

Grand River Rainbow Historical Project

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celebrating the lives and times of rainbow folk in Grand River country

OUT!

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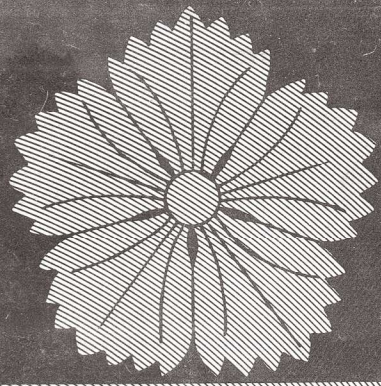
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OUT!



KITCHENER-WATERLOO-GUELPH-CAMBRIDGE

COMING OUT!



SPECIAL ISSUE

The phrase "coming out" means different things to different people. Within the pages of this issue of **OUT!** are several accounts of what coming out meant for some of us in the local gay community. The phenomenon of coming out is not, in my opinion, exclusively homosexual. Most persons at some point in their lives experience an emerging of self or discover a newer deeper understanding of who she/he is. I feel this is a natural and indeed necessary part of maturing and of learning to live comfortably with oneself.

I hope reading the accounts in this issue will provide some insight and understanding of how and why we, the writers of these accounts, chose to come out publicly, for it was in this spirit that the idea was conceived and the articles written and presented.

Lynne McInnes

GAY
COFFEE HOUSE
Wednesday's
8:30 pm
Room 110
CAMPUS CENTRE
U. of W.

May 1979
Vol. 1 No. 6

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ON COMING OUT

I think I would have to say I came out twice -- once to myself and my closest friends, and then again a little more than a year later to the rest of my world.

The first coming out — and by far the most difficult — was a long and painful process. I don't really think it had a beginning (other than with my birth) and I don't feel it is entirely ended or will ever be, though it is no longer a painful process.

I was born in England and spent the first six years of my life there, mostly on farms where my dad worked with other farm hands whose families also lived on the farms in dwellings much like town houses. I knew then that I didn't want to grow up like the wives of those men. What I wanted was to be like my dad and work the land.

This ambition stayed with me after we emigrated to Canada though time soon impressed upon me that it would be a difficult dream to fulfil — all the heroes in the books I read were men and all the women I read about and most of the ones I knew spent their time serving men.

Even though I was forever being told "girls don't do this" "girls can't do that" "I helped in the barn and in the fields". As long as we were out in the country no one objected too much. But farm jobs were getting harder to find as farmers could no longer afford to pay family men enough to live on so we moved into town. Then things changed for me as it wasn't "proper for girls your age to be such tom-boys".

I heard it from my mother and my teachers - I was even sent to Sunday School and heard it there, too. It seemed there was no shortage of people to tell me how to behave. I did as I was told but my determination didn't change.

When I was 12 or 13 we went back to the farm and I had more freedom again and by that time I was already discovering sex. Sex opened doors. Because of it I could hang around with the boys and do what I liked. All I knew about sex then was it was

a tool for women and a pleasure for men.

The first time I heard of Lesbianism was when I was about 14 and had moved away from the farm and back into town. Lil a friend of my mother came to stay with us one night because she was fighting with her husband. The only place for her to sleep was with me. During the night she put her arms around me and kissed me. I told her to wake up because I was sure she was dreaming.

"I'm not sleeping," she said. "I know who you are," and Lil taught me that women have sex together too.

The next day, however, my mother was furious. She knew Lil was bisexual and nothing we said would convince her that "all we did was sleep". So not knowing quite what to do my mother called the police.

The Sergeant who came, took me out to the police car (Lil had left already), spent two or three hours explaining to me that Lil was sick - a nymphomaniac - and needed help. He was big and stern but kind in his way and I listened to what he said. Later when Lil's husband had her committed to 101 Queen Street (the Ontario hospital), I was sure they were right.

Many women attracted me strongly throughout my teens but I was so sure that sex should only be with men that I stifled my feelings. Some of the girls I spent time with would kiss and neck "just to show you" and many times I joined in, which only confused me more.

I was extremely homophobic for years. When people would ask if I was gay or say things like, "normal women don't work on loading docks," I would lose my temper and assert that I was very normal and liked sex with men. I proved my point by being promiscuous.

Then when I was 24, I met a woman from Toronto who excited me like no one ever had. We became close friends and spent a lot of time together. I started to become jealous of the men she saw but since I

couldn't admit even to myself what was happening, tension grew and we argued more and more. A mutual friend remarked that we acted like a married couple.

This went on for a year or more till finally in a state of utter inebriation I told her that when I was having sex with men I was thinking about her.

"What do you want to do?" she asked. (She was loaded, too.)

So I told her I wanted to make love with her and she said, "okay" - just like that.

Well that isn't what I expected and I didn't have a clue what to do so when she finally stopped me I was both relieved and disappointed.

