. Steve K was to have been elected the next co-coordinator but instead became the Janus Treasurer. No other co-coordinator was selected to replace Elizabeth and consequently from that point on to now, there has only been one coordinator office in Janus.

So why couldn't LA and SF Janus co-exist and work together? There are many reasons why they couldn't, depending of course on whom you talk to on either side of the issue. Elizabeth compares LA Janus of that time as being like the "teenager who wants to move out from his

parents." They felt their concerns weren't being addressed, they weren't allowed much if any feedback on how Growing Pains was put together, they didn't like how Janus was spending the LA chapter's money, and they wanted to make their own decisions with regard to how the group was run, instead of having to have everything okayed by people 400 miles to the north of them.

Even though there were those including Herb C and Josh and Karen F who thought it would be a 'good thing' to have a national organization, most Janus members as stated before didn't care about having a national organization. They wanted programs, parties and services, not a debate about the merits of having a national organization.

On a personal note. I too have noticed how over the last few years, several chapters of the international leather group, the National Leather Association (Portland, OR, San Diego and Vancouver, BC Canada, for example) have also voted to split from the national group and form their own groups. Chicagoland Discussion Group, which started sometime in the late 1970s to mid 1980s as a chapter of TES is another example of a chapter of a group which later decided to go "on their own."

While a nationwide BDSM organization might on paper be a great idea, every city has a different feel to it, in terms of culture, politics and numerous other intangibles, including what they expect an SM group to provide for them. Every city differs on what they want out of a BDSM group. Again some are more interested in parties, some (like Cynthia with the early Janus) want a group that only provides education and not parties. Regrettably, a national BDSM group may not be a feasible idea in this day and age, given how passionate people in the BDSM scene can get about what they want from a group.

In addition to the LA Janus chapter, there were also very briefly Janus "chapters" in San Jose (run by Lady Thorn) and Sacramento. However, these were more like small discussion groups that only lasted a few months to a year in the mid 1980s.

Janus "Traditions"

Two long traditional programs Janus has had since the early 1980s are the **Bondage Beauty Pageant** and the **Top/bottom Auction**.

The **Bondage Beauty Pageant** originally started out as a demonstration program where various Janus members could do a "show and tell," displaying their various bondage techniques. It soon turned into a contest where prizes (usually gift certificates of various amounts at local SM 'toy shops') would be awarded. Awards would be given out for "most restrictive bondage," "most unusual bondage," "non-rope bondage," and "group bondage," to name a few of the prizes. Now it has become not only a contest, but there is also a play party afterwards. The 1997 Bondage Beauty Pageant was held on New Year's Eve, and began with the contest, then a play party lasting until 2 or 3 am the next morning. This event currently is held annually, usually in December.

The **Top/bottom Auction** was started as a way for new people to get to know and play with each other. It is an event where Janus members and their guests auction themselves off. For this event play money is given out to the "bidders" who then bid for the right to negotiate a scene with whomever they buy. It is made very clear they do not automatically get to play with the person they 'buy.' Rather again it is the **opportunity** to negotiate a scene with the person. There usually is a play party after this event as well.

In 1982, there was another annual function known as Valhalla. This was a combination retreat/outdoor play party that was held by two Janus members named George and Anonka, who lived on a ranch in Ukiah (a town approximately 150 miles north of San Francisco) called Valhalla. The retreat was held in the summer. There was another retreat the next year. But the ranch was then sold and consequently no more parties were held there. Outside of the occasional Janus picnic, there haven't been any other "outside" events in Janus' history.

Pamela Gitthens

One incident that brought Janus and the BDSM community of the early 1980s 'together' was what happened to Pamela Gitthens in 1983. Pamela was a schoolteacher in Sacramento who moonlighted as a professional Dominatrix. She worked with two other people who also were schoolteachers during the day, a husband and wife who ran a "pro Domme" business in Sacramento. The wife was also a professional Dominatrix. The couple was arrested and the authorities found out that Pamela was also involved.

At the advice of others, Pamela turned herself in and in talking with the couple and with others she was told if she pleaded "no contest" to the charges, and paid a fine, the authorities would not pursue it any further. So Pamela did plead no contest. However the authorities did indeed prosecute her further, bringing her and the school she worked for much unwanted publicity. She was fired from her teaching job.

Layne Winklebleck, one of many that helped organize a benefit to raise money for Pamela's defense fund recalls Pamela:

"The Pam Gitthens Defense fund, and the benefit at the On Broadway theater, which featured many volunteer entertainment groups, drew 4 or 5 hundred people, as I recall, and raised in excess of \$2000 (all of which went to Pamela). The event did represent the community coming together in a quite remarkable way. The defense of Pamela Gitthens was never motivated by an assessment of Pam's character or intelligence. If anything, it was based on her rather unusual innocence, her Pollyanna approach to professional dominance. She never touched clients sexually. She simply spanked them with hairbrushes and the like."

"Her case, in that sense, was a "pure" instance of law enforcement irrationally seeing professional dominance as illegal. Her ill-advised plea, in which she pled "Nolo Contendere" was in advance of the efforts of the San Francisco community to help. Her new attorneys hoped to undo the plea but she was not allowed to do so. Her return to professional dominance and her eventual re-arrest and incarceration for a time, was the result of the same sort of naivete' that got her in trouble in the first place. But she was truly an innocent victim of a crazy law enforcement system and as such a worthy candidate for the help of the community. If there is anything to be regretted in this history, it is that many more such efforts on the part of the community have not taken place in response to similar travesties of basic justice throughout the nation. Yes, Sacramento is more like Laredo, Texas than San Francisco. But that is all the more reason to make our voices heard there."

One of the problems with this case was that the authorities equated professional Dominance (and still do for the most part) with prostitution, even though in Pamela's case she never had "sex" (intercourse) with any of her clients. Pamela decided to fight the charges she was accused of and

asked for the support of the San Francisco SM community. People like Josh and Karen F, X SunLove and X Winklebeck of the *Spectator* organized fund-raisers for her, and numerous other people donated their time and money toward her defense.

Among them were Steve K, who joined Janus in 1983 and who has since contributed much of his time and energy to Janus and "Piano Jack" (aka "Hard Ass Jack", who got that nickname because of his penchant for wanting to be spanked as hard as possible with any implement he could find) donated money from his piano playing job towards the Pamela Gitthens defense fund.

There were several play parties during this time where the proceeds from the parties went to help Pamela. One of them was the huge fund raiser Layne mentions in his previously mentioned comments, that X SunLove, Sybil Holliday, Mistress Papillion, and other Pro Dommies attended. Josh recruited his brother's band to play at the benefit and he in turn recruited another band to play. The money was this and other fund raisers was presented to Pamela.

However, when people like Josh and Karen F went to meet with her and deliver the money to her, they discovered she was not a very likable person. She was rumored not to like men. However, two people I interviewed disputed this, one of them saying that she "deferred" to men. As Josh puts it, "she had bad energy." Pam was also reportedly not a very intelligent person. Noni refers to her as a "neophyte," and one who didn't really understand the legal problems she had gotten herself into. During the time that people were raising money for her defense fund, she was again doing pro Domme sessions and made no bones about it. According to several of the people I spoke with, Sacramento is a rather conservative area (perhaps because it is the California state capital) and making it well-known you are doing pro Domme work is an "invitation to get yourself arrested in a hurry," which is exactly what happened. Pamela got arrested again for doing pro sessions and in fact was arrested two more times after that. Ultimately, she made a plea bargain and wound up serving nine months in prison. She later moved to Oregon (where she currently lives) after serving a short time in prison. She wrote a play based on her experiences while in prison that was eventually done by a group of Oregon actors.

Kat and mouse's Workshops

Mistress Kat and Layne made a great contribution to the SM community of the early 1980s with their "SM workshops." They did these workshops from 1980 to 1986. While neither of them was an active Janus member, these workshops brought numerous people (mostly Dommies) into the SF community, including Lady Thorn, who later started her *SM Community Exchanges (Bizarre Fleas)*. Also, these workshops gave people an opportunity to find out more about SM. Calling themselves "Kat and mouse," they ran these workshops often in the early 1980s. The workshops were usually divided into two or three parts, starting off with an all-day women's workshop, then an all-day workshop for men called "Submission for Men," two weeks later, and then two weeks after that an all-day workshop for couples called "SM for Loving Couples." The workshops would be limited to 12 people, all of whom were couples.

