

We Were Family:

Regional and International Leather/ Levi Clubs and Conferences

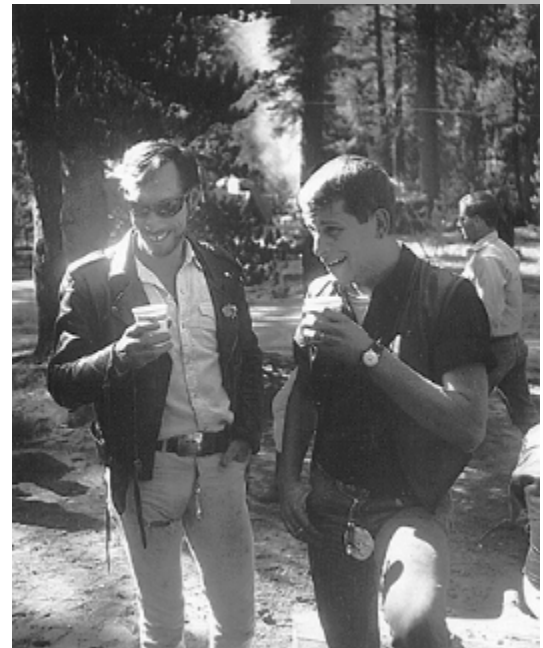
by Rob Ridinger

One of the lesser-known aspects of the history of the North American leather and levi community is the existence of networks of social and service clubs which provide the architecture of most local communities at the regional and international level. While the basic unit of these systems, the gay male motorcycle club, emerged from the post-war explosion of interest in and popularity of bikes during the 1950's (as witness the first such group, the still-active Satyrs M.C. of Los Angeles, formed in 1954), the first major networking did not arise among them until 1968, thus predating the Stonewall events of gay liberation history by a year.

The first organization of gay male motorcycle clubs, the Council of Southern California Motorcycle Clubs (1968-1988), was created in this region where the clubs began, fourteen years after the foundation of the Satyrs. Its founding clubs were the Satyrs M.C. (1955), the Oedipus M.C. (1958), the San Andreas M.C. (1964), the Saddleback M.C. (1965) and the Buddy M.C. (1966). The purpose of the Council was to coordinate the dates of club functions to avoid conflict. The Council also sponsored the Motorcycle Olympics, held yearly from 1969 to 1991. Members competed in motorcycle events, with participants awarded gold, silver and bronze medals for first, second and third place finishes. The club with the most medals was the overall winner, a title held by Oedipus M.C. from 1969 to 1979.

One year after the birth of the Council, the spread of this kind of organizing continued on April 4, 1969, with the creation of what is

now known as the Atlantic Motorcycle Coordinating Council (AMCC), the first multistate organization of this kind east of the Mississippi. According to the club news highlights for 1969 published in the last issue of *WHEELS*, the magazine of Cycle M.C. of New York, the founding clubs of the AMCC were 2nd City of Chicago, Cycle M.C., the Vikings of Boston, SMCLA (Lost Angels), and the Spartans of Washington, D.C. Its distinctive insignia was designed by Roger Torkelson of Second City, and the summer run hosted by Second City M.C. of Chicago in Michigan in July, 1969 was its first "official" run. In the same month, Empire City M.C., the Rocky Mountaineers of Denver and S.N.C. of the United Kingdom joined the conference. In August 1969, Second City hosted a meeting which adopted the Articles of Agreement, voted in Wheels MC of New York as the first new member club, and approved the design of the patch. In February, 1970, the AMCC changed its name to the Atlantic *Midwest* Coordinating Council and *WHEELS* was designated to be the best vehicle for



Chuck Arnett and Bill Tellman at Badger Flats Run, circa 1964

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Photo by Mike Kelley

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disseminating Council news. The AMCC met quarterly, and gradually clubs outside the area began to be aware of its existence. It thus served as the model from which all subsequent organizing of leather/levi clubs in the East, Midwest and South would be drawn. By 1974, with clubs from England to Colorado involved, it was recognized that the conference had to change, resulting in the birth of the European Council of Motorcycle Clubs (ECMC), the recently formed Mid America Conference (MAC), and a smaller version of the AMCC, limited in area from eastern Canada and Maine to Florida.