The next morning was a different matter. My friend was singing and cheerful and I was sullen and depressed.

"It's not so bad," she told me.

"I'm glad it happened. I've wondered for a long time and now I know I'm not gay. You see it had to happen so we'd know we're okay."

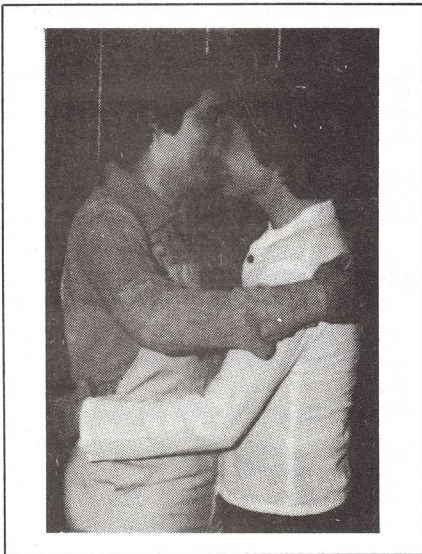
"Great!" I was thinking. "You're okay and I'm queer!"

For weeks I brooded and fought with my own awareness. I didn't want to be a lesbian and if I was I didn't want to know! Everywhere I looked, though, there were women, and I knew.

There was a woman I met at the college where I'd taken my upgrading who I knew was gay and I met her one evening in the supermarket. I told her my problem and asked for help. She invited me for drinks and we talked. We went back to her place and I got drunk again and we spent the night together.

Eventually Heather moved in with me and I told all my closest friends (who sighed in relief being glad I was smiling again).

My "second" coming out was easier. I'd spent more than a year happily gay part of the time and uncomfortably appearing heterosexual the rest of the time. Heather and I had separated after nine months and I was seeing other women when I came to Kitchener to



go back to school.

Kitchener I knew from my childhood as a very conservative place with lots of Germans and Mennonites - BUT- I was sure - no gay people.

The first week of my course was orientation and did nothing to alleviate my discomfort but on the first day of my own class I was told about Joe. "He's gay and proud of it--he tells everyone," I was told.

It was two days till I met Joe--he'd been away. Then when I met him he was just leaving. Not wishing to lose an opportunity I went over and blurted, "Hi--I heard that you're gay." He smiled and said, "I sure am." I said, "me, too", and the whole class knew almost immediately.

Now, of course, everyone knows and I'm much more comfortable. I can be who I am now and not hide anything. I even told my father--who, because he loves me and sees that I'm happier now, accepted the news calmly and without reservation.

Hindsight, I'm told, is 20-20. Looking back, I know I spent a lot of time and energy hiding my self from myself and everyone else. All that effort was futile and only made me unhappy and uncomfortable. If Lil were alive now, I'd tell her this and I'd tell her I know she wasn't sick, just confused about who she was. Homosexuality isn't the sickness--trying so hard to be something we're not--is.

Part of my impetus to come out as a lesbian and no longer to think of myself as bisexual was the recognition of the strength of my attraction to a particular woman. As it happened, I never did tell her about my feelings because I never got to know her very well. In retrospect, I'm glad I didn't, because she was a symbol to me, and I can't imagine any real person being all the things a symbol must be in a time of change.

Hopefully, some time I will get to know the woman in a more realistic way. Then maybe I'll get to sing her this song I wrote for her:

Song to Another Handsome Woman

1. Well, I want you to love me, I wanna love you (oo hoo)
Well, I want you to love me, I wanna love you (oo hoo)
I've followed you a thousand miles
For the way (that) you think and the way you smile.
Well, I want you to love me, I wanna love you (oo hoo).
2. Oh, well, I want you to hold me, I wanna hold you (oo hoo)
Well, I want you to hold me, I wanna hold you (oo hoo)
A woman that's so big and strong
Should be my friend (/lover) and it won't be long...
Well, I want you to hold me, I wanna hold you (oo hoo).
3. Well, I want you to tell me, I wanna tell you (oo hoo)
Well, I want you to tell me, I wanna tell you (oo hoo)
'Bout the things we know and the things we've done
And those dreams that you can't just share with anyone
Well, I want you to tell me, I wanna tell you (oo hoo).

4. Oh, well, I want you to show me, I wanna show you (oo hoo)
Well, I want you to show me, I wanna show you (oo hoo)
How a love can be both strong and free
When you're friends and lovers simul-taneously
Well, I want you to show me, I wanna show you (oo hoo).

5. Oh, well, I want you to know me, I wanna know you (oo hoo)
Well, I want you to know me, I wanna know you (oo hoo)
I wanna see you as you see yourself
In those secret spaces where there's no one else
Well, I want you to know me, I wanna know you (oo hoo).

Then do Verse 1 over again.

Mae



Jill Durkin

I am a lesbian
what is the matter
with this world
that one word
which describes your loves
turns friends into strangers

All the word is
is a preference
for women over men
It is not a rejection
of friends beliefs.

