

The

Leather Times

News from the Leather Archives & Museum

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in this issue

DRUMMER

THE MINESHAFT

GMSMA

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NOBODY DID IT BETTER:

Lines in appreciation of JACK FRITSCHER

as he appeared in DRUMMER magazine.

BY JOSEPH W. BEAN, APRIL 2002

Jack Fritscher \ 'jak-'friche(r)\ prop. noun - no plural poss. [Unique coinage, more at homomasculine]. 1. Legendary 20th to 21st Century homocultural figure said to have war-painted himself with the splatter from strafing pop cultural icons and gay pseudo-leather cults with sweat- and cum-scented rounds fired from unimaginable heights at what he viewed as bastions of slow-moving and therefore false imagination below. 2. Variant view: mythical writer whose stream of sanity blew away posers, especially those clad in chaps or leather clothing, while attracting a following as he wrote his heart out into "ho-sex, mo-sex leathersex" reality, creating in his one lifetime an entire non-virtual world of both steam and substance.

Drummer had a long run from June 1975 to its 214th issue dated April 1999. Along the way, the magazine frankly created a good many writers, but it served a more important function for some writers. It gave them a forum where they were free to say what was most on their hearts and minds, what stirred them most powerfully in their guts and groins, and what got them off most perfectly. In those nearly 24 years, few writers took more complete advantage of the special soap-box that was *Drummer* magazine than Jack Fritscher. And very few were as well equipped as Fritscher to benefit the very particular readers of *Drummer*. He had not only the skills and talents, but the lifestyle and experience needed. In fact, maybe no one was better supplied with passions worth exposing to the half-formed world of leathersex for that matter. For volume (both much-ness and loudness) and frequency (both pitch and often-ness) and for both voracity and for veracity... for memorable texts and inescapable even cataclysmic juxtapositions of God and gonads, sweet perfection and drooling desire, nobody did it better. In the entire history of *Drummer* and its many spin-offs, "brother" publications and imitators, and in his own books and periodicals, Fritscher was creating a unique

leathersex universe to which—even now—only a handful of writers have made any additional "direct deposits."

In one tumbling, fully-conscious stream of truth after another, Fritscher left us *Drummer* readers numb and spent and happy to have been run-over so gloriously. He seldom spoke when shouting would be tolerated and never explained when exuberant telling would get the job done. He grabbed us with his language and his style and, without stopping to ask how we liked to be fucked, just rammed it in and pleased himself, which is just what we'd have asked for if we had the courage and self-confidence to do that.

Leathermen were just steps out of the super-cultural closet when *Drummer* came along. A decade before, or less, they were nearly invisible, and meant to stay that way. Being invisible to the world had a certain positive value, maybe. Being invisible to each other at the distance of a city or two was not so good—damned inconvenient, really. Being invisible to the fresh meat that was seeking hungry users and abusers and brothers and Dads; mentors, re-inventors, bike riders to buddy with and buddies to fuck with... well, frankly, that kind of being invisible was intolerable. Even though there were other magazines from time to time—

none for long, but always something else—*Drummer* was a necessity. The new Technicolor reality springing up from the gone-gray flats of gay social nothingness needed to be named and defined and cheered and kicked in the butt.

For all of that, the naming and defining for sure, the cheering when absolutely necessary and the kicking in the butt any time at all (thank you), again, nobody did it better than Jack Fritscher.

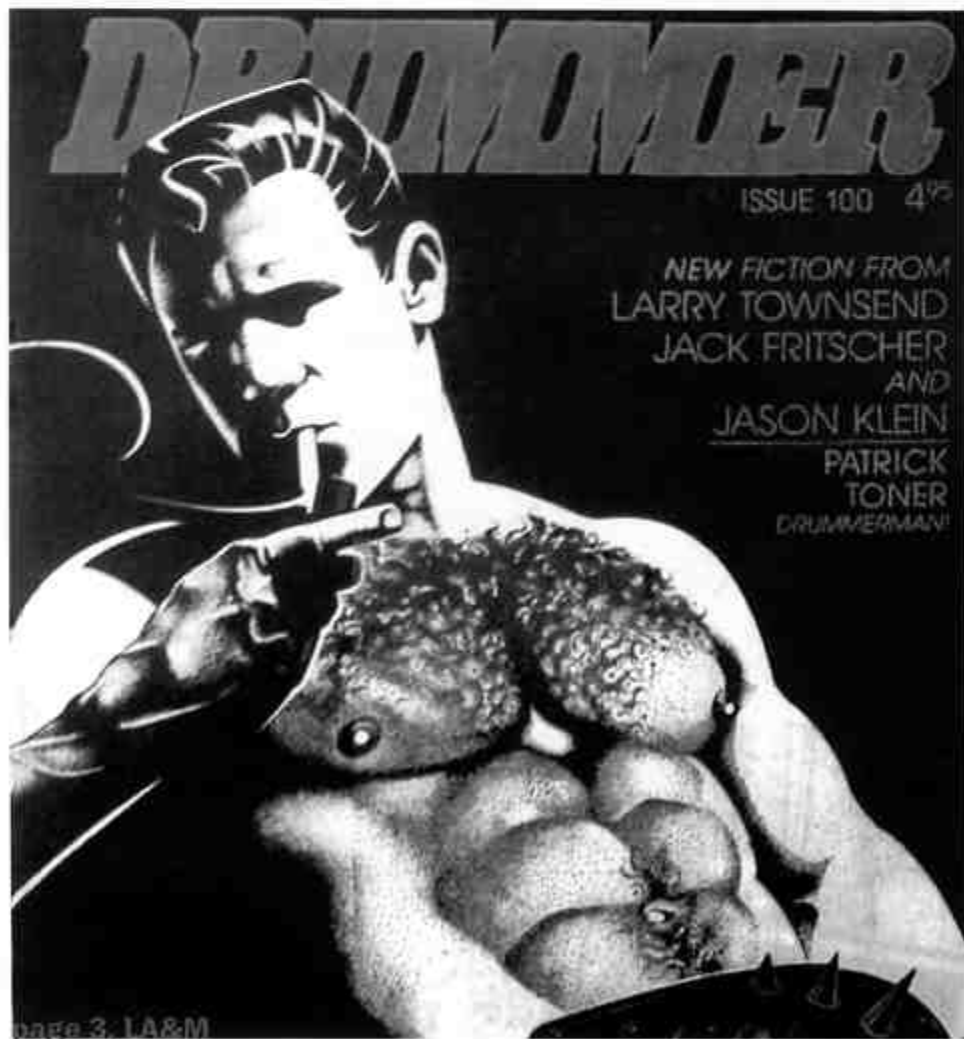
It's true that Larry Townsend was there before Fritscher, but he was doing another thing, a couple of other things. He was entertaining and Jack was too, but Townsend was also a lot about scientifically proving what we were and what we did. His column—along with Bill Ward's "Drum" cartoon—was among the longest running features in *Drummer*, and they both were sources of great bar-talk and cocktail conversation. All good, in fact these things were very good. But the bonfires of leather vainglory ignited around Fritscher's contributions. While one circle of leathermen demanded to know, "How could he say that?" another would be shocked into asking, "Did you see how he said that?"

