

**BRIEF HISTORY OF NEW ORLEANS P-FLAG 1982-92**  
(from May 1992 BANNER)

Having been part of this group since its inception, I recall many highlights, but to aid my memory, today I re-read the early newsletters written by Molly Webster, our first President/Editor, and those following from 1989. I'd like to remind old-timers and tell newcomers some of the developments of our chapter over these first ten years:

May 1982 - our first meeting at St. Louis Community Center, attended by about 20 people. (Our Treasurer, Laura Peebles, was among us with her partner, Ellen Fingerhann, and the entire Fingerhann family.) Molly and Doug Webster, our sponsoring parents, began a wonderful tradition of sharing and caring. Some months later, the TIMES-PICAYUNE featured an interview with them "Parents Coming Out" by staff writer Kathleen Mulvihill.

1983 - After much soul-searching discussion, we changed names from Parents and Friends of Gays to Parents and Friends of Lesbians and Gays in order to affiliate with the national Federation. We participated with other groups in donating money (for our group, \$26 was a lot!) for bullet-proof vests for the police. We also agreed to support "Celebration '83" although not yet active in it as a group.

1984 - We helped with Tulane Gay Awareness Week and did our first "Celebration" workshop: "Coming Out to Parents: Pitfalls and Pratfalls". We had our first representation at the national convention (Niki Kearby and Betty Caldwell went to Denver and did a workshop on "Longterm Lesbian Relationships".) The first effort at a gay rights ordinance for New Orleans failed. (Sponsored by Mike Early and Wayne Babovich, who, under pressure from the Temple of Faith folks in his district, withdrew support and actually voted against it!) Barthelmy and Boissiere joined Early in support, but Brian Wagner and Joe Giarrusso (thanks to the Archdiocese!) joined Babovich. Jim Singleton avoided the vote by absence.

1985 - We expanded PFLAG presence by helping Baton Rouge form a chapter! PFLAG again did a "Celebration" workshop, and four of us, Molly and Doug, Niki and Betty, went to the national convention in Atlanta. In Nov., the Gitting-Hays award for outstanding work for the gay community honored PFLAG and Molly accepted it for us. Our first fund-raiser was offered by the Shelby Fine Arts Gallery, giving 10% of sales to those identifying with PFLAG back to PFLAG.

1986 - At last, a PFLAG-NO bank account. Another art-gallery fund-raiser, Elizabeth-Alexander Gallery, run by our charter member and board member Betty Moynan and gay son David) gave 20% of sales to PFLAG-NO. In May, Doug and Niki made the first of the on-going series of presentations to the freshmen class at LSU Medical School. In June, "Celebration '86 and the Southeastern Conference of Lesbians and Gay Men met at Tulane and we hosted there our first regional mini-conference and presented 4 workshops for PFLAG and other "Celebration" registrants. In June, we made our

first appearance in the Gay Pride Parade. In Aug., Betty M. hosted our 1st "Parents Only" party. Also in Aug., we went to Houma to help Julia Madere form a group there. In Sept. Saxon and Gordon Kane hosted a "Parents Only" at their home in Prairieville. Doug, Molly, Niki & Betty went to Portland for national convention. In Oct., PFLAG was given a great picnic on the Amite River by Ted and Martha Innes. Perhaps the most important event in this busy year was the in-service workshop "One Teenager in Ten" for teachers and counselors, given by PFLAG at De La Salle High School library one Sat. 33 registered, including 11 counselors and teachers. In Nov., PFLAG was asked to participate in Assoc. Catholic Charities Social Ministries Fair. In Dec. came the 2nd try at a gay rights ordinance. This time, Molly, Doug, Betty M., Betty C. and others in PFLAG spoke for the ordinance, as well as heads of both Loyola and Tulane Law Schools, ACLU, the Anti-Defamation League, several Protestant ministers and Catholic nuns and one or two brothers (not directly controlled by the Archdiocese). However, strong opposition from the Archdiocese and from the fundamentalist Protestant churches defeated the measure. Only sponsoring Councilman Johnny Jackson, Jr. and one brave, idealistic colleague, Dorothy Mae Taylor, voted for it. New Orleans Magazine writer, Laura Claverie, did an excellent interview/article "View from a Different Window, talking with Molly, Doug, Betty M., Saxon, and Betty C. PFLAG-NO incorporated and applied for tax-exempt status, thanks to lawyer member Steve Laborde and board member Bobby Huskey.

