

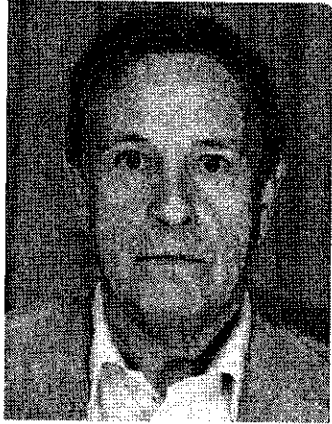
Sandy also continued to work with *The Ladder*. Although her roles and titles changed over the years, Sandy was a major contributor to the look and substance of this publication. She designed some of the most memorable covers and in 1966, for a brief time, became editor of *The Ladder*. Sandy made clear that what happened in the name of the homophile community also happened to lesbians, even though men dominated the homophile community. Because of this belief, she felt it obligatory to print extensive reports of programs and surveys that might not, at first glance, be pertinent to lesbians, but could have considerable effect on them if not reported, and sometimes challenged.

Although Sandy used her Helen Sanders pseudonym for most of her writing and public persona, she occasionally wrote under the pen name Ben Cat, writing from the perspective of the beloved housecat that Sandy and I had. As Ben Cat, Sandy was free to explore topics and perspectives that she would never have written in public print as Helen Sanders or herself, Helen Sandoz. For example, Ben Cat puzzled over the meaning of Christmas and the frantic pace of that holiday.

Sandy and I decided not to follow others in *The Ladder* and Daughters of Bilitis in joining forces with the new organization, National Organization for Women. Although she believed in NOW's goals, she did not approve of much of the rhetoric, and she wanted to concentrate on getting rights for both gay men and lesbians in the homophile movement. She died June 7, 1987, in Anaheim, of lung cancer.

Herb Selwyn (1925-)

Vern L. Bullough



Serendipity played an important role in Herb Selwyn's involvement with the gay and lesbian community. A devoted member of the American Civil Liberties Union, Selwyn was, in a way, a typical member of his generation. Born and raised in West Hollywood, a community which is surrounded by the city of Los Angeles, he entered UCLA and left for military duty in World War II, serving in the Air Corps in England, France, and Germany, returned to UCLA, went onto the University of Southern California law school, set up a law practice, married, and eventually had four children.

He was not, however, typical in his defense of gays and lesbians, a cause in which he became involved because his father, a doctor, had a patient who was known to him to be a lesbian. On one of her visits he mentioned that his son was a lawyer. She turned out to belong to the Mattachine Society and was hunting for a lawyer to speak at a society meeting, but, as an indication of the stigma and fear which many gays and lesbians lived, rather than approaching Selwyn directly, she asked his father to query him about whether he would be willing to talk to such a group. Selwyn remembers his reply was that his concept of a lawyer was a person who could help others and certainly he felt that gays and lesbians needed help.

The meeting itself was held in a private home with between twenty-five and thirty men and women in attendance, none of whom were lawyers. This lack of lawyers in attendance was understandable simply because those who were lawyers for the most part were fearful of being exposed, since they could in fact be disbarred. With such official hostility to gays and lesbians, it was perhaps inevitable that many of the public advocates for the community came from the straight community. Selwyn's talk led to various members of

the Mattachine coming to him for legal advice. He handled the incorporation of Mattachine in 1954 without fee, the first gay organization to be incorporated. He also became involved in various legal cases in the community and appeared on various radio and television talk shows. One of the most traumatic involved a television appearance with a judge who claimed that all male homosexuals had become gay because they had been seduced by sailors when they were twelve or thirteen years old. A fellow panel member, a psychiatrist, Dr Frederick Hacker, disagreed with the judge. The judge, who had a violent temper and was particularly abusive when individuals disagreed with him, became greatly agitated and suffered a stroke on camera. He was taken from the television studio to the hospital and died a few days later. Selwyn reported that several members of the district attorney's office, who had often suffered from the temper of this particular judge and who were rather pleased that they would no longer have to face him in court, congratulated him on his great success.

Some of Selwyn's activities were also done anonymously. He wrote a wallet-sized card entitled "Know Your Legal Rights," for the Mattachine Society, which distributed it to members and at gay bars. It apparently aroused the ire of at least one member of the city attorney's office who showed the card to Selwyn and said, "Isn't this awful? Isn't it horrible?" Selwyn simply inquired, without claiming authorship, whether any statement on the card was incorrect. Even such a response upset the attorney who then walked away.

One of his cases involved a man who challenged his unfounded arrest in a public rest room. An undercover cop had approached and said, "I'm just down from Sacramento and I'm a lather [someone who puts up lath and plaster], and I don't know anybody down here." After some additional conversation, his client allegedly propositioned the man, who then arrested him. At the trial the policeman admitted he had lied about his identity; he wasn't a lather and he wasn't from Sacramento. The jury acquitted the client. The trial is significant not only because of the acquittal but because the accused person was willing to go public to fight the case.

Another one of Selwyn's cases dealt with an attempt to revoke the license of a cosmetologist who had a lewd conduct arrest for propositioning an undercover policeman. Selwyn pointed out that the arrest was a misdemeanor, not a felony, and should not be used to revoke a license. Selwyn also made fun of the prosecuting attorney's case by requesting that the judge ask his own wife how many hairdressers she knew who she thought were gay and what would happen to the women of America if all their licenses were revoked. The client's license was not revoked.

Selwyn worked with Vern Bullough and others to establish the first gay rights policy of the American Civil Liberties Union in 1964 and with public-

ity more cases came to the ACLU as more and more gays were willing to go public to challenge what they regarded as unfair laws. As they did so other lawyers in Los Angeles also began to take cases, many of them gay or lesbian themselves, and Selwyn was called upon less and less by the gay community. As he looked back upon his career in the year 2000, Selwyn felt that his handling the criminal cases or affiliation with gay and lesbian groups did not hurt his career at all. Rather, it caused considerable admiration from some of his fellow members of the bar who were impressed by his willingness to defend those most in need of defense, something that Selwyn has done all of his life. He later came to realize, as gays and lesbians came out of the closet, many of his friends, acquaintances, and fellow professionals were gays and lesbians. Still, when he entered the field, there were few lawyers of any sexual identity willing to deal with the topic, and that is what made him a pioneer in the movement. He was there almost from the beginning because, as he says, it was the right thing to do.