I don't know about other readers, but Fritscher was an unexpected shock for me when he appeared in *Drummer*. I didn't really notice the by-line on the piece about the Leatherneck bar (issue #18) before I saw his name as editor in issue 19. I was not thinking of writing for *Drummer* myself, not by a long shot. Even though I did a lot of writing for *Drummer*, I didn't do any of it for another ten years. Hey, it was just about the time of my 30th birthday that I saw this new Fritscher-phenomenon in print, and my opinion was that the guys who were doing this magazine were gods—ageless and eternal if not omniscient. How could I have known that Jack Fritscher was only eight years and one day older. He was on fire and I was on track to be a late-bloomer (as a writer about all this "jazz"), I guess. But, maybe eight years would have seemed a lot then.

In any case, starting then, in the summer of 1977, Fritscher was on a mission which others would attempt to join, but only he could perform, pursue, posterize and perfect with such zest and energy: He began reinterpreting popular culture in a leather context. This could have been done a million ways, and many famous writers and artists before

and since have done something like it, but Fritscher's method was perfect for who we were and for the time. What's more, since we learned from Fritscher to think in his "language" (as much as that can be done by anyone other than the man himself), we "naturally" realized that his views were our views, his discoveries our truths. And, to make his dominance perfect, he changed as we changed and kept up with the times in a peculiar, all-Fritscher way that didn't involve any unnecessary trendiness.

The recipe for the emerging leatherman's point of view is not something that can ever be entirely clear, but the list of ingredients had to include cynicism and sarcasm along with respect and broad awareness. A special flavor of humor was a requirement, and Fritscher put his finger on the right one after *Drummer* had thumbed across humorous options unsuccessfully for nearly 20 issues. There had to be a degree of separation, even superiority, without the slightest touch of smug condescension. Once this blend of se-



cret brotherhood and popular culture was worked out, we all knew better than we thought we ever could just who we were and where in the Big Picture to “find ourselves.”

In fictions and fetish features and editorials, *Drummer* under Fritscher's guidance became the leatherman's mind as well as his heart—without letting go of his sex for a second—and it defied us to be more or different or otherwise. This was all very good for everyone, particularly a youngish guy who believed that the leather-clad men you could find in *Drummer* were a separate and special creation, on a higher order than homo sapiens sapiens. That's me thinking that, until a few Fritscher features drew pictures in which I could see myself without even straining. Then, just to keep me in my place after all, he'd come along with something like the issue #23 editorial where, in effect, *Drummer* claimed its place in the world and demanded that the readers notice the magazine was hung bigger than we were and had balls like we only dreamed of.

“Just you mention *Drummer* in a roomful of guys. You'll get a heavy feedback of attitude. They either love us or hate us. They either understand us (meaning themselves) or they refuse to understand us (again, meaning themselves).” That's balls! And, not surprisingly, the editorial began by asking “where's *Drummer* get the leather balls to...” and ended with the honest answer that the readers who kept buying the magazine gave those who produced it the balls to do it as hard as they did and, in every other way, just as they did.


I don't know that the truth of the moment is really in that. For me, and I suspect a lot of others, it was impossible to see myself as a provider of chutzpah. I was being fed and encouraged, not consumed or reflected... but then I saw it, thanks to that editorial: There was a breed of leathermen—Val Martin and Fred Halsted and Joey Yale and Durk Dehner and the rest, art director Al “A. Jay” Shapiro and editor/writer Jack Fritscher among them—who were the source of all this ballsy machismo. And, closer to my home, there was a less plugged-in tribe—myself included—who were being lifted and flown, like little kids being “airplaned” in circles by their Dads. Fritscher was the Braveheart, the Shaka Zulu, the Kamehameha, the battle-crier who did not say something never before said or thought but, instead, gave voice to a thing never before made clear enough to rally around and to pass along to strangers in print.