I can accept straights
and the straight society
why can't they
learn
to accept me.

Life would be so easy
if everyone took time
to share their thoughts
and communicate with each other.

People just sit
and wrench their minds apart,
never asking for help
nor realizing they need it.

Why don't all people
learn to laugh and cry
with each other.
For then we'd all be sane.

Jayne Pollock

Untitled
and
Uncertain

Schizophrenic pleasures
mix with
full-moon madness
giving birth to
heady expectations
and
virginal anxieties

THAT NIGHT--recent in time,
entombed in memories,
when I held a woman;
smaller than myself,
softer than before,
in my arms.
Silently agreeing with Anais Nin.
Still recognizing
the limitations
she imposed.

Womon-love is more
than a narcissic reflection.
It's also the differences...
the subtlties of the mind
the delicate tones of the body
the shape
the size
the touch

It's mine
It's hers
It's ours

Self-conscious reflections
mingle with
self-doubt
creating
ambivalence, fear
yet
knowing that I can't
won't be the same

Wij

Beginning to Know

I've always said about her, she was the first woman I ever realized I loved.

I was drinking in a grubby little bar, back for the summer in my old home town in northern BC, when a girlhood friend told me about this woman who had come to town with someone her husband knew. "She's weird," my friend said. "She was in the bar for a few minutes but she's not very friendly. All she does is sit up in the hotel room and read books."

Later she said, "Listen, that girl I was telling you about. Well, she needs a place to stay, it's weird for Richard to have her in his hotel room, I mean she's not his girlfriend or anything. I told her you had an extra room in your apartment. Is that OK? Actually, I think you might like her, she's more like you than she is like us."

Well, the man in my life had just walked out for a while, intending to come back at his leisure. This was the first time I had really lived by myself and I was looking forward to exploring what that was like. I didn't want another person in my space.

On the other hand, something about this unseen woman intrigued me. I wished I had what it took to sit in a hotel room above the bar and read rather than be drawn by the beer and the company. I told my friend to tell her to come, figuring I'd like to meet her, but not willing to offer her a place to stay.

The next day I answered a tentative knock to find this preposterous woman standing in the doorway. She was tall and gangly and her short, ragged hair stood straight on end as she snatched her toque from her head. If I had known

the term "dyke" then it would have been an insult, but I knew what a lesbian was and I was sure this woman was one. I was immensely intrigued. Within moments, it was more than that. My heart virtually fell at her feet.

I invited her in and we talked for hours. Later she told me she had hardly ever worked so hard at getting someone to like her. Of course, she moved in.

She made my summer magic. I had never been close with anyone before who liked themselves enough to love me without trying to make me feel bad about myself.

There was no doubt I was in love. I even put her name first on the mailbox. (Listen, that might not sound like much to you, but I was very frail in those days, I needed to be first in everything.)

But she wasn't a dyke. She was 'in love' with a he-man who would come down from Prince George and boast about brothels he had visited all over the world.

I wasn't a dyke, either. I refused to acknowledge that he and I were in 'competition'. I just hated him because he was a creep.

It wasn't that I couldn't tell her I loved her. I did, many times, but that was OK — we were hippies, you could tell anyone you loved them. I knew she wouldn't feel threatened by my feelings for her as long as I didn't try to express them sexually.

So I found me a man to fuck to take away the sexual tension. It must have been a strange summer for him; he was so insubstantial.

She and I became (blush) Water Brothers.

But I knew I loved her more than I had ever loved anyone in my life, we should have been each other's, if she had been ready I would have been.

But she wasn't, and she went away to India leaving me to hit the road with my pain and a bottomless sense of loss that I couldn't even name.

Mge

ACCEPTING MYSELF

I was 17 in grade 9, bored, I had a lot of energy and nowhere to direct it. My exploration of sex other than with myself had just begun with men.

Danielle came to live with Roger, a friend with whom I had spent a lot of time. There was something about Danielle that intrigued me.

Roger was to move out and I was to move in. I didn't like living at home.

Danielle asked me for a back rub. At this point, I was becoming aware of my feelings for her, but I was not going to make first advances. So when she fell asleep I went back to my own bed.

A long weekend was coming up; it was spring. Danielle asked me if I was interested in going with her to her home town in Quebec. I jumped at the chance to drive that distance with her.

She at that point said that there was something she should tell me before we left. I thought of the times she had asked for a backrub and was beginning to think about what it might be that she had to tell me.

We had a few drinks with some people who lived above our apartment in the basement of a house in Kitchener. Danielle went downstairs and I followed her.

She spoke very little English so we would communicate with the help of a French/English Dictionary. She asked if I knew what a homosexual was. (this was the only French/English term in the book. (Then she told me in her broken English, 'I am like that.')

