

The Voice

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Volume Three

December 2000

Issue Three



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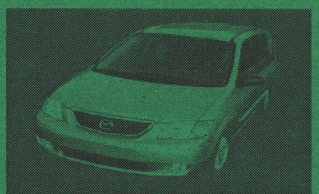
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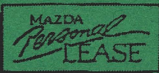
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Guest
Editorial:

What's in a name?

By Lyn McGinnis

What's in a name?

Our language defines our world, but there are problematic exceptions. We are not heterosexual. This sentence illustrates our dilemma. In a heterosexist culture, language defines the norm so we can't articulate our reality.

Hence all the terms floating around. Before Stonewall, we had few choices. While underground codes developed in certain urban ghettos, for most, the choice was between clinical labels and abuse. These efforts had mixed results. They illustrated our defiance of our oppressors while displaying our internalized homophobia.

In our post-Stonewall culture, we have taken these labels and transformed or discarded them. Usually, once a "chosen" name is established we leave the label behind. For instance, today very few men will refer to themselves as a "homosexual," as opposed to a "gay man." This process is not over. We still use the terms "bisexual," and "transgendered." Within these cultures there are chosen names, but they usually haven't surfaced in the rest of the community. There are ways of simply trimming the label to make it our own, such as those identifying as bisexual referring to themselves as "Bi."

Irony and satire have always been tools of the oppressed, and we have found many humorous ways to say who we are. An example

of this is the term "Tranny" within the transgendered community. Recently we have started creating acronyms such as LGBT, BLGT, and GLBT.



This is a creative way of taking our names along with inherited labels, and making them our own. It also has the added virtue of including all the diversity existing within our community.

What about the abuse? One of the best known is "Queer." Like other oppressed groups, we took a term intended to destroy us and turned it into an affirmation. This process began in the 1980's when a group emerged in North America called "Queer Nation." One of their slogans was "We're here! We're Queer! Get used to it!" This represented an entirely different strategy. Instead of saying, "Don't say that mean word, say this nice one," we say, "Go ahead, say it, cause we own it!" This represented an admirable measure of self confidence and clarity about the sickness of our culture. It took this struggle out of the personal and into the political.

This led to intensive examination and discussion similar to the early days of the feminist movement. It showed great promise for an aggressive challenge to both personal and political manifestations of homophobia. Unfortunately, we have since backed away from this exuberant personal defiance and political sophistication. Now we aspire to blend into the middle class banality of our culture.

This is a mistake. We have unique perspectives on a wide variety of issues surrounding sexuality and gender which our complacent culture needs to hear. We are the "gadfly" to a society very much in need of reexamining its inherited assumptions. We must challenge heterosexism both internal and external, clearly present in language, as an ongoing part of our civilization's evolution.

"We're here! We're Queer! Get used to it."

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We just found your publication. We think it's great! Keep up the good work. You are making a difference and it is important that we have this vehicle to voice our cares and concerns.

-- Peter and Jeff, London, Ont.

Found you online recently. What a wonderful resource all of these articles are. Too bad you don't have any more racey stuff though. Thanks. -- John S., Alberta

I'm glad to see a publication that strives to keep things somewhat even. So many magazines lean more toward just informing or entertaining men. -- S. V. - Waterloo

In response to your editorial, "The Commercialization of Our Culture", I don't agree. I think what you had to say was well-written and interesting. I am more of the opinion though that the more attention paid to us as consumers the better. It's a good place to start. When anything is commercialized it tends to grow and be more visible and better understood. I hope that this current trend continues.

-- Mike Byers, Toronto

In the November, 2000, Have Your Say section of The Voice Magazine, a letter to the editor was mistakenly attributed to Jim Mills. We were informed that Mr. Mills did not, in fact, write the letter that we published with his name on it. The Voice regrets this error and apologizes to Mr. Mills.

HAVE YOUR SAY



If you have something that you like to say about what you read in The Voice send a letter to the editor. We'd like to hear from you!

You can email us at [redacted] or go to our web site at www.thevoice.on.ca and click on **HAVE YOUR SAY** and use our form mail. If you'd like to snail mail us our address is on page two.

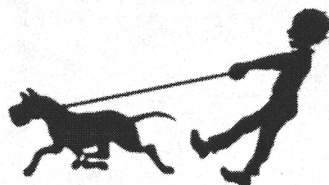
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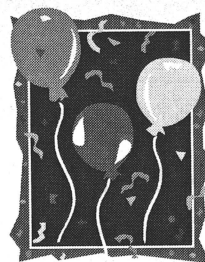
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By Audrey Charbonneau



I am pleased to announce the newly elected board for the Regional Pride Committee (RPC) is as follows:

A.J. Mahari, Chairperson, Robert Miller, Vice chairperson, Audrey Charbonneau, Treasurer. Currently we are still in need of a Secretary. We have many new faces around the table, and an indication that more are coming soon (always room for more) to help with all the work that needs to be done for this year's pride event.