The style and intelligence and urgency of Fritscher's message were his own, but the message itself was the one leathermen wanted (or, just as often definitely didn't want) disseminated. The essential content of what he was saying

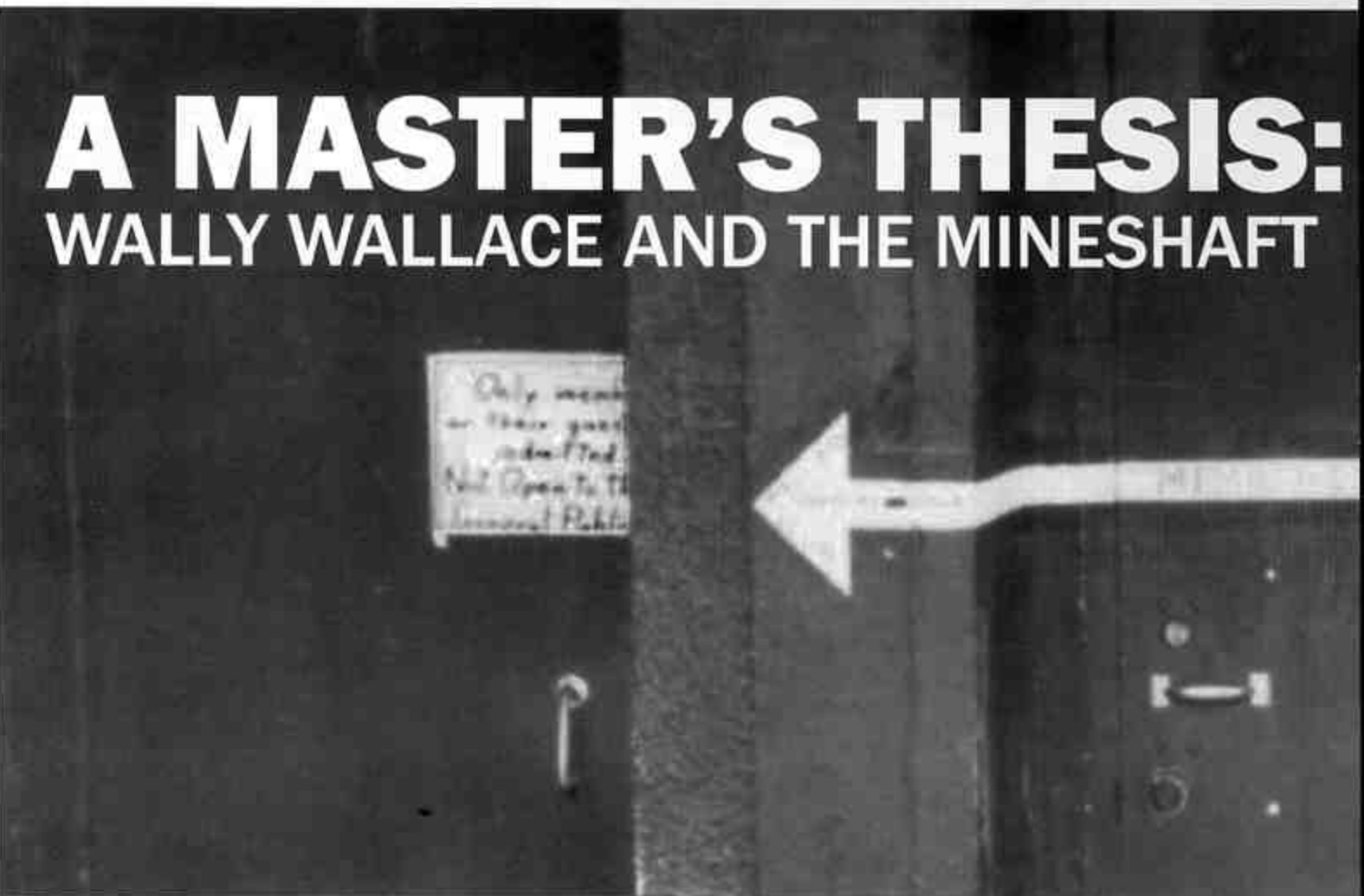
in “his” issues of *Drummer* (18 through 30) and in his other work and, as a contributor, in later issues of *Drummer* changed naturally because we changed, but the essential nature of it, the thing that made it Fritscher, never changed.

By the time I went to work at *Drummer*, 100 issues after the last one Fritscher edited, he really was a god of leather, an unimpeachable and unassailable solitaire whose very name had developed a meaning. “What do you want done with the ‘Leather Lifestyles’ theme you announced for #132?” I asked my boss, *Drummer* publisher Tony DeBlase.

“Go all the way with it,” he answered, apparently leaving me unsure of what he meant. “You know,” he added, “do a Fritscher!” Yes, I knew. In fact, either the topic was unyielding or I was unable. It didn't work that time. Subject after subject thereafter, the concept kept being “do a Fritscher” on it. Brown leather (#134) fell far short of that goal, leathersex and spirituality (#136) almost made it, bears (#140) got pretty close, spandex (#141) felt like a success. We really did a Fritscher on that “kinky softwear” as we called the form-accentuating garments. Edge play (#148) felt even more fully Fritscher-ed, but none of the issues I worked on were sufficiently Fritscher-ed except the ones put on that footing by the one and only original Jack Fritscher.

The now infamous “Remembrance of Sleaze Past” issue (#139) has to be the best of that lot and, if I remember correctly that idea either came from Fritscher or from DeBlase in conversation with Fritscher! I owe Jack a lot, starting with my adult sexual vocabulary, and maybe including whatever success I have had writing and speaking of leathersex. I might never have done any of it at all if I had not been inspired, encouraged and kicked in the butt every step of the way. And, for all that, I can assure you, nobody did it better than Jack Fritscher. 