1987 - Thanks to Alan Robinson of Faubourg Marigny Books, PFLAG could offer mail order book buying. Feb., Molly went to Lafayette and New Iberia and a new PFLAG group began in Lafayette with Thelma Aucoin as leader. PFLAG had a workshop for LA NOW. The newsletter became the BANNER. Molly, Doug, Niki, Betty and the Aucoins of Lafayette went to D.C. for the national meeting. Molly and Doug summarized and had printed "Neurohormonal Influences and Sexual Orientation" for lay readers. PFLAG again participated in "Celebration" and Gay Pride and Assoc. Catholic Charities Social Ministries Fair. Molly, another mother, and several gay & lesbian members spoke to various groups. The March on Washington for Lesbian and Gay Rights had a number of gay & lesbian PFLAG members from N.O. but none of our parent members. Many other PFLAG groups were very much in evidence.

1988 - Molly created an excellent Helpline Manual and gave a training session for volunteers. She and Doug, Niki, Betty, the Aucoins from Lafayette and Jackie Plaisance from Baton Rouge all went to national convention in Chicago. Other outreach continued.

1989 - Another Times-Picayune writer, Millie Ball, interviewed "Mothers of Gays" including Eileen Hastings. Betty M., & our new president, Anne Childress (who bravely let us put her in office when Molly felt she had to leave, although Anne had already lost her only gay child to AIDS and had

cancer herself). She, Sandra Paillet, Niki and Betty all went to Detroit for national meeting. Before that, the usual "Celebration" and Gay Pride, where Alex Jacobs (life-partner of charter member Father Bill Richardson) raised funds making Polaroid photos of people in front of an antique Rolls Royce.

1990 - We lost Anne, and Sandra agreed to take on the job and turned out to be a real dynamo! The Times-Picayune did an article on Kevyn Aucoin, now a nationally-known make-up artist, and told how much PFLAG had helped his parents. The same week, local host Angela Hill had a PFLAG panel on her talk show, Sandra, the Aucoins, and a Baton Rouge mother. Later in the year, Angela had 5 days of programs on gays, many with PFLAG members on panels. PFLAG was invited to judge the Gay Pride parade and later to be the lead group in our first NO/AIDS Walk. UNO prof Bruce King, teacher/author on human sexuality, spoke at one of our meetings. Each year, more of our PFLAG speakers go to more groups to do educational outreach.

1991 - National President Paulette Goodman, in town for the American Psychiatric Assn. meeting at which she spoke and was honored by their gay and lesbian caucus, was guest at our 9th anniversary meeting and our Mother's Day Brunch. Main event, our first Champagne Reception to raise funds for our Scholarship Fund honored Molly and Doug, Angela Hill and Andre Trevigne (another friendly TV personality), Bruce King, Michael Kaiser, M.D. Much work done by volunteers, bless them! Additional scholarship funds came from a raffle organized by Michael and Kenny, and still more, in the fall, from "Third Thursday" group (social and networking group for gays and lesbians in many professions). Two workshops at "Celebration", gay pride parade judging, etc. kept PFLAG busy in early summer. In the fall, Sandra, Stewart Butler, Alfred Doolittle, Cliff Howard, Niki, Betty, Saxon, Faith Joubert, Kelly Russo, & David all attended the national meeting in Charlotte. The Lafayette Aucoins were also there. At that convention, our board member Niki became a V.P. on nat'l. board. And - at last - Dec. 12, 1991, City Council voted 5-2 for civil rights including gays & lesbians! Sandra & Stewart were 2 of 8 on principal planning committee and Sandra the only non-gay member of that committee. She was also one of the main speakers at the hearing and was very moving. That night, our PFLAG holiday meeting was a real celebration, with guest speaker Judge Miriam Waltzer, long-time civil rights (including gay rights) activist to share in our triumph!