Among topics covered in the workshops were "The Art and Techniques for Dominance," the mechanics of dominance, and "worshipping the goddess." There were also role-playing exercises. The format of the workshops was somewhat loose, since the people in the workshops had varying levels of expertise in SM, some were raw beginners, others had some experience. Some of the workshop would be devoted to "self-awareness." They would also demand answers to their questions. The workshops would also explore why "certain things got them hot," while other

things might turn someone off. The workshops were very popular, Kat recalls getting letters at the Spectator from all over the US about the workshops. "People were hungry for information," Kat recalls.

Another great thing about the workshops was that women were taught how to Top or Domme their partners and men were allowed "the capacity to let go." It also gave them in Kat's words, "a comfy way to bring up SM."

Kat also had a column in the Spectator in the early 1980s called "The Kat Box," where she talked about SM and mentioned groups like Janus and also SMC (Service of Mankind Church) with dignity and respect. Janus also ran ads in the Spectator and this was one way that straight men found out about Janus.

Bizarre Fleas

Lady Thorn, mentioned in the previous section, is responsible for starting The SM Community Exchange or "Bizarre Fleas." The Exchange is a "kinky flea market" that takes place in San Francisco the first Sunday of March, August, and December. Besides being a place for toymakers to sell their floggers, paddles, or other toys, it is also a social event, a place for community members to not only buy 'toys,' but also to see other scene friends. Lady Thorn, who has been a Janus member since the early 1980s, conducted the first "SM flea market" in San Francisco in December, 1983. This was a Janus program meeting that was a flea market, where Thorn had bought old SM equipment she didn't want and wanted to 'get rid of it' and decided to have a flea market. Sybil recalls attending this "flea market" and buying a pair of black, custom made 3 inch platform shoes with a 7 inch heel and long ankle straps for \$5.00!

The next flea market, which may have the first actual "Community Exchange," took place in 1984 on a Sunday afternoon. Admission was \$1 and 38 people attended. Thorn recalls that she paid \$50 to rent the space (Shotwell Meeting House aka SMH) and traded Mistress Devora, the SMH owner a pair of suspension boots as payment for renting the place. Devora was looking for ways for SMH to bring money in and suggested having a 'kinky flea market.'

Six or seven vendors sold mostly used clothing at that first 'flea market,' making a total of \$400. At first, the Exchanges were only held once a year, Thorn spent six months trying to set up dates that wouldn't conflict with other SM events. Thorn wanted everyone to be able to participate. One interesting thing Josh recalls about the early flea markets was that several people would go into an adjoining patio area that SMH had to "try out" their toys on their partners or have their partners try them out on them. This patio area was totally enclosed so people could do this without any "outsiders" knowing about this! After Shotwell, exchanges were also held at the Women's Building and now are held in a building near Market and Van Ness in downtown San Francisco.

Nowadays, vendors at the Exchanges are selling mostly brand new equipment, whereas in the early days it was mostly used clothing and SM toys. Within the last year or so, Janus members Robert H and Vicci G have run similar flea markets called "Kinky Karnivals" in the Bay Area, which are run at different times of the year than the Community Exchange. Like the Community Exchange, it is mostly 'toymakers' selling their toys. Other cities, like Los Angeles and Boston also now have "SM flea markets" as well.

A more recent 'addition' to the Exchange was started in 1995 by Phil D. The "Fandango parties" now take place after the flea markets. Phil had noticed people "milling around" after the flea

market had closed, some of them with "toys" they had bought at the flea market in effect with "nowhere to go" to use them. He talked with several community members, all of whom were lukewarm to the idea. He then mentioned it to Greg, who was very enthusiastic about the idea and offered to help Phil and August K put the parties together. The parties would be limited strictly to flea market attendees and as such would not attract just the "Janus people," but instead a cross-section of scene-minded people, a concept Greg thought was wonderful.

Greg and Greg's partner Carmilla helped Phil and August put on the first three Fandango parties, then bowed out. Since then Phil and August have added one more person (Tim) who helps with the lighting at Fandango parties. These parties usually run between 6:30 pm until midnight.

Oral History

In early 1984, a project was started by Frank J, Brandy, Josh and Karen to interview members of the community to document the history of SM. However, after only a handful of people (including Janus members Don Miesen, Lady Thorn, and Brandy) were interviewed, the project was dropped due to other issues (LA Janus, Incorporation, etc.) taking precedence. Regrettably, the tapes of those interviews have disappeared.

SM Contingent

Janus had first marched in the Pride Parade in 1978. However, it wasn't until 1986 that there was any organized SM "contingent" that marched. Carol T organized the first SM contingent that year. She recalls her role in setting this up in a memo to the Gay/Lesbian History Archives, dated April 8, 1998:

"The first conversations that led to the formation and appearances of the San Francisco Bay Area SM Community contingent ... took place between me and Strap (a 15 Association member) at the Folsom Street Fair in 1985 ... Strap and I talked to our respective clubs (Janus and the 15) and in November, 1985 in my function as Janus' communications secretary, I wrote to as many local SM organizations as I could find, asking if they were interested in participating."

"A couple of fairly short, apparently very efficient meetings were held, at which responsibilities were divided up. Judging by the continuity of notes in my file, everything seems to have moved smoothly for the first year or two. Outcasts made a banner in 1986, and one was made for the community as a whole (Bay Area SM Community). Janus and the 15 each had its own organizational banner. The original expectation was that people from each organization would share holding the community banner, and that each organization's members would carry their own club banners behind them."

"This led to a couple of problems in 1988, the second year in which the One and Only Original Precision Whip Drill team marched. The front of the contingent, with the community banner, didn't realize the drill team was performing its routines behind it, so the front went marching on ahead. The rest of the contingent, with the clubs banners and members, waiting patiently (enjoying the view), several causing a very wide gap in the contingent. After that parade we tried to work out a way to minimize the gap and to give each other club a chance to be the first one in the

contingent. The 15 chose to drop out ... largely because of the many non-club members who were marching at the very front of the contingent, behind the community banner ... In 1989 Outcasts and Janus marched as a two-organization contingent. The whip drill team had disbanded, having won a Cable Car Award for its participation in the parade..."

"From watching the parade on TV for the last couple of years, it's obvious that an SM-identified contingent marches, complete with bullwhip wielding and the Morris White Rat dancers with bells sewn onto their bodies ... In 1997, Outcasts laid itself down and I don't know whether Exiles marched as an organization in that parade, its first year of existence."

Carol recalls too that there wasn't any real resistance to setting up the contingent in 1986, but "there was an acute apathy from a number of the organizations; as in people not getting back in touch even to say they weren't interested. I'd sent out a letter to all the known existing clubs: Outcasts, Janus, and The 15 Association were essentially in at the beginning anyway. I don't remember if I sent second letters or not, but Outcasts, Janus and The 15 were the original formal participants and the expenses were shared among us. A fair number of people joined the contingent from the sidelines the first year and, I think, in subsequent years."

The SM contingent has now become an integral part of the SF Pride parade. Several other SM groups in addition to the ones mentioned have marched in the contingent. Janus has marched in it every year since its inception.

Folsom Street Fair

1984 also marked the first Folsom Street Fair, an annual leather event in San Francisco (and now the final event of Leather Week in SF) that takes place the last Sunday in September. The fair attracts artisans, "toy merchants", and people (leatherfolk and 'vanilla' tourists) from all over the world. There are two performance stages and one dance area that provide continuous entertainment.

The Fair was started in 1984 by a group of community organizers and housing activists to make a political statement to let "outsiders" know that the area (also known as SOMA or South of Market) was not a "slum" in need of redevelopment, but was an area already "occupied." AIDS and 'gentrification' of the neighborhood had forever changed what had been a primarily gay leather neighborhood with leather bars on virtually every corner. Janus has a booth at this fair every year.

In 1985, a second street fair, called the "Up Your Alley Fair" was started in San Francisco. It was originally held on Ringold Alley in San Francisco and in 1987 was moved to Dore Alley between Harrison and Folsom Streets in San Francisco. A nonprofit corporation called SMMILE now runs both fairs, which have both become important social events for the community.