Pride 2001

Imagine: Be a Dreamer!

On Friday June 8th, Waterloo-Wellington Regional Pride 2001 invites you to a Pavilion Pride Party, with D.J. in conjunction with The Rainbow Chorus who will proudly present the musical review, "Dear Diary..." in Kitchener's Victoria Park Pavilion. After our midnight last-call, the party shifts to Club Renaissance until 3am. Back in Kitchener's Victoria Park, on Roos Island from 12pm -7pm on Saturday June 9th, we will celebrate our seventh annual Pride Day. On Sunday June 10th there will be a Pride Service at the First Unitarian Congregation of Waterloo. Every one is welcome.

Currently we need entertainment ideas from all those creative minds out there. The Annual Rainbow Pride Directory will be printed and distributed earlier, so if we've missed someone in the past or need to revise a listing, please speak up now or wait another year. We will attempt to have fundraisers this year. For those who wish to participate in raising funds or any of the above or who would like to share your ideas on how to improve our celebration please contact the RPC via internet, phone or snail mail. We will welcome anyone who is interested in helping to make this year's event better.

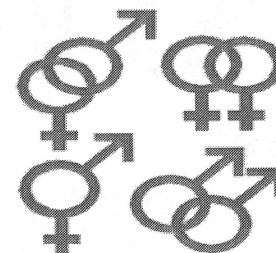
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Hamilton Pride is on the June 16th weekend and Toronto's Pride is from June 18th to the 24th. Save your strength June is looking like a month to dart from party to party.



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For promising West Hollywood photographer Dennis (Timothy Olyphant), his friends -- exasperating as they are -- are the ones who make single gay life bearable. He loves them, but they drive him crazy. He hates them, yet can't imagine life without them. He can't find a moment's peace from them, but they're always there when he needs them.

poignant space in between --that is if they can get any space at all. According to writer/director Greg Berlanti, it's also about something eve-

ryone can relate to:

"how screwy and dysfunctional friends can be, but also how wonderful."

Review: "Shot in less then a month on location in West

Hollywood, THE BROKEN HEARTS CLUB is a character study of a group of friends who just happen to be gay. All of them are just regular guys struggling with issues that are basic to everyone... a heart-warming, glorious movie."



THE BROKEN HEARTS CLUB is a fresh, funny, real story about a group of gay men in Hollywood, their lovers and friends, and the often hilarious, occasionally



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Strategies for Happier Holidays

By Judy Saltarelli Neal, M.A.



Members of the LGBT community face many different, and often difficult, challenges during the holidays. The issues each individual or couple

has to deal with depend on a number of factors: your personal stage of coming out, your family of origin's stage of acceptance, your personal wishes, and your family's expectations.

One way to empower yourself when dealing with holidays is to be proactive about the whole situation and plan ahead. If you are still in the closet or are faced with a family that is homophobic or hostile, you can structure your participation to avoid or minimize the pain. If you are out and wish to spend more time with your same-sex partner or chosen 'family', you can lovingly find ways to address everyone's needs.

Transactional analysts have several strategies that can be very helpful. One is to deal with anyone who is unsupportive or hostile from what we call your Adult ego state. Your Adult is the part of your personality that is analytical and has good problem solving skills. Its function is to safely navigate your path through life, and to protect and nurture your vulnerable inner Child state, which is strongly affected by experiences, memories, emotions, dreams and wishes.

As an example, if your parents are unsupportive but you still wish to maintain ties with them, you could use your rational, objective Adult ego state to select a greeting card or a holiday gift for them. Using your Adult means that you would shelter your most vulnerable inner self, your Child ego state, from the process of selecting and sending the card or gift. You could use your Child ego state to help select a special card or gift for your trusted partner, though, and really get into it.

Another useful technique is to identify who your strongest supporters are. On a sheet of paper draw a large bulls-eye, with several concentric rings. In the centre write your name and that of your partner if you have one. As you move out from the centre, the rings represent levels of closeness or support, with each successive ring representing less support. Write the names of your strongest supporters in the ring closest to the centre, and the names of those who are the least supportive in the outermost circle (or completely outside it). Put the names of others in the rings in between, based on your sense of how supportive they are. Members of your family of origin may or may not be near the centre.

