

A RAINBOW FLAG FOR MARSHA

"You know the memorial I'd like to see us have," I told Marsha during a discussion about the then-proposed Segal sculpture now standing in Sheridan Square during the early 1980s. "I'd like to see you cast in bronze and set over on the West Side Highway as a memorial to all the transvestite hookers, the poor & homeless people of the world.

"We'd would put a wishing pond at your feet where young lovers could come and toss a coin & make a wish. Then as evening fell, we'd let those really hard up girls come & rake out the coins, giving them a couple dollars, a little change for the evening.

"The only thing I can't make my mind up about," I continued while watching a traditional big smile light up Marsha's face, "is whether I should have you cast as a male or female figure."

"Oh, I'll tell you how it should be," Marsha virtually cackled in that unique machine-gun paced laugh of hers. "You should make it so whenever two people came up and looked at it, one would their hand on their chin, study it for a moment & then declare to their friend, 'It's a woman!' --To which the other person would respond just as surely, 'No, it isn't it's a man!'--To which the first one would reply, 'No, it isn't. It's a woman.'--And they'd just stand there all night arguing-'It's a man.' 'It's a woman.' 'It's a man.' 'It's a woman.' Marsha slapped her thigh with obvious delight at the idea.

In the fantasy world of my soul I dare to dream that impossible dream. Especially now that Marsha's body has been pulled from the Hudson River & her blood has literally stained the soil. But one friend's tribute reshaped my dream of a memorial to Marsha into a realistic tangible achievable concept.

The friends who sat with her body after they pulled it from the river designed their own special tribute by erecting a simple memorial, a collection of bottles outlining the bloodstained pavement. The enter was of grass & weeds pulled from nearby. Those with nothing fashioned paper flowers from colored pieces of paper. Then others brought ~~flower~~flowers & candles. And a people's memorial to Marsha was born that way --in a decayed, broken bottle strewn park at the foot of Christopher Street. Word spread. Even Marsha's more elegant friends came to see it.

Nearly two weeks after its birth, as the flowers continued to be left & candles burned nightly, a young man named George Pabon added his own special tribute--a black flag fastened to a stick wired to the river's concrete wall which had tiny colored streamers in the colors of a rainbow attached to it's outer edge.

George Pabon had been Marsha's dance partner at countless clubs & social events during the last couple years. Although half her age and of another generation, he had come to love & admire that aging queen of disco, the legendary Icon of The Anvil. And so an idea was born.

A bronze statue & wishing pond, however merited, at the moment seems out of reach. But a Marsha P. Johnson Memorial Flagpole sitting at water's edge in that park at the foot of Christopher Street, a gay flag flying from it's mast, IS an idea whose time has come.

~~MMarsha~~ Randy Wicker

MARSHA P. JOHNSON MEMORIAL COMMITTEE, 506 HUDSON ST. NYC , NY10014