AIDS and the Community

Several of the people I interviewed spoke of the pre-AIDS days being the "Golden Age" of SM or as Kat Sunlove calls it, "the Camelot era." She recalls, "People were open and adventurous, it was all so new and fresh. We felt like we were on the cutting edge of human sexuality exploration."

We were a real community and family and there was much less of a distinction between the social and commercial aspects of SM."

The parties held in the late 1970s and early 1980s were truly pansexual, with straights playing next to and with gay men and lesbians. When people began to be diagnosed with AIDS, and then later dying of it, the "pansexual" aspect of parties changed, probably forever. The straights, fearful they too would get AIDS, stopped attending the parties. Today, there are very few if any truly "pansexual" parties going on in the San Francisco scene.

The effect AIDS had on Janus, its members and the leather community was staggering. Most members either had friends and/or lovers contract AIDS and watched them suffer and later die from it. Scores of creative and knowledgeable leatherfolk died from AIDS. The knowledge and creativity these people brought to the community who were lost forever. Janus and the SF community have felt its effect in numerous ways. One example of course would be Cynthia who was found to be HIV+ in 1985, developing AIDS two years later, and dying of it in 1989.

To try to go into further detail about the effect AIDS had on the San Francisco leather community here would be redundant, since many others have written articles and books about it and described its effects much better than I could. One excellent essay about AIDS and its effect on the leather community is *Elegy for the Valley of Kings: AIDS and the Leather Community in San Francisco, 1981-1996* and is written by Dr. Gayle Rubin. It appears in the book *In Changing Times*, edited by Martin P. Levine, Peter M. Nardi, and John H. Gagnon, University of Chicago press.

SM Art Faire

In September of 1987, right before the "LA Janus civil war" started to "rage" at business meetings, Karen M, who was a Janus co-coordinator at the time organized the **SM Art Faire**. She rented a large room at Fort Mason (a complex of buildings in the Marina district of San Francisco) where people could display and sell their art work or photos. As Karen recalls, there were approximately 15 artists that day. There was also a stage show with six to eight acts. People got to exhibit their art work and see a stage show. One of the acts was the Precision Whip Drill Team (more about them in the next section) and Vanessa, a long-time Janus member was one of the stage acts, doing a dance. This event was a huge success, which generated the most money for Janus that any single event had done to that point in Janus history.

Precision Whip Drill Team

The Precision Whip Drill Team was organized by Jay Marston. with encouragement and help of Elizabeth and Stacey D in 1987. It was made up primarily of women from the Outcasts (SF women's SM group of the time), some female Janus members and any other female members of the SM community interested in being a part of it. It also had two or three men in it including Mark Joplin, who was one of the drummers for them. Josh was even a member briefly, but dropped out due to time constraints. The "Drill Team" lasted for two years and had between 16 to 20 members. It won the "Cable Car Award" the second year (1988) it marched in the Pride parade. However, interest in it eventually fizzled out and after two years was discontinued.

By-laws

In 1987-88, a set of By-laws governing the day to day operation of Janus was put into place. Janus had had "rules" governing the running of the group almost since its inception. In fact several by-laws had been set in place in the early 1980s, but this was the first attempt to set "true" bylaws in place. One reason it was decided to set by-laws in place was the LA Janus 'civil war' that was taking place at that time.

A committee made up of Jeremy F (who was a lawyer), Steve K, Karen M, and Don Miesen set about to create the bylaws. One of the reasons for doing this was that in order for Janus to be run as a non-profit corporation, they needed to have by-laws in place. The bylaws were needed more for state government regulations for running a non-profit organization, than for running the group and its members. Another reason for the by-laws was that it was felt that in Janus there was "too much power among too few people," and steps needed to be taken to prevent that.

The bylaws covered areas such as how officers would be elected, how business meetings would be run, how to deal with disciplinary actions against any member, and types of program meetings Janus would have. The process of creating these rules took four to five months, and were the subject of much debate in the GP's at the time, but were eventually ratified at a Janus business meeting.

In 1997, these By-Laws (as well as Policies and Procedures which were written and ratified by Janus in the mid 1990s) were modified by a new committee. Al was one Janus member involved heavily in this project. After some debate and discussion, the modifications to the Policies were approved by the Business Meeting and are currently being used to govern Janus.

Incorporation, which had been discussed and attempted twice in the 1980s however was still years away from becoming a reality. There were those in Janus who feared member confidentiality would be lost if Janus became incorporated and were "forced" to submit financial reports as well as membership information to the state of California. In 1997, thanks to Jerolyn (the Janus Treasurer at the time), Janus finally became a non-profit corporation recognized by the state of California. There is more about the Incorporation attempt in the section about Janus in the 1990s.

Playspaces: From Catacombs to Castlebar

Throughout Janus' later history, there have been Janus parties (starting in the 1980s). Other individuals and groups hosted parties in a number of different locations throughout San Francisco and the greater Bay Area. First, of course, was the Catacombs, which started out as a male fisting playspace in the 1970s and had three "incarnations," the first on 21st Street, the second being a short-lived space on Larkin, the third being a space on Shotwell. The "Shotwell" Catacombs later became Shotwell Meeting House in the mid to late 1980s. More recently parties (both Janus and private parties) have been held in playspaces like The Holy Place, Eros, and Castlebar I and II.

The Catacombs was in some ways a legendary playspace. Many people I interviewed spoke of Catacombs as being a "magical place" and of incredible energy among the participants. Kaye Buckley recalls attending an early party at the Catacombs:

"I remember Amber and myself at a Catacombs party - one of the earliest mixed parties, way before "Queer" in vogue. Taking a break from playing, Amber and I leaned against the wall and sat observing the large group of people of various gender

orientations playing together. The mix of energy was very magical and very connected. Amber commented: "Look at this..a whole roomful of people, all loving each other." That is a remark I'll always treasure, one which said something about the essence of How It Was Then. There was such a sense of intimacy, innocence and wonder in those pre-HIV days of the late 70's. As Amber Rae said, "It mattered to those people and they knew it."

The book *LeatherFolk*, edited by Mark Thompson and published by Alyson Publications, contains a wonderful essay about the Catacombs, entitled *Temple of the Butthole*

One custom that started at Catacombs parties and was carried over to Shotwell was the playing of a tape of a song called the "Hallelujah Chorus (Hallelujah 2000, according to Carol T)." When that song came on, it was a 'signal' for everyone to get out on the floor and start playing. Fred Heramb, the original Catacombs owner had first introduced the song, but Mark Joplin later "reworked" it. Sybil recalls the song:

"Fred introduced it, but it was Mark who made it so long. Mark was a genius when it came to music. He ... made really great party tapes where you couldn't hear the splices. So he made this lo-o-o-ng version of HC, didn't tell Fred it was extra long, and played it. Fred was whipping away, and finally said something to the effect of "When the ---- is this going to end!"

The "Chorus" was a 14 minute long disco version, complete with loud thumping, designed to get people up off their seats and into the dungeon. It was a popular custom at New Year's Eve parties in the 1980s to start the tape around ten or fifteen minutes to midnight, so that right at midnight, the "crescendo" of the song would be playing! After a few years or so of this however, this practice "got old" and is no longer done.

Playspaces seem to be a very fragile thing, something to be appreciated during their all too short life. In the San Francisco community (and in most other cities I'm sure), they seem usually not to last for very long. There are many reasons for this, not so much the "paranoia" that you will be 'busted' for running a SM party house by the police, but rather that some people won't like the way the playspace is run and will constantly complain to the proprietor, there will be mismanagement of the space or owners who suddenly decide to sell the building where the playspace is! And in a city like San Francisco with exceptionally high rents, finding a suitable building to rent as a playspace is extremely difficult, if not impossible!

Over the years, various Janus members have had private party groups. Cynthia herself hosted or attended numerous private parties at the Catacombs as well as her own apartment. She also ran "Clean and Sober" parties after when she became a recovering alcoholic. Mark J and his partner of the time Cleo later took them over and they became known as the "Down and Dirty" parties. Mark later renamed them the "Serpent Mountain" parties, which were run by a variety of people over the years. First it was Mark J and Cleo, then Mark and Wendy D, then Mark J, Wendy D and Cleo, then Cleo and Sybil, then Cleo, Sybil and Greg L, then Sybil and Greg L, then finally Greg L and Carmilla. The Serpent Mountain party "group" lasted into the early to mid 1990s. A number of lesbian women have also had women's parties in this period, inviting and including female Janus members as guests.