So we went off to Quebec and I had the best time of my life to this point with Danielle and her friends. I discovered that Danielle had a sugar

daddy and ex-lover who was a woman. That weekend I also discovered I had a crush on Danielle but I was too shy, or frightened, or something to say or do anything about it.

So Danielle and I moved into an apartment on the third floor of a building but Danielle was not happy here in Kitchener and I was not sure of myself. She was involved with a few men in town and didn't seem to be very comfortable with her sexual feelings for women. We only lived together for a month, then she decided she would go back to Quebec.

I was sad for at least two years after she left and looked for a gay community for about that long. Almost overnight I discovered there were many more like me and I need not be ashamed of myself as I am.

Bahar Duane



The pen leaves
lines on the page.
Squiggly little marks
which mean nothing
alone, yet joined
they can mean anything.
Isn't it curious
how people invented
these lines
and like them
they mean nothing
alone?

Jayne Pollock

Am I
Gay & Proud
or
Gay and Scared

How often have I
told lies
to appear
heterosexual.

How often will I
remain
anonymous
during broadcasting.

I could make excuses
I could say
its to keep
my mothers love.

But I know
Its because
Im just gay
& scared

A BEAUTIFUL DAY

I
you left me standing in the rain
we said a quick and nervous goodbye
that moment in time seems so long ago

II
Today the strangest feeling came over
me.
i may never see you again
i may never touch you,
hold you or caress
your warm body
Today i am feeling the earth
between my toes,
the sky is my favourite
turquoise blue
and the funny thing is
all i can think of
is you.

i can stretch my arms
and touch the sky
But my arms can't stretch
far enough to hold you
and i start to cry

III
Life surrounds me, astounds me,
it fills me
And sometimes i fill myself
with thoughts of you
the memory fades
as the sun sinks behind the pines
yes, it was a beautiful day.

M. Feig Star

DEAR MOM AND DAD,

I am writing this letter to tell you about an intimate part of my life which, until the past few months, has caused me considerable agony and at times, complete despair. The suppression of this aspect of my life within me has cost me a great deal in terms of my openness, honesty, and even creativity. It has dominated my outlook on life and has resulted in my general unhappiness.

I have been aware since the time when I was about thirteen, and increasingly so since that time, that I was a homosexual. Knowing nothing about the subject except that it was considered to be a severe social problem, and being afraid that attempts to find out more about it might result in my discovery, I worried myself sick and deprived myself of thoughts, of close personal relationships, and indeed of many of the activities which allow a young person to develop the ability to communicate with other people with complete honesty. I created a behaviour pattern which seemed to be acceptable to our society. I know that you were aware of my seclusion which I used to avoid being put in a position where my sexuality would be questioned. This came at the expense of not developing deep friendships with men and women with whom I was associated, even though my most natural tendency was to be friendly and open towards others. I moved into a role which society had created for me, that of a reclusive, quiet and often gruff person whose outward serenity could nearly cover up the turmoil and pain within himself. This inability to relate to other people, in a society where homosexuals are treated with utter contempt, was the greatest blow against me, and at times it nearly crushed me, since it went against my most natural instincts in relating to other people.

I underwent a dramatic internal change during the past summer. My work caused me to be alone much of the time, and I began to think more deeply about myself and other people than I had ever done before. I

eventually reached certain basic conclusions and justifications about our human existence, which were of great significance in the acceptance of myself as a human being. However, the severe flaw in all of my thinking was that society had previously defined that I was unacceptable to myself or to the rest of society. Even though my feelings about the possibilities for interpersonal relationships and goals of which the human population is capable were of an extremely noble nature, my natural impulses of love were considered to be the lowest possible morally.

During the fall, I was feeling my sexual deprivation in the extreme, and when a group of homosexuals at the University of Guelph held a meeting, I decided to attend, primarily because of my great personal need for someone to relate to. At first, I was unable to break down my reserve enough to even talk about my intense personal agony with these other people. But I quickly became aware of the diversity and humanity in the people I had met, when I had expected to find excessive promiscuity, which was notably absent. At that meeting and in the following weeks I discovered a new strength within myself to cope with my problems, and this was the first step I made towards accepting myself.

I was introduced to a whole new segment of society which I had never previously realized to exist. I discovered that as a homosexual I belong to a group of people who had left various marks indicating their existence throughout recorded history, even in the face of suppression that included being burnt at the stake or being sent to the gas chamber. I discovered that within that mass of people were artists, musicians and scientists whose works are still considered to be among the greatest treasures mankind has been given. I discovered that the vast majority of homosexuals, numbering to the tens of millions in North America alone,

were still holding their true feelings about love from society, except under the most furtive conditions, and that they were undergoing the hopeless despair which had ruled so much of my life previously. I discovered that despite the codes of behaviour that our own and other cultures have maintained for centuries, there exists a wide spectrum of human sexual responsiveness. I recognized in many of my male and female acquaintances in everyday life the self-repression of certain natural impulses, sexual and otherwise, that were involved in role-playing. I saw that aspects of the behaviour codes relating to brutality, wanton killing, discrimination and mistreatment were ignored in most respects. I knew within myself that the acceptance or tolerance of these types of behaviour when certain types of sexual behaviour were openly attacked as immoral and beneath human dignity, could only prove the illogic of our morale values. Having experienced the bitterness, despondency and self-hatred resulting from my self-repression, I began to perceive some of the reasons for the mood of the people and for their increasingly antihuman behaviour.