A MASTER'S THESIS: WALLY WALLACE AND THE MINESHAFT

A black and white photograph of a door. On the left side of the door, there is a rectangular sign with some text that is partially obscured but appears to say "Only members or their guests admitted Not Open To The General Public". To the right of the sign, a large white arrow is painted on the door, pointing to the left. The door has a handle and a lock mechanism visible on the right side.

Only members
or their guests
admitted
Not Open To The
General Public

MEN'S BAR SCENE
Manhattan's Divine Decadence...

THE MINESHAFT

Over the holidays, the Mineshaft played host to the FFA, UYA, and countless single guys from all over the world. Many of the latter came to us during their New York visit after reading a fine article about the Mineshaft in *Drummer* magazine. Although we did not seek this publicity, it was a positive statement for the Mineshaft and we thank....writer, Jack Fritscher, for his fine words.

—Wally Wallace, Founding and Only Mineshaft
Manager, *The Mineshaft Newsletter*, February 1978

As editor in chief of *Drummer*, I took the opportunity to write the first (as well as the second) national and international article about the "Number One 1970s sex club," the immediately legendary Mineshaft which orbited Earth at 835 Washington Street, New York, from its opening October 8, 1976, to November 7, 1985, when shut down, shuttered, and slammed closed by the health department of the imperial City of New York. The second article "Pissing in the Wind:

A Night in the Mineshaft Bath Tub" appeared in *Drummer* 20 (January 1978.)

"We lasted nine years and nine days," Mineshaft manager, Wally Wallace, told me.

Fourteen years earlier, that second week in October 1976 was a busy one in Manhattan: the S&M Eulenspiegel Society was incorporated on October 14, 1976, six days after the Mineshaft opened. *Drummer*, founded June 1975, was sixteen months old and on sale at gay New York shops

In leather-heritage synchronicity, Wally Wallace and I knew each other for twenty-three years. Few in the salon around the Mineshaft knew his name was "James Wallace" who to intimates was known as "Jim," or that he had transferred his theatrical experience—mid-1960s through early 1970s—as actor and stage manager with La Mama to the theatrical set and dress-code costumes at the Mineshaft.

In the zero degrees of separation, it was at La Mama that Wally Wallace first met Robert Mapplethorpe and Patti Smith; and it was at the Mineshaft in 1976 that Jacques Morali saw Wally Wallace's blue-collar dress-code archetypes that became the pop stereotypes of his disco group, the Village People. Glenn Hughes, the original leather biker in the Village People, was a frequent sex-player at the Mineshaft as well as part of the 1970s S&M leather salon around

Pre-Publication
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to the *Leather
Times*

PRIVATE CLUB

835

by Jack Fritscher, PhD
Founding San Francisco Editor in Chief
of *Drummer Magazine* and *Leather
Historian* Since 1967

Drummer in San Francisco.

My "Mineshaft" *Drummer* article, delivered up in the limited format of our monthly "Men's Bar Scene" column, is brief because the Mineshaft had been open only seven months when I wrote about it in June 1977, and the legend of the Mineshaft sex circus was just beginning to launch. Mythologizing the Mineshaft was not my point because I was writing frank PR to promote the Mineshaft—as Wally Wallace acknowledged in 1978—with readers who lived outside Manhattan.

Perhaps someday I will write a lengthy, humorous, and scandalous article for *Vanity Fair*, or, better, a screenplay that will reveal the players, the mystery, the comedy, and the sexuality of the legendary Mineshaft. Chaucer would love such a framing of the newer, sexier, raunchier *Canterbury Tales*. Host Wally Wallace fills in as the Harry Bailey of leather and the Mineshaft is Bailey's Tabard Inn where the pilgrims as sex-tourists meet up. The Wife of Bath becomes the Husband in the Bathtub; and the ass-kissing and red-hot poker up-the-bum in "The Miller's Tale" recreates itself nightly.

Attending the opening night of the Mineshaft, I recalled Kenneth Anger's film title *The Inauguration of the Pleasure Dome* (1954). As a journalist and a sex commuter to New York, I was staying with my longtime pal Jack Mc-

LA&M Editor's Note: Jack Fritscher's Leather Heritage Interview with Wally Wallace introduces "The Mineshaft" from *Drummer* 19 (December 1977); excerpted with permission from the forthcoming book *Gay San Francisco: Eyewitness Drummer A Memoir of the Art, Sex, and Salon around Drummer Magazine from the Titanic 1970s to 1999* by Jack Fritscher, edited by Mark Henry, San Francisco: Palm Drive Publishing, 1500 pages, 2007.

Except as specifically noted otherwise, all Wally Wallace quotations are from the video titled *Jack Fritscher Interviews Mineshaft Manager, Wally Wallace*, March 28, 1990, with further leather history research at www.JackFritscher.com.

Nenny who was, in the zero degrees of our salon around *Drummer*, also a friend of Wally Wallace and a founding member of the Mineshaft. Jack McNenny owned the scatalogically named flower shop "The Gifts of Nature" on the northeast corner of Sixth and Houston where he provided Robert Mapplethorpe with flowers for his photo shoots at his 24 Bond Street loft. (See "Take 2: Pentimento for Robert Mapplethorpe" and "Take 3: Adventures with Robert Mapplethorpe" in the 1994 erotic memoir, *Mapplethorpe: Assault with a Deadly Camera*; "Take 2" was first published as the lead cover article in *Drummer* 133 (September 1989.) Jack McNenny was also the New York distributor for my Mineshaft-like *Man2Man Quarterly* 'zine which I began as a "Virtual *Drummer*" in 1979.