The Trident International (1973-) was founded in Montreal, Quebec in 1973, taking its famous three-pronged black and red symbol from a local tavern, the Neptune, and eventually grew to encompass thirteen chapters in both Canada and the United States, with the greatest concentration of chapters on the East Coast and in the Midwest. The relative absence of the Tridents from the leather community history of the West (with the exception of Trident City of Angels in Los Angeles) may be due to the fact that a similar organization, the Knights of Malta, had established chapters along the west coast from its birthplace in Washington - thus, there might not have been a niche in those local communities for the type of social service leather organization the Tridents represented. The basic mandate of the Tridents can be seen in their motto, "Give A Damn",

which is interpreted by members to mean that one of the goals of the organization is to engage problems facing local gay and lesbian communities and to demonstrate to them the ethic of brotherhood and sisterhood of the leather/levi community.



Mid America Conference Logo

Knights of Malta (1973-) In the same year as the foundation of the Trident International's mother chapter in Montreal, a second organization drawing on a different facet of history was founded in the Pacific Northwest in Seattle, Washington. Taking their name from the order of Knights of

St. John, the modern Knights of Malta spread out from Seattle's initial Jet Chapter to found chapters in Vancouver (Dogwood Chapter), Fresno (Yosemite Chapter), Modesto, and San Francisco, California and Reno, Nevada. The Knights hold an Assembly every two years.

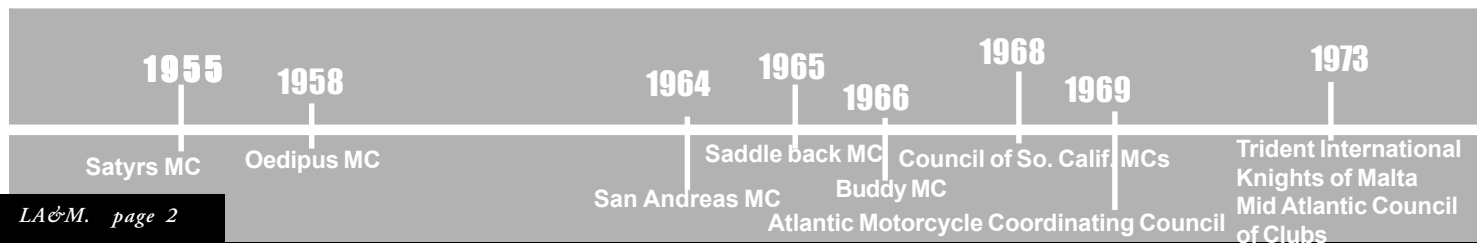


Texas Conference of Clubs

Mid America Conference of Clubs (1973-) Founded at the eighth anniversary run of Chicago's Second City club, "Two Becomes 8" on April 28, 1973 with a meeting of all attending club presidents and one other member from each group, this organization was known initially as the Mid West Conference, to distinguish it from the older AMCC. An entry in the June/July 1973 issue of LINKS, the newsletter of Second City M.C. of Chicago, records the foundation of the conference in some detail:

On Saturday afternoon, during *2 Becomes 8*, our Captain hosted a brunch for the President and one other member from each club in attendance. After the brunch, a short meeting was held to give birth to the Mid West Conference. It was decided that no officers would be elected, no clubs voted in or out, and that any club that considered themselves a Midwest Club would be invited to participate. Attending the meeting were representatives of the following clubs: Unicorns (Cleveland), Cin City (Cincinnati), Tribe (Detroit), Atons (Minneapolis), Silver Star M.C. (Milwaukee), Chicago Knights (Chicago), Hellfire (Chicago), 2nd City (Chicago) and the Omaha Meatpackers. Attending as guests were the Vanguard and Keystone Riders of Philadelphia. It was decided that we would attempt to attend each other's functions as much as practical. However, since most of us have limited funds we decided that we would promote one major event for each club during any given year.

This meeting marked the beginning of several decades of growth and change across an area stretching eventually from



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Denver to Columbus and from Green Bay to New Orleans and Atlanta. The “Captain” mentioned in the article was Frank Thomas, president of Second City. He had been a member of Wheels M.C. in New York City. By the end of 1974, the more familiar name of “Mid America Conference” had been adopted. At one time, this conference reached from Colorado and Texas to Ohio and Minnesota. The Texan member clubs voted to break away in 1976 and form the Texas Conference of Clubs (TCC), while the sheer distances involved eventually led to a withdrawal of conference borders to Louisiana, Ohio, Nebraska and Ohio. It was rebuilt under the dynamic leadership of Peter Thomas of the Rodeo Riders of Chicago (1986-2002) following a period of turbulence in the early 1980s and, as of 2003, had thirty-three clubs as members.

