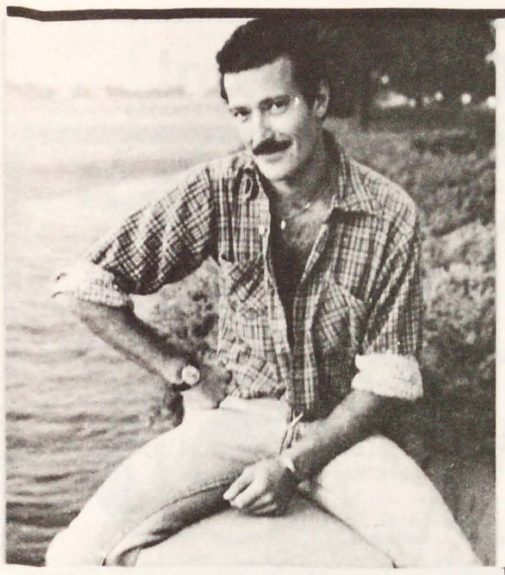


SW: Yeah, it's the first time the audience has to sit, when they're not entertained. Up to that point it's very light. You hear some funny stories. You hear things like, "Life is an ashtray," and "If Troy Donahue can be a movie star..." and "Tits, when am I gonna grow tits?" Those are things you're just sitting listening to, but there's not any kind of impact. Cassie is the first one that you go, "Bang, there's something heavy here" (between Zach and Cassie.) And then Paul comes on and you're ready for him.

OO: *How do audiences normally react to the monologue?*

SW: It varies. That's a hard question to answer. Some people are devastated by it. Some people have come back and told me that I just broke their heart and that I really hit the nail on the head. Sometimes after my monologue they clap, sometimes they don't clap. I feel that sometimes if the audience is really in tune, I can hear a pin drop.

And then there are those people out there who just can't deal with it, who are rustling around, you know, getting into their bags, and putting on lipstick or whatever they are doing. They just can't handle the story, and they become very bored with it and don't pay attention to what's going on, and there's lots of coughing. It's different every night.

I hope, and my intention is, to get the message across, the loving message. You see, this is a real good opportunity for me to spread the word about homosexuality, and to let people know that we are human beings.

"(THE PLAY) IS A PERFECT OPPORTUNITY TO LET SOCIETY SEE ANOTHER ASPECT OF A PARTICULAR HOMOSEXUAL."

And being judged is not something that we appreciate. We are human beings with human feelings and we eat and sleep and survive and strive just like everyone else. We're no different than anyone else in this world. We're no different. And this is a perfect opportunity to let society see another aspect of a particular homosexual.

Society has a view that we are just screaming queens that dress up in girls' clothes, and we're sick and we're into child molesting, and all the other crazy shit that is so untrue.

This particular character is a person who wants a job and who is willing to take a chance of losing a job by telling his story.

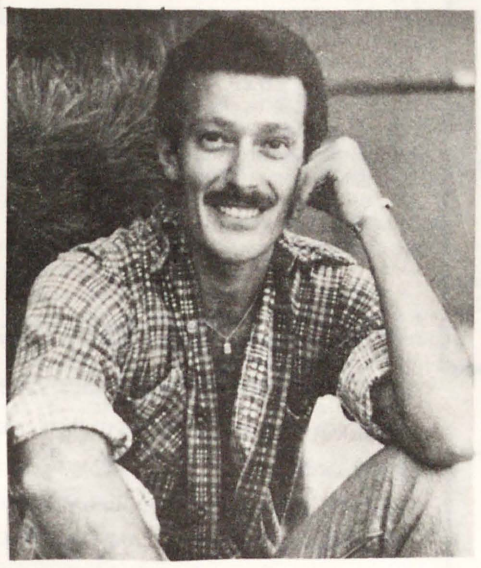
OO: *Do you feel a little let down that the character hurts his leg near the end of the play and doesn't get chosen?*

SW: I always felt that if the accident didn't occur that I would be chosen for the show. It's just something that happens; and it's another knife that goes into your stomach. To happen to that character--anyone else would be fine--to happen to that character that you have so much feeling for is devastating.