Through hundreds of visits, I experienced the Mineshaft as the 1970s quintessential frame of homomale sexuality. Years later in San Francisco, on March 28, 1990, Wally Wallace recalled again that this first *Drummer* article gave the Mineshaft some welcome initial traction because it was like an alert, an invitation, sent out worldwide to *Drummer's* passionate subscription base which Wally Wallace always considered the house magazine of the Mineshaft where "a regular Saturday night drew five hundred or six hundred guys and I'd have fifteen guys on duty at the door, the coat check, and the bars. The night of the annual Barnum and Bailey Circus, I'd have a crowd of a thousand guys."

Actually, this *Drummer* 19 "Mineshaft" article is a prequel to a second Mineshaft feature that I wrote for the next issue, *Drummer* 20 (January 1978) titled: "Pissing in the Wind: Wet Dreams, Golden Showers (Or, A Night in the Mineshaft Bathtub)." Writing as a gonzo participatory journalist a month after the publication of the first Mineshaft article, I went into erotic detail about the fabled extreme sexuality of the Mineshaft. These two articles might be read together.

I like to put gay history into objective correlative context that is as sensual and descriptive as possible. I also like to prove my pioneer eyewitness testimony with internal evidence from letters and interviews and printed articles.

Without initial irony, the Mineshaft was situated in the meat-packing district of West Greenwich Village. In the pre-dawn hours on the shared loading dock, Mineshaft members, arriving and leaving, crossed steps within inches of butchers in bloodied white aprons shouldering huge, stiff carcasses from waiting trucks into their meat-cutting shops. It was very *Twilight Zone*: two worlds existing in the same dimension, each invisible to the other, one leathery and dark, the other bloody and lit with extraterrestrial fluorescence.

Time Capsule Sidebar: A daytime and deserted view of the street and the warehouse loading docks was used as a location in the Robert Mulligan film *Love with the Proper Stranger* (1963) which featured Natalie Wood and the leathery biker Steve McQueen in a very long scene shot virtually on the doorstep of what would later become the Mineshaft.

Wally Wallace's Letter of Invitation to the Opening of the Mineshaft

(Presented as Written, without Editing, from the Jack Fritscher and Mark Henry Personal Archive Collection)

October 2, 1976

Howdy,

On Friday October 7th [hand-corrected by Wally to 8th] at 9 pm I will begin managing a new club in THE MINE SHAFT [two words at this point quickly changes to *Mineshaft*] at 836 Washington Street by Little West 12th Street. You may have visited it under its present name or as the old Zodiac years ago. In any event you will find it different in terms of decor and concept.

We have taken away the lovely wall-to-ceiling silver foil Reynolds Wrap decor and made the main bar area [up the stairs from the street and built on the second floor] into a comfortable Western style club complete with new murals and a pool table.

From this room you go through a set of swinging doors into a tunnel leading into a cave style bar area with smaller caves for exploring off to the sides. A perfect setting for underground graphic viewing. In the middle of the room is the Mine Shaft [a door in the floor of the second floor that pulls up to reveal rugged lumber stairs] leading down to a lower level [the first floor or ground floor or street floor] for shafting sports. It is indeed different!

Conceptually the club activities will be different as they revolve around special interest groups during the early hours starting at 9 pm. On Tuesdays we have the Wrestling guys and on Sundays the P.G.T. Club. For them we have installed a new shower.

There will also be a SCHOOL FOR LOWER EDUCATION [run by GMSMA, Gay Men's S&M Association, with an occasional show-and-tell by Chicagoan, Tony DeBlase] beginning in early October with limited size classes in subjects relating to improving one's sexual techniques. I can not for obvious reasons describe this further in print.

We will also have special events such as a BLACK AND BLUE PARTY for our members. Setting the tone for this and the place itself there is a dress code of levi, leather, uniforms, and similar casual attire required at all times. No fluff allowed!

So, come on down and see what we have going on. The sooner the better as the number of memberships will be limited. During the month of October we will be open to you and your friends between the hours of 10 pm and 6 am Weds through Sunday. But for a sneak preview come Friday October 7th [sic] at 9 pm.

Try it! I know you'll like THE MINE SHAFT!
Wally

On that opening night, October 8, 1976, Wally Wallace, a protector of male space in Manhattan as was Steve McEachern at the Catacombs in San Francisco, was intent on keeping intact a sanctuary for masculine men. Wally Wallace wrote in his homomasculine *Mineshaft Manifesto* about sex, identity, performance art, politics, and civil war over gender:

THE MINESHAFT IS NOW, AND FOREVER WILL BE, A UNIQUE MEMBERSHIP

The MINESHAFT is basically a unique playground conceived by and dedicated to the fun-loving raunchy gay male minority who exist in the underworld of gay society. It is truly a place where many a gay man would never come because it is surely not a place for everyone.

The facilities include three bars, a roof, several playrooms, a [bath] tub room, and various pieces of equipment [slings, bondage equipment] located in a half block long building at 835 Washington Street in the middle of the New York Meat Market. It is all to be used and shared to enhance your wildest sexual fantasy and more!

As a social club, the MINESHAFT provides the opportunity for guys to meet and to play with men of a like persuasion, or with men so rare and so different that they inspire new ways to play, or might even change their entire life. This is mentioned as many couples have first met and found new type lives through the club. Yes, we are ever changing and the changes are due to the various men from all over the world who meet and play here in international play.

Within minutes of opening the Mineshaft, the liberation zeitgeist of the 1970s changed him when as a business man he observed a truth of the way white gay males kept company with women at that time. This is an excerpt from the video *Jack Fritscher Interviews Mineshaft Manager Wally Wallace, March 28, 1990*:

Wally Wallace: The night of the opening, the word had got out through my letter and that word of mouth got to people who were looking for something different. The Eagle and the Spike, which were the leather bars at the time...had become rather inundated with people who were not into the leather scene. People were looking for a new place to go. I promised a dress code, although at the time I didn't know what it would be.

