

Past 'sleazy bar and bath stage'

Gay businesses becoming big profit industry

LOS ANGELES (AP) — Businesses catering to or run by homosexuals have become a multimillion-dollar industry covering innumerable professions.

Gay business is long past the sleazy bar and bath stage, though they still exist. Today a lawyer, accountant, doctor, garbageman, real estate broker, plumber, auto mechanic or insurance agent may be an avowed homosexual.

"Gay capitalism has arisen in the last three to five years," says Morris Kight, who owned a chain of hotels in the Southwest before becoming active in the gay rights movement here.

"There used to be a retardation of the spirit — gay people tended not to achieve because of the fear they might be exposed. But gay liberation has counteracted that, and gays are more willing to try to be a success now."

Some researchers estimate that 10 per cent of the U.S. population is homosexual. Bob Arthur, an insurance agent and head of the Los Angeles Community Guild, a gay business group with 167 members, says:

"Most gay business leaders are intelligent and realize that until gay professionals come out of the closet and identify themselves, we're always going to have this tip-of-the-iceberg problem."

Openly gay businessmen still are primarily a big-city phenomenon, because of the greater acceptance of alternative lifestyles in cosmopolitan towns. In Chicago, gay bar and club owner Chuck Renslow estimates \$500,000 changes hands each weekend in the Windy City's 60 or 70 gay bars. He notes that the Gay and Lesbian Coalition of Metropolitan Chicago has more than 80 members.

"We've got florists, dentists, plumbers, doctors, lawyers and so on," he says, "although not all of their clientele is necessarily gay."

Concentrating on gay business can be highly profitable though, says Arthur, whose Royal Insurance Agency first went after gay business more than six years ago by advertising in The Advocate, a nationwide gay newspaper.

In New York, The Islanders Club books more than 30,000 seats a summer for its bus trips to the nearby resort of Fire Island and has about 3,000 members, according to president Blue Flettrich, who started the travel club 12 years ago.

"It's easier to attract members now," says Flettrich. "Getting yourself on a gay mailing list 10 years ago was not such a good idea, but today people don't seem to mind."

Bars are perhaps the most visible of New York's gay businesses, but the Greater

Gotham Businessmen's Council has roughly 400 members. GGBC President Jerry Schiff is an accountant. Gays do differ from heterosexuals in their need for some professional services, says Sid Crocker, a 29-year-old Beverly Hills accountant who has used his understanding of homosexuality and tax law to aid couples in about 40 gay marriages.

"Let's say you have a gay individual who has a high income and his partner in life

has a very low income," he says. "They can't file a joint tax return or anything like that, so they should be set up as a legal partnership as far as tax laws are concerned." Ray Hartman, a 32-year-old homosexual attorney, has

helped scores of gays receiving "less-than-honorable" discharges from the military.

"It's sometimes very hard to obtain employment with that kind of discharge," says Hartman. "By law, they also

are unable to obtain any kind of unemployment benefits, welfare, food stamps and other benefits."

Many gays say their sexual preference simply don't have any bearing on their business lives, a view frequently

shared by personnel directors. president for personnel administration with the Bank of America in San Francisco, At TRW, a major Southern California employer, spokesman Ray Wells says there has never been any ban on hiring homosexuals.



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'Birthing room' brings hospitals home

(c) 1977 N.Y. Times News Service
PHOENIX — The walls are bright with yellow and brown sunflowers, the bed is covered with a cheerful quilted spread and a nearby lamp, with a colorful Mexican pottery base, gives off a soft glow in the room.
 It is here that tiny Brinca

