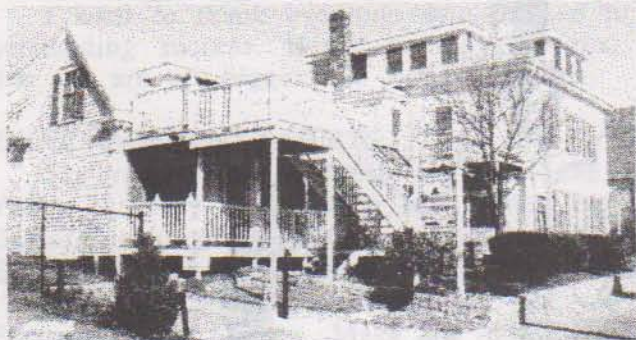


ENCOURAGECON '95

a look back
by *Cube*

Over thirty gentlemen, encouragers and gainers, came from as far away as England, to spend a Provincetown, Mass. weekend that included touring, shopping, socializing, discussion groups, and — of course — eating.



After a pleasant trip up from New York, my travelmates and I arrived and checked in at the marvelous Watership Inn. Immediately, we found ourselves among old friends and new faces, all of whom I was delighted to see, as I registered and weighed in. I cannot claim to have set the weight dial spinning, but there were several very attractive men

who gave impressive readings as they got on the scales.

There was a wonderful feeling of comradery at our first dinner at "The Lobster Pot," a local favorite. Several tables had been pushed together to accommodate our happy and hungry crowd of trenchermen and we talked and laughed as we gave the waiters a good workout. The highlight of that first meal was the birthday surprise given to our good friend Carl F. A plate of cheesecake topped by a blazing sparkler was presented with a rousing chorus of "Happy Birthday."

Later that night, we were all very relaxed and happy as we sat around the lobby of the Watership Inn for a "Welcome to Provincetown" party. The New England members treated us all to a session of clam chowder and strawberry shortcakes, which arrived in a seemingly endless supply. Food, talk and compliments continued, while we were serenaded by John D.

Finally, we all went up to the hospitality suite across the backyard, for a dessert party held by the California members. As we sat in the room, decorated with wonderful colored drawings by Frank C. and a 'Big Guys' video on the VCR, we made further use of the extra strawberries and whipped cream from the shortcakes, reinforced by nuts, syrups, cherries and several different flavors of ice-cream. It was hard to leave the dessert feast, but it was time to get some sleep for the next day...



Friday morning had us gathering at the Provincetown Recreation Center where, amidst the children's sketches and community announcements, Randy S. led a friendly, informative and sometimes hilarious discussion group on "Living Large." Everyone had a chance to speak his mind, and exchange views that really gave food for thought.

It was lunchtime when the seminar finished and dozens of intriguing eateries and shops (all very well disposed towards a "man's man") awaited us. Soon well-fed, attractive men were roaming the streets, delighted to discover all that Provincetown had to offer. The summer season had not officially begun, so we had the great pleasure of going wherever we liked without any worry about lines or crowds. We mingled with the other early tourists, enjoying the relaxed holiday mood and even met a friend or two.

Eventually, we all regrouped at the Gifford



House Inn, where we had the perfect session to follow up an afternoon of hiking about — a seminar on massage. Larry M., a massage therapist/medical student led us in the activity of rubbing wholly respectable, but very pleasant and sociable way.



As Friday night came on, everyone went their own way for supper, but we were all together at Crown & Anchor for a special performance of the drag show Illusions. We weren't the only one there — the New Jersey branch of G O A L (Gay Officers Action League) arrived as well and were ready to party! What could be better? A fun show up front and a crew of attractive gay policemen in the rear!

Illusions was terrific — Four drag queens with a sense of humor and a varied collection of lip synched songs. They weren't quite sure what Encouragecon '95 was, but they were not going let that slow them up for a minute! It was hard to leave the nightclub when the show finished, but leave we did, for the Ohio member's midnight snack party.

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The Ohio group had a pajama-party/surprise-birthday-party-for-Brian D. as the theme for that evening's binge in the hospitality suite. All of them did a brilliant job, but it was Jimmy S. who really outdid himself, spending an entire day to bake the most delicious cakes for the party. We really fell into the spirit of Encouragecon that night as people enjoyed feeding/eating. Three of the cutest, big-bellied men were crowded onto a couch, eagerly swallowing down spoonfuls of sundaes which another attractive mass of male, Jeff L., was giving to them. At the same time,

John D. demonstrated the art of inhaling whipped cream. Simply put, we were entertained, fed and happy.

Saturday morning was sunny and warm as we made our way to our next seminar. It was almost too nice to stay indoors, but the meeting on "Chubs in Cyberspace" was worth it. Rick K. led us in a very informative discussion that ranged on everything from the different bulletin boards available, to information of the best computer equipment to buy.

Lunchtime soon arrived and we were able to enjoy our own bits of Provincetown until 4:00 p.m. when everybody gathered at the main pier for the Whale Watch. Soon Encouragecon '95 was on the high seas, enjoying the sights, the lecture (Carl F. knew the guide) and the glorious weather. It was obvious that the whales were having a great time too, as they swam along the surface. They



actually gave us the pleasure of coming surprisingly close. As the sun set spectacularly in the west, we returned to shore a bit late, but it was well worth it.

Dinner was spent at several different places, but soon it was time for the New 1cheesecake party in the hospitality suite. Several members of the 'Con had to leave early the next morning, so it became a sort of final fling for us all. As the food went down, the scales came out and the final weighings began.

It was a rare man who did not add a few extra pounds to his frame but the KING OF GAINERS was Lucifer T. who put on a whopping THIRTEEN POUNDS!!! He was presented with a crown and cape and happily took his place next to the biggest man, John D., as we, his admiring comrades, surrounded him and applauded.



Bubala's Diner had a crowd of hungry men waiting by its doors the next morning, when those of us who had not yet left, got together for our farewell brunch. As we ate, we talked about how much we enjoyed our stay at Provincetown and gave suggestions for Encouragecon '96. It might have been the final meal of Encouragecon '95 but we had so much to talk about, between the great time we had, our plans for the future and the ties we had made, that no one really had a chance to feel the sadness that sometimes comes when the good-byes begin.

The Watership Inn became a mass of activity as our large crowd got ready to leave. Addresses, invitations and hugs were exchanged, photos taken and bags packed as

Encouragecon '95 finally wound up. It was a tremendous experience and most of us gained a lot out of it. On the whole, Provincetown proved to be a wonderful place to spend my first Encouragecon.

Just one last thought — Ben, Andrew, Carl and all those whose efforts gave me cause to write such a happy article: **THANK YOU! THANK YOU!! THANK YOU!!!** And one more **THANK YOU!!!!** For those who organized the whole darn thing!