1992 - Our new meeting place: St. Charles Ave. Presbyterian Church. The weekend following our anniversary meeting, we had our 2nd Champagne Reception Scholarship Fundraiser and gave our first five \$1500 scholarships to 5 wonderful young people!

AND NOW, A BRIEF UPDATE SINCE THAT ANNIVERSARY NEWSLETTER:  
More 1992: Soon after the 1991 Charlotte convention, Sandra and Stewart decided that our chapter could host the

1993 national convention and planning began. In June, our chapter gave two workshops at "Celebration" (including one showing the Project 10 video and leading discussion on it). Again we were part of Gay Pride, judging parade floats and having a booth of information, etc. all weekend in the park. Another outreach: Sandra, Mel Tankersley, George and Chris Caldwell spoke to the cadets at the Police Academy, thanks to Marilyn McConnell, from the Mayor's Advisory Comm. on Gay/Lesbian Issues, who regularly sends panels of gay men and lesbians to speak to the cadets (PFLAG members among them) but this was a first for the cadets to hear from parents! Barbara Perrault hosted a "Parents Only" so well-attended that there were more people than chairs! The N.O. presence at the Seattle convention was especially important for us to "sell" N.O. as '93 site. Sandra, Stewart, Alfred, Mel, Niki, Betty, Saxon & Gordon, our out-going regional director Thelma with husband Izzie and son Kevyn, son-in-love Don were all there, and other chapter members were present in works sent - Bob Tick and Ed O'Hallaron made a gorgeous banner to advertise our convention & a fabulous "second-liner" umbrella. Our 3rd co-chair, Billy Henry, had gotten us cases of miniature Tabasco bottles and long-suffering chapter members had patiently attached the cards with our logo designed by Donna Barnet (of Wenger Ink, Judith Wenger being our ever-helpful printer), which we put at every place in the dining room. We also had a drawing and gave one convention registration, a dinner for 2 at Bacco (thanks to PFLAG's Greg Golden who worked there) and a hotel room for 3 nights. For our scholarship program, we received our first grant from a foundation, the Lupin Foundation (which is local). We also instigated the policy (copied from Minn. G/L Task Force) of allowing major donors (\$1000 or more - from an individual or group) to name a scholarship in honor of or in memory of someone. In Dec., the Regional AIDS Interfaith Network (RAIN) participated in World AIDS Day with a moving service, and two of our chapter mothers, Mel and Nancy Rogers, both of whom have lost their sons to this plague, carried our chapter banner down the aisle of Christ Church Cathedral. Sandra lit our candle for the recessional. A cheery note for the same month, the anniversary of the City Council civil rights ordinance was the date for the long-awaited opening of a Lesbian/Gay Community Center.

1993: Chapter members continue outreach: Sandra, Mel, and Jane White spoke to the police cadets. Another day - at 8AM on the Westbank! - to a group of school social workers. Unlike the '87 March, the April 1993 March in D.C. had a large group of parents as well as g/l members from our chapter. In May, we gave twice as many scholarships as last year! These occasions are particularly successful because Bill Dailey and Rich Sacher (who first inspired us to do scholarships!) give us their beautiful American Aquatic Gardens for the evening. One of the convention co-chairs, Billy, and Carl Ricketts (our official convention travel



agent) gave an elegant fund-raiser for the chapter at Carl & Henry's lovely home. Our terrific mother-team, Sandra, Mel, June, and 2 great young people, Missy Abbott and Brad Robbert, did a 2 1/2 hour workshop for Jefferson Parish school social workers. The same team (except Zachary instead of Brad) made another presentation to over 250 people at the National Council on Adolescents. In July, the Human Rights Campaign Fund held its first N.O. fundraiser dinner with guest speaker Tracy Thorne. 4 locals received honors from the HRCF, three from our chapter, Stewart Butler, Niki Kearby, Betty Caldwell. A talk on the latest developments in research on genetics and other biological factors pertaining to orientation was given at our chapter meeting and also at the convention by Dr. Cheryl Weill, Assoc. Prof. of Neurology & Anatomy at the LSU Med.Sch.