The advent of AIDS of course greatly affected not just the community, but the parties as well. It was due to the efforts of the people mentioned in the previous paragraph who helped keep the parties going during the mid and late 1980s and into the 1990s that helped the community to survive.

Currently there are a handful of Janus members who host parties in dungeons in their own private homes. Elizabeth W, who had a prominent role in Janus during the LA Janus days has run her own "group" and play space called House of Differences in San Francisco since the early 1990s. Another small group of Janus members in the South Bay area (San Jose) recently started a discussion/party group called Odyssey, which has held two successful parties this year.

The "great" Safe Sex rules debate

Speaking of parties, a vote was taken in the late 1980s which affected the way Janus parties were to be held. This vote was to decide whether Janus parties should require barrier protection where body fluids might be exchanged. This debate had raged for a few years already in Janus as members had watched friends and loved ones die of AIDS. The argument in favor of safe sex rules was that as an educational group, Janus was obligated to enforce mandatory barrier protection at its parties as a way to show the community they were serious about making an effort to stop the spread of AIDS.

The argument against mandatory barrier protection was that people who went to parties should know enough about how AIDS was being spread that they would use barrier protection as well as the fact that monogamous couples who never used condoms or gloves at home in their play would now be forced to use them at parties. Another argument in favor of barrier protection rules was that at Janus parties, gay men felt "singled out" in terms of having to use condoms. It was felt that if everyone had to practice safe sex rules, even those who weren't in "high risk groups," that those who might practice high risk behavior would feel more comfortable in attending.

In the late 1980s, the question was put before the Janus members in the form of a ballot that was mailed to them. The measure failed by a count of 29 against, 25 for mandatory barrier protection at parties. Jay Wiseman to this day feels that the Janus majority had spoken AGAINST having 'safe sex' rules at parties. However, it should be pointed out that at this time Janus had approximately 500 members, which could be construed to mean that 445 or so members didn't seem to care one way or the other about the issue! Pat C wrote a scathing letter to Janus after the vote, in effect saying "How dare we disregard this plague?"

Greg L was nominated as party director during this time and made it clear when asked that he would institute mandatory safe sex rules at Janus parties. Greg was still nominated and elected Party Director. He and his successor Evan did indeed have barrier protection rules at all Janus parties. This "debate" went on into the early 1990s. There were a few business meetings during this period where people "stacked" the meeting with "allies" who would vote against the safe sex rules policy. However, when the issue again came to a vote at a subsequent business meeting among the business meeting attendees, they voted in favor of having mandatory barrier protection at parties, a practice that continues on to this very day.

October, 1989

October, 1989 was a rough month for Janus and San Francisco of course. The Loma Prieta earthquake occurred on Oct. 17 and Cynthia's death from AIDS came exactly one week later. Because the San Francisco - Oakland Bay Bridge had been damaged by the 'quake and closed for repairs, getting over to Janus programs was made more difficult. There were pleas made for

carpools to and from programs, so that members could more easily get to and from them, at least until the bridge was reopened.

Cynthia was dying and in the last weeks of her life, Janus members arranged a "round the clock" vigil for Cynthia, because she had asked not to be left alone. There would always be at least one person with her at all times. Maggie R recalls going over to visit Cynthia in the hospital to bathe her the night of the earthquake in spite of the possible danger of falling objects from aftershocks, because as she puts it, "I wanted to obey Cynthia's wishes. "

The night of Cynthia's death (Oct. 24, 1989), Pat Califia was half an hour into a program on Slave Training when there was a phone call. The call was to announce Cynthia had died. The announcement was made to the audience. For a few moments, Pat and others tried to decide whether to call off the meeting in Cynthia's memory or continue on. Pat decided that in honor of Cynthia's true spirit, the program would go on. A memorial service was held for Cynthia several days later that numerous people attended. There is also a memorial brick with Cynthia's name on it near the Golden Gate bridge in San Francisco. The November, 1989 Growing Pains issue became a tribute to Cynthia.

So as the 1980s came to a close, Janus said goodbye to one of its original founders. By the time of her death however, Cynthia had little or no involvement in Janus. She had stopped taking an active role in Janus in the early 1980s and was rarely seen at Janus programs or business meetings after that. Only a few "old-timers" in Janus knew her well. Her death was also not a major shock since she had been ill for some time. What had really taken the most out of Janus was the LA Janus 'war', and people by the end of 1989 were tired of the bickering that had gone on during the previous few years.

The 1990s

Transformation and Change

As the 1990s began, Janus and its members looked to the future. Janus at the time had approximately 450 members, among them energetic officers like Steve K, Mic B, and Greg L who contributed much to the organization. The 1990s would prove to be a decade of great change not only in Janus and the SF community, but to BDSM as well.

D/s Discussion Group

At a Janus picnic in approximately 1993 or 1994 with 40 members in attendance, the idea of a "special interest group," devoted specifically to discussion of Dominance and submission issues was proposed. Robert H and August K had noted that within Janus, all activities and parties were devoted strictly to SM, with very little or nothing devoted to the psychological or D/s issues of SM. They proposed a group as Phil puts it "to address these issues." Robert H's and August K's spouses (Vicci G and Phil D) supported their idea and the D/s Discussion Group was born. At first it was run as a group independently of Janus, because it was felt the group could do more as an independently run group. Group meetings went from "home to home" over the next year. A year or so later, the group acquired new leaders Marie and Dan R, who decided to turn it into a Janus-sponsored group, complete with a D/s Discussion Group officer. The group currently meets at their home on the third Sunday afternoon of each month.

The Internet

One major change that unarguably has had a huge impact on BDSM has been the Internet. I think it's safe to say that the Internet for better or worse has changed the BDSM scene forever. As Jay Wiseman puts it, the Internet "has made SM more findable."

An Internet newsgroup called alt.sex.bondage was started around the late 1980s on the 'net. Alt.sex.bondage or asb for short was an Internet 'newsgroup' devoted to discussions of topics related to BDSM. People could post questions to the newsgroup or respond to other peoples questions or comments as well as 'flame' (criticize another person's 'post' to the group) them. The newsgroup lasted several years without serious problems, other than individual posters disagreeing with each other. However it began to be overrun with posts that were 'commercial advertisements' (also known as 'spam') and a new group called soc.subculture.bondage-bdsm was created in 1997 or so, which exists to this very day.

BDSM electronic mailing lists, including one locally that was first called BABES (Bay Area Bondage Enthusiasts), then BAST (Bay Area Sexually Twisted) began forming in the early to mid 1990's as the 'Net became more popular. BAST was discontinued in the mid 1990s and was later replaced by a mailing list known as the Frenzi list. In 1999, there probably are approximately 15 or 20 different Bay Area BDSM mailing lists alone. Nationwide, there are now likely several hundred BDSM lists, if not more!

Another 'Net phenomenon have been the advent of "online chat rooms." America On Line (AOL), a well-known national Internet Service Provider (ISP) has had BDSM chat rooms for several years. In the early 1990s, Internet Relay Chat (IRC) was invented and also began spawning numerous online chat rooms or "channels" as they are known. There are now numerous IRC channels devoted to BDSM. On the positive side, these chat rooms have allowed people into SM to find each other. However, on the negative side, there are some who will claim they are into BDSM when they really aren't, or are looking for "one-handed material" or are closet abusers masquerading as Dom/mes or subs into SM. The old Latin term "let the buyer beware" may very need to be changed to "let the user beware" when it comes to online BDSM.

The first "BurgerMunch"

One byproduct of the Internet's effect on BDSM has been the advent of "munches." Munches have become a no-pressure filled way of meeting other like-minded scene folk. They have been known to take place virtually anywhere, but are most commonly held in a restaurant or coffee house. The original munch or "Burgermunch" took place here in the SF Bay Area in 1992.

Thanks to STella™, these munches are now commonplace not only throughout the United States, but the world. STella, who later was a Janus member briefly posted an article on the asb newsgroup one day, saying that she would be at Kirk's, a Palo Alto (town located about a 45 minute drive south of SF) hamburger stand that evening, and anyone wishing to join her was welcome to do so. Several people did indeed show up, and the "BurgerMunch" as it was known back then was born. The idea of "munches" being a pressure-free place for people with an interest in SM to meet (usually in a restaurant or coffeehouse) slowly caught on in other cities over the next few years. Incidentally, the 'descendant' of that first original Burgermunch is still held every Thursday; however it has had several different locations over the years. It currently meets at a coffee house not too far from its original location.

