

Four Seasons, Metairie



The Country Club



CrescentCare



GrandPre's



The Balcony Bar @ Lafitte's

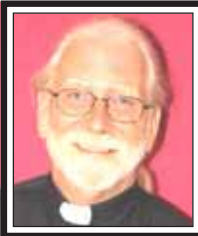


Rawhide 2010



ambush paparazzi

Autour de la Ville ~ Metairie, New Orleans ~ Photos by Misti Gaither, Paul Melancon



a community within communities

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Mardi Gras

The following was written a few years ago. I tweaked it but it still reads true in a community that is reacting to the forces of bigotry, misogyny, and homophobia. Those forces perceived or real have gotten us down. So.....

FAT FAT FAT Tuesday, corpulent fun, a bacchanal to end all bacchanals. Costumes that are racy and discreet, brazen and bawdy, sweet and petite. Mardi Gras. It is time for the fantastic fun of a day of revelry and libation. Young, old, middle aged, there is usually something for everyone. I suppose for this city it is the big blowout before we all go on a diet, quit cigarettes, start exercising, lose ten pounds, and destroy the credit cards and other "Lenten disciplines."

As a native I remember Mardi Gras quite differently. The Krewe of Carrollton rolled down Carrollton Ave. The Krewe of Comus rolled down Bourbon Street as the closing act. The French Quarter did not "close." But then again the Quarter had half the t-shirt shops, door men stood at clubs for a peek inside, four or five jazz venues and Frenchmen Street was still residential. It was the days of the Upstairs Lounge and Charmaine's Bar. It was a town when the Half Fast Marching Club actually walked and no one knew where the "real" parade route for Zulu was headed. Ah the golden age.

That same age in which little Ruby Bridges and ten others 54 years ago desegregated New Orleans Public Schools to howling parents chagrin. The first Gay Mardi Gras krewe was the Krewe of Yuga or "KY." This krewe was formed to satirize the straight, aristocratic Mardi Gras traditions in 1958. In 1962, the Krewe of Yuga threw its first ball at a badly chosen sight, a private children's school. No sooner had the tableau begun with Queen and Maids expectantly waiting the adoration of the spectators when police cars roared up and the ball was raided. Doors were locked and people were unceremoniously hauled to jail. Ah, the golden age.

In those days many in the LGBT community stayed in the closet. There was nothing new about Gay men in New Orleans. They had been silently acknowledged, you know, the bachelor men that moved to the French Quarter. Guys like Tennessee Williams would sojourn to this dowager-Queen City and discover who they really were. One did not say they were gay it was simply understood. That was then and this is now.

Now some old timers might grumble that "it's all commercialized!" Perhaps, but today we have the great Drag Queen contest and no one gets arrested; at least not for being Gay. Today the Public School system while in disrepair is fully integrated as far as public access goes. Yes, it has its issues but none the less fully integrated. Today in addition to Mardi Gras we have Decadence, Gay Pride, and Essence Festival. No my dear we are still not quite there. Other issues need to be settled like the apparent swing toward "conservative values" and the potential for a turning legal system that takes three steps back according to legal rights of minorities. Turbulent times perhaps reflected most sarcastically with Krewe du Vieux foisting political and social critique upon us as only such a parade can.

The laconic days of the 1950s and 60s are gone. Some of which many of us sorely miss. But, the 21st century has given us many gifts of social justice, equality, and hope. It is hard to sort all that out, it truly is, and it's confusing sometimes because as a community we want so desperately to think of a golden age.

Perhaps this IS the Golden Age, at least for some, and I am not talking about "the One per cent." I am talking about you and me. In the middle of this confusing, rapid paced, age of technology there are glimmers, more than glimmers, bright stars of hope and equality. Jesus said, "The kingdom of God is near and at hand." It always has been in the hearts of people like Stewart Butler, or, perhaps in the heart of A.P. Tureaud and Nelson Mandela and Archbishop Desmond Tutu. The Kingdom of God that Jesus spoke of knows no shame in being who we are created to be nor to celebrate our common life.

The Kingdom of God is an on-going process drawing us closer to "the beloved community" of hope and hospitality. So, party hard on Mardi Gras, last flash of the flesh. Be safe; be thankful, that today you can be who you are in the streets of New Orleans. Maybe not in Sochi or Syria but certainly in New Orleans – we have at least that going for us. Then make your humble supplication to the creator and sustainer on Wednesday thanking him/her for all the current, past, and future blessings that we are imbued with. For it is after all, "the sacrament of the present moment."

out front

Hidden Treasures of the Louisiana State Museum: Carnival Edition February 16

For all you hardcore Carnival fanatics, join the **Friends of the Cabildo** and the **Louisiana State Museum** for one night only as they open the impressive Carnival Collection for an exclusive behind-the-scenes viewing of historic costumes and other rarely seen artifacts.