The deep South initially saw the proliferation of local clubs such as Atlantis MC (Atlanta), Celtics MC (Jackson, Mississippi), and the Pendragons (Birmingham), with these groups taking part in the event calendar of the AMCC and MACC. The short-lived South Florida Council of Clubs (1978-1981) was succeeded by the statewide Florida Brotherhood of Clubs in 1981. The idea that would grow into the South Eastern Conference of Clubs (SECC) began in November and December, 1995 with a small group of individuals, leading to an initial meeting of twelve representatives of fourteen organizations on March 31, 1996. An enthusiastic response to the proposal led to the formal creation of the SECC on June 14, 1996 during Southeast Leatherfest in Atlanta, Georgia, to serve the leather, S/M, bear and fetish communities of the region. In part, its structure and point system were modeled after those of the Mid America Conference of Clubs.

The Defenders USA (1981-) were founded in New York City in 1981 as an affiliate of Dignity New York, and by 2002, chapters were present in New York City, Boston, Providence, Washington, D.C., Tampa, Columbus, Chicago,

Denver, Los Angeles, and San Francisco. Their statement of purpose centers on the integration of leather and Christian spirituality (similar to the writings of the leather poet John Eric Larsen), challenging the idea that the two are mutually exclusive, and aiming to “encourage a constructive interaction and understanding between the leather community and the Christian community by example.”

In April 2000, a meeting was held at the KC Pioneers spring run in Kansas City, Missouri to explore the idea of a “Conference of Conferences”, which would serve as a network of the already functioning regional organizations. While representatives of all major groups attended, the consensus was that the existing connections were adequate to handle all scheduling and information needs. The idea begun in California had become a permanent part of the landscape of many leatherfolk, a solid and visible expression of the idea that, working together to encourage and

Trident MC Colors



Rob Ridinger is a professor on the faculty of the University Libraries at Northern Illinois University and has worked to promote awareness of the Leather Archives & Museum within the professional library and archival communities. With his life partner John Schultz, he helped found Trident International Windy City, in 1992, and has served that organization as secretary since that time. He also serves as the official historian of the Mid America Conference of Clubs and has assembled a history of the Trident International as well. He is currently serving on the LA&M Board of Directors and working as coordinator of the pin collection.



Capital Campaign News

Thank you to our new donors of \$500 or more . . .

Tribe Detroit
Alameda County Leather Corps
Chicago Hellfire Club/Inferno XXXII
Bruce Johnson
Los Angeles boys of Leather

Giving to the Capital Campaign ...

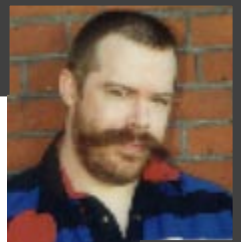


Some of our donors share why they have given ...



"Master and i contribute to the LA&M because of a phrase which has always touched me, more or less as, "Those who don't know history are doomed to repeat it"! Our story, from the early days following World War II (and earlier!) up to the present day, is worth telling, and worth remembering."

— *slave kirk thomas, International slave 2000, is owned and operated by Master Steven Sampson, who insists on His slaves having full, physical and spiritual lives.*



"Although fetishes and leather have been around since before recorded history, the organized fetish movement is new enough that its memories still exist in our minds and its physicalities exist in our closets. The Leather Archives & Museum provides us with a place to *keep* those memories and physical elements. Its walls will contain our recorded history, as long as we give of our memories and our closets, and its walls will stay strong and permanent if we contribute from our wallets. Where we have been in our own life shapes our own futures; where this community has been in all our lives shapes this community's future."

— *Andy Mangels, best-selling science fiction author and publisher of IN UNIFORM The Magazine*

You Call *This* a Volunteer Job?

by John Prather

Shortly after Rick Storer became the director of the Leather Archives & Museum he approached me to become a volunteer with the organization. He said that one collection that hasn't been addressed as of yet was the video collection. It needed to be put in some semblance of order and catalogued. I gladly accepted the job because it sounded fun and intriguing. So, most every Saturday you will find me down in the media room next to the museum "doing my thing."

I spent the first few weeks separating out the various types of tapes. We have VHS tapes, Beta tapes, 16 mm films, and 8 mm films. We also have a large amount of slides and audio cassette tapes. Once each of these categories had its own corner of the room, Rick and I decided that I should concentrate on the VHS tapes. The first task at hand with the VHS tapes was to separate them into two general categories. We called these categories: "documentary" and "pornography."

