Post

Good morning!

It's Friday, June 17, 1977

20 cents

All rallies peaceful during Bryant show

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The crowd started forming late Thursday afternoon and by dusk there were almost 4,000 gays and straights shouting "No, no Anita" from the large parking lot at Bagby and McGowen.

They marched peacefully by candlelight down Smith and Louisiana, protesting the appearance of anti-homosexual singer Anita Bryant at the annual convention of the State Bar of Texas at the Hyatt Regency Hotel.

Meanwhile, an anti-gay rally met peacefully near the City Hall reflecting pool.

"It's having sex with the same sex — like men with men and women with women," said Tommy Asch, 13.

"It's wrong. The Bible says it's a sin against God, and I believe in the Bible," he said, describing his views of homosexuality.

Tommy's parents, Sue and Roger Asch of Houston, brought Tommy and his 10-year-old brother Bobby and 8-year-old sister, Sharon, to the Save Our Cherished Kids (SOCK) rally, where they were among some 200 participants.

For Bryant, the President's Dinner of the state bar was very much like the title of one of her songs — "My Little Corner of the World."

A threatened walkout during the controversial singer's performance materialized, but just barely.

Two officers in the heavy security detail said that fewer than 20 persons walked out. One of those officers said four persons left, removed their black arm bands with rust-colored triangles and returned for the rest of the 40-minute show.

Joe West, a San Antonio preacher who organized the anti-gay gathering, said he had expected a larger crowd, "but what we lacked in numbers we made up in spirit."

Supported by amens in the background, West said: "This is a visible protest against homosexuality in this country.

"I'm tired of tiptoeing higher and higher in slime. It's time to do something," he said.

He said he believes SOCK is necessary because he fears homosexuals recruit children.

"They can't reproduce children of their own, so they have to recruit boys and girls and make them homosexuals," he explained.

Among the anti-Bryant forces were Dominican nuns and the Warlocks, a gay San Francisco motorcycle club.

Men in wheelchairs and women carrying babies took part.

Hand-holding men and also women with their arms around each other cheered as gay leaders from across the United States addressed the peaceful but exuberant crowd.

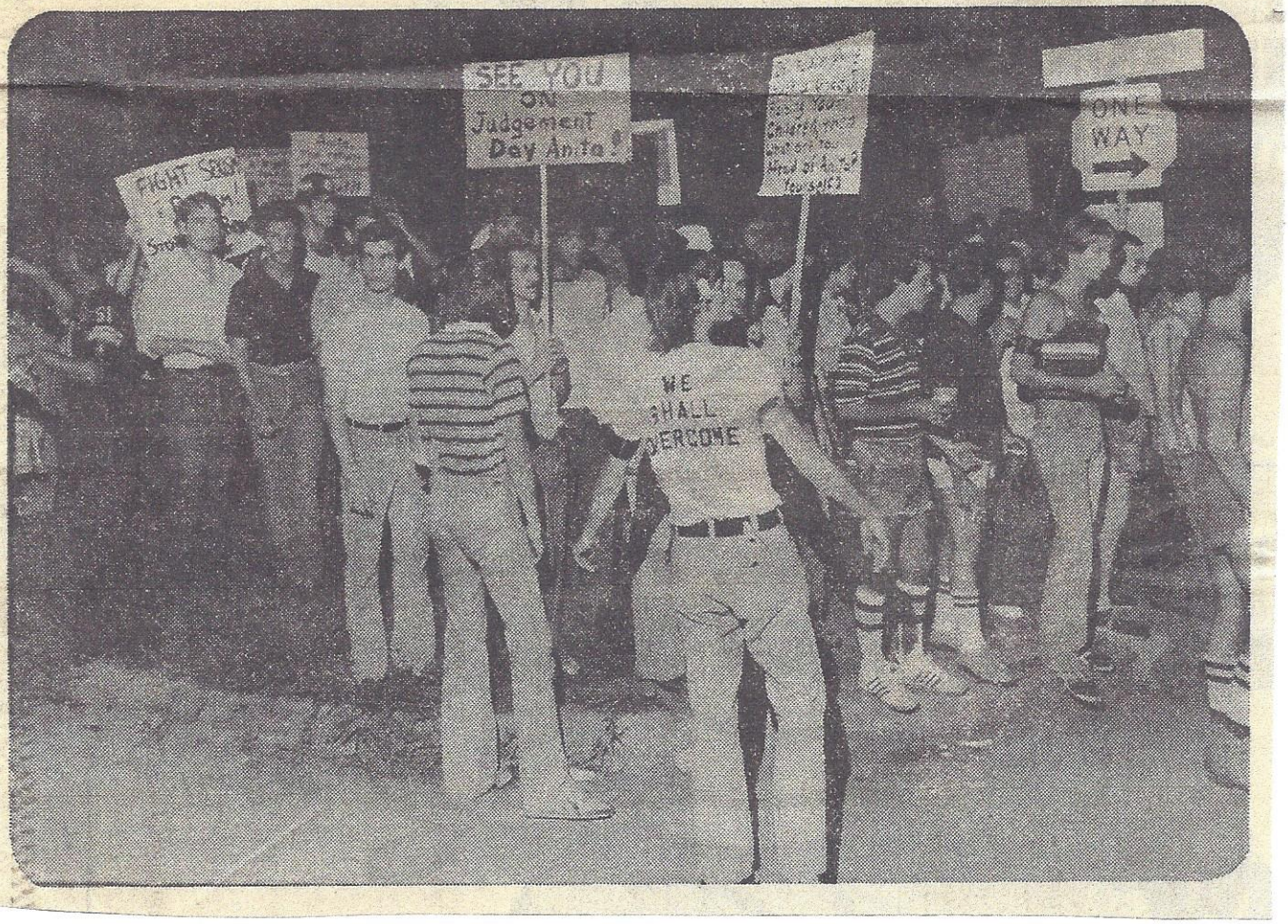
There were no disturbances and only a few catcalls when the chanting crowd filed down the street past the Hyatt Re-