Once you have your Rings of Support chart completed, you can use it to help structure your holiday activities. You may choose to spend

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most of your time, or very special days, with those whose names are closest to the centre. Or, if you feel you must spend time with people who are less supportive, or even hostile, you will be aware of the need to develop strategies to protect yourself.

Self-protective strategies can include shortening the amount of time you spend with an unsupportive family by arriving later or leaving earlier, spending more time with family members who are supportive, and talking only about neutral subjects or parts of your life that your family members can be proud of. Focus on emanating love and support to others who may be facing stress or disappointment. It may be helpful to arrange to sleep at a friend's or neighbour's or at a hotel. You can make sure you have car or train fare so you won't be dependent on your family for a ride home. If you drive, you can choose to park where you won't be blocked in so you can leave when you're ready. Think carefully about the potential problems, and come up with ways to overcome them.

Another way to empower yourself is to create new rituals for the holidays. If you must be apart from your loved one, find a way to connect with them at a special time. It can be by telephone, e-mail, or by thinking about them at an agreed-upon time. Or exchange special mementoes and keep them with you. If you are excluded from holidays by your family of origin, have your own festival with members of your chosen family. If it pleases you, put as much effort into planning your special version as the mainstream community does. Make it outrageous or make it spiritual, but make it truly your own!

They can only steal your happiness if you let them!

Judy Saltarelli is a Counsellor and Personal Productivity Coach at A Different Way in Waterloo, Ont. This article is a Voice exclusive.

The Voice On Line

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"You never get a second chance to make a first impression."

"Like yourself for who you are and keep that well-polished."

"Live with your standard without selfishly stepping on other people."

"When you have the time and knowledge, help others."

"Feel happy with all things."

"Don't let your fear bother or interfere with you."

"Don't care about your age."

KISS A KWEER BEFORE THE GRINCH GETS HERE

By Charles W. Westfall



When a business arrangement went sour a couple of years ago, I was left carrying a considerable debt. In the two intervening years, although I understand it should be possible, no attempt or offer to repay that money has been forthcoming. I often wonder if it ever will be. The holiday season, however, is approaching. This presents an annual problem, to me, of immense proportions.

Not that I buy presents. I've learned that I can't afford luxury. But, I do like to cook and host a Christmas dinner. I do so every year and it is tasty, attractive and abundant. How to pay for it? That's the question. A limited allowance from some, so far, generous benefactors, doesn't begin to pay the bills. Ill health and bad debts have done me in, for all practical purposes. So, a creative approach to personal finances seems to be called for.

Last year I stumbled on a few solutions, none of which worked out. They did, however, help me get my mind off of my financial woes.

Walking down the street one day, I passed a group of young adults with a sign, "Kick a Punk for a Looney". That set me to thinking.

So, I wrote my friends in New York and offered myself to them for the holidays as a Living Antique Objet d'Art. They collect antiques and I

would be huggable and moveable: two traits that I felt they couldn't resist. They did.

Then, I thought about the season and put myself up as a portable, living Christmas Tree. I had it all worked out. I would dress in a green, tree-shaped outfit, with lights around me and two arms out to hold Hors d'Oeuvres platters. They almost bought that one. Even suggested that maybe I could be an ashtray, instead. Then, they went out and bought a 12 foot white artificial tree, decided there wasn't enough space left for a human ashtray and there went my hopes. If only I had thought to say that I would dress in a white outfit.

Recently, while out and about, I've been seeing this woman in a wheelchair offering Hugs for 25 cents. That has set me to thinking again.

I had a big argument last year with the Editor of The Hamilton Spectator about coverage of an LGBT Kiss-in. I felt that the reporter had distorted the details and made the whole event, at McMaster, appear a bit farcical. We ultimately declared peace; but, the idea of a Kiss-in, that might work to my advantage, remained.

The way I figure it, I could set up a booth. A booth like they used to have at Church Socials and Country Fairs. A Kissing Booth. A Fund Raising Booth. Only this one would say, "Kiss a Kweer for \$1". I would spell Queer with a "K" so conserva-

tive straights wouldn't be put off or offended. I would even go so far as to accept the \$1 without the kiss.

I would decorate that booth with Rainbow Flags and Pink Triangles and make sure I wore appropriate "Gay Apparel". I've thought about selling hugs, too; but, I wouldn't want to be unfair competition for that woman in the wheelchair.

However I manage matters, the holidays for me will be their usual quiet, reflective and peaceful selves. But I will do Christmas Day Dinner and there will be, as usual, an open invitation for others to join me and my roommate Bobbie.

