

# 'Fierce Lesbian' remembered

## Lesbian Avengers eat fire in spirited sidewalk ceremony

by M. Jane Taylor

People slow as they pass by Starbucks at 1810 Wisconsin Avenue in Georgetown, which is adorned with dozens of flowers and other memorials to the three young people who were slain here a few weeks ago. A woman turns slightly and crosses herself.

Everything inside the dimly lit coffee shop stands just as it did the evening of July 6, cleaned and ready for a Monday morning opening that never came.

The Baltimore Lesbian Avengers met here Tuesday night for a candlelight vigil in honor of one of their founders — Caity Mahoney, 24, the assistant manager at Starbucks who was shot to death shortly after closing the shop that Sunday. Police are still looking for suspects in the murders.

Since the slaying, people have pilgrimaged to the storefront, leaving flowers, pictures, writings, and stuffed animals. The red brick pavement is covered with chalked messages of love and well-wishes to Mahoney and the others killed.

Nearby, a flyer posted by the Georgetown Business & Professional Association announces a \$10,000 reward for information leading to the arrest and conviction of persons responsible for the murders.

A palm cross has been attached to one of the front doors. Beneath it hang eight cards — birthday cards. Nearby, hiding in a corner, someone has left a bottle of dry white wine.

"Today's Caity's birthday and that's why we came here," said Kim Donahue, another founding member of the Baltimore Lesbian Avengers. "To celebrate who Caity was and honor her."

Someone has drawn a naked woman in front of the doorway, in white chalk, her arms outstretched as if she were twirling. Perhaps it is Caity Mahoney.

Nearby, in large pink letters, someone has written "HAPPY BIRTHDAY CAITY! 7-22-72."



by Clint Steib

Lesbian Avengers light candles in memory of Caity Mahoney.

Women arrive in twos, threes, and fours. They greet each other with embraces. A few men show up.

At 7:25 it isn't quite raining yet, but the wind is kicking up and causing the candles everyone had passed around to flicker and run.

Donahue says Mahoney loved to eat fire, a tradition among the Lesbian Avengers.

"I know that Caity would be here with us. Maybe she's with us now," Donahue says. "She's a fierce Lesbian and we're going to light this for her."

Several Baltimore and D.C. Lesbian Avengers pass a flame around from torch to torch, chanting "their fire will not consume us, we take it and make it our own" before devouring the blaze.

Long after most people have gone, Beth Kuhns, a Baltimore Lesbian Avenger and a good friend of Mahoney's, suggests that the remaining women have a group scream. Kuhns says screaming releases tension.

The women — mostly Baltimore Lesbian Avengers — huddle together and let loose three howls, each one progressively louder and longer, before filing off to meet up again at Dupont Circle. ▼