OO: *Do you ever get tired of the role?*

SW: Yes. It's a very difficult role to do. It's a responsibility. I find myself being very moody because it's a heavy responsibility, and I don't have music to carry me through. There is me and there is Zach, and nothing else. And when I do that fourteen-minute monologue there is no one else out there but me.

There are only so many times you can tell the story. I always love the role, but, yes, there are times when I get real tired of saying those same



words over and over.

OO: *You're leaving the company soon?*

SW: In a week and a half.

OO: *And then what?*

SW: Unemployment.

OO: *What would you like to do?*

SW: I would like to do a new Broadway show, a good part and something new and exciting. I've been involved with the Chorus Line company, in and out, for five years, and that's a long time to be playing Paul San Marco. It has given me many opportunities and more than I ever dreamed about, and for that I'm very grateful. It has taught me a great deal about myself. Playing that particular character has taught me a lot about being a homosexual and how to deal with it. But I'd like to move on and do something else.

OO: *What about the proposed movie of Chorus Line? Do you have any thoughts about that?*

SW: The movie of Chorus Line...I would give my eye teeth, I would give all of my teeth...Yes, I would like to be in the movie. To do that particular role on film would be the ultimate.

OO: *Hollywood doesn't have a habit of using Broadway performers, do they?*

SW: No, Hollywood's real strange. I have a feeling that Hollywood is going to fuck it up, to put it point blank.

OO: *Who do you think they will cast?*

SW: Well, they supposedly have already cast Baryshnikov...I presume as Zach, the director. And they've also cast Michael Jackson either as Richie or Paul. He's a very light-skinned Negro, he could pass as a Puerto Rican. Paul's a very central character. I can't imagine Michael Jackson playing Richie and just saying, "Give me the ball" and that's it...I have the feeling they would have to beef up the role of Richie to have Jackson play it.

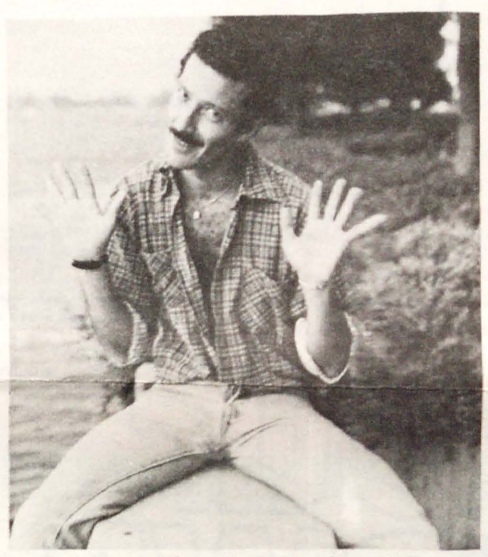
My personal opinion is that if they don't do it exactly the way it was done on Broadway, that they're just going to fuck it up. And that's going to be real sad because that's what made it so unique and so wonderful--the fact that it had no stars and it was done very simply. They're going to try to make it a star vehicle, and that's very, very wrong.

OO: *You worked with Baryshnikov on his TV special. What was he like?*

SW: Misha, as he likes to be called, is a really loving human being. There are no airs about him. He doesn't walk in like "I am the prima ballerina of the world." It took me three days to get over the fact that I was working with Mikhail Baryshnikov, because he really is a legend. And beyond that, he's a human being, a lovely human being. He's very supportive of other people. If you were having problems with a step, he would come over and say, "Can I help you?" He was phenomenal to work with.