I have entertained, in this way, any number of friends and total strangers. One memorable Christmas, in Kitchener, I had two refugee families from San Salvador, several unemployed persons and a couple of students from a course I was taking at the time.

We usually try to have dinner around 5 or 6 p.m. so that people with evening plans can get to them. There is no curfew, however, and it has happened that there have been late-night visitors to help clean up anything that was left over from dinner.

Since space is limited, only the first 8 or 10 reservations can be accepted and must be made before December 20. We will keep a waiting list, however. We normally request a modest donation to help with food costs. We would never turn away anyone who couldn't afford it. We have only ever turned away those who have abused our

hospitality in the past.

Also, Bar Service and Inventory are the responsibility of the guests. We have to draw the line somewhere.

And you don't have to be Queer to call and make a reservation at (905) 526-9257. Just Queer Positive.

I warn you though. I will have my "Kiss a Kweer" booth set up in a corner of the apartment and will be manning it periodically. I may even convince Bobbie, my handsome, charming and wonderfully kissable roommate, caretaker and co-host, to take a turn in the booth. The price would probably triple though. How much is a beer, these days?

Actually, I'd probably let anyone who asked make use of the booth. 'Tis the season to be jolly and gay, after all. And you know what they say, "Togetherness: there's goodness in it."

To all of you who have other plans, I offer this greeting: Happy Holidays and Every Best Wish for a Wildly Happy and Prosperous New Year.

Charles W. Westfall is a writer living in Hamilton. This column is a Voice exclusive.

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Peace and The Ego By Becky and Angela

The only thing that the majority of people strive for in their lives is peace. Peace of mind and strength of spirit. But it always seems as if something always gets in the way of our goal, making it impossible to achieve. Sometimes just reading the newspaper or listening to the radio and hearing about what is going on in the world is enough to shatter any peace of mind we thought we had.

There are a million things that could happen between dawn and dusk that we can blame for our lack of peace. Maybe your car won't start, maybe you have a fight with your partner, or the neighbours come over and complain about your dog using their lawn as a washroom. Maybe when you finally get to work your computer system has crashed. Truly, the list of things that confronts us daily is endless as is our opportunity to let them upset us. We have a choice in this. We can choose differently. We can choose to change the angry, fearful, negative thoughts into ones that are more useful.

Where do these 'automatic' negative thoughts come from? A Course In Miracles suggests that they come from our 'ego mind'. That part of our unconscious mind that wants to squash our happiness, that looks to find fault with ourselves and with others, and that believes that we are right and everyone else is wrong. It is the part of our mind that keeps us from loving and joining with others. It is strictly fear based. It will beat us down until there is nothing left.

The ego is the device we use to take a feeling we are uncomfortable with and project it out. Instead of taking responsibility for our part in something, we would rather make it somebody else's fault. The ego can and will use any means possible to viciously attack another, to gain a temporary relief from the anxiety we are feeling.

Let me give you an example. You are driving down the road, checking your hair in the mirror when all of a sudden you see break lights in front of you and you have to slam on the

breaks to avoid a collision. Now, you can take responsibility for your actions here, after all, you were checking your hair in the mirror and not paying full attention to the road, or you can take the easy way out and blame the driver in front of you: "That jerk, he pulled in front of me and almost killed me. Does no one in this world know how to drive? If I could get my hands on that guy I'd....." A few weeks pass and a similar incident happens again: "Where do all these stupid drivers come from?"

Now you can continue in this way of thinking the rest of your life, but at what cost? How different would your experience be if you owned your part in the incident. Maybe the other driver was just like you and not paying attention. Maybe there was a higher purpose for this experience. Maybe the purpose was to help you learn that driving is a responsibility that you need to pay attention to for your own safety. Maybe you could be less concerned about being 'right' and be more open to the truth and see that other person as your equal and acknowledge that we all make mistakes in life and that mistakes can be an opportunity to learn something.

I'm not preaching about road safety here. I am simply illustrating the function of the 'ego mind'. It keeps us in chaos and negativity. It we live in negativity, we draw even more negativity into our lives. The ego will always be a part of us as it is there to teach us the lessons we need to learn. We learn these lessons by taking a look at what the ego is saying, owning it, and correcting the message with self.

We need not be victims of events in the world around us. Every instant we can choose what we want to experience, love or fear, peace or conflict.

Becky and Angela, of Kitchener, are a mother and daughter team. They run a weekly processing group. A Voice Exclusive.