As I grasped the scope of these discoveries, I began to accept myself for what I really was. My new awareness led me to despise those areas of my behaviour which society has dictated as appropriate. I experienced a supreme joy of self-discovery which just radiated from me, as my closest friends can tell. I became interested in aspects of myself which I had previously denied could exist. I became aware of the naturalness of my sensuality, and of the great comfort that this awareness gave to me. I have become proud to be alive and homosexual or gay, as we like to refer to ourselves, even though the term creates discomfort in many straight people. With my new pride has come an indignation, not against straight people or positions of authority which can momentarily strike out at me, but rather an indignation with the human race for ever allowing itself to become so encumbered, and for perpetuating this blindness in spite of increased human self-awareness and scientific

enlightenment. Many truths about the spectrum of human sexuality have been revealed, and were disregarded despite their availability to social scientists and psychologists. With all of these discoveries, and the resultant awakening of pride for myself, I have sensed an increasing commitment to help other escape from the bonds which formerly held me down, and my dedication to that goal grows almost daily as I am awakened to new aspects of myself and other people.

I have told you these things which are so close to my very soul, because I love you and consider that you have respect for me as an individual. I believe that you know that I could never bring myself to do anything which would really cause you pain, unless I was truly aware of the significance of that matter to myself. In face of the cultural stigma with which I am to be hereafter associated, I can only hope that you will sense the importance of my decision to tell you about myself.

You will no doubt want to inform yourselves on the subject of homosexuality, and I will do my utmost to help you educate yourselves. I am sending copies of two books to start out with. The thin book is called "Society and the Healthy Homosexual". It was written by a psychiatrist with an extreme professional awareness of the torment inflicted upon certain people because of their sexuality, and I hope that this book will help you to accommodate the surprise, sorrow and uneasiness you will feel for me. The Second book, called "The Gay Mystique", was written by a homosexual, and presents an intense personal description of human sexuality, the gay life, and gay liberation. It is written from inside the life of a gay person, rather than by an outsider looking in. These are just two of the innumerable enlightened books on the subject, and I will bring more when I come home which should be in the near future.

This letter will no doubt bring you a great deal of sorrow, and I have tried my best to soften the blow while being honest with myself. I know that your first concern will be for my happiness and health. I assure you that I have never in all

my life felt happier or healthier. I am trying at the present time to deal with my situation here at Guelph, and am continually impressed by the warmth and understanding accorded to me by those in which I have confided and hold great personal respect for. For this reason I would prefer that you did not try and get in touch with me until you yourselves have come to some level of understanding about my situation and my own feelings about it. As I have said, I have come to despise my former self-repressive behaviour, and I simply could not face continuing to cover up my tracks in the future. I can only ask for your acceptance of me as I am, and as I always have been beneath whatever exterior facade I have put on.

I realize that this revelation will put another burden on your already over-burdened lives, but you must comprehend the immensity of the personal burden which up to now has rested solely on my shoulders and in my heart. I feel that you have the love and trust in me that will allow us to share this burden and to develop a new strength to face what the world has to offer.

Love, Jim

Epilogue

Ever since I wrote this letter in March, 1974, my parents and I have travelled a great distance in terms of our relationship to each other. Once I sent the letter, I didn't hear from them for several weeks, until my mother called one night, very upset. My father sent me a letter which was, I felt, an attack on my new-found life. He said that I sounded like someone who had just been converted to a fundamentalist dogma, and that I should seek therapy. My father is a doctor.

I wrote back to him explaining some of the atrocities I had heard about psychotherapy when used as a weapon against homosexuality. I also explained that I now had a lover, a man that I loved a great deal.

There were several more weeks of silence, and in May my mother came to visit in Toronto. We had a tearful reunion. She was most concerned that I had left unable to turn to them for help. That was tempered with a bit of "maybe if we'd found out sooner" guilt. But she also discovered that I was still the same person as before.



Nearly five years have passed since those days. Paul (my lover) and I now visit with my parents occasionally, and spent Christmas with them. Paul's mother and my own have talked together on the phone and hopefully will meet soon. While that may seem mushy or a bit too much like marriage, it is an important step for two gay men who are committed to each other and who love their parents.

My parents claimed that they received my letter at a 'bad time' when they had a lot of other pressures. Sometimes I think that a phone call or personal meeting might have been easier, but since I like to procrastinate, I probably still wouldn't have taken the big step.