OO: *What about Minelli? (who was also in the TV special)*

SW: Liza Minelli...she was tough, she was tough. I found her to be...I hate to put this in print, but I believe in speaking honestly...She's a lovely lady, but I found her to be a little schizo. She was just real "wired," I didn't know how to deal with her. She just came from a miscarriage, so she was a little freaked out about that. She was freaked out about being overweight from having been pregnant, and she was a little paranoid about dancing with Baryshnikov. I just found her to be a little difficult and I think I was intimidated by her. Once again, she was a legend and I allowed myself to be intimidated by Liza Minelli. She's a very, very strong personality.



OO: *What effect did winning the Tony have on you?*

SW: Ah, the Tony award...well, I was 25 years old and very young and very naive. It scared me to death. Like I said earlier, I never wanted to do anything other than dance in the chorus, and, all of a sudden, there I was standing on stage with a Tony award for Best Featured Actor in a Musical. And it took me by surprise and it was a very difficult thing to handle. It was a lovely moment in my life, one that I'll always cherish. But what do you do with it? At 25 years old, what do you do with it?

I'm now six years older and I've learned a lot about how to deal with it. For a long time I wouldn't look at the Tony. I had it up on my mantle, but I wouldn't go near it, not even to dust it. It was just something so beyond my expectations. I'm very grateful to have it.

OO: *One last question. Would you care to speculate on what percent of the cast of Chorus Line is gay?*

SW: No...I cannot speak for them, I can only speak for myself. It would be unfair to them to comment on that. I'm learning to be more open about my life. At the time Chorus Line happened I hadn't yet accepted my own homosexuality. I looked upon it as something very negative, as a lot of homosexuals do that haven't really come out of the closet, and I was very much still in the closet.

So, every night for three years I walked out on the stage telling this

"AT THE TIME CHORUS LINE HAPPENED I HADN'T YET ACCEPTED MY OWN HOMOSEXUALITY."

story that I was a homosexual and hating it. This was because I was not only playing a character, but I was forced to look at my own life, and it wasn't a very pretty picture to me. So I approached the role of Paul very negatively.

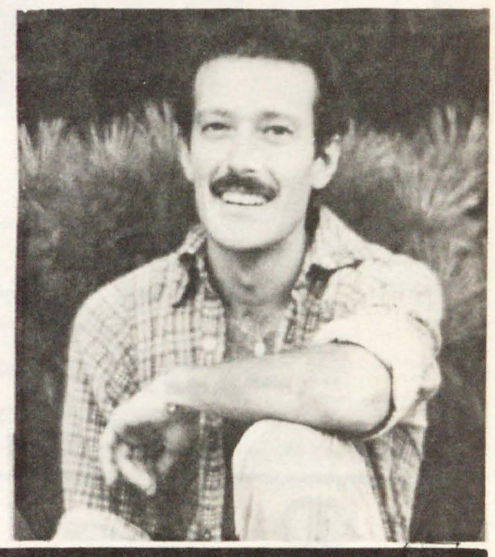
Since then my attitude has definitely changed. I am who I am and I live my life the way I want to live it, and if it is something people can't deal with, that is just too bad.

My one big fear about being homosexual was that I would lose work. But, as I say in the character, "I am a man." And I have spent 30 years trying to learn how to be butch, and I don't have to be butch. I mean, I am not a truck driver. And I don't have to be a truck driver to be a man. I am who I am.

I'm getting better. I haven't quite conquered all of it yet, but I am a lot more open about it and being out has made my life a lot more lighter and enjoyable. It has allowed me to comfortably audition for other things. When I had done the role of Paul originally and after I had won the Tony, I thought, "Oh, God, all these people know that I'm gay, I'll never work again as long as I live."

I found that not to be so. I found out that it was just my own insecurities about being homosexual that bothered me. But now, I'm a lot more open than ever. I'm very proud to be who I am. I'm proud of what I've accomplished in my life and I'm getting a lot better at spreading the word. And like I said, this is a wonderful opportunity for me to spread the word, and I'm real happy about that.

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