'Tis the Season to... By A.J. Mahari



'Tis the season to celebrate if you ascribe to express your faith religiously. 'Tis the season to ignore if you are not religious, Christian or given to the traditions that run wild at this time of year. 'Tis the season to feel the pain that you may have lurking inside of you from "seasons" gone by.

It is important to just be who you are and to feel what you feel. Each one of us can best take care of him/herself by doing only that which one is comfortable with. Do not allow anyone else to pressure you into taking part in anything that contradicts

December brings with it such pomp and circumstance. Traditions and celebrations that many who are LGBT have experienced as being painful. It is a time of year, for many in which friends take on an increased importance - that of family.

who you are. Be true to yourself. Seek out ceremony, ritual or tradition that allows you to feel good about yourself.

This is not the time of year to feel obligated to anyone for anything. Spend time with only those who can respect who you are and where you are in terms of this "season."

Remember, too, that it is okay to spend some quality time alone, or down time. Whatever each person feels will best suit his/her needs is what s/he needs to pursue at this time of year.

'Tis the season to be kind to yourself. 'Tis the season to look inside and to evaluate the kind of year it's been for you and why. There is value in this time of year, whether it is joyous or painful. There is much to be gained from sharing company with those whose traditions and approaches to this "season" differ from yours.

'Tis the season to accentuate the many choices that there are out there. Respect how you feel.

The opinions expressed in this column are those of A.J. Mahari, only, and are not made from any editorial standpoint of The Voice Magazine.

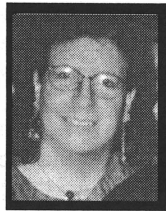
Individual and Couple Counselling Anger Management Gay Positive

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Religious Poisoning

By Lyn McGinnis



Tis the season to roll our eyes as all the tired Christmas clichés again assail us. For lesbians, gay men, bisexuals and/or transgendered persons (LGBT), it is also a reminder of the religious oppression many of us have had to fight in our quest for wholeness. As a result, we LGBT suffer from "Religious Poisoning."

What are we poisoned by? After many years of research, active participation in a variety of religious traditions and intensive reflection, I have my own answer. We have the singular misfortune of carrying around inside us a profoundly hostile tradition. Aspects of this tradition include body-phobia and dissociation between our bodies and our emotional lives. This repressive and unhealthy tradition is naturally authoritarian and is profoundly hostile to our existence.

We have inherited this poisonous legacy as a set of internalized "values." These ancient, anachronistic ideas are built into the foundations of our culture and, therefore, into the formation of our personality. As such they represent a greater threat to our mental and emotional health than any outside force possibly could. Homophobia has two faces. We all know the external one. The greater enemy is internalized homophobia. While there are other sources, the bulk of the blame for this situation lies with religious traditions in general and, in particular, the Judeo-Christian tradition.

Why this tradition? To answer this we have to look far back into the early traditions of Judaism. Unfortunately for us, sometime in the very early formation of this tribal society there

developed an intense body phobia totally unique to this group. Surrounding cultures, in many ways very similar to the Jewish tribes, enjoyed a comparably free and open attitude towards seeing the nude body and expressing sexuality and sexual diversity, including as part of religious observance. Significantly, these cultures and many others at this time and even earlier were matriarchal in social organization.

In these societies there was a much higher acceptance of gender identification diversity. In later times, the Greeks and other Classical cultures, while not perfect, continued many of these healthier trends. Sadly, the future founders of our religious tradition developed what is now seen as a pathological

fear and loathing of all forms of body image and a severely limited sexual and gender expression.

How extreme? You have all heard the quaint myth of Noah and the flood. What many of you may not know is there is another story about him. After his sailing trip, while all the pairs of animals were busy re-

populating the earth, he had a bit of a drink fest. He went a bit too far and ended up laying naked in a drunken stupor in his tent. The reason this story is in the Bible is to reinforce the tribal taboos against nakedness. The story relates the absurd situation where his sons had to try to cover his nakedness without looking at him. They accomplished this by holding an item of clothing between them and walking backward to the tent and covering him. Nakedness and shame were the same thing!

As something of a student of anthropology, history and ancient literature, I can say, while there are other historical examples of body phobia, I know of no other instance of such

"We suffer from Religious Poisoning."

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extreme fear and loathing of nakedness! Certainly not one from a source so central to our culture's early formation.

We are all familiar with the story of Sodom and Gomorrah. While modern scholars are able to skate around the clear indications this is another taboo enforcing story, this time against same-sex activity, it is taken further in a subsequent tradition. The Muslim holy book, the Quran, relates this story and quite explicitly makes it a condemnation of all same-sex activity beyond any linguistic attempt to say otherwise.

