

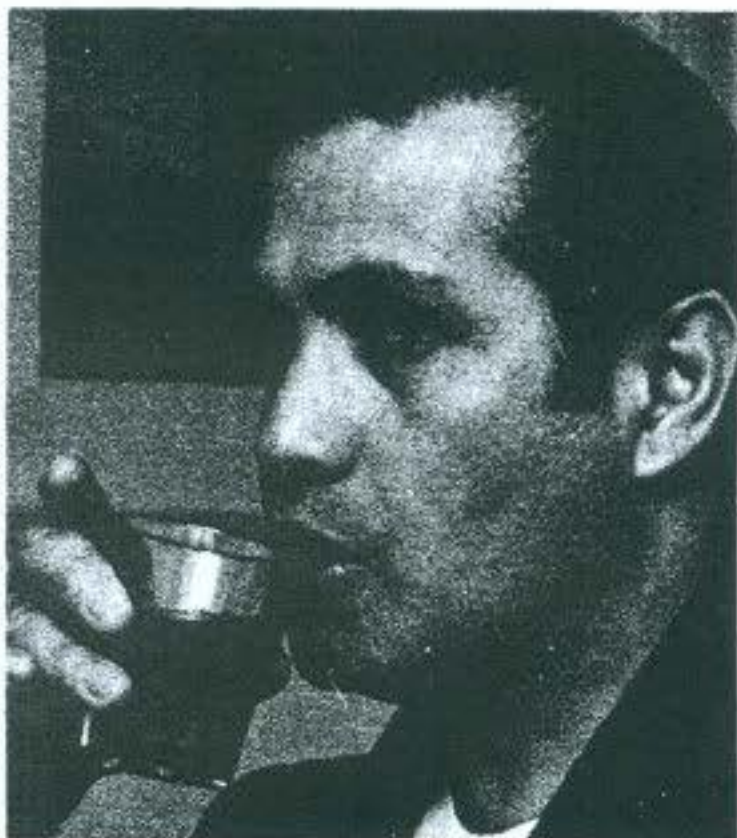
The Montgomery Street Nightengale

or "IF YOU KNEW JOSE LIKE I KNOW JOSE"

by Cliff Reynolds

Our interview and dinner were set for six o'clock. I arrived on time having suffered a dented fender in the process. No Jose. I was greeted by his roommate-accompanist Lyle Gardiner and ushered into the unorthodox living room where I waited patiently counting the cars passing beneath us along Castro.

Obviously the maitre was not there—it was too quiet. I was surrounded by brickabrack and memorabilia. Somewhere a clock was timidly sounding off and then fell silent. It was very difficult to remember Jose as Colonel's orderly in the E T O or for that matter as Sargeant running what must have been the giddiest motor pool at Fort Dix in the uptight state of New Jersey.



JOSE Photo by Ruben

My reveries were rudely interrupted by the dramatic, tow-and-a-half hour late arrival of the star bursting thru the front door embracing two large bags of groceries. He flung appologies in all directions, issued orders to his menage and bulldozed through to the small kitchen. I was stunned.

Any attempt at conversation now was a total loss. Noises issued from the culinary area and people milled about in a furious fashion. A table cloth of red and white checker design—reputedly a hold-over from the Black Cat was thrown across an old cottage breakfast table set up in the center of the living area.

Chairs of all description mysteriously appeared. Bustle, bustle, bustle. The overwhelming sound of frying chicken and the clanking of utensils rent the air. Amid all this, our Vector photographer arrived. It took a great deal of coaxing to get him to step into the maelstrom. Bits and snatches of information were being proffered and as fast as my little hands could write I noted it.

One: did you know that our man was an education major in college? I didn't. But that is what interviews are for. How is it he did not become a teacher? You could have heard a pin drop. I swear that even the chicken ceased frying for a moment. It was His voice that finally came thru: I was all but crucified. Being labled as a known homosexual is the death sentence to a credential in this state.

Noise and activity resumed. He continued: I resolved that if I was tagged, then I would turn it to my advantage. Gay bars at the time were oasis of retreat for the 'set' and some of the better known ones were featuring entertainment.

Pearl's in Oakland was one such place. Periodically they held talent auditions. Lynne Carter encouraged me to go along with him and try out. I did and won second place and a chance to work at the old Beige Room in San Francisco. That, I remembered, was in the early 50's.

The heaping platters of beautifully brown chicken were being brought to the table and savoury salad passed around by this time. Time and red table wine had honed our appetites to a razors edge. It was delicious. I asked where he had learned his skill.

"I have been a Maitre d' at some of the better restaurants here in the city and, in fact in several important fairs," Jose said. Well, then, what ever took you out of the kitchen and onto the stage? The chicken platter was passed again and I took another drum stick.

My host sipped his wine thoughtfully. "I was working as Maitre d' at the



Photo by Laurence

Make-up artist works on Jose.
Our Lady of The Lashes?

