

## The Lavender Panthers

Four San Francisco teen-agers recently got the surprise of their young lives. Tooling around in their souped-up car looking for a little fun, they spotted two homosexuals leaving the Naked Grape, a well-known gay bar. The youths roared to a stop, jumped out of their car and began to push the homosexuals around. Suddenly a brawny band, led by a man in a clerical collar, leaped from a gray Volkswagen bus and lit into them. "We didn't even ask questions," said the Rev. Ray Broshears, 38. "We just took out our pool cues and started flailing ass." The teen-agers fled into the night, only to return ten minutes later, begging for their car: "Look, man, we don't want no trouble."

The group they most assuredly did not want trouble with was the Lavender Panthers, a stiff-wristed team of gay vigilantes who have taken to the streets of San Francisco to protect their confères against just such attacks. Formed by the Rev. Ray, a Pentecostal Evangelist and known homosexual who himself was once beaten severely outside his gay mission center, the Panthers patrol the streets nightly with chains, billy clubs, whistles and cans of red spray paint (a substitute for forbidden Mace). Their purpose, as the Rev. Ray candidly puts it, is to strike terror in the hearts of "all those young punks who have been beating up my faggots."

San Francisco has long had a reputation for permissiveness toward homosexuals, and the police department claims that there are only a couple of iso-

lated incidents of gay beatings on their records. The homosexuals say that that is precisely the point: gays will not file complaints because the police are likely to accuse them of having invited the beating by propositioning someone. The Rev. Ray's own log shows 300 incidents of muggings and beatings of homosexuals in San Francisco during the past six months, usually by roaming teen-age gangs. A pudgy, confessed coward, Ray says he finally got fed up on the Fourth of July after he had complained to police that some young toughs were setting off fireworks in a parking lot outside his Helping Hands Gay Community Service Center. According to Ray, when the cops arrived all they did was tell the youths he had ratted on them. The toughs proceeded to beat him senseless. Two days later Ray announced that the Lavender Panthers were coming out.

**Kung Fu.** The basic band numbers 21 homosexuals, including two lesbians who are reputedly the toughest hombres in the lot. Besides their goal of halting the attacks, the Lavender Panthers want to gainsay the popular notion that all homosexuals are "sissies, cowards and pansies" who will do nothing when attacked. All of the Panthers know judo, karate, Kung Fu or plain old alley fighting. For gays without defensive skills, the Panthers hold training sessions with instruction from a judo brown belt and a karate expert. Although Ray has a working arrangement with Elliot Blackstone, the police community relations officer who deals with homosexuals, not to carry firearms on his patrols, he does keep a shotgun in his office, which, he boasts, "will leave a hole in a man big enough to drive a tank through Georgia."

Beyond their stipulation against the Panthers' carrying guns, the police have not interfered with the patrols, nor have they received any complaints from anyone the Panthers have accosted. Indeed, the Panthers have gotten more heat from their own brethren than from the police. Bill McWilliams, owner of three gay bars, says, for example, that the patrons of his Boot Camp bar can take good care of themselves. Moreover, many of the city's affluent gays do not like the idea of hard-eyed homosexual toughs causing commotion in the streets. But Ray insists that his Draconian measures are necessary. "Middle America has always had a little tinge of homophobia," he says. "But I've had it up to here. All this queer bashing has simply got to stop."

THE REV. RAY & PANTHERS ON PATROL

