

vision." Titled *Different Drummers*, the concept of the show never evolved due, in part, to a lack of available funding from the Corporation for Public Broadcasting and the rise of the politically conservative 1980s.

Nevertheless, many public broadcasting executives remained interested in Scagliotti's idea and arranged a meeting with two other film producers, Greta Schiller and Robert Rosenberg. Together this small group began work on the documentary, *Before Stonewall*, a history of the making of the gay and lesbian community in America. From the sexual experimentation

own shows, the idea for a gay and lesbian culture series on television once again entered the forefront of his mind. "After about three or four years (at the radio station), it was time to leave. There had been a big change in radio and the gay movement started changing. I knew there was a need for a gay and lesbian series on television," said Scagliotti. Although many were impressed with his ideas, few were able to lend the necessary monetary support, and it took over a year and a half to raise enough funds for one show.

The first installment of the series titled *In the Life*, was aired

past thirty years in gay America, including the '70s and '80s disco scene, the rise of the AIDS crisis, the fight to stop rising fundamentalist "new right" organizations, and the successful election of hundreds of openly gay candidates to political office. According to Scagliotti, "Through personal stories and personal expertise mixed with rich archival materials, we hope to be able to tell the big picture by telling a number of small stories. (Also, it is our goal) to give a sense of the sweeping change that has taken place, and to show how we changed the world... how this gay and lesbian experience of 'coming out' and being open has affected every single institution in the world." The film will be available to

It was a way to reach people who would have otherwise remained uninformed, alone and afraid.

of the Roaring Twenties to the scapegoating of homosexuals during the McCarthy era and the development of the homophile movement, the film provides an intimate look at gay history in America.

Using archival news and in depth interviews with such personalities as poets Audre Lorde and Allen Ginsberg, as well as Harry Hay, co-founder of the Mattachine Society, the documentary took three years to make before finally airing on PBS in December 1986. Despite being viewed as "questionable" and "inflammatory" by mainstream society, the film won two Emmy Awards and opened the closet for other gay directors.

Having achieved great success with *Before Stonewall*, Scagliotti desired a break from the world of producing films and secured a position as program manager at a local New York radio station. In the midst of developing his

on six stations. Before the second show aired, Scagliotti and a small group of supporters began a grassroots effort to boost their viewership. "We'd send out things in the mail, and try and get people to call their local stations and (urge them to carry the show). It went from six stations to one hundred and twenty and continues to do well today, but they can only afford to do about eight shows a year," said Scagliotti.

After leading the series for five years, Scagliotti resigned his post shortly after the death of his partner, Andrew Kopkind, who had become an award winning journalist, in 1994, and only recently has he started documentary work again. His current project, a highly anticipated film entitled *After Stonewall*, will serve as a sequel to its Emmy award winning predecessor.

Narrated by Melissa Etheridge, the film will recount the

the PBS network in time for the thirtieth anniversary of the Stonewall riots in June of 1999.

What began as merely an interest in communicating information to a large number of people has gradually evolved into a lifetime pursuit for John Scagliotti. A self-described "amateur," he has two Emmy awards to his credit, but they pale in comparison to a letter he received one day in Boston while working at the radio station. "It was from a kid who had turned the radio down really low in his bedroom in order to listen to 'The Lavender Hour.' That was the first time he had ever heard another gay person, and he wanted to thank me for putting the show on. Those stories have repeated themselves throughout all of my work and continue to be the only reward... seeing how my work changes people's lives."

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