

“Tavern Charges Police Brutality.” County Courier: The Voice of Los Angeles, 19 Jan. 1967.

As the new year rang in, police attempted to make routine arrests at a known “gay” bar on Sunset Boulevard in the Echo Park Area when all hell broke loose.

It ended with seventeen arrests and three policemen badly injured.

A bartender complained that he, too, was badly hurt and most of the other defendants contended they received bumps, bruises and cuts.

Acting on numerous complaints that lewd acts were being committed at the Black Cat Cafe in public view, plain clothes vice officers entered, decided that such was the case, and announced “This is a pinch.”

Since then bars have been flooded with literature, distributed by organizations claiming to represent homosexuals, charging “police brutality,” and demanding justice for deviates.

Inspector Sid Mills, area commander, said, “However, no charges against officers have been received by the Los Angeles Police Department. If we do, such complaints will be promptly and thoroughly investigated.

Newspapers, T.V., and radio stations have also received calls from the organizations contending that there has been a “news blackout by police.”

Mills explained that the department does not intend to discuss the case while it is pending in court, principally because of Supreme Court decisions against pretrial publicity.

“We intend to see the the defendants received their full justice and a fair trial,” Mills announced.

Putting the pieces together, the County Courier has decided to bring the facts to life.

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The fracas began when a girl kissed a man dressed as a girl while seated at the bar.

Officers thought she was another man dressed as a woman. It turned out that she was giving a New Year’s kiss to her brother. Police later released her when they discovered her true identity.

Patrons, most of them men dressed in girlish attire and definitely the effeminate type, took violent exception.

One officer pulled a gun. Someone thought it was a holdup. And then there was a general melee.

The plain clothes vice men then obtained help from uniformed officers who waded into the donny-brook.

Police cars were used to transport the suspects to jail.

Meantime, three other suspects escaped, chased by three plain clothes officers to a nearby baar, the New Faces.

There the officers were refused admittance even though the identified themselves to two unknown males.

A bartender jumped over the counter and before any of the policemen could make a move, one of them received a “sunday punch”.

One officer wound up on the sidewalk. He was kicked, beaten and stepped upon. He was hospitalized for nine days.

Another policeman received a broken hand and other injuries and is still off duty. The third was treated and released for bites on his fingers.

The twenty four year old bartender was booked in General Hospital prison ward for battery upon a police officer, a felony. He says that his spleen was ruptured and he has facial hurts. Police said they had to use necessary force to subdue him.

During it all, the three defendants made good their escape as did the two males who assisted the bartender.

In another incident, in front of another bar nearby, two members of the force were sent to the hospital. They were beaten without provocation by some men who recognized them as officers. One of the officers received a ruptured sternum and has just come back to work. The other received lesser injuries.

Most of the defendants are represented by attorney Ray L. Smith a noted member of the California Bar. Not guilty pleas have been neutered and the trials are slated for later this month. Despite the attacks by the groups fronting for the homosexuals, department members of the force shrug their shoulders:

“We get assaulted every day. It’s all in a day’s work. Public morals, decency and the law must be maintained.”