For those with strong stomachs, I can only say there are many other stories in the Hebrew Bible illustrating the various excesses of unhealthy body phobia and extremely rigid sexual taboos. I don't care if there were compelling reasons for the formation of these hateful notions. All I know is that even though they belong to a past far removed from my life, they have still poisoned me. We are faced with the absurdity of having this anachronistic tradition forming an important foundation of our culture.

It is a vital component in many manifestations of homophobia which we now experience "And what about the other part of our religious tradition? What is now known as Christianity was originally only a reform movement within the Jewish tradition. It was later masterfully reworked into a new and dynamic religion by borrowing heavily from other mystery religions of the time. Examples include the Greek tradition of the god Dionysus. While we know him from the Greek tradition, this is a very ancient religious figure whose beginnings are in Asia at least a thousand years earlier. His flesh and blood were symbolically eaten in the form of bread and wine. He was viewed as the son of the Father God. He was killed and resurrected after the third day. Dionysus is often pictured with a lion and lamb. In the Roman tradition, we have the god Attis, who was a son of the virgin goddess Nana. His birth was celebrated on December 25. He was sacrificed as an adult in order to bring salvation to humanity. He died

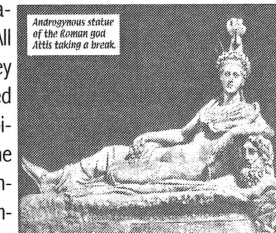
on March 25, after being crucified on a tree, and descended for three days into the underworld. On Sunday, he arose, "as the solar god for the new season," hence the term "Sun Day." His followers tied an image of Attis to a tree on "Black Friday," and carried him in procession to the temple. His body was symbolically eaten by his followers in the form of bread. Worship of Attis began in Rome in the year 200 before the Common Era.

Early Christianity wedded these popular mystery traditions with many of the guiding concepts of the older Jewish tradition, including the severe sexual restrictions and extreme exclusivity from all other religious traditions. The various versions of Jesus/Dionysus/Attis etc., we find in the Gospels have little to say in favour of the body phobia and rigid sexual repression we are examining here. Another early Christian figure more than makes up for this omission."

We have already seen how the early Jewish tribal elders began this process by creating the body phobia and sexual repression which we have inherited. We should not forget the next layer of this onion of hate, provided by the Apostle Paul (3 - 62 of the Common Era). Many scholars are now willing to acknowledge whatever his organizational abilities with the early movement and his acknowledged eloquence on other aspects of ethical living, he was more than a little disturbed on the subject of sexuality.

In addition, he added a new toxic element not formerly found in the Jewish tradition, that of an extreme dissociation between our bodies and our emotional selves. Until the beginnings of secular culture, he was perhaps the greatest obstacle to the concept of wholeness of humanity.

Life was, in his terminology, a war to be fought between the "flesh" and the "spirit." He explicitly refers to these two elements as conflicting spheres of power, because "the realm of the flesh" is susceptible to the power of sin.



Anonymous statue of the Roman god Attis taking a break



It is impossible to estimate how much suffering on a personal and cultural level can be laid at his door for such teachings. Even today we struggle to free ourselves from his legacy of guilt and shame!

Unfortunately, this bizarre ideology of dissociation took rapid hold in the early Christian world. Manifestations of it included a number of early Christian eccentrics who chose to live on top of columns, in caves and in other cloistered settings. It was also the beginnings of the masochistic recreation of

some religious zealots in self-abuse. One early Christian scholar and thinker, Origen (circa 185 - 254 of the Common Era), went to the extreme of castrating himself as an act of devotion.

While for the most part such acts of self-mutilation are thankfully discredited today, some of the ideas behind them remain very much alive. "These persons believed the body and

all physical life was "dirty." Desire was a sign of spiritual sickness and to give into it meant pollution. While most would not subscribe to such absurd notions today, we continue to pay lip service to it in our language. Think about it, why is telling a humorous story involving sexuality a "dirty joke?"

Within more intellectual circles of the early Christian community, there was a careful examination of other traditions, particularly within the Greek and Roman world. Early Greek philosophers and scientists, such as Democritus (circa 460-c. 370 before the Common Era), who first postulated the existence of atoms, did much to free the Greek mind from its own mythology. He and other like-minded thinkers promoted the empirical method of discovering the truth, affirming all knowledge is based on experience.

But there was always another school of thought, first championed by Pythagoras (582 - 500 before the Common Era) and his students. While they did great work in laying the scientific foundations for mathematics along

with innovative work in astronomy, they also developed an unfortunate interest in mysticism. Pythagoras believed in immortality and in the transmigration of souls. He told his students that he was a new incarnation of a famous warrior in the Trojan War, and that he had been permitted to bring into his earthly life the memory of all his previous existences.