Wayne Phillips, Curator of Costumes and Textiles for the Louisiana State Museum, will guide you through an in-depth, first-hand look at Carnivals of years past through a tour of the storage rooms of the State Museum, usually off limits to the general public.

Hidden Treasures of the Louisiana State Museum: Carnival Edition takes place Thursday, February 16.

Tours are at 6pm and 7pm at the Louisiana State Museum's Collection Storage Facility, located at 1000 Chartres Street in the French Quarter.

Cost is \$25.00 per person or \$20.00 per person for Friends of the Cabildo/Louisiana Museum Foundation members.

Reservations are required, and space is extremely limited. No tickets are sold at the door.

For more details and to reserve your space, please contact Rachel Strassel at the FOC Office 504.523.3939 or purchase online at www.friendsofthecabildo.org.

Friends of the Cabildo is a private non-profit volunteer group that provides financial and volunteer support for the Louisiana State Museum, its projects, and its properties. Since incorporating in 1956, the Friends of the Cabildo has grown into a large statewide membership organization, a dynamic and motivating force in broadening and supporting the aims of the Louisiana State Museum.



NOLA Leather to Geaux Returns March 10-12

New Orleans' only Leather, Kink and Fetish Run returns for the third year March 10-12. The Frenchmen Hotel at 417 Frenchmen Street is the host hotel for this year's event.

Join locals and visitors who will be wearing their gear and enjoying all that New Orleans has to offer for a fun weekend of parade watching, food and maybe a little debauchery.

Participants will be welcomed with a cocktail party at the hotel where they may watch and catch beads from the Molly's at the Market Irish Parade as it rolls through the Marigny on Friday, March 10 at 6pm. Following the parade, the festivities continue with a social at the Rawhide bar in the French Quarter.

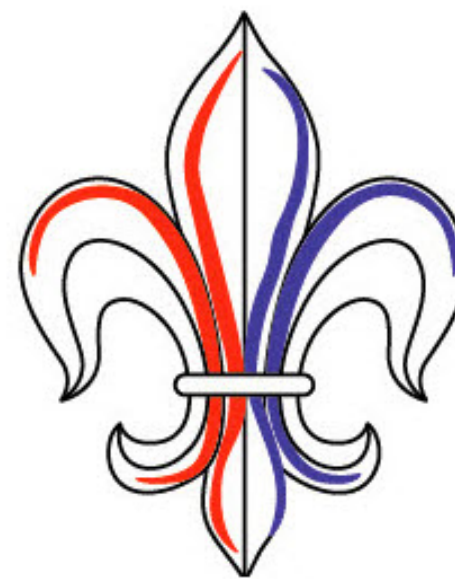
Walking history tours of the French Quarter are on the agenda for Saturday with the group convening later that afternoon at the Phoenix Bar for dinner, Naughty Bingo and a Beer Bust.

Sunday will wrap up with the very popular Springtime Brunch on GrandPre's patio.

Registration is available at www.nolaleathertogeaux.org by clicking on the "Do Attend" link. Do it now before the rate goes up in early February!

Make your hotel reservations now for the Frenchmen Hotel by calling 504.945.5453; be sure to mention "NOLA Leather to Geaux" for the special rate.

More information can be found at www.nolaleathertogeaux.org; questions can be directed to nolaleathertogeaux@gmail.com; and also see us on Facebook (www.facebook.com/NOLALeathertoGeaux).



The Cafe

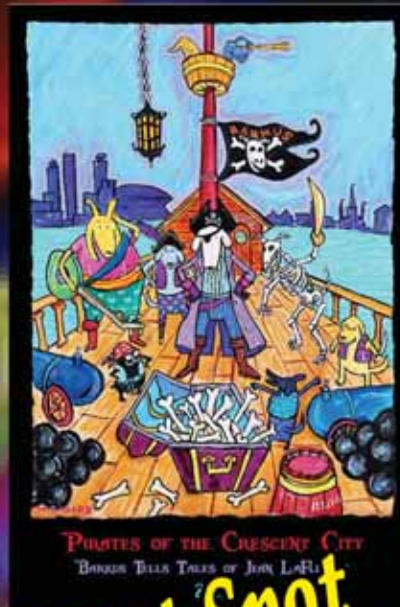
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in North America
....despite what others claim

MYSTIC KREWE OF BARKUS
Pirates of The Crescent City
Sunday Feb., 19th 2pm



Best Spot
is on the
Balcony

Kafe
Karaoke
Wednesday 9pm

Stop in for Wheel of Fortune
weekdays
Be the first
to solve the
puzzle and win

Open 24 hours
Every Day

Trash
Disco
Sunday
4pm - 10pm

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