Jack Fritscher: Your dress code was like the dress code Chuck Arnett enforced at the Tool Box in San Francisco in the 1960s. The one difference was that Arnett nailed a pair of sneakers to the ceiling with a sign saying "No sneakers." And you...."

Wally Wallace:...allowed sneakers in as a fetish. [Laughs]...To have the dress code, I had to make the Mineshaft a membership club. Well, the first night we opened—we were on the second floor, and I was standing at the entrance greeting friends at the top of the stairs. Then I noticed an attractive female standing halfway up the stairs.

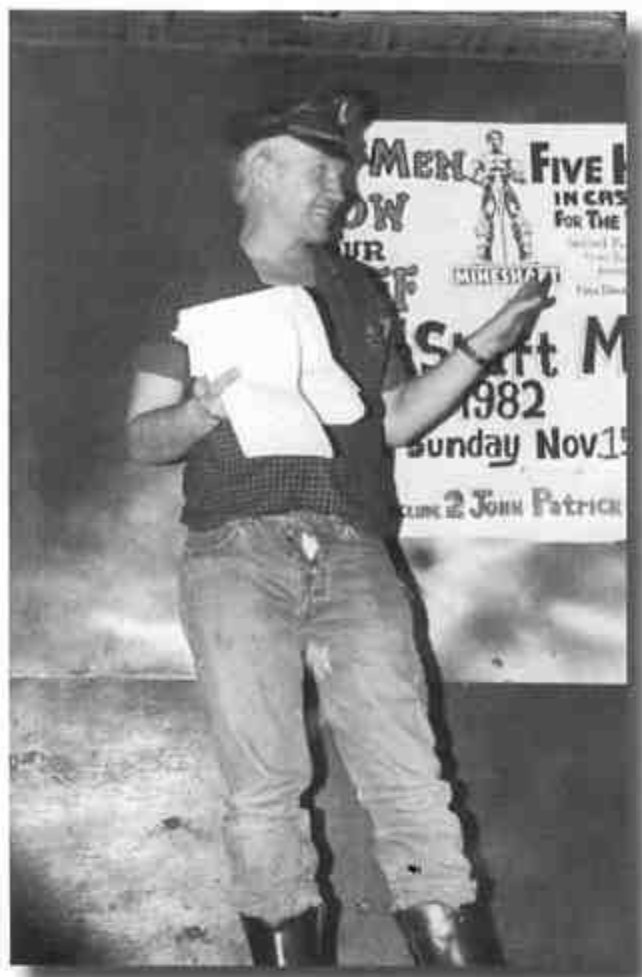
Jack Fritscher: I know this story. I love this story. It's canonical. She herself told me.

Wally Wallace: So I said to her, I'm sorry but you can't come in here. This is a men's club, a gay men's club. It might be embarrassing for a woman. She said, Well, I go to the Spike and the Eagle. She was dressed in leather and a very attractive girl. I said, I'm sorry but we determined that this was to be a private club for leather men. I was worried about getting into trouble with women's rights groups. We had some trouble at the Ramp...

Jack Fritscher: Nureyev's favorite sex bar...



Sculptures of angels by artist Muriel Castanis that stood in the Mineshaft; now they grace the LA&M lobby



Wally Wallace at the 1982 MineShaft Man contest

Wally Wallace: ...with women trying to get into the backroom, but that was a public bar. So this great looking girl in leather turned and walked down the stairs and left, and when she left all these hot men standing on the stairs also left. The hot guys were with her! So I said to myself, I've got to find out who this woman is....

Jack Fritscher: When legends collide.

Wally Wallace: That's how I met Camille O'Grady who became our sort of token female member of the Mineshaft, but she could only go to the bar area and she couldn't bring any of her women friends, which she didn't. She pretty well stuck to those rules. I know that sometimes when I wasn't there, she would end up in the back rooms, but I wasn't supposed to know. I'm sure she got involved in some pretty hot scenes....

Jack Fritscher: Camille was very involved with your entertainment events.

Wally Wallace: We had S&M demonstrations like bondage and body painting. I remember she was involved in one contest. She was a talented artist.

Jack Fritscher: She exhibited her drawings at Fey Way Gallery in San Francisco.

Wally Wallace: Where she was almost shot to death.

Camille O'Grady was rivals at CBGB with punk diva Patti Smith who was coupled with photographer Robert Mapplethorpe the way Camille O'Grady was coupled with *Drummer* writer and photographer Robert Opel who streaked the 1974 Academy Awards, and was murdered in his San Francisco gallery, Fey Way, on July 8, 1979. The gunman mercifully did not shoot Camille O'Grady who was forced to lie on the gallery floor during the robbery and murder. (For dramatized details, see *Some Dance to Remember: A Memoir-Novel of San Francisco 1970-1982*, Reel 3, Scene 1 and Scene 8; for documentary details, confer *Mapplethorpe: Assault with a Deadly Camera*, "Take 11: Robert Opelthorpe: Streaking the Academy Awards.")

The first Mineshaft flyer for Christmas 1976 advertised: "Upcoming special events include the opening of our new tunnel playroom, a 'Criscomas Party,' and a repeat performance by Camille O'Grady." Wally Wallace also invited Camille to sing her piss song "Toilet Kiss" at the Mineshaft 1978 anniversary party. Patti Smith's own first single was "Piss Factory"—but it was not literal as was Camille's.

Jack Fritscher: When did you notice that the Mineshaft was getting to be a lot kinkier than you first planned?