Our convention was, we think, a roaring success, culminating with a mini-Mardi Gras Bal Masque. Our chapter members could never have done it without tireless and enthusiastic volunteers especially from the lesbian/gay community, many of whom have never participated in PFLAG but appreciate the organization and the parents and other family members. We threw a big party the next month to thank them, and it was superb, thanks to Cleo Pelliteri and her staff at the Bayou Ridge, who provided a lovely venue and great food! Another good party was given at Bayou Ridge by the Forum for Equality, a political group, to honor our president, Sandra, for the enormous contribution she and PFLAG have made towards eradicating prejudice and ignorance. Our next year's scholarship fund grew as other groups made major donations - Third Thursday and Lavender Moon, the Mamou Riding Club, and Irene Flynn, a local chapter member and talented singer, who organized a concert during Xmas holidays and donated all proceeds to the fund. To our delight, the Baton Rouge chapter which had become inactive (or non-existent!) has revived and is going strong.

1994: Betsey Backe, Director of the Divorce Center, came to our meeting to announce new free support groups for g/l spouses and for non-gay spouses of g/l partners (separate groups!) and also one for children of g/l parents. This is a much-needed service, as spouses have been coming to PFLAG and are very welcome, but feel their needs are somewhat special. Houston PFLAG invited our Cheryl Weill to give her workshop on genetics, etc., at their all-day conference on homophobia. Our scholarship program increased to 20 grants! More people are choosing to honor someone with a scholarship and a second local foundation (the Keller family) also made a major contribution. The 1st Unitarian Universalist Church, long a haven for g/l people seeking a welcoming, accepting church home, asked PFLAG to provide speakers for a Sunday service: Sandra was unable to be there (family illness) but Mel, George Caldwell, Raymond and Wanda Maronge made a great impression on the whole congregation and the many other chapter members attending were very proud of them. A group of people on the north shore are organizing to become an af-

filiate of our PFLAG chapter, as they are not yet ready to form their own independent chapter. Two of their group have come on our board and are most helpful. We all cheered when N.O. agreed to allow domestic partner to register officially as such, but groaned when the mayor vetoed spousal insurance for them. In June, Cheryl, Niki, Betty and other PFLAG supporters, Mindy Milam, Clay Latimer, Marilyn McConnell, Jody Gates, Melanie Miranda, Louise McFarland, Charlie Tomeny, Gilbert Castillo were among the 30 New Orleanians to participate in Unity '94, in NYC, the Gay (Olympic) Games. Of course, they also were in the Stonewall Anniversary celebrations and marches, too. The National Education Assn. met in New Orleans and PFLAG had a table and parents and g/l members to staff it, all of whom found it a positive experience. Sandra had worked with g/l NEA members for months ahead and was their guest at the banquet. Next, our fearless leader went to Baton Rouge to provide a PFLAG presence at the hearing on the "hate crimes" bill. For Labor Day weekend, another international convention, this time in San Francisco, attended by Sandra & her partner Steve Freeman (his first convention besides ours in '93 in N.O. after years of helping with all Sandra's PFLAG activities), Stewart & Alfred, Niki & Betty, Mel, Cliff (who had done the bulk of computer work for our convention, used to do our newsletter mailing labels, taught me how to do them -- and generally makes it possible for our chapter to have any computer work done by me or others!) Soon after the convention, Billy Henry (on our board starting with having co-chaired our convention) wisely suggested that our chapter needed long-range planning, so we announced a strategic planning session and invited Nancy McDonald as our leader. Billy also suggested that PFLAG should march in the World AIDS Day jazz funeral (N.O. style) put on by the NO/AIDS Task Force, so Sandra, Nancy, Yolie Tomeny, Clare Katner, Betty M. - a great group of mothers - carried our banner just behind the Olympia Brass Band.

This "brief" history became very long. If you have read all this, congratulations! If you were with us for parts of this journey, we appreciate your help!

Betty Caldwell  
December 1994