

Gay Pride: Queen City Style

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The first gay pride in Cincinnati I went to was in 1994. The crowd met at Fountain Square and we marched down to the Dock. I was going to UC at the time and part of their gay student group- The Alliance of Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, and Transexuals. My friend Kelly Gorth was president and she decided to have a pie throwing booth. Kelly and our other friend Kelvin Dickinson met at UC to make signs for the booth. I went with Kelly to Sam's Club to pick up ingredients for making the pies like whip cream. Kelvin and Kelly took turns getting hit with pies while I watched. I don't know why I didn't participate. I was young and afraid to mess my hair I guess. There were about 10-15 booths in the Dock parking lot. It was one of the smallest parades and festivals that I had ever seen and reminded me more of a church bizarre than a gay pride event. There was about a couple hundred people there all day. The Dock had rented a dunking booth and people took turns getting dunked. Mark, the sexy barback with dark hair and muscles even took a turn. I think he just wanted some relief from the heat. sand volleyball was being played just over the fence as the festival took place. I met a lot of people that day like lesbian activist Carol Lippman, Dr. Kurt Prine who was giving massages, Tommy Tuttle, and a bunch of nameless faces. I hadn't been to many big gay events in Cincy since moving here and this was the social event of the year.

1994 was the Gay Games in NYC my hometown and months prior the local gay men's soccer team from Cincy had been planning on going. They had fundraisers throughout the year. On Valentine's Day they took over the Golden Lions as bartenders and auctioned off items. The team captain Chris Payton was the auctioneer and at one point auctioned off the t-shirt he was wearing. I had a huge crush on Chris and was envious of the guy who won because he got to take off the shirt from Chris. The winner was cute and Chris flirted with him and gave him a quick kiss and hug. The soccer boys were at it again one Sunday in June at the Dock just before they were to leave for the Gay Games in NYC. They were hosting another auction and this time performing. I bought a few raffle tickets for the auction. The boys were lipsyncing to the Go Gos' "Vacation" in a musical number. Chris Payton, my secret crush was the master of ceremonies for the event. The team ended up raising enough money eventually to go to NYC and from what I remember did well in the soccer games.

The UC glbt Alliance went to NYC gay pride that same week and there was a bit of controversy. Paul M. brought his boyfriend along and apparently had sex in the room he shared with a good number of others. The group had only booked one or two rooms and it was hard not to notice, how should I say this without offending anyone, the couple having sex. Kelly Gorth was in charge of the trip was pretty mad from what Brian Scott told me on the phone. I was in NYC home for a summer trip and at the parade. I had called to meet up with the group but never got to connect with them. I heard besides the sex incident at the hotel everybody had a decent time. The NYC parade was amazing. It was the 25th Anniversary of Stonewall plus the Gay Games and there were signs all over NYC about pride and the games not just in the gay sections. The next Cincy pride I went to was in 1995. It was a little bit bigger than the previous year but

not by much. When you can spot all of your friends in 3 minutes or less than you should be concerned about attendance. We met at Fountain Square and marched to the Dock again. This time we chanted, "We're HERE! We're QUEER and We're NOT Going Shopping!!!" as part of the boycott in response to Issue 3. The thing about Cincy pride back in those days is that the young sexy boys that I would see at the Dock at night would never show up at gay events during the day and pride was no different. The crowd was older like 30 and up. I hung out with William Brogan, who was a sometime friend and his trick of the week. There was no Alliance booth or dunking thingy. The volleyball teams did play. Alex Ewing showed up wearing some old army uniform and I saw Mickey Hess who I had dated very briefly a couple months before. He had just died his hair purple or red. There were about the same number in attendance from the previous year and the same number of booths about 20. When the Dock was open for its regular evening hours the place was packed. It was this year or maybe last year that they had hired a woman in a full body stocking covered with that material they use on the outside of disco balls to dance on a small platform in the center of the dance floor.

The next year, 1996, there was no parade but only a small festival at Lunken Airport. I didn't go but a friend and his boyfriend who were from out of town and staying with me went. They said it was a small event and they left early because they didn't know anyone there. As many of you know, there wasn't another pride event in Cincy until the early 2000s. And they moved it to Northside. As my close friends know I have traveled back and forth between Ohio and NY/NJ for the last decade for business reasons and it is hard for me to say that I will definitely attend anything. So it wasn't until 2008 or 2009 that I began attending Cincy prides again. I was at the very last one in Northside. It was ok but I missed being downtown and out in front of the straight community. The last three in 2010, 2011, and 2012 each get bigger and better with each year that comes and goes. I admire all of the hard that people like George Crawford, Brooklyn Steel-Tate, and so many others have put forth to make Cincy pride very memorable!!!