

The GPC mailing list: probably bigger than you thought

By William Marberry

Computer lists, phone books and materials were scattered all over the room. There were four people working at the glass dining table, two more at a card table set up in front of the fireplace.

Several others were working alone at various spots around the room while Don Hrachovy continually moved from person to person answering questions and checking what was being done.

It was a regular Tuesday night work session of the Gay Political Caucus mailing list committee.

At the heart of the GPC is its mailing list, the most extensive and accurate list of its kind in the United States. But to keep it that way is a work-intensive year-round activity.

Two hundred man hours per month is the minimum amount of time devoted to the updating and making corrections required to prepare the 2000 to 5000 pieces of data that must be keypunched preparing for the monthly computer run. During times of political activity, the mailing list committee virtually spends all its time working on the list.

Said Hrachovy: "During the city elections, I spent 13 out of 14 nights working on the mailing list. It has to be that way because the list is for more than just the mailings. Phone numbers also have to be provided for the phone tree to be able to do its work."

Having worked on the mailing list for more than six years, Hrachovy has seen the list grow from 1500 names kept on 3x5 index cards to 15,000 names maintained on computer tapes.

The bulk of the mailing list work involves address changes. On an average, each name moves once each seven months creating over 30,000 address changes each year. Last election's address corrections were mailed bulk rate and the address corrections notices cost more than \$700. Most

- Montrose gypsies tend to congregate in a few favorite apartment complexes, among their favorites are (in addition to 1400 Richmond) 1301 Richmond and Marshall Square.

- At one time, there were almost as many Dallasites on the Houston GPC's mailing list as there were on the Dallas GPC's own list.

- The geometric center of Houston's gay population is not at Westheimer and Montrose as generally believed, but near the intersection of Buffalo Speedway and West Alabama—over 2 miles to the west.

- The master GPC list is 258 pages long; a complete set of labels takes 55 minutes to print on an IBM-360 computer; the last mailer filled 38 mail bags. To type the entire set of labels by hand would take a good typist over three solid days.

- The caucus maintains a variety of information in its memory banks. In addition to your address, among the information that "Big Sister" keeps track of is:

Your voter registration number.

The month your phone number last changed.

The names of your last two known roommates.

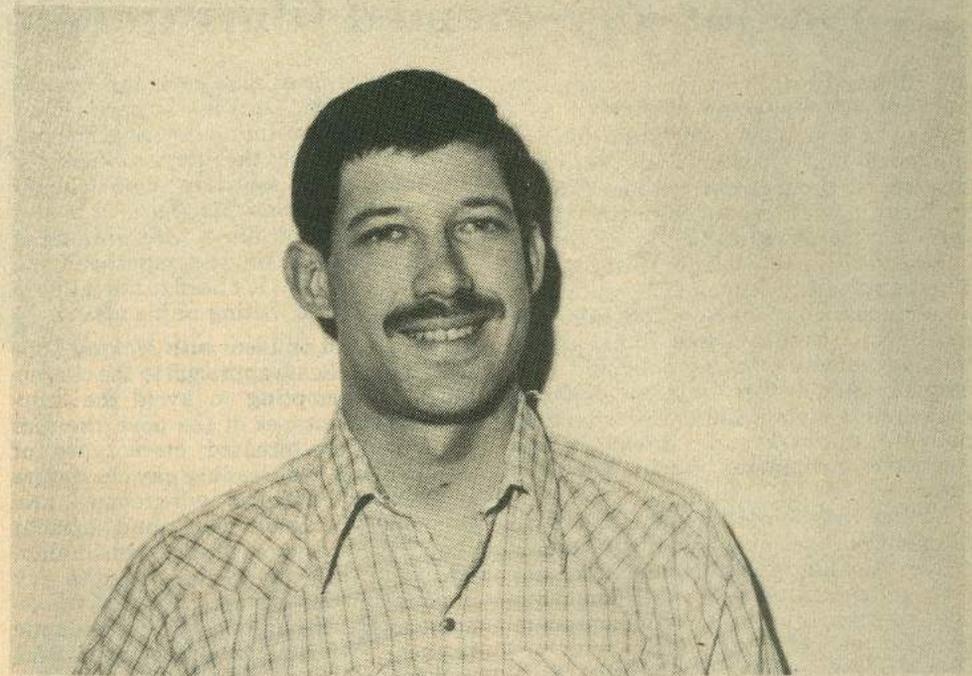
The number of times you moved since getting on the list.

Your party affiliation (the primary in which you voted).