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Opposing points of view were expressed Thursday by signs, shouts and slogans. The family above attended a rally by a group called Save Our Cherished Kids (SOCK) at the City Hall reflecting pool supporting Anita Bryant. Below, supporters of gay rights loft signs during downtown parade.

— Post photos by Carlos Antonio Rios and Bill Thompson



All Bryant rallies peaceful

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gency toward City Hall.

Troy Perry, founder of the Metropolitan Community Church, which has a large gay membership, said: "We're gonna haunt that woman." The marchers clapped and shouted their approval.

The SOCK crowd prayed, sang "Stand Up for Jesus" and "America" and drank orange juice — in reference to Bryant's television commercials for that product.

Said Bob Kidd, a 39-year-old Houston businessman who was handing out the orange juice: "I'm giving it out because I support the orange juice lady, and I'm here to stand up against homosexuals."

West pledged this gathering was not just a shot in the dark. He promised to follow it through with more rallies "before we get inundated and swamped with filth and wretchedness."

He said he intends to expand the fight against pornography and massage parlors and "all that nudity."

Liz Torres, an actress who played a Puerto Rican boarder on "All in the Family," earlier told the anti-Bryant group that she probably would not find work after making her stand in favor of gay rights.

But she received the warmest response when she declared: "This Puerto Rican woman will make her stand in Texas or anywhere else."

Although there were some traffic tieups as the crowd filed downtown, police said everything had been conducted in an orderly manner.

A mother with her three children stood on one street corner clapping and shouting, "Right on, brother. Right on, sister," as the marchers passed.

As the marchers entered the plaza in front of the Houston Public Library, they lit candles and soon the walls of the building glowed in a soft yellow light.

They sang "We Shall Overcome" and "Battle Hymn of the Republic" and "God Bless America" while across the street a group of Bryant supporters silently watched.

Bryant, who ironically arrived in Houston aboard the same flight with Miami gay rights activist Bob Kunst, who flew tourist while Bryant and her husband, Bob Green, occupied the first class section.

The only time Bryant's patter at the Hyatt Regency touched on anything serious was when she stressed her belief that it's not "the world or even America that needs changing — it's people . . . if we get down on our knees and really mean 'In God we trust,' we'll see a lot of changes."

State bar president Gibson Gayle, in whose honor the dinner was held, said he thought it went well. Asked if he were more relaxed now, Gayle said, "You bet."