The Janus website was created and started in 1994. Janus has had three "WebMasters" in the last five years; first Mark L, then Laurie O, and currently Todd H.

Phil D was the Outreach Director in the mid 1990s and was concerned that the site didn't have an adequate "warning page" i.e. a way to let people "surfing the web" (going to different web sites) that they had stumbled onto an adult web page. He expressed this concern to other Janus officers that they might be liable to be sued if a web user stumbled upon the site and became offended at what they saw. The officers assured him it was not a big deal and was nothing in effect to worry about. This was at a time when there was growing concern about a bill that had been ratified in Congress called the Communications Decency Act (CDA). This bill was perceived as a major threat to free speech on the Internet, but eventually was struck down as unconstitutional.

Phil was friends with Todd H and after a few tries convinced him to become the WebMaster. At the time, the WebMaster reported directly to the Outreach Director. Phil lobbied hard for Todd to become the new WebMaster. At the June 1997 Business Meeting, Phil nominated Todd for the position. There were two others who also wanted to be the WebMaster; Mic B and Laurie (the Web "mistress" at the time). However Laurie was ill that evening and couldn't attend the meeting. It came down to a vote among the officers between Mic and Todd, and Todd was elected to be the new WebMaster

Todd recalls taking it over:

"When I found out I was the new WebMaster, I grabbed a few beers at the nearby Safeway after the meeting to celebrate. It took a couple weeks to get the password for the site but once I got it, I redid everything. I spent about 20 hours that first weekend changing the background and text colors and also searching for informational and BDSM group sites that I could put "links" to on the Janus site. Janus gets a lot of calls and letters from across the US from people looking for groups in their areas. I felt the site could be a good resource for those people."

"I also strongly felt, and still feel, that the Janus site could be a valuable tool for those people 'online' new to BDSM who want to explore it. Having spent lots of time in online chat rooms, it's scary to me how many online have no clue what 'real' BDSM is all about! It has been so gratifying to me that so many people have complimented me on the site and that they appreciate and understand what I was trying to do."

Todd H turned the Janus web site into one that now receives approximately 1000 hits a day and is listed on a few BDSM online resource lists. The site contains links to some informational BDSM sites, and also contains a huge list of other cities' SM groups' web sites. Reaction to the changes Todd made to the web site were overwhelmingly positive as he turned what had been a nondescript site into something that became a valuable community resource.

While Todd did also put up a warning page on the site, he is quick to point out that in this day and age, having a warning page on any adult-oriented site does not automatically protect you from "harm" if someone feels like taking legal action against the site. However, such legal action would prove to be quite time-consuming and very expensive and most likely not worth anyone's time.

Incorporation

In 1998, the Society of Janus became an official non-profit corporation registered with the state of California. Two attempts had been made at incorporation in 1982-1983, with Herb C filing a Doing Business As (DBA) statement with the state of California. Herb and Josh signed the incorporation papers with Herb reportedly notarizing them. Janus even set up Cynthia, Vince P (Janus member originally from New Jersey) and Josh as the Janus Board of Directors. This board was mostly just a 'figurehead' board and had no real power. In fact, virtually all of the time that Vince was on the Board, he had already moved back to New Jersey and had not made any contact with anyone in Janus.

Frank later checked and discovered that somehow the incorporation papers never made it to the California Secretary of State. Another attempt at incorporation was done in 1983-84 but this attempt never got very far. Many Janus members felt if Janus became a non profit corporation, this would allow the state of California access to the Janus membership list. In actuality, if the state decided to conduct a civil or criminal investigate or any other group based in California, they could legally subpoena any and all records (including membership lists) of Janus at any time, whether they were a non-profit group or not. Another obstacle to incorporation was that Janus had originally of course been an "underground" group when this process started and many members preferred to remain anonymous.

Members also confused the term "non-profit corporation" with "charitable non-profit group." In a charitable non-profit group, no profit is allowed over approved expenses is allowed. However, a non-profit corporation is allowed to have money in its Treasury. Since Janus has as of this writing, over \$10K in its Treasury, this was a major concern to both officers and members. There was also the problem of setting up a "corporate structure" in accordance with California state law. This would mean that Janus would need a President, Vice-president, and Treasurer offices.

Another problem with incorporation was that Janus was a "participatory democracy." All members had a vote in how the group was run (as opposed to Threshold in Los Angeles, for example, where only the officers can vote on how the organization is run). Because of the way Janus was run, incorporation was made more difficult.

Phil D felt that Janus should become a non-profit group because of the concern that the state might require Janus to file old tax returns. He feared Janus had not done this years ago, and making themselves a non-profit corporation would absolve them of any responsibility to do this now.

In 1997, Jerolyn B, the Janus Treasurer at the time set out on a third attempt to "incorporate" Janus. She spoke with a few Janus members familiar with the two previous incorporation attempts and the concerns of people about incorporation. She also listened to a cassette tape that contained information about the two previous attempts and people's issues and concerns about this.

After getting all this information, Jerolyn wrote an "outline" paper that was published in *Growing Pains* addressing these concerns, explaining to all members the need to incorporate and assuring them among other things that members suddenly wouldn't be "outed," and that becoming a non-profit incorporation would protect the members from any financial liability that might be incurred through Janus.

There was a vote for incorporation soon after that. The ballots were included in the same envelope as the newsletter is sent in. Jerolyn doesn't recall the exact vote, however it was

overwhelmingly in favor of incorporating Janus. Only one or two people voted against it as she recalls.

Once Jerolyn got member approval to go forward with incorporation, she put an ad in the newsletter asking for an attorney's help with the incorporation. After about a month or so, Carolyn Y, a San Jose attorney who specializes in incorporation's contacted Jerolyn, saying she was willing to help. She helped with the legal aspects of turning Janus into a nonprofit corporation, filing incorporation papers with the government.

There were actually two steps to this process. The first step is filing the legal papers and the second step was filing statements with both the Internal Revenue Service and the Franchise Tax Board (FTB), California's state tax income board. In California, any group is still obligated to pay taxes until the FTB recognizes your group as a tax-exempt non-profit organization. Since Jerolyn is a CPA, it was easy for her to file the papers needed for the IRS and FTB.

At this point, sometime in mid 1997, thanks to Jerolyn's hard work, Janus became a non-profit incorporation and remains so to this day.

Newcomers Discussion Group

Started in 1998 by current Janus Orientation Director Maryann B, the group holds meetings once a month for any Northern California people new to BDSM. While it is not a Janus-sponsored group, it was created by Maryann as a "safe place to learn about your rights and responsibilities, and to discuss bringing your fantasies to reality." The group covers a number of topics in its monthly meetings including: safety, ethics, party manners, socializing, and any BDSM topics that attendees might ask about.

Epilogue

As Janus celebrates its 25th anniversary, the organization and its almost 700 members can look back at a group that for a lot of years during its existence may have been close to being the "only game in town" for a lot of people. In the 1970s, Janus and TES in NYC were probably the only organized SM groups around. In the 1980s, groups began forming in a few cities (LA Janus, DADS in Denver, Chicagoland Discussion Group, the National Leather Association, ORGASM in Portland, the PEP groups, for example) With the advent of the 'Net however, people are more apt to discover other like-minded individuals and decide to form their own groups. As a result, SM groups across the US now are being organized and created at a remarkable rate, one that just a few years ago would have been unthinkable!

I was recently told by a scene acquaintance that currently in the SF Bay Area there are approximately 15 different SM groups! Some of these are discussion groups, some are strictly munch or party groups. San Francisco always has had a reputation for having a diversified scene and that is very true today as we approach this so-called millennium.

People in the local scene I've spoken with recently seem to feel time "has passed Janus by," that it is too stodgy, too "ravaged by politics," and too set in its ways to be a viable force in the local scene anymore. While these complaints may have some merit, I have to wonder if these same things were said about Janus in the 1980s? Janus is a volunteer group, and is only as good (or as bad) as the people in it. Are all these other local groups bereft of the same problems that Janus is encountering? What about groups in other cities?