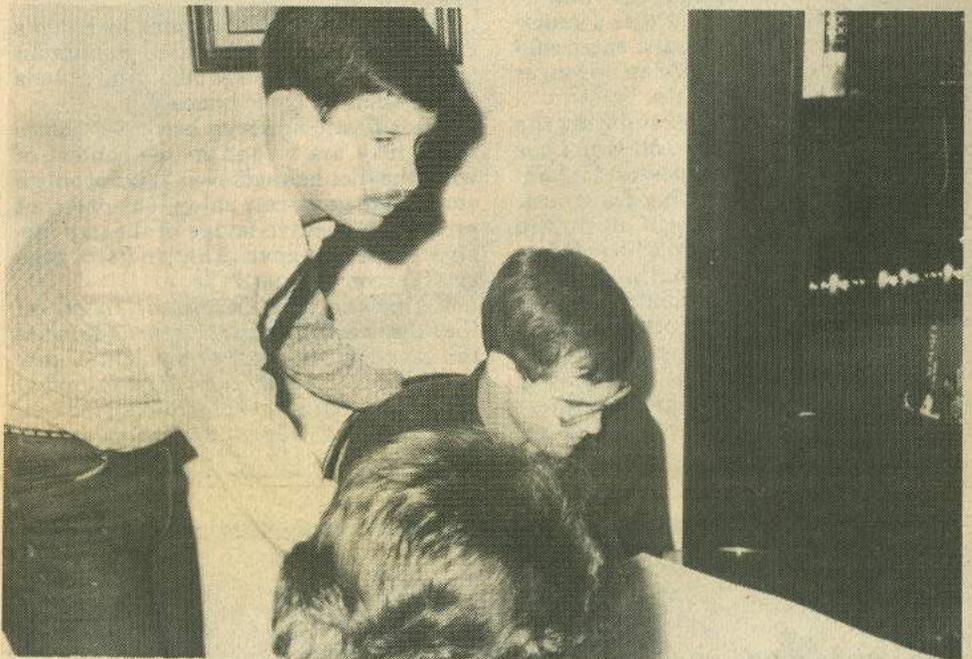
All of the legislative districts in which you reside.

- Precinct 34 has as many people on GPC's mailing list as there are registered voters in that district.

- Montrose is very gay and getting more so all the time. Four years ago, a survey was done where it was found that 34% of GPC's mailing list lived in Montrose. A similar study eight months ago revealed that 37.6% live within Montrose. Though there is a tendency to move into the western and southwestern suburbs, many people return to the inner city after a



Don Hrachovy



Hrachovy supervising his final mailing list work session as Communications

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Hrachovy has compiled many interesting demographic profiles about Montrose that he calls mailing list trivia.

- The "gayest" street in Houston is Richmond, on which over 500 of GPC's list reside. The most populated single address is 1400 Richmond.

- Based on GPC's sampling of data, the average gay person lives seven months at a single address though many people move more often. One person, a GPC member, has had 13 recorded moves since the present computer system began in December 1979.

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Originally conceived as a way of notifying members and interested voters of the GPC endorsements, the mailing list is now a more valuable tool for recruiting volunteers to work for endorsed candidates. The news media in the last several elections have spread the GPC endorsements beyond the ability of the mailing list.

Since the fall elections, Hrachovy has undertaken a consolidated mailing list program that allows participating organizations to share address corrections while maintaining the confidentiality and exclusiveness of their lists. The major organizations participating include GPC, CHE, Texas Human Rights Foundation



Hrachovy supervising his final mailing list work session as Communications Coordinator.

and "Tea for Two Thousand." It was largely on his stature as a community activist and a past president of GPC that Hrachovy was able to bring these diverse organizations together in sharing mailing list expenses.

Unlike many of GPC's tasks, the mailing list is a thankless and never ending job. It is essential, but tedious. The measure of the mailing list is in the results it produces. For these reasons, the mailing list chairman is the most important GPC position after the presidency.

But the mailing list does not receive the publicity or recognition of the more visible offices. Few outside the hierarchy of GPC

ever realize the importance of the mailing list chair.

At last Wednesday's GPC meeting, Don Hrachovy completed his tenure as head of the mailing list in the same manner he had worked on the mailing list—mostly overshadowed by the more visible officers. His successor will soon be appointed and the unsung and overlooked spark plug of the GPC will continue on.

Meanwhile, many say that GPC and all of Montrose owe Don Hrachovy a debt of gratitude that cannot be repayed. Only the new mailing list coordinator can ever really appreciate the job Hrachovy did.