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METROPOLITAN

Activists arrested after gay parade

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The 16th annual Lesbian and Gay Pride Day was marred last night by an impromptu street party at 22nd and P streets NW that blocked traffic more than two hours and resulted in the arrest of four persons.

An estimated 500 gay rights supporters converged on the area after an afternoon parade and festival that attracted speakers including Mayor Sharon Pratt Dixon and D.C. Delegate Eleanor Holmes Norton.

Last night, a mass of people refused to leave P Street when Metropolitan Police arrived to clear the thoroughfare. Patrons spilling out of nearby bars closed the street without a permit, police said.

About 9:45 p.m., three men and a woman, all members of the homosexual activist group called ACT-UP, were arrested by police. They were charged with a misdemeanor, failing to clear a street.

One of those arrested was Mike

Petrelis, an ACT-UP leader. He said he was blocking the street to draw attention to what he considered the lack of government funds for AIDS research. The three others arrested were not immediately identified.

Police arrived at 22nd and P streets about 7:30 p.m., witnesses said, after the roadway was cut off by pedestrians.

By 9:20 p.m., 12 persons were sitting on the street's center stripe, refusing to leave. Police presence grew to more than 50 officers about 9:40 p.m., when they began to move people on to nearby sidewalks.

When the number of people sitting in the street began to diminish, people on the sidewalk began to chant, "You don't have support" and "Get out of the street." When the arrests were made, the crowd cheered and many thanked police officers.

Earlier in the day, the 16th annual Lesbian and Gay Pride Day parade and festival in Northwest attracted an estimated 17,000 people, including the curious and the supportive.

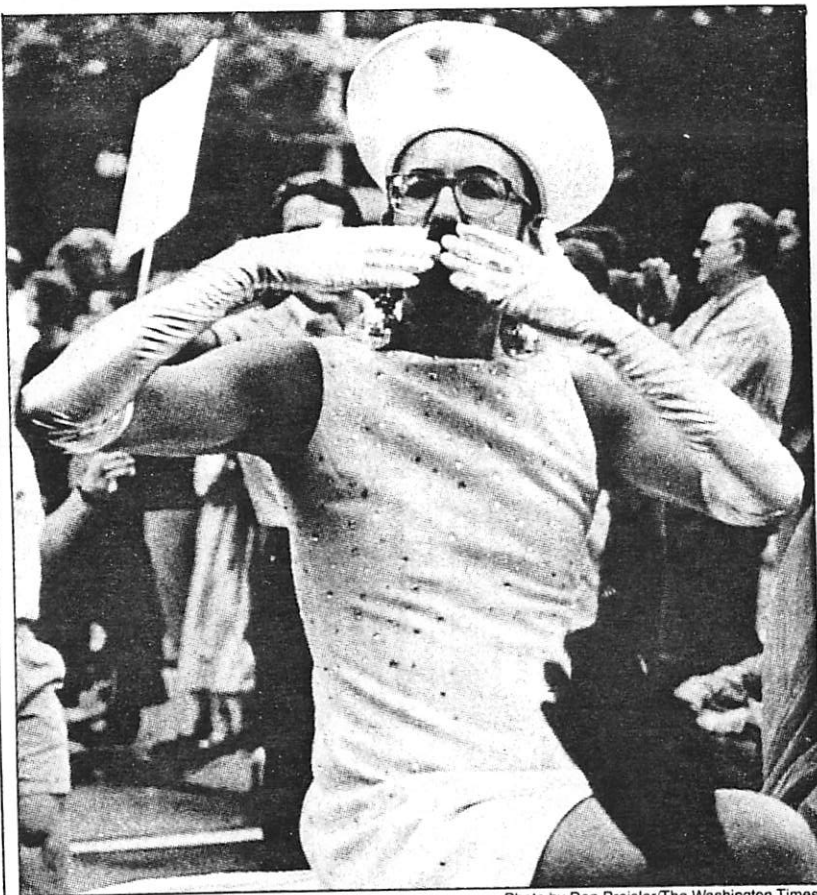


Photo by Don Preisler/The Washington Times

Participants in yesterday's Gay Pride Day parade throw kisses to onlookers.