Wally Wallace: In the beginning, I thought it would be just a basic fuck and suck in the back room. Well, it was fairly early on that we put up slings.

Jack Fritscher: That signaled something new.

Wally Wallace: I remembered seeing a place in San Francisco, a place called the Barracks.

Jack Fritscher: The kinkiest place in San Francisco next to the Slot.

Wally Wallace: It had a bathtub, where somebody was in the bathtub, fully clothed, getting soaked with piss, surrounded by a big crowd pushing in to piss on him, which I thought was kind of hot.

Jack Fritscher: So you put a bathtub on the ground-level floor of the Mineshaft.

Wally Wallace: That bathtub became famous. I didn't realize how many people were into bathtubs.

Jack Fritscher: Into piss.

Wally Wallace: I'm sorry I didn't keep a nightly diary. We had a group, the FFA [Fist Fuckers of America]. In the bar business, except maybe in Las Vegas, there are so many dead times during the week. When the Mineshaft opened there were maybe thirteen leather clubs in the city. Several of them fisting clubs. So we

tried to attract them in on the slow nights....The FFA was a very heavy drug scene as I realized when their orgies went on for days....

Jack Fritscher: You knew Leather Rick who shot outrageous, extreme S&M videos at the Mineshaft featuring the club guys from the "Skulls of Akron." The action is astounding as in *Fisting Ballet*, but the videos also show a lot of the interior set of the Mineshaft rooms.

Wally Wallace: I became good friends with Leather Rick....and it was on a New Year's Eve, I think, he nailed somebody's cock down on the back bar. The guy climbed up and sat on the bar....In the Mineshaft for the first four years, I would not allow photos. Although I let George Dudley shoot a poster for our tub room and one of our American flag display that had Christmas lights behind the flag.

Jack Fritscher: It is really unfortunate that so much of the 1970s went unphotographed because it took nearly the whole decade for everyone to catch on after Stonewall that it was okay to be in a gay snapshot. Even in the early 1970s, a camera could empty a gay bar. By 1977, everyone was ready for his close-up. I'm glad that you let Robert Mapplethorpe in to shoot.

Wally Wallace: Yes...he shot one of the Mineshaft Man contests. It was David O'Brien that year, about 1979-1980. Somebody thought Bob could take pictures of the event. But that wasn't his thing.

Jack Fritscher: He couldn't shoot from the hip in spontaneous conditions. He needed the formality of a studio.

Wally Wallace: ...I liked Bob, although we weren't close friends...

Jack Fritscher: We were.

Mapplethorpe and I were bi-coastal lovers from October 1977 until our lovely affair evaporated into simple friendship in the Spring of 1980.

Robert Mapplethorpe shot many photographs in the Mineshaft, including the print he gave me of David O'Brien, "Mr. Mineshaft 1979." Over the years, Wally Wallace grew quite conscious of the documentary value of photography within the Mineshaft where history was made nightly. In his flyer, "MINESHAFT FIFTH ANNIVERSARY, OCT 25 1982," his archetypal sense of Mineshaft identity was evident: "The Men! The Music! The Mystery! The Magic! The Myth!" Most of the Mineshaft photos shot by Mapplethorpe have disappeared, presumably into the vaults of the Mapplethorpe Foundation, because, perhaps, they are not as formal and "perfect" as Robert's

exquisite studio photography. (See the outlaw memoir of what happens to outlaw art, *Mapplethorpe: Assault with a Deadly Camera*.) For all his bad-boy reputation as an artist as well as his involvement with Wally Wallace socially at the Mineshaft, Mapplethorpe really preferred private sex to public sex, and told me so frequently because I liked to fuck in public. With regard to uncloseting gay photography, the Mineshaft truly did break the historical taboo against cameras in gay bars and baths. Thousands of photographs, shot by dozens of photographers in the Mineshaft, actually exist, as do videos such as *Fisting Ballet*, shot by the Skulls of Akron and long-since proscribed by government censorship.



The winner of the 1982 MineShaft Man contest

THE MINESHAFT

FIVE YEARS YOUNG

AN ANNIVERSARY TO REMEMBER

"IN ONE HUNDRED YEARS WILL ANYONE REMEMBER?
IN ONE HUNDRED YEARS WILL ANYBODY CARE?"

Lyrics from a long ago Broadway show echo through my head as I put together this Newsletter celebrating the MINESHAFT's fifth anniversary. Well, I can't comment on one hundred years to come, but as far as today goes it can be said that the club is in the thoughts of guys the world over who have either been in the MINESHAFT or fantasized about it from printed word or the word of mouth. So for you and them I hope that the mystery, the myth, the magic, the music, and the men remain hot for at least five years if not for one hundred.

Wally

THE MINESHAFT IS NOW AND FOREVER WILL BE A UNIQUE MEMBERSHIP

The MINESHAFT is basically a unique playground conceived by and dedicated to the fun loving raunchy gay male minority who exist in the underworld of gay society. It is truly a place where many a gay man would never come because it is surely not a place for everyone.

The facilities include three bars, a roof, several playrooms, a tub room, and various pieces of equipment located in a half block long building at 835 Washington Street in the middle of the New York Meat Market. It is all to be used and shared to enhance your wildest sexual fantasy and more!

As a social club the MINESHAFT provides the opportunity for guys to meet and play with men of a like persuasion or men so rare and different that they inspire new ways to play or might even change their entire life. This is mentioned as many couples have first met and found new type lives through the club. Yes, we are ever changing and the changes are due to the various men from all over the world who meet and play here in international play.