Documentary includes anything instructional or historical. It also includes tapes of various events and contests in the leather community. Some of the events LA&M has are the First International Ms. Leather, Alameda County Leather '94, Mr. Leather Europe '96, Mr. Empire State Leather '95-2000 and Mr. Dallas Leather 2000. Various interviews, such as "The Leather Report" and "Out of the Darkness", are another large area of the documentary tapes. We also have a few full feature films like "The Wild One" starring Marlon Brando made in 1953.

With regards to the category of pornography, what can I say? It includes all that is shot for your viewing pleasure and excitement. The pornography that is kept as part of the collection needs to reflect some aspect of the leather community. It could feature a particular fetish, scene or relationship such as master and slave. It could also feature a well-know porn star like Donnie Russo or Jeff Stryker. The tapes and films are catalogued by name, type of media, such as VHS or Beta, who donated it, copyright year, if available, whether it's a documentary or pornography with a brief description, the condition the tape is in and, lastly, where it's located in the room. To date I've seen close to 400 tapes. Once I've finished with VHS tapes, it's on to the 8mm & 16mm films.

On a personal note, I'm not quite sure who has gotten more benefit from my work with the video collection, the LA&M or myself.

No Saturday goes by without my learning something new about

the leather community. It could be something or someone historical, an event that I never knew existed, or a fetish that intrigues me and sparks my interest. I'm also learning a lot about relationships, the exchange of power and the excitement and sensation that the exchange can create. One thing I'm realizing is that the term "leather community" is really an umbrella term for various "cultures", if you will, that exist in our community. The straight, gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgendered cultures all are a part of the leather community. Each may have their own set of rules and protocol in the world of SM, yet they all play very important roles in creating the fabric of what is called the leather community.

In closing, yes, what I do is a volunteer job. Yet, the fun and excitement I'm having along with the knowledge I've acquired is well worth more than any monetary value.



LA&M Under Consensual Examination :

A professional / independent organizational assessment

by Rick Storer

As I've traveled around the country representing the LA&M, I've seen (and been a part of) some pretty hot and heavy interrogation scenes. Submitting to inspection, answering questions and getting probed for information are all part of a great interrogation scene. Recently, the LA&M has consensually entered into one of these 'scenes'. Unfortunately, this interrogation will be nothing like previous ones I have participated in. Most interrogation scenes result in a really intense head trip and a really great time. This interrogation scene will result in better operations at the LA&M.

The museum has hired Alisa Swindell, an independent (but very community friendly) contractor, to dig into the museum's activities, policies, staff, directors, and other aspects. She'll be looking for ways the museum can run

better, work with the community and public better, offer better programs and services, and plan for the future more effectively. Work on the assessment has already begun, and is expected to continue through the end of the year.

While the LA&M itself is always looking for ways to improve, an outside eye and ear can be invaluable. Often, staff and volunteers get so wrapped up in the institution's operations that they can't see opportunities or threats coming down the road. An independent assessor may be able to see these coming, and point them out to the LA&M in time to take advantage of, or prepare for them.

The LA&M is appreciative of International Mr. Leather, who has sponsored this assessment.

Gallery Hours

Every Thursday 5-8 p.m.

Every Saturday 12-3 pm.

See below for holiday closings

New LA&M Online Calendar

<http://calendar.yahoo.com/leatherarchives>

Calendar

November 2003

November 6	Fundraiser at Daddy's Bar	San Francisco, CA
November 7-9	Santa Clara County Leather Association Fundraiser	Santa Clara, CA
November 8	LA&M Board Meeting/Annual Meeting	Chicago, IL
	The Next Generation Chicago @ LA&M	Chicago, IL
November 9	Chicago Leather Club Panel Discussion @ LA&M	Chicago, IL
November 15	Performance Art at LA&M	Chicago, IL
November 27	Gallery Closed for Thanksgiving Holiday	Chicago, IL

December 2003

December 6	The Next Generation Chicago @ LA&M	Chicago, IL
December 25	Gallery Closed for Holiday	Chicago, IL

January 2004

January 1	Gallery Closed for New Year's Holiday	Chicago, IL
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LA&M Online Survey

The Leather Archives & Museum (LA&M) is asking each person in the leather community to complete a survey about the organization. An online version of the survey can be accessed through <http://www.leatherarchives.org/Contact/surveytest.htm>. The survey will be available from October 1st through November 30th 2003. The survey results are stored with a contracted survey vendor, and made available to the LA&M. The Leather Archives will not have access to IP addresses or similar information about surveys submitted online. Paper surveys will be distributed through various (though limited) means during the month of October, and will also be made available by request.