Clift Hotel at the time and had a friend, jim McGuiness, working at the Cat as a bartender and waiter," Jose explained. "Sundays he played piano for the cusomers and some of it was opera music. Well, one day I went down and began to make up a story and added cooky words to the music and the people there loved it. Someone suggested that I do it again the next Sunday so I did." Jose added. "We used to push tables together to make a stage. A merchant seaman brought his collection of kimonos and we did Madama Butterfly. It was a camp. By the middle of the summer our productions had expanded and shortly after that I was put on salary" Jose said. "I had quit my job at the hotel, increased the profits, and the number of performances."

Jose stayed there until it closed in 1963. Many of the New York roadshow stars and casts would come to see him at the Black Cat. Ruben, our shutter clicker, was shooting up a storm. I persisted.

"Where did you go from there?" "Well," Jose sighed, "I was running for Board of Supervisors and lost the race but managed to poll about six thousand votes. I ran on an open gay ticket. It started the ball rolling."

"But," I said, "where did you go next to entertain?" "Oh—to the Back

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CAVEAT EMPTOR

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Listen. Try 'em both for yourselves. Jackson's is at Bay and Powell. On The Levee is at Filbert between the Embarcadero and Battery. If you don't like something about the service tell 'em! Or shut. up. And if you do, the management always appreciates a compliment.

Should any of you have any recommendations or complaints about *any* of the businesses in our Gay community, we would like to hear them. Those that warrant mentioning will be checked out and mentioned. Address your comments to CAVEAT EMPTOR % Tad Stone, Vector, #15 Beaver Street, San Francisco 94114.

JOSE (Continued from Page 10)

Stage." Jose answered. Oho, an ill fadish place. When that folded he went to the New York World's Fair and maitred the Luxembourg Cafe, the smallest restaurant on the fair grounds. Robert Moses, the fair coordinator, had banished all the gay bars and those that even looked gay. Phi on him.

Jose then returned to this giddy city by the bay for a brief stay and made notable and not-so-notable appearances in some of the then hot spots. But finding the going a bit disappointing and depressing he went to Expo 67 in Montreal to operate another restaurant.

His return to San Francisco was brief for he was off and running to the Hemisfiar in San Antonio.

"How long have you been at the Opera Club?" I asked. I watched as he glanced about the room. Finally: "You mean this time?" I looked puzzled. "You see," he said, noticing our bewilderment, "Years ago I worked there when Magnolia Calhoun was the star attraction." I nodded. "This time I've been there since June 1968."

The clock struck another timid note and we began to didgit. Since you are at the Club only on Sundays what do you do during the rest of the week?

"I sell women's shoes" Jose answered. That figures, I repeated to myself. Our photographer was packing up and we thanked our host and took our leave. The cold air and darkness struck us and we pondered what I was going to tell my roommate about the dented fender.

SEXUAL FREEDOM LEAGUE

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along I would expect to see more gay is good people there. This brings along one of the other fears. "Will the straight people put me down?" Hasn't happened yet. The few gay people who have attended our parties have had no complaints. Most S.F.L. members are very polite, and since many heterosexual males are social failures the good looking gay man is in conversational demand by the female party goer. O.K. so you can't stand women. Or maybe you are honest and are afraid of women. So what? Nobody is going to eat you up (unless you are lucky). Come to the parties and groove on people, not sex.

I'm not quite sure exactly what I'm trying to convey here except that you are more than welcome at S.F.L. parties, you are necessary, if sexual freedom and sexual tolerance is to prevail. Also, gay has not been good in the S.F.L., but not because of the straight people—it's because of the lack of gay participation.

Three Bay Area Chapters of the S.F.L. have regular activities each week. Something like SIR had about three years ago, these active small groups provide members and non-members with everything from formal dinners to sex.

Sunday: ENCOUNTER GROUP (East Bay)

Monday: OPEN HOUSE (SF), 1019 Ashbury, 8:30 PM, \$1 donation

Tuesday: VISUAL DELIGHTS CIRCLE: (SF, 1019 Ashbury) members only, activity for Voyeurs and Exhibitionists.

Wednesday: DRAMA GROUP (East Bay) Play readings.

PHOTO GROUP (SF)

Thursday: OPEN HOUSE (Bkly House, 8:30 PM), April 10, 24

DISCUSSION GROUP (Bkly. House, 8:30 PM) April 3, 17

Friday: ENCOUNTER GROUP (2 in East Bay)

NUDE PARTY (SF), members only

Saturday: GOURMET DINNER GROUP (usually 2nd Sat.)

NUDE PARTIES, 2 each week, 4 different types each month. Members only.

ALL S.F.L. FUNCTIONS ARE OPEN TO GAY MALES AND/OR FEMALES.



DINNER NIGHTLY \$1.75

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