

Jokingly some of the gay community call Halloween "the bitch's Christmas" because it is that special time of the year when "drag queens," those male homosexuals who sometimes dress in female attire, enjoy parading their finery. Most of the dresses, jewels, and furs are new and many have been originally designed at great expense for this one night.

Here, A.L. Mosher, writes of his love of San Francisco and particularly, of the annual Halloween Ball sponsored by the Tavern Guild of San Francisco.

by A. L. Mosher

San Francisco, the city of the polite taxi-drivers, the home of the Giants, with one of the finest symphony orchestras in the world, a famous opera company, the most unique restaurants and the haven for homosexuals is proudly my adopted home. I wouldn't trade it for the world ... not our picturesque Chinatown, colorful Fisherman's Wharf, the concert-giving Stern Grove, the bell-ringing cable cars and certainly not our studded leather Miracle Mile, the deliciously attired Polk-strasse or the very hip Castro.

San Francisco is the city of new trends and of fresh ideas. This one city is the birthplace of the United Nations, the home of the Love Children and the city moving toward sexual freedom. The fog embraces the city in early morning like two young lovers together under a shower.

Now, it is October and a special event is being readied. The Tavern Guild is making preparations for one of the most well run galas that a city of galas can expect. It is Halloween and throngs of people from all walks of life, congregate outside of a famous hotel to anx-

THE BITCH'S CHRISTMAS

iously await in roped-off areas. The police direct traffic and the spotlights luminate the arising limousines. The gentlemen step forward in their formal attire and present the most exquisite women (!) in the Bay Area on their arms. Many of the tourists, who came to be amused, gasp with admiration. ... They realize that you can't take it away from the homosexuals. When they do something, they do it in style! The annual Halloween Beaux Art Ball is soon to begin.

The attendants courteously usher the guests into the ballroom that literally flows with the well jewelled, fur-clad and originally costumed ladies. The escorts' constant attention to their ladies is a pleasure to observe.

Everyone is excited. There is dancing and entertainment. The orchestra plays while the audience votes to determine who shall be the new Empress of San Francisco, a sometimes serious - sometimes camp honor that commands attention for the following year. The diamonds, sapphires and emeralds glitter from the dance floor (although some may have been purchased at Woolworth's).

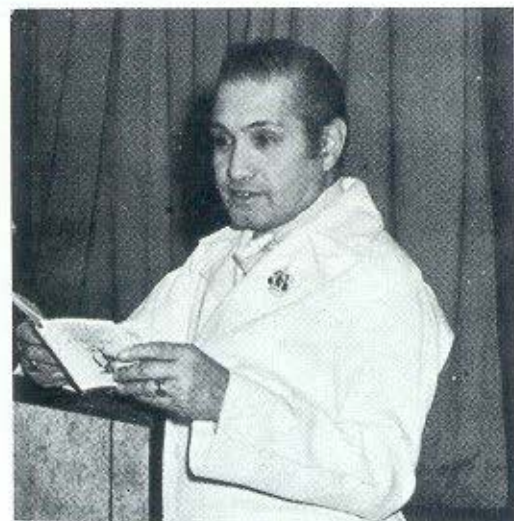
All of a sudden the orchestra ceases to play. The dancers stop in mystification, yet in recognition. A silence falls over the hall. The big event is about to take place! Thunderously a roll of drums fan-fares the intoxicatingly heated air. The President of the Tavern Guild appears on the stage. The aspirants for the crown appear also. They have campaigned long and hard for this moment. Each has her own ideas on what an "empress" should be and should do during her reign. Those present have viewed the "Vote For -" posters in gay bars all over the city and they have now voted for their favorite.

The candidates feel the fear of losing. There is an urgency to be approved; a terrible hunger to please and not to disappoint. The possible Empress of San Francisco is standing up there before one of the most critical audiences in the world. Each is a nervous wreck, standing brave and pathetically human. A homosexual in drag, demanding respect and recognition.

"Ladies and Gentlemen!" the President finally announces: "The votes have

been counted and it is with great honor that I present to you *The Empress of San Francisco of 1972, the Empress* ———." A cheer fills the ballroom amidst some tears and heartaches. The ruling Empress steps forward and removes her crown and places it upon the head of the new heiress. She is also handed the royal scepter and the house breaks down in glorious applause. All stand to recognize and pay tribute to her triumph. What all awaited was now coming to pass.

San Francisco is my home and the world is not behind me but directly ahead. San Francisco is the laughter of children at play, the guy upon his motorcycle, the broken man with his wine bottle as his companion, the student who



JOSE SARRIA
The First Empress

bravely burned his draft card in order to tell the world that his beloved country was indulging in an immoral war, the black man who let it be known that he will no longer be put down and the lonely with their cherished pets.

San Francisco is a beautiful place where, when the fog rolls in people awake to a new day and life goes on with new determination to encourage the best out of one's self. Everyone is doing his thing as best he knows how. Each seeking respect and recognition ... including the homosexual in drag who proudly receives a crown at a Halloween Ball.