

# Gay guild angry at news media

By Susan Areson

Charging the board of selectmen and the news media with sensationalizing the issue of sex discrimination, the Provincetown Business Guild denied Monday that it uses promises of free sex in its advertisements to lure gay travelers here.

Guild president Paul Christo, reading from a prepared statement, blasted the Cape Cod Times for "irresponsible journalism" and the selectmen, Chairman Mary-Jo Avellar in particular, for exploiting the issue.

Christo's remarks, which were endorsed by the guild at its last meeting, immediately preceded a show cause hearing against the Crown and Anchor Motor Inn's license for complaints of sex discrimination.

After the meeting Avellar called Christo's comments off-base and accused him of bringing bad publicity to Provincetown by his recent appearance in a photo-spread in a Boston gay newspaper. A two-page story in Esplanade pictures Christo at the Provincetown Inn surrounded by several nude men.

"If that isn't sensationalism I don't know what is," said Avellar. "I don't think that is good publicity for the town."

Christo, who said he has not seen the article or his picture in it, agreed that this type of publicity is bad for Provincetown. He said he had no idea his picture was taken at the Provincetown Inn.

Christo said the guild was offended by a recent front page article in the Cape Cod Times which hinted that the intense competition for gay business in Provincetown this season is "Manhattanizing" Provincetown. He criticized Avellar for saying she feared Provincetown might end up with gay bath houses or live sex in bars.

The article quotes from guild advertisements which promise a steady flow of fresh faces and exciting nightlife in Provincetown, where gay persons are welcome and safe.

The guild advertisements, which appeared in several national gay publications, are not using sex to lure gay tourists here, said Christo.

It is the guild's intention to make gay people welcome, to promote the feeling that there is reason to feel safe and enjoy a vacation," he said. "No one is promoting a future gay ghetto. No one is using the guild as a divisive tool."

Christo, whose remarks were applauded by spectators in the packed hall, urged people to write the selectmen and to the editor of the Cape Cod Times to "express their disappointment over this recent outbreak of unfounded

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# Gay guild angry with press

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criticism and fear."

"I wish the guild and residents would write letters of protest to publications like Drummer and Esplanade for their sensational stories and pictures of people cavorting around Provincetown bars," said Avellar after the meeting.

"Certainly gay people are welcome here but they don't have to make it look like there's an orgy going on in every bar in town. I think it's outrageous."

Christo said he "couldn't agree more" with Avellar about the bad publicity some gay publications have given Provincetown. But he said the guild has not contributed to that form of publicity and that it refuses to advertise in "porno" magazines.

"The guild can't help it if journalists from gay magazines like Esplanade come up here and do a number on this town," he said. "These things are beyond our control and the guild is sick and tired of getting blamed for it."

Avellar's main complaint with the guild's statement is that the selectmen are being labelled discriminatory when their efforts have been to halt discrimination against men, women, gays or straights in any public place in Provincetown.

"The Provincetown board of selectmen is not anti-gay," said Avellar. "Every single year at this time somebody makes that complaint and every single year it follows a statement that we will not tolerate discrimination of any kind."

After Christo's statement Monday selectmen George Bryant and Avellar both emphasized their opposition to any sex discrimination. Both vowed to immediately ask for a show cause hearing to revoke licenses from town businesses that selectively choose patrons.

Christo said the guild, despite its 30 percent straight membership, advertises only in gay magazines simply because gay tourism is more profitable for merchants here. Gay persons have more money to take vacations, he said, and tourism is "the lifeline" to Provincetown's economy.

"Since better than 50 percent of the income-producing property is owned by people who openly support and not just tolerate a gay community, a multi-million dollar tourist economy exists to pay a \$4 million town and school budget, salaries, etc." he said.

"Provincetown is unique with its mix of lifestyles. There's probably no other town in the country like it but gay people elsewhere don't know about it," said Christo. "The guild has an obligation to get the message across to enhance gay tourism here."

The real problem, said Christo, is that every businessman in Provincetown is worried about this summer's season because of the recession and high gasoline prices. He said because gay tourism is flourishing other businesses that are not doing as well are resentful of the guild, and its members.

That resentment has taken the form of attacking the guild for its advertisements and blaming the guild for every scrap of bad publicity other magazines heap on Provincetown, said Christo.

Christo announced that the guild set up a 10-member committee to work with the selectmen and town manager to help make the guild and its intentions understood better. The committee is made up of motel, restaurant, rooming house and gift shop owners, both gay and straight. That committee planned to have an organizational meeting yesterday and hopes to meet soon with the selectmen.

with the resolution but she believes it was a smart decision.

"We've learned a lot about licensing in the past three years and I think we showed that," she said. "I think the decision we made was among our best."

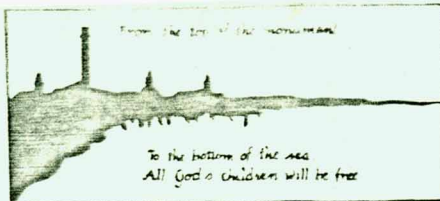
Sakey said after the meeting he, too, thought the board was considerate and gave him ample time to present his views. He agreed that the board with its new members has considerably polished its licensing procedure.

The main complaint Sakey had about the hearing was that he was not allowed to interrogate deRocco. He said the board, which refused Sakey's request to question deRocco, should seriously consider this in the future.

"It's a serious problem if one person who complains has a chance to shut down a 60-year-old business," he said.

Sakey also said the selectmen went too far by ruling that the next validated complaint will result in suspension of the license. "That's putting a shotgun to the licensee's head," he said. "I'll be back there and you know it."

Sakey said he is distressed about the new 150-foot noise bylaw, but said that is the town's prerogative.



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1. You will be charged with lewd and lascivious acts...  
a felony charge in this state.
2. Court costs range from \$300 to \$500.
3. Attorney fees of at least \$300.
4. A return trip to appear at your trial.
5. Even if your case is continued without finding (the best you can hope for) and your records are sealed, your fingerprints will be on file with the central fingerprint bank and the reason for your arrest will also be on file. This information will come up any time in the future your fingerprints are checked.

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