The well-known Greek philosophers, particularly Plato (circa 428 - 347 before the Common Era) continued this trend. A great admirer of Pythagoras, Plato was a young student of

"The first act of self-affirmation should be the detoxification of Jewish and Christian teachings, with their hateful doctrines of body phobia, sexual repression and unhealthy dissociation of our bodies and us, from our system."

Socrates. While he was influenced by Socrates ethics and shared his skepticism in the limitations of what we know, Plato went beyond into the certainty of "Ideal Forms." Plato said in the changeless world of Forms or Ideas can be known only by reason. He said forms have greater reality than objects in the physical world because of their perfection and stability and be-

cause they are models, giving "ordinary physical objects" whatever reality they have.

Such an eloquent and compelling mysticism gave even greater intellectual respectability to the notion that our bodies and our mental and emotional lives are separate from each other. The subsequent elaboration's of other philosophers of this dissociation became quite sophisticated and appealed to the early Christian intellectuals. The Roman philosopher Plotinus (205-70 of the Common Era), was an exponent of Neo-Platonism. This school of thought, founded in ancient Alexandria, sought to develop and synthesize the metaphysical ideas of Plato. Plotinus gave intellectual respectability to the notion that people lived in two worlds, one of the senses and the other of pure intelligence. He said that matter is the cause of all evil, and that the object of life should be to escape the material world of the senses.

The Christians avidly took these concepts and used them to strengthen the existing body phobia and sexual repression by giving them a new philosophical base. They also gathered other

ideas from very different sources, including the earlier intense tradition of Zoroastrianism, (630 before the Common Era) based in what is now Iran. This tradition had the most extreme version of dualism of any at the time, having a clearly articulated God of Good and

"We have the singular misfortune of carrying around inside us a profoundly hostile tradition."

God of Evil. We all know what the early Christians did with this concept!

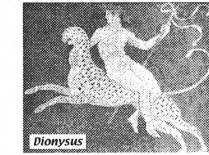
The result was a new phenomenon on the human landscape, a compelling mix of admirable ethics, a very strange worldview and what we can now recognize as an extremely unhealthy psychology towards our bodies and our sexuality. These are the religious foundations of our culture. During what is rightly known as the "Dark Ages," when this ideology dominated the life of the West, we saw many manifestations of its stupidity, intolerance and self-righteous inequity.

Because of this internalized legacy, for LGBT persons, words like "God" and "the Bible" represent wounds we have suffered. While knowing something of the underpinnings of this inherited poison, what we really need to do is purge these ridiculous concepts from our system and live whole lives as healthy, embodied persons.

LGBT persons deserve community more than most because they have been cast out of the community based on this hateful system. The first act of self-respect and affirmation should be the complete expulsion of a system that has tortured and murdered us for centuries.

Then we can look for all the alternatives to churches, the source of the poison we wish to free ourselves from, for community. We can share a sense of wonder at life, and building connections with others like and unlike ourselves. There are religious traditions, particularly based in Asia, that are far beyond this poisonous body-phobic culture. There are also the earth-centered traditions being revived today celebrating diversity and are inclusive in a way the Judeo-Christian tradition cannot.

There are those traditions, which began as post-Christian associations and which have passed beyond Christianity entirely, including Society of Friends (Quakers) and Unitarians.

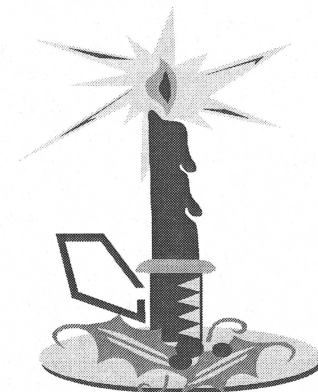


There are also Humanist and other God-free ethical movements easily demonstrating the lie that asserts that an atheist cannot be a

good person.

We LGBT are the last people to be, using a famous Christian phrase, "putting new wine in old wine skins." The first act of self-affirmation should be the detoxification of Jewish and Christian teachings with their hateful doctrines of body phobia, sexual repression and unhealthy dissociation of our bodies from our system. Then we can move forward as happy, healthy whole persons who are much better equipped to deal with outside challenges. Because of the injustice and oppression we have suffered, we should be far more sensitized to the suffering of others and be in the forefront of progressive social change for our society. We should also be able to live life kindly and gently, being freed from the self-loathing brought on by religious poisoning.