When I first joined Janus in 1991, I was told it was an "umbrella organization" and the people I met there might lead me to private party groups or other local SM organizations. I think that is still true about Janus and while there are many other outlets both here and nationwide for people to explore SM, Janus is still attracting members. So with all the supposed "problems" Janus has, they still must be doing something right.

I have attempted over the last 35 or so pages to document the history of Society of Janus. It is not perfect, but then again what history or attempt to document one is? It's my hope that my history will motivate those in other communities to write similar histories of their scenes. We all have the right to know about our past. As Kaye Buckley said to me when I interviewed her for this project, "We can't know where we are until we know where we have been."

Bios

This section is a brief "look back" at the people who have contributed the most to Janus over the years.

Cynthia Slater

Obviously without Cynthia, Janus and perhaps the San Francisco SM community as we know it today would not exist. It would take a separate document to fully describe all that she did for our community. Pat Califia, a one-time lover, shares her thoughts about Cynthia:

"Cynthia was one of those people who are larger than life. She always seemed to be able to think faster, talk louder, play harder, and do more drugs than anybody else in the room. She was a brave and articulate woman who took enormous risks by coming out of the closet about SM and doing educational speaking engagements. For example, she almost single-handedly turned San Francisco Sex Information into an SM-positive organization. She was physically beautiful, with long black hair and a striking face. Her lifelong dream was to find a master who would understand her as a submissive and a masochist and give her a context for those desires. Unfortunately, this was a difficult desire to satisfy, as many of us know. She was also a gifted and ingenious top who introduced a lot of people to the scene."

"On the down side, Cynthia was as passionate about her anger as she was about her affection. If you got on her shit list, you weren't ever coming off of it. Even on her death bed, she managed to find enough anger to say something vindictive to an old lover who she had never forgiven. She was self-centered and her addictions were out of control. At a certain point doctors told her if she kept on drinking she would kill herself. And so for a few years she got sober, and held the first clean-and-sober play parties in San Francisco. That was during the 80s. But when she got her diagnosis of AIDS, she was not able to maintain her sobriety ..."

"I want to be clear that Cynthia's positive qualities, in my heart, far outshone her ability to be a major pain in the ass. She was a joyous and gutsy woman who went after what she wanted in a time when you paid a very heavy price for that. She was always in the forefront of any effort to make things better for leather people ... I wish her life had been happier. Certainly she facilitated happiness for many other people."

Cynthia, as mentioned previously, moved to San Francisco with her partner of the time, Larry Olsen, in 1971. She started doing pro Domme sessions in her apartment and within a year or so began to see the need for a SM education/support group in San Francisco. Cynthia got involved with San Francisco Sex information in 1972, when it was first starting out, starting the SM segment of the training, delivering sex-positive info about SM.

Drawing inspiration from the people who formed TES in NYC in 1971, she and Larry started one group in 1973, which she burned out on some months later. She started another group some months later with the help of several gay leatherman. This group was Janus.

During the 1970s and into the 1980s, Cynthia helped train several pro Dommies, among them Kaye Buckley. Kaye worked as a pro Domme at Cynthia's house in 1976-77 and became a Janus member through knowing Cynthia. She said Cynthia provided training for pro Dommies that was "above and beyond" the training anyone else was doing at the time. Kaye goes on to recall more about Cynthia:

"Jay and Amber had known Cynthia from their days in the Sexual Freedom League, and found Cynthia sophisticated and knowledgeable. One day, Jay called her and took me in role as *kazaba*, pleasure slave, to meet her and show her something about our private play. After putting kazaba through her paces for Cynthia, he took her out of role, and "*kazaba*" then became "Kaye." Cynthia had been considering opening her "Black Chapel" (as I called her playroom) for others to use professionally. We spent the rest of the afternoon talking about it, and I began to work at Cynthia's in my various roles as a Switch. It was there that the second phase of my training began, both privately as well as professionally. Cynthia, being a "sexual witch" taught me about SM on a whole other level."

"Cynthia was known professionally as "The Mistress." I remember her at one of the earliest Cardea meetings, when we were still using the "rap format." She talked about how important bottoming was to her. As a top with such an impressive reputation, she showed me and other women that it was possible to bottom from a position of strength, self-esteem and turn on. She was a very important role model for women who wanted to feel good about themselves as bottoms, who wanted to challenge themselves (and those who topped them!) to have the best and most empowering experiences they could."

Sybil is another pro Domme who knew Cynthia well recalls her: "Cynthia was very, very psychic and a wonderful person." Sybil also recalls like Pat that Cynthia could at times be "a pain in the ass." Sybil also recalls Cynthia being a humiliation expert and there were many sides to her. She alternated between being wonderful and horrible after she got AIDS, but also conversely became more vulnerable. Cynthia also was an expert at "mindfuck," which is another term for so-called mind play.

Probably one of the gutsiest things that Cynthia did in the 1970s was to go to gay male leather bars, along with Pat Califia and Gayle Rubin, not only "hanging out" in them but playing there as well. Noni recalls that the three of them took "quite a risk" by going to gay male leather bars in the 70s, as there was no gender tolerance then.

Cynthia was bisexual, playing with both women and primarily gay men. She loved the energy that gay men provided, and Cynthia was constantly meeting and "falling in love" with gay men, only to watch them leave her once they would find gay male lovers. Chris S, her last lover before she died recalls that "she didn't talk much about men in her past." Pat recalls that part of Cynthia:

"She had such a huge appetite for life, I don't think any single person could have kept her satisfied for very long. Given that she got involved with the gay male leather scene, this was especially difficult, since gay men are (of course) mostly interested in other gay men. She had a long, unrequited love for Steve McEachern, a gay man who operated The Catacombs ... Although Steve occasionally played with Cynthia, and pierced her nipples, he was never her lover, as she claimed after he died. Instead, they had a long and tragic history of Steve getting interested in the men Cynthia brought to The Catacombs, and (to her way of thinking) taking them away from her and becoming lovers with them. This is how Steve met Fred Heramb, who operated the second Catacombs after Steve died of a heart attack. Fred was originally one of Cynthia's dates to the Catacombs."

Cynthia also started "mixed energy" parties in SF in the late 1970s, with gays and hets playing together. When she stopped drinking, she started having the "Clean and Sober parties," that Pat C spoke of, where no alcohol was served. Eventually, she stopped having them and Mark Joplin took them over and renamed them the "Down and Dirty" parties. As the 80s started, Cynthia began to withdraw from actively participating in Janus, some say because she felt it was time to move on to other things. Bobby N feels that Cynthia left because "she felt people weren't willing to follow her, she wasn't getting the respect she deserved."

There also were those in Janus in the early 1980s (like Frank J) who felt Janus should start having parties, as it would be a good source of revenue. Cynthia always felt Janus should remain strictly an educational group. Consequently Cynthia and Frank J did not see "eye to eye." This may have also played a role in Cynthia pulling back on her involvement with Janus.

As dynamic a woman as Cynthia was, she also had her share of problems. She battled alcoholism for years (and started the first bisexual AA group at the Bisexual Center in SF), and was estranged from her daughters for most of the time she was involved in Janus. She had been "cut off" from her daughters by a court order obtained by her ex-husband and her mother, who were furious at her for leaving her previous marriage. As Pat C. mentions, Cynthia also had a fiery temper. If you got her angry for any reason, she usually stayed angry at you for a long time, if not forever.

In 1985, Cynthia was found to be HIV+. In the mid 1980s AIDS was still considered a 'gay man's disease' and women who got infected were treated poorly or largely ignored by the medical establishment. Chris S recalls that she had to "fight the whole system to get women with AIDS tested." She won an award from Shanti, an AIDS organization for helping to publicize the issues women with AIDS had. She also was active in women's AIDS groups and developed a switchboard for women with AIDS. She believed AIDS affected women differently than it did men and wanted to see more research done into that. Pat C recalls Cynthia's struggle with AIDS:

"She was one of the first women to deal with having AIDS. She was one of the first women to be out of the closet about that and educate people. It made her very bitter to feel that the same gay men who had partied with her and infected her did not want her to be part of the activism that addressed AIDS. So she just refused to be left out or excluded."

Chris S notes that after Cynthia became HIV+, she went back to college in San Francisco, finishing her degree and graduating as valedictorian of her class! She also spent one winter in the late 1980s as a ski instructor in the Sierras.