My father is still reluctant to talk about the whole issue. I sense he still feels a great deal of guilt, and I plan to spend some time with him, alone. He does acknowledge that Paul and I are a couple now, which is a step forward.

Telling your parents is more important to some than to others. There are a lot more books and things to give them now than ever before. One such book is Charles Silverstein's, "A Family Matter: A Parent's Guide to Homosexuality", available at Glad Day Books, 4 Collier Street, in Toronto. If you really love your parents, they probably deserve to know.

Jim Dougan

**GLAD
DAY
BOOKS**

4 Collier St.
Toronto
Phone: 961-4161

A DEEP, DARK SECRET

In the past year, my life has changed so drastically that I wonder where it will lead me.

My tale begins when I met Nicole through her job and became friendly with her. Discovering she was a lesbian did not change my feelings towards her nor did it change our rapport. A few months later, I was partying with her, dancing, talking, when her lover arrived. I found myself being very antagonistic and realized that I was jealous. It came as a shock; however, not a blow, at last I knew what I needed and wanted.

Keeping this to myself, a deep dark secret, Nicole assumed I was straight. I moved into her apartment and curiously enough, she thought it was to be closer to my male lover who lived in the same building. My feelings toward Nicole changed until I now love her as a friend.

Through her, I met other women, finding that some of the most interesting ones are lesbians. I came out to Nicole and some friends after a few visits to HALO in London.

The next stage of my coming out occurred when I went to the Michigan Womyn's Festival during August. Imagine, 5000 women, ninety-nine percent of whom are lesbians, all in one campsite, with womyn's music, politics, parties and nature. At that point, I learned how to make friends, to be comfortable with new women, and also to realize how powerful we, as feminists and lesbians, could be.

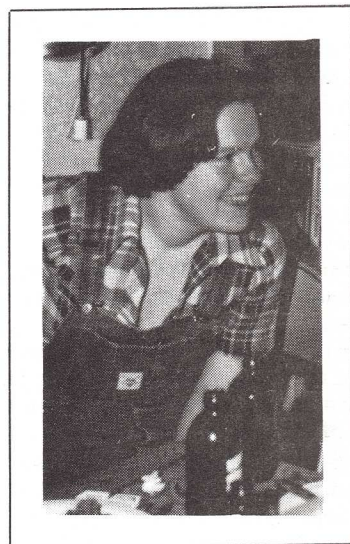
Upon my arrival in Kitchener, I started to become more involved. I also found my first lover who happened to be moving to Montreal. Through her, I discovered a lot about myself.

Since then, I have attended GLM meetings, LOOK meetings, helped (or tried to) Gay News and Views and OUT! I also have participated in a seminar at WLU at which I came out to my first straight strangers.

To myself, these are major steps, but they don't mean any more than the first time I asked a woman to dance.

It occurs to me more every day how I always have had sexual feelings towards women. I repressed these feelings and transformed them into energy for looking for Mr. Goodbar which I did for 4 years. I at times get depressed and wonder if I'm really gay but it doesn't last long. The conclusion is always reached that I have never been happier and could not love any man as I do women.

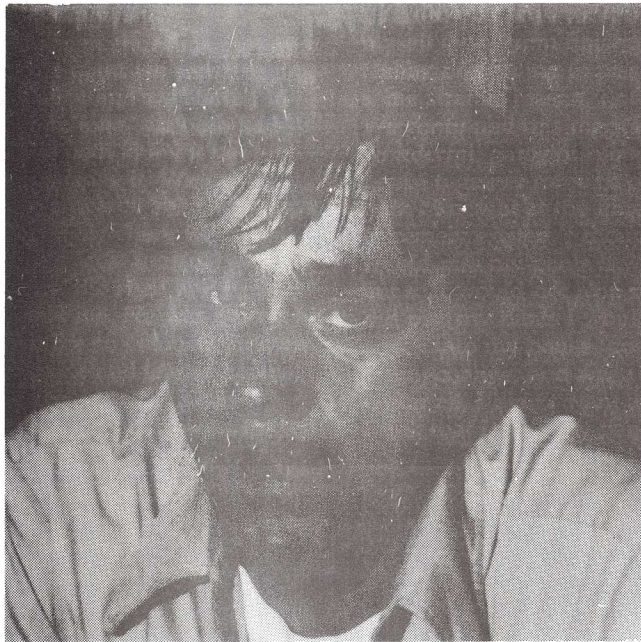
Looking over the past 8 months, from when I first came out to my friends, I have some doubt as to my future. Right now I am at a stalling point in my politics due to the fact that my parents live close to Kitchener. I know that to go any further I will have to tell my parents and eventually my employers. Every day I find it harder not to come out. Coming out is a continuous struggle but it's one worth fighting.