Johnson was born, a far cry from the glaring lights and sterile atmosphere of the traditional hospital delivery room. Here, too, Brinca's older sister, 3-year-old Jamie, watched the birth of her new sister in the accompaniment of her father, a neighbor and the neighbor's own two

children, 3-year-old Sarah and 12-year-old Amy Blackburn. The room is the newest accommodation offered to prospective parents by Phoenix's Memorial Hospital, an institution that lacks the elements of some large hospitals in this city but one that popularity in recent years

as the first Phoenix hospital to allow fathers in the delivery room. Now it has become the first to allow relatives and friends of prospective parents to watch the birth, too. "I'm going to have a baby, too," young Jamie told a visitor to her home later, "and

all my children will watch." Her mother nodded and smiled. Mrs. Judy Fritz, obstetrics head nurse at Memorial, said the hospital coined the name "birthing room" to describe the two-room suite where Jamie's sister was born. The new service started on Sept. 1,

1976. Reginald Ballantyne 3d, the hospital president, added that the birthing room was a case, where "necessity was the mother of invention." "There was a swelling of interest in home deliveries," he said, "and we were concerned that home deliveries

may not be in the best interest of good patient care." The attractions of a home delivery could be offered, Ballantyne reasoned, without the disadvantage of being far from the equipment that may be necessary in an emergency. "We decided to recreate the

home environment within the hospital and to eliminate the need for an overnight stay," he said. "The demand is unbelievable. We're going to have to add another." The birthing room contains a living room with sofa, chairs and a television set as well as a separate bedroom, complete with a bean bag chair for the mother to lean against during delivery. In between is a viewing window with curtains that may be drawn. If both mother and doctor agree, observers may be present in the bedroom itself during delivery.

The hospital requires that small children be accompanied by a "support person" other than the father so the youngster can be entertained, even taken across the street to a nearby park to play, if the labor becomes lengthy or complications develop. Siblings of the newborn may watch the birth or, if the mother prefers, wait until the baby is born to join mother and newborn in the bedroom. The conditions of the birth depend upon the physician and the patient. The mother may wish to have "an intimate experience with just mother and father present," according to Shirley Morris, a nurse, or the mother may wish to include friends, relatives and other children. The mother leaves the hospital within 24 hours.

"We discourage them from bringing young children under 5 because they usually are not emotionally equipped," she said, "but if the parents have prepared the child and want to and the doctor agrees, they can."

Adequate preparation is the key to the birth observation being a good experience for a child of any age, according to a prominent Phoenix family psychologist.

"If the family had an experience or openness and discussion, it could be a very good experience, but if you brought a child in out of the cold, it's not going to be so good," said Dr. Owen Morgan, a marriage and family counselor in the Center for Family Life Studies at Arizona State University. He added, "There are cultures in which the child is in the midst of birth, death and sex all the time. Our culture screens that out. Birth is part of life, so is death, and we alienate ourselves from both of them by going to the hospital. I've had students pass out when they see films of birth."

Janice Johnson was concerned about the effect the sight of blood would have on 3-year-old Jamie, so she and her daughter "talked about that a lot. I didn't want to warp her for the rest of her life," she said after the birth.

"I told her it was up to her. If she wanted to be in the next room playing, fine. If she got uncomfortable, she could go. She's her own person already."

But Jamie chose to remain on her father's knee in the bedroom as her mother delivered her new sister. The other friends, Mrs. Blackburn and her two children, stayed in the living room, watching through the window. All three Blackburns watched intensely and 3-year-old Sarah wanted to take the baby home when it was all over.

Mrs. Johnson said that she had seen no signs of sibling rivalry in Jamie and had noticed that newborn Brinca seemed particularly attracted to Jamie's voice. She said she thought that was because Jamie was the first person that Brinca heard speak.

For Mrs. Joanne Cain, the appeal of the birthing room included the opportunity to have her 5-year-old daughter, Joleen, a youngster with a high IQ and fourth-grade reading ability, to participate in the birth, too. She spent nine months preparing her daughter for the event and asked her sister to accompany Joleen.

Joleen was ready for the birth. Her aunt, Jean Robertson, wasn't.

"I faint real easy," Mrs. Robertson confessed later.

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