In 1987, Greg L organized a party for Cynthia in 1987 to help raise money to pay off her medical expenses. Bud R donated a few of his videos for sale, several pro Dommies including Sybil and

Kaye Buckley donated an hour of their time. There was also an auction where approximately 50 items were auctioned off and sold. After expenses, the party raised \$4000. It allowed one of Cynthia's daughters to fly out to San Francisco and also allowed Cynthia to meet her granddaughter for the first time. Dossie recalls: "This estrangement was always a source of tremendous grief for Cynthia and it was very important that she managed to get in contact with some of her children at the end of her life, when they were old enough to make their own decisions about their mother." This fund-raiser turned out to be one of the biggest fund-raisers Janus has ever had.

In 1989, a motion proposing that a "commemorative brick" bearing Cynthia's name at a spot near the Golden Gate bridge was brought up at a Janus meeting and passed. It reads: **Cynthia Slater Founder of Society of Janus - 1974**. It remains there to this day and as Wolf G (the current Janus coordinator) jokingly said to me about a year ago, "Cynthia tops all the other bricks out there."

Chris S also recalls that Cynthia could alternately be "wonderful" and "frightening" during her illness. In the last few weeks before her death, Cynthia wanted someone at her bedside 24 hours a day. Carol T helped arrange this "vigil" up by making numerous phone calls to Janus members, asking if they would spend a couple hours with her at the hospital (Pacific Presbyterian). Chris feels "Carol deserves a lot of credit" for arranging for people to be with Cynthia. Members of the lesbian community also helped out with the 'vigil.'

Sybil had just finished taking a class called The Home Care Companion Course for care givers of people with HIV., around the same time. The first meeting for volunteers to help 'take care' of Cynthia took place at Sybil's house. Over 20 people attended, and according to Sybil, they "created a structure for volunteers to shop, cook, clean, do laundry, run various errands, sit and talk with Cynthia, drive or accompany Cynthia to various doctor and other appointments, etc. Many people from Janus and the Outcasts helped."

Cynthia died on October 24, 1989. She had previously arranged for herself to be cremated and the ashes are at an unknown but reportedly illegal place. 75 people attended her memorial service, which was videotaped. The video was then sent to her daughters.

On a personal note, I deeply regret never having had the chance to meet or know this extraordinary woman.

Skip Aiken

Skip wrote *Don't Hide In the Closet Because There's Leather Inside*, a pamphlet about SM that is now included the Orientation packet Janus sends out to prospective members. He also edited *Growing Pains*.

Guy Baldwin

Was instrumental in helping to get Janus started by offering to and then helping Cynthia get the group "reorganized."

Kaye Buckley

Early Janus member who helped organize and run Cardea, along with Amber Rae and Jay M.

Pat Califia

An early Janus co-coordinator who became actively involved in Cardea. Pat also convinced Janus to march for the first time in the Pride Parade in 1978. She later went on to stay very active in the women's SM scene.

Herb C

One of the LA Janus founders. Herb also was a GP Editor in the early 1980s and was responsible for creating Rapid Release, as well as being Communications Secretary (1982-Jan. 1984) and Business Meeting Moderator.

Dossie Easton

An early Janus member and one of its first female members, Dossie helped form Cardea. She has co-written a handful of SM books and currently works as a scene-friendly therapist.

Wolf G

Wolf has been a Janus member since 1982 and has been Program Director and GP Editor twice, and Coordinator four times.

Noni Howard

One of the founders of the local community, Noni helped with organizing Janus when it first started. She also was the first person to introduce SM at local swinger's parties and "initiated" a number of early members into Janus. She also was among those helping to start the Bisexual Center in San Francisco. Noni held many officer positions in Janus in the 1970s and early 1980s including Program Director, Orientation Director, Coordinator, and Party Director. Noni also wrote (along with Don Miesen) the text and did the illustration for the "Hey Lady, Take a Dare" ad that was produced in 1982.

Frank J

Among other things, Frank J was responsible for ensuring that Janus kept its name after the vote to allow LA Janus to "secede" from Janus. He felt along with Josh and Karen F very strongly that the two "Januses" should not split. He started the procedure of having Robert's Rules of Order for Business Meetings when he was Business Meeting Moderator. Frank also hosted Janus Orientations and several parties at his house for several years. In fact, Jay freely admits to having written most of the original manuscript for his introductory SM book, *SM 101* in Frank J's basement!

Mark Joplin

Mark during his time in Janus provided much needed skills and leadership to the organization. He was a former Growing Pains editor, taking what had been something nondescript and turned it

into an entertaining monthly newsletter. While he was GP Editor, Mark did an interview (1983) with Cynthia Slater, quotes of which appear earlier in this history.

He also created the current Janus logo and in Sybil's words "helped keep Janus together." In approximately 1981 or 1982, Don Miesen (a Janus co-coordinator at the time) had a fire in his house and resigned his position. Mark, along with Josh and Karen F, and Lady Thorn took over running the organization. Mark also recruited Vince P to become a co-coordinator, and taught him about the organization, since Vince at the time was brand new to Janus.

Mark also started the "Down and Dirty Parties," which later became the Serpent Mountain parties. One of his other "claims to fame" was putting together tapes of music for play parties. He would skillfully mix different types of songs on these tapes. This tradition was carried on by Greg L at Serpent Mountain (and later Vermilion) parties for a while, but regrettably seems to be a lost art now.

After Mark's death from AIDS, Steve K proposed a scholarship be established in Mark's name for Janus members who are too poor to pay membership fees. In exchange for the scholarship, the members offer to do some 'work' for Janus, either in the form of artwork or articles for Growing Pains, or programs for Janus.

Josh S and Karen F

They, along with Herb C helped create the LA Janus chapter and contributed time and effort to raising money for the Pamela Githens Defense Fund. Josh was never a permanent Janus officer, while Karen F was the Orientation Secretary for four years. Because of their involvement with LA Janus, they were often present at business meetings and were very much involved in the day to day operation of Janus throughout most of the 1980s. Josh was also briefly the interim Program Director in 1982 or so.

Steve K

Steve has been a Janus member since the mid 1980s and since then has at one time or another held virtually every officer position within Janus with the exception of Party Director. Steve in some ways has really been an "unsung hero" in Janus and Jay Wiseman feels that Steve has done "great unrewarded work for Janus." He was Membership Secretary for four years in the mid to late 1980s and convinced the other officers to put the membership list on a computer for better accountability. Steve was the Treasurer for eight or nine years in the 1980s and formalized the Treasury Reports. He also created the Postmaster Officer position in 1985 after Janus encountered problems with losing several checks in the mail. He also has been at various times Janus Coordinator, temporary Program Director, temporary Outreach Director and Orientation Secretary.

Greg L

As mentioned before, in 1988 Greg organized a party/auction as a fund raiser to help defray Cynthia's medical bills. Many pro Dommes including Sybil donated an hour of "session" time to help raise money and these "sessions" were auctioned off. One of Cynthia's daughters was able to come out to San Francisco and re-unite with Cynthia, due to some of that money. The party raised \$4000 for Cynthia after expenses. Was Janus Program Director twice and in his second

term as PD in 1996-97, Greg had programs on many diverse topics, including one by Frank Strona called "Living with HIV." Greg also is a former Party Director and designed and built the booth that Janus uses at Pride Day and Folsom Street Fair. He was involved in organizing the Janus portion of the SM contingent at a handful of Pride Day parades and also produced several flyers advertising Society of Janus.

Greg also instituted what became known as the "no cruising rule" at Janus orientations. This rule was enacted because numerous Janus members (predominantly male) would show up at orientations and 'cruise' (i.e. 'ask out) new orientees (predominantly female), who felt uncomfortable with the unwanted attention. Greg did this because he "wanted to provide a safe place for everyone, no matter what their kink or gender; a safe place to discover and grow" at Janus orientations.

Jay M

Early Janus officer and GP Editor, was involved in a triad relationship with Kaye Buckley and Amber in the mid 70s to the mid 80s. He also came up with the name Cardea, for the late 1970's women's "SM rap group" that Janus started and did a lot of brainstorming and behind-the-scenes organizing of their meetings.