CONTINUING MEMBERSHIP IS AN INVESTMENT FOR THE LIFE OF THE SHAFT

Since the beginning in October 1976 membership has been on a quarterly basis with the quarters following the calendar year. Namely, Winter (January 1 to March 31), Spring (April 1 to June 30), Summer (July 1 to September 30) and Autumn (October 1 to December 31). Membership dues remain low for each 3 month period with the last date of each quarter serving as the expiration date. This is done for legal purposes of book audit and to keep close tabs on the quality of the men who are members and have no problem with club rules and MINESHAFT dress code.

Wally Wallace: Bob liked Black men and he had heard of a Black bar in Midtown in the 40s [between 40th and 49th Street] called "Blues"...and Bob was afraid to go there....So I went up there with him one time. He was like a kid so eager to go, but afraid to go alone.

Jack Fritscher: His insecurities were endearing. I squired him around town on his first trip to San Francisco to introduce him to everyone in the leather scene.

Wally Wallace: You might have thought we were headed to the depths of Harlem. The night we were there, there weren't many hot men, but only a couple of drag queens with their white boyfriends. It was not what he imagined.

Jack Fritscher: "Blues" was not the Mineshaft. [When Mapplethorpe broke through the calla-lily-white ceiling of his racial fear—he had no racist fear—he created brilliant studies of black men. For a consideration of racism in Mapplethorpe, see *Mapplethorpe: Assault with a Deadly Camera*, Take 16, "White Art, Black Men." In his will, Mapplethorpe left the sum of \$100,000 to one of his Black models, Jack Walls.] ...Camille told me she was in a video shot early in the Mineshaft.

Wally Wallace: Before *Leather Rick* made a video, the first video was shot by a director from France who was a friend of one of the guys who worked for me at the Mineshaft. Supposedly this would only be seen in Europe and not in America. We got a little money, but it was a strange film.

Jack Fritscher: Even in an age of Warhol and John Waters and underground films?

Wally Wallace: It was a French version of the Mineshaft. What the French thought we were about. They tied one guy up and put Christmas lights around him.
Jack Fritscher: Very teenage Kenneth Anger.

Wally Wallace: I remember Camille O'Grady was in it, singing. She was a good singer. But the soundtrack on the video had a terrible echo...

Jack Fritscher: Maybe it was the punk rock sound that had just become so popular from CBGB.

Wally Wallace: The movie did nothing for Camille's career. She thought it would. I remember her. She did sing at the Mineshaft a couple times for benefits. We did a lot of benefits like after the fire at the Everard

Baths in 1978 when so many died. We also did a Casino Night to raise money for Rex...I just love Rex. Our heads are complementary. Very private. But he's nowhere near as quiet as he seems. He's a wonderful human being. Rex drew three posters for the Mineshaft. I feel fortunate in having known so many great people in male porn. Rex is our Michelangelo and so is Tom of Finland and A. Jay [Al Shapiro, art director of *Drummer*].

In the zero degrees around *Drummer*, Rex was the official Mineshaft artist who illustrated my "Mineshaft" article in *Drummer* 19. He had drawn the cover of *Drummer* 10 (November 1976) which was on the stands when the Mineshaft debuted. I also wrote a major feature article about his work in my special issue, *Son of Drummer* (September 1978), pages 48-51. In 1980, I formally interviewed Rex who had moved in the migration of Manhattanites to San Francisco. For the excerpted interview, see *Mapplethorpe: Assault with a Deadly Camera*, "Take 14: Merchandising the Magical, Mystical Mapplethorpe Tour." Rex moved South of Market and opened up a gallery called "Rexwerk" in his home on Hallam Mews, fifty feet across the lane from the Barracks baths on Folsom. Rex who has rarely had good luck had some very bad luck. An arsonist set the Barracks on fire during the night of July 10, 1981.

That Folsom Street fire on July 10, 1981, ended the leather decade of the Titanic 70s that had begun with the harakiri of leather-and-uniform fetishist Yukio Mishima on November 25, 1970.

Rex, along with more than a hundred other leatherfolk including *Drummer* photographer Mark I. Chester, escaped with their lives. But everything they owned, and all their artwork, was lost in the disaster. **L**

(For a dramatized documentary description of what happened in the studios of Mark I. Chester and Rex as the fire raged, see *Some Dance to Remember*, Reel 4, Scene 3.)

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TO READ MORE of Jack Fritscher's "Interview with Wally Wallace," go to www.jackfritscher.com/Drummer/Issues/019/Mineshaft.html

Research leather history at www.jackfritscher.com

GMSMA donates records to the LA&M

by Rick Storer

In January 2007, the Gay Male S/M Activists (GMSMA) organization of New York City donated their organizational records to the Leather Archives & Museum. The contribution includes administrative records (By-Laws, meeting minutes, reports, etc...), scrapbooks, a full run of the NewsLink publication, photographs, press coverage, and other documents associated with the organization's twenty-seven year colorful history. GMSMA's records and story are a critical component of the fetish and leather community history. GMSMA's influence, longevity and educational programs as documented in their records will be a valuable asset to the Leather Archives and the Patrons who use this collection. Future researchers and leatherfolk owe a big "thank you" to GMSMA for making these records available. Gratitude is also extended to GMSMA archivist Gil Kessler, who has been providing excellent stewardship of the records and put in much time to prepare the records to come to the Leather Archives. Thank you GMSMA and thank you Gil!



This pencil cartoon drawn by Pat Daley of Chicago, IL was included with the GMSMA donation. Pat originally gave the piece to Drummer Magazine publisher Tony DeBlase. ©Pat Daley, reprinted with permission.

Leather Archives & Museum **LA&M**

To make arrangements to donate materials to the collections of the Leather Archives & Museum, please contact the Executive Director.

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