Jayne



BACK ALLEY SEX



For me, coming out was a long and painful process. It was full of contradictions, misgivings, and incredible guilt, self-rejection, and clandestine sexual activity.

The process took 16 years.

First Sexual Experience

I first had sex when I was in grade 7 (or was it 8?). There was a boy in my class who lived only a block from my house. Roland was new in my class and, as I didn't have many friends, we began chumming around together. One night we were playing in the back alley and we started to wrestle. Before long, we both had erections. We both knew it but we didn't acknowledge it. We got up and went to a nearby shed where we wouldn't be seen. There we continued this most unusual game. I leaned against the shed and Roland leaned against me. He was quite a bit shorter than me so I slouched down so that when Roland leaned against me I could feel his erect penis rubbing against mine. Roland started

to rub against me, and then pull back, then rub against me, and then pull back. This touching game continued for about half an hour. We didn't remove any clothing; didn't touch each other's genitals; didn't say anything, didn't show any emotion, didn't make any sound, didn't acknowledge what we were doing. I can only assume that we both enjoyed this game because neither one of us wanted it to stop.

After about half an hour I felt as if I had to piss but I didn't want to pull myself away from Roland. This feeling of wanting to piss was, for some strange reason, not unpleasant. We continued this mechanical, this wonderful, game of rubbing our penis' together through our pants. I didn't know it at the time, but I was extremely excited. I thought that I would piss my pants if we continued but that would not stop me now. If I did piss my pants I would merely sneak into my house, go to my room, change, and wash my pants. (After all, I didn't want anyone to think that I peed my pants in grade 7.)

By now I could no longer hold back. I wanted to piss and yet I didn't want to piss. And then it was too late. My body tensed. My emotions froze and I started to piss. But no! It wasn't piss. It was very different from piss.

I was twelve years old. I didn't know about sex--gay or straight. I had never masturbated before. I didn't even know I was having sex. I had an orgasm, and I loved it. I was totally naive, I didn't even realize that I was having sex with someone of my own sex.

Early Sexual Experimentation

The latest Master's & Johnson study says (among other things) that one of the most common fantasies among heterosexual couples is to have sex with a different partner. I was no different. Although Roland and I continued to play our mechanical sex games for many months I wanted to experiment. However, for many reasons, that was not easy.

I had been raised as a Roman Catholic and we all know about their attitudes toward sex (even if the reality is different). I found out what 'homosexual' was and what society thought about it; and it wasn't very nice. I was going to burn in hell. However, I still had a life to live and the god of the Roman Catholic church could see all, I could still hide my activities from mere mortals. So I did - for a very long time.

I wanted to have sexual experiences with others because Roland and I didn't particularly like each other. We both knew something about each other and I don't think we trusted each other. I didn't want to have sex with girls because I was told that they would get babies or that I could get VD. I didn't want to have sex with men because I feared that they would turn me in to the police, or tell my parents, or my school, or something awful that I didn't want to happen. Boys my own age were also out of the question because I feared that if I approached them they would beat me up, or reject me and 'spill the beans' at school. Societal pressures, gay oppression and my own reasoning narrowed my choices down to one possibility and that was younger

boys who were not sexually cognizant, that is, they were not aware of what was happening sexually.

I felt safe fooling around with younger boys. I would allow them to explore all parts of my body--especially my penis. I would give them hugs and they would hug me back. Most of them would get erections but beyond that I don't think they understood that we were playing sexual games. I never forced myself on them and if they didn't feel like playing that was alright with me. However, I felt a lot of guilt about what I was doing and would try to alleviate that guilt by telling the boys that they should "never do 'this' with anyone but a girl". I also very seldom played sexual games with any of the boys more than once. I didn't think it was safe. The fear of discovery was the beginning of my sexual promiscuity. The silence and lack of emotions was the beginning of my sexual oppression. Both were social factors.

Older Men

When I was in grade 9 my younger brother and I went to play and to explore some of the trails on the Niagara escarpment in Hamilton. I noticed a man looking at me and when my brother went off on his own, the man came up to me and sat beside me. He said it was a nice spring day and that it was nice to sit and lie on the grass. He asked me where my brother was and whether or not I had a girlfriend. I immediately became interested in him. My brother returned and wanted to go home. I told him to go home on his own because I wasn't tired and still wanted to explore some more trails. By this time the man had left and that puzzled me a bit. However, as soon as my brother left the man appeared again. I went off on a trail by myself and shortly after the man was walking behind me. He approached me and wanted to know if I minded if he walked with me. I said I didn't mind but since the path was so narrow he had to walk behind me. Well the strangest thing happened. He walked very close behind me. He was so close that I could feel his erect penis rubbing against my back as we

walked. He kept suggesting that we stop and lie down because it was such a nice day. He also kept asking me if I had any hard feelings toward him. (I didn't catch the pun at that time.) I told him that I still felt like walking some more. So we walked a little more with him rubbing against me. By now I too had an erection. We stopped and he touched my penis through my pants. I went over to a nearby tree and leaned against it. He came up to me, hugged me, and asked if he could put his 'thing' between my legs. He promised he wouldn't wet my underwear so I let him undo my fly. He then shoved his penis between my legs and began pumping. It felt wonderful and so exciting. True to his word he took his penis out just before he came. I didn't come because I didn't want to show my emotions. Didn't want to show that I enjoyed it. Before he left he asked me if I had ever done 'it' before with a guy. I said no. Then he told me that it's safer if you do it only with a girl.