Karen M

A former Janus Program Director and also co-coordinator in 1987, during the LA Janus "war." She became a co-coordinator at the urging of Steve K who told her, "We really need someone to stand up to the other side because as she puts it, "Steve wanted to have a 'point man' to deal with the "anti-LA Janus split" people." Karen at the time felt that LA Janus should be allowed to split from Janus. She was instrumental in the process of allowing LA Janus to do this.

Don Miesen

Don Miesen was several different things to Janus. He was in some ways, Janus' link to the gay community after most gay male members left the organization. He also could be outrageous, loving to shock people. He also was an incredibly generous man who gave his time and energy not only to Janus, but to gay men "down on their luck" as well as several charities. Don also wrote one of the classic essays about SM called *What Is SadoMasochism*, as mentioned earlier in this document.

Many people in Janus referred to him as "Santa Claus," because he resembled both in appearance and temperament of the jolly old fellow. Pat Califia says of Don: "He was a big bear of a guy who had a large heart and a good reputation for responsible play ... He was present at almost every meeting and I recall him as a source of common sense at business meetings."

Guy Baldwin recalls: "Don attended meetings, spoke up often, and sometimes even made a pest out of himself by playing 'devil's advocate' ... Don was my landlord at Church and Market Street above a bar once called the Naked Grape. I was living there when I attended my first Janus meeting in the Sunset at Cynthia and Larry's place. He was a skilled bondage technician, and did mind control stuff and mental manipulation extremely well."

Don held several officer positions in Janus. He was a GP Editor, also created the position of Business Meeting Moderator, so that he'd always have a Janus officer position. He also ran the Janus orientations for four years, finally getting "kicked out" of that job because he reportedly used to tell orientees stories designed to shock them!

Don even had a rule named for him. The "Don Meisen rule" as it came to be known was enacted at a Janus business meeting in the early 1980s. Don had been a co-coordinator and at that time, co-coordinators also moderated the Business Meetings. Don planned to step down as co-coordinator and created the office of Business Meeting moderator mainly so that he could continue to moderate the business meetings.

Don was well-liked. He truly was a man with an open heart. He started the Community Thrift Store in San Francisco, with all proceeds going to different charities, mostly AIDS-related. He also was active with the gay rescue mission in San Francisco and took in the gay men who no one else wanted to take care of. He even had one man living on the porch of his boarding house!

In 1985, Jay Wiseman was badly injured in an auto accident and was unable to work for several months, surviving on general assistance payments and living in a run-down apartment in the Mission district. The area was so bad Jay tells of having to wire his door shut at night with chicken wire to keep people from breaking in to his apartment! Don found out about this and would take food to him and magazines and books to read. Jay recalls being amazed that a man he had barely known before his accident would be this charitable to him. Don also ran a boarding house. When one of his tenants moved out, Don asked Jay if he wanted to move in. Jay of course said yes and lived there for several months, until he could get back on his feet again.

Jay calls Don an "unconditionally generous man." He fed people who were starving. In fact as Jay puts it, "no one knows how many lives he saved, how many he kept from going hungry." Jay also recalls like Josh and Karen how outrageous he could be; calling him a "scamp" at Janus business meetings. Besides being as Jay says an incredibly generous man, he also liked to shock people, more for the sake of shocking them than anything else.

Jay also feels Don didn't get the recognition he deserved from Janus for all that he contributed to the organization. He feels that Don's death "left a hole in the community." After Don's death in 1992, Jay received all of Don's papers, including a manuscript Don was working on at the time, which was about the origins of SM! Hopefully, one day this manuscript will be edited and published.

Larry Olsen

Larry along with Cynthia founded Janus and up until now has not gotten the credit he should receive. This is due probably in large part to the fact that Cynthia and Larry were lovers who had a reportedly nasty breakup in 1976, after which Cynthia referred to herself as the sole founder of Janus.

Amber Rae

One of the first female Janus members; was one of the founders of Cardea. She was involved in a triad relationship at one time with Jay M. and Kaye Buckley. Kaye, Jay and Amber also participated in many early Janus programs.

Bud Russell

One of the vendors at various Community Exchanges has been a Janus member named Bud Russell. Bud along with Bob Bishop (the late artist) wound up helping produce a video called *Story of k*, starring Kaye Buckley in 1980. It was the first of a genre of SM film using real SM players doing real scenes, not just models pretending. It was co-written by Jay M, Kaye and Amber Rae. It was the precursor to such videos as "Journey into Pain" and "Pain Suite." Kaye recalls:

"Bud Russell and Bob Bishop had called Cynthia because they wanted to try putting together a video with people who were really into SM, which up to that point had never been done. They didn't know whether they could sell it or not. Cynthia called me, and I came over and read their proposed script. My response was that if I could rewrite the script into something I would really enjoy doing, that I was willing to be in it. We wanted to do real scenes, not something contrived by people who didn't themselves have any personal knowledge or interest in what SM experiences were really about. We also wanted to show turn on, consensuality, trust, and safety. It was supposed to be an hour and a half feature length film, but after it was completed the company paying for it cut it up into a 55 min video. Bud Russell put in lots of time keeping the story's integrity and as much of the important stuff in as possible."

Bud recalls that this was the first time he had done any kind of BDSM video where "he got a hardon" from producing this kind of video for the first time ever. Deciding he wanted to find out what about this video got him so 'enthused,' he explored further and joined Janus. Through the 1980s, he was active in Janus, doing a program on electrical play in 1983 and helping to create a set of bylaws for Janus in 1987 or 1988. He also directed and produced several classic SM videos in the 1980s including the previously mentioned *Pain Suite* and *Journey into Pain*. Sadly, these videos are currently out of print.

Carol Truscott

Carol is a one-time Janus Communications Secretary and was also responsible for setting up the first "SM Contingent" in the Pride Parade in 1985. She, along with Chris S shared "durable power of attorney" for health care for Cynthia during the last part of her life.

Program Presenters

Sybil Holiday, Fakir Musafir and Cleo DuBois, Jay Wiseman, and Dr. Charles Moser have all done numerous programs for Janus over the years.

Others

Betsy D, Mark I. Chester, Dan R, Mistress Kathy and Al are among many who have been GP editors. Among others also deserving mention as having contributed to Janus are Alan Selby, Dr. Charles Moser, Elizabeth W, Stacy D, Maryann B, Todd H, and Phil D.

Related Reading

The following articles also discuss some of the history of the San Francisco SM scene:

Black Books. "*Sex Pioneers*." Black Sheets Issue 12. (a look at the SF SM 1970s scene).

Califia, Pat. "*A Personal View of the History of the Lesbian SM Community and Movement in San Francisco*." Coming to Power. Ed. Samois. Boston: Alyson Publications, 1982.

Rubin, Gayle. "*The Catacombs: Temple of the Butthole*." LeatherFolk. Ed. By Mark Thompson. 10th Anniversary Edition. Los Angeles: Alyson Publications, 2001.

Rubin, Gayle. "*Elegy for the Valley of the Kings: AIDS and the Leather Community in San Francisco, 1981-1996*." In Changing Times: Gay Men and Lesbians Encounter HIV/AIDS, Ed. By John H. Gagnon, Martin P. Levine, Peter M. Nardi, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1997.

Rubin, Gayle. "*The Miracle Mile: South of Market and Gay Male Leather in San Francisco 1962-1996*." Reclaiming San Francisco: History, Politics, Culture, Ed. By James Brook, Chris Carlsson, and Nancy Peters, San Francisco, City Lights Books, 1998.

Rubin, Gayle. "*The Outcasts: A Social History*." The Second Coming. Ed. By Pat Califia and Robin Sweeney. Los Angeles: Alyson Publications, 1996.

Truscott, Carol. "*A Reverent, Non-Linear, Necessarily Incomplete History of Its SM Community*." SandMUtopia Guardian Issue 8.

Thanks

I would like to extend a heartfelt thanks to all who consented to be interviewed for this project. They are as follows:

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Lady Thorn

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Bill B & Robin S

Dossie Easton

Karen M

Amber Rae & Jay M

Josh S & Karen F

Alan Selby

Kaye Buckley

Pat Califia

Mic B

Maggie R

Jay Wiseman

Sybil Holliday

Gayle Rubin

Greg L

Brandy

Chris S

Mark I. Chester

Fakir Musafir & Cleo DuBois

Elizabeth W

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Steve K

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Larry Olsen

Guy Baldwin

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Todd H

Jerolyn B

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