The primary purpose of the survey is to collect feedback from the leather community about the LA&M. Executive Director Rick Storer said "In January of 2004, the Board of Directors will be holding a strategic planning meeting to lay out a three year roadmap for the LA&M. Having the community's input is a crucial part of this process." The Leather Archives hopes that all who hear about the survey will publish the information on their club websites, electronic discussion groups and through word of mouth. "If every kinky, fetish and leather person alive today completes this survey over the next two months, this organization will operate and plan that much better." said Storer.

Complete the survey now at:

<http://www.leatherarchives.org/Contact/surveytest.htm>

History of Black BDSM Available Online

Dark connections, a website offering resources for and about Black BDSM, has published a history of Black BDSM on their site. The site offers a brief overview of people in color in BDSM publications, media and groups. After the introduction, the site provides information about BDSM as related to African rituals, slavery and religion. The Black leather community is discussed through the notable people and organizations that have contributed to the community over the past 3 decades. Finally, the site offers many Black BDSM internet resources. Links and brief reviews of each site are offered. The Dark Connections site can be accessed at :

<http://www.darkconnections.com/history/history01.htm>

Datenschlag's Bibliography (in English)

Datenschlag, a BDSM education group in German and Austria, has published a comprehensive bibliography of BDSM writing, mostly academic and scientific, on the web. Earlier this year, the bibliography was translated into English. This valuable resource is available on the internet at :

<http://www.datenschlag.org/english/bisam/>

The bibliography can be searched by author or chronologically by publication year.

**Web
RESOURCES**

Teri Rose Library Progress

by Rick Storer

*Teri Rose
Library, in
process*



Each time I step into the “in progress” Teri Rose Memorial Library, I can envision a room filled with books, magazines, newspapers and leather people researching their history. While that dream won’t become a reality until (at least) May of 2004, I’m happy to report that the library is very much coming alive. Each time I see the room, it’s a few steps closer to that goal.

On one front, MJ Productions and friends are busy with drills, hammers, saws, and other tools building the shelves that will hold the library’s resources. High quality oak wood is being used to construct the shelves which will line the walls of the room. Carpeting, judges panels on the ceiling and new light fixtures are expected to create a warm and comfortable atmosphere in the room. A research desk and reading furniture will complete the room. While the physical library is being prepared, the materials that will fill the library shelves

are also under preparations. Natalie, the LA&M’s super librarian volunteer, has been organizing and sorting the books in preparation for their new home. The books have been sorted according to genre (fiction, pulp fiction, non-fiction, art, etc.) and will be sorted by author within each of those sub categories. While the books are being sorted, the LA&M and many of its library professional friends are examining catalog opportunities.

The Teri Rose Memorial Library is intended to be more than a physical room in Chicago. As erotic digital content becomes available, the LA&M hopes to create a “digital library” with electronic resources online.

If you’re a library or metadata expert and would like to lend a hand in getting the physical or digital library up and running, please contact Rick Storer at rick@leatherarchives.org

The Traveling Exhibits

See the LA&M calendar at www.leatherarchives.org for more information



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Newsletter Editor

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Facilities Manager

LA&M in Your City

While the physical gallery and archives of the museum are located in Chicago, we seek to serve leather communities all over the world. Our board members travel to leather conferences and event weekends around the US. We currently have two traveling exhibits which also make appearances around the country. If you are an event organizer and would like a traveling exhibit at your event, please contact Rick Storer.

Visiting the LA&M

Open visiting hours are:

**Thursday 5 p.m. to 8 p.m.
Saturday 12 noon to 3 p.m.**

Requests to see the museum at other times and requests to conduct research in the LA&M archives can be arranged by contacting the LA&M

Board of Directors:

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**Donations
and Tax Deductions:**

The Leather Archives & Museum is recognized as tax exempt under the US Internal Revenue Service section 501c(3). Donations are deductible from your Federal Income tax, subject to IRS deduction regulations.

I wish to become a member of the Leather Archives and Museum. Enclosed is my donation.

Name: .
Club or Organization: .
Address: .
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Please send information on:

- A codicil to my will
- Donating Materials
- Club Colors Project
- Vacation Volunteering
- Local Volunteering
- Regional Volunteers
- Major Gifts

I represent

- An individual
- An Organization
- A Business

I will contribute:

- \$30 and become a Member of the LA&M for one year
- \$100 and become a Voting Member of the LA&M for one year
- \$500 and become a "Full-Brick" donor to the LA&M Building Fund
- \$600 and become a Voting Member & donor to the LA&M Building Fund
- \$ as a donation to the operation of the LA&

