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ON THE DOCKET

HEY, LA-A-A-DIES!

by Lauren Collins

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“Girls, y’all got one, a night that’s special everywhere, from New York to Hollywood,” Kool & the Gang sang, in 1979, and every year thereafter. Ladies’ nights, however, are lately in peril (and with them, presumably, sales of coconut rum and Coty Wild Musk). In June, Roy Den Hollander, a Manhattan attorney, filed a federal lawsuit alleging that ladies’ nights constitute a violation of the Fourteenth Amendment. Citing invidious discrimination, he named as defendants the night clubs A.E.R., Lotus, Sol, China Club, and the Copacabana—which charged lower admission fees for women at, respectively, their Remix Thursdays, Velvet List Wednesdays, Models and Bottles Fridays, Metropolis Fridays, and College Party Thursdays.

The other night—nite?—Den Hollander was maneuvering his way past a maroon rope that marked the entrance to LQ, a dance club in midtown. It was a Salsa Wednesday: five bucks for ladies, ten for gents. Den Hollander shelled out and went inside, where he cruised the pink-lit periphery of a dance floor, sparsely populated with wrinkled couples practicing twirls. “Last time I was here for an after-work, you had younger people,” he said. “Problem is, the music’s so loud. When I hit on a girl, I need to be able to talk to her.”

Forgoing a complimentary buffet, he made his way to the bar, where he ordered an Absolut vodka gimlet. “I tend to be attracted to black and Latin chicks, and Asian chicks,” he said, citing the influence of the twelfth-century

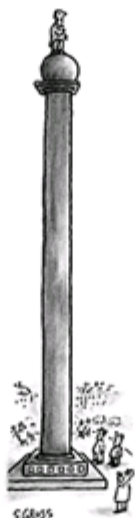
Provençal troubadour Guiraut de Bornelh. “He said, ‘For a man, attraction goes through the eyes.’ ” Den Hollander was unfazed by the notion that, as a hound dog, his fight to defeminize clubs was perhaps counter to his self-interest.

Den Hollander likes to keep his age a secret. He was wearing a greenish double-breasted suit and, judging from his gray buzz cut, rubbery grin, and Hypnotiq-blue eyes (courtesy of contacts), seemed to be about forty-five. His frequent references to the Vietnam era, however, put him slightly earlier. “I look around,” he said, recalling his college years, “and there are all these girls walking around in see-through skirts and having sex whenever they want to, and there I am, dodging the draft.”

He reached into his pocket and produced a typed forty-one-point list headed “Discrimination against men in America.” (Sample gripes: child-custody laws, circumcision, “5% of females have borderline personality disorder.”) “What I’m trying to do now in my later years is fight everybody who violates my rights,” he continued, bringing to mind a combination of Leon Phelps, Che Guevara, and Travis Bickle.

Den Hollander’s latest litigative quest (there have been many: defamation suits, a nuisance complaint against neighbors) began in earnest about seven years ago. A former associate at Cravath, Swain & Moore, he had moved to Russia to work as a private investigator. There he met a woman, with whom he returned to New York. They were married in March, 2000, and separated by December. (In *Den Hollander v. Flash Dancers Topless Club et al.*, Den Hollander sued his ex-wife and her employer under the auspices of a civil RICO statute. The suit was dismissed.) “So what happened was, my best buddy in town called and said, ‘You’ve got to get back in the social life,’ ” Den Hollander recalled. “We’d say, ‘Hey, the Copa looks good tonight,’ but we wouldn’t go, because they’re charging double for guys and maybe we didn’t have the cash.”





*"In real life, he
had acrophobia."*

The club was filling up as Den Hollander held forth on Title IX ("Sports isn't a big thing to girls, but it's a big thing to guys"), pickup tactics ("You sort of cut the person you're after from the herd"), his personal finances ("Have you heard of the dot-com bubble?"), and his belief that "the Feminazis have infiltrated institutions, and there's been a transfer of rights from guys to girls." Too bad, it was suggested, that his lawsuit is set to be heard by Judge Miriam Goldman Cedarbaum, herself a known female. But Den Hollander was not deterred. "What I think will happen," he said, "is that clubs will reduce the price for guys and increase it for girls. Every guy will have ten or fifteen more dollars in his pocket, which the girls will then manipulate into getting more drinks out of him. If they drink more, they'll have more fun, and so will us guys. And then when she wakes up in the morning she'll be able to do what she always does: blame the man."

In his lawsuit, Den Hollander invokes a precedent: *Seidenberg and DeCrow v. McSorley's Old Ale House* (1970), in which female patrons gained the right to drink alongside the menfolk. Reached last

week, Karen DeCrow, an attorney and the vice-president of the Greater Syracuse chapter of the National Organization for Women, reacted evenly to news of Den Hollander and his unlikely alignment. "It probably wouldn't be very fun to go out to dinner with him," she said, "but, insofar as you've told me about his theory, I agree with it." Since winning the McSorley's case, DeCrow hasn't returned to the bar. "It would be fun to go back and have a glass of ale," she said, "but in the past twenty-five years it hasn't seemed urgent." ♦

ILLUSTRATION: TOM BACHTELL