The experience showed me that I could have sex with older men. So for a few years I would stand on street corners or near a hotel and look for men who were slightly drunk and by themselves. I would follow them for a block or two and then catch up to them and ask them if they knew what time it was. If they sounded harsh or threatening I would say 'thanks' and if they sounded friendly I would ask them if they wanted to go into the alley. (I was getting quite brazen by this time.) It's surprising how many of these men would agree to go into the back alley with me--a minor. I didn't care how these men looked. I just wanted to have sex. Some were heavy, some were skinny, some short, some tall. Some were in their twenties, some in their late forties or early fifties. Most were married, some with children my age.

Two years after my first sexual experience with an older man, and five years after my first orgasm, I had a course on "sex education" at school. Throughout this period I never admitted that I liked sex with guys. I always said that I "liked" girls but was horny and wouldn't mind trying 'it' once with a guy. My clandestine sexual activity continued through high school and the first 4

years of university. During my university years I had sex with approximately 12 women. I had a straight macho image that I wanted to protect. Meanwhile my sexual oppression and frustration was destroying me. I had very bad headaches, got acid indigestion almost daily and I couldn't even shit properly. I no longer believed in god so I didn't worry about being seen by a deity. I could still hide from others but I could not hide from myself.

Coming Out in Montreal

I first came out in Montreal when I moved there in 1974. In Montreal, I was anonymous. The city has a large gay population. For 16 months I hung out at Bud's and picked up, or got picked up, every day. As people in the bar got to know me it was pointless to say that I didn't like gay sex. For the first time I began to feel good about my sexuality. However, none of my friends knew I was gay. They were all in Kitchener and I was in Montreal. Then, a close friend of mine, Jim, came to visit me in Montreal and I took him to Bud's. He didn't particularly like the place but he got the hint. He asked me if I was gay and I said I was. He was the first friend I ever told. It was a big step for me. By now I was 24 years old. When Jim returned to Kitchener he told other people that I was gay. I could now return to Kitchener as a gay person.

Coming Out in Kitchener

When I returned to Kitchener in 1975, everything for me changed. I was no longer afraid to be seen in the Walper Hotel. I told more and more friends that I was gay. The support from my many heterosexual friends was what I needed. I didn't lose a single friend because of my gayness. In fact, they introduced me to other gay people whom they knew. I became more and more relaxed and my health got a lot better. The only people who didn't know I was gay was my immediate family. They had to wait four more years.

Joe Szalai

What do you do with a thousand lesbians?

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The Lesbian Organization of Toronto is planning such a gathering — a conference for lesbians from different communities, doing diverse things. This is your conference. Please write us with your ideas and inspiring thoughts. Pass the word along. And send us a donation. The Lesbian Conference Committee, 342 Jarvis Street, Toronto.

Join CGRO!

We know you're out there and we need you! The gay community faces increased hostility from reactionary interests across the province. More individual lesbians and gay men have joined CGRO in recent months to meet this challenge. You don't always have to be "out" to help out. Your membership or donation will help to give us the clout we need to make Ontario a safer place for all of us. Use the coupon below or drop us a note. We'd like to hear from you.

Please enroll me as a member of the Coalition for Gay Rights in Ontario:

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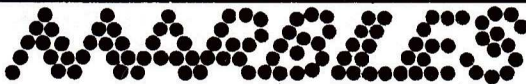
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Please put me on the mailing list for the CGRO Easter Conference. I plan to attend. (See story page 14.)

Please send me _____ copies of the CGRO brief to the Ontario legislature, "Discrimination and the Gay Minority." I enclose \$1.50 for each.

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EVENTS

Guelph — Coming Events

- Wed. May 9: Meeting of fitness and exercise. 9th floor Lounge Arts Bldg. 8:00 pm.
- Wed. May 16. Informal drop-in. 9th floor lounge Arts Bldg. 8:00 pm
- Wed. May 23. Film Night. 9th Floor Lounge Arts Bldg. 8:00 pm.
- Fri. May 25. Dance School House 611 Silver Creek Parkway 9:00 pm.
- Wed. May 30. Informal drop-in. 9th floor lounge Arts Bldg. 8:00 pm.

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Conférence Lesbienne Bi-nationale



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Hart House and Medical Sciences Building, the University of Toronto

Registration:

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Saturday afternoon at Hart House

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