Lyn McGinnis, of Waterloo, is a writer, artist, web-designer who does ad graphics for The Voice.



Domestic Violence (Part 2 of 2)

By Dr. Charles E. Corry, Ph.D., F.G.S.A.

If the violence between partners is an isolated incident, it would seem best to let the couple work it out themselves without the adversarial arena of a court. One of the primary findings of the 1995-96 National Violence Against Women survey made in the U.S. was "...that most victims of intimate partner violence do not consider the justice system an appropriate vehicle for resolving conflicts with intimates."

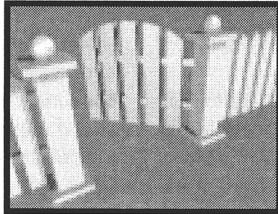
Despite the understanding summarized above, in pursuing their political agenda, gender feminists have succeeded in polarizing the public understanding of the issue as male 'batterers' and female 'victims.' In the name of protecting women, ideologically-motivated laws have been put in place over the past two decades that have transformed the issue of domestic violence into a social-engineering experiment of epic and dangerous proportions.

Efforts by the State to combat abusive violence and battering are most certainly justified within Constitutional limits that preserve the civil liberties of all. But ideology has been craftily used to gain political power and public funding to stop "Violence Against Women." And with the concept of "zero tolerance" the laws make any violence, even arguing, between partners a crime. Under colour of law, in the nightmare world of today's State-sanctioned war on domestic violence, arrests are made without any pretense of a warrant and these mandatory arrests are often based on nothing more than hearsay. Unresisting citizens are bludgeoned and maced within their homes after police force their way in. Accused are assumed guilty until proven innocent. Citizens are forced from their residences and children with nothing more than the clothes on their back. Police searches of

their homes are made without warrant or consent. Children are taken in the dark reaches of the night by State authorities and parents have little hope of ever getting them back. Property is seized without redress. The right to confront the accuser and obtain witnesses in one's defense is denied. Hearsay is admissible as evidence. Punishment and imprisonment occur before a trial or without one. Citizens are publicly censured for crimes they have not committed. And these are not limited actions nor are they limited to males; I know of lesbians in my community subjected to this same treatment because of their 'deviant' lifestyle.

Even official statistics show that this is being done to hundreds of thousands of men and women every year. The recent National Violence Against Women (NVAW) survey sponsored by the U.S. Dept. of Justice estimates that 1.1 million restraining orders are issued in the United States every year for intimate partner violence and stalking. The actual number certainly exceeds 500,000. These are acts of a police state and the policies of tyrants. And such actions do nothing to solve the problems of domestic violence. In fact, the underlying causes are totally ignored as they don't fit the ideologic foundation used to justify such tyranny.

However, such draconian laws do provide powerful weapons of vengeance for women seeking to drive the male in their life away. Charges of domestic violence, often combined with allegations of child physical and sexual abuse, have become the weapon of choice for women in divorce and custody battles. Despite the fact that a great majority of these charges are false, women are rewarded with the house, kids, child support, and often alimony for making such statements, and face no penalty in



court for their false accusations.

Where I live, in Colorado Springs, Colorado, restraining orders claiming domestic abuse are issued at three times the state average. Simple demographic analysis shows that over 5,000 men are being thrown into the streets here every year without cause or redress. Correspondingly, 72% of all marriages in my community end in divorce, also the highest in the state. Is it any wonder that there is credible evidence that restraining orders actually increase the violence in many cases? And the NVAW survey suggests that nearly two-thirds of such restraining orders are violated so they provide virtually no protection to those who may need it. In cases of women stalking men, restraining orders are violated in nine out of ten cases.

In bringing such false allegations, many women with children have found themselves under scrutiny by child protective services. As the parents challenge each other with charges, both false and real, of domestic violence and abuse, and physical and sexual abuse of the children to gain advantage in a divorce or custody battle, all too frequently their children are being taken from both of them. In Colorado Springs, once the Dept. of Human Services remove children from the home, the parents only have about a 25% chance of getting them back.

Thus, the real domestic violence is perpetrated by these draconian laws, and families are the principal victims of the State's tyranny. Who are the real victims of domestic violence?

We all are, as the laws destroy families by the hundreds of thousands and drive fathers from their children. Both men and women become more afraid of the State than they ever were of their partner. The supposed 'cures' offered by the State often place the real victims in more danger than they were to begin with.

And as surely as night follows day, such tyranny will beget domestic violence throughout our society as the State continues to destroy its foundations in families. This in a land charged in the Preamble to its Constitution "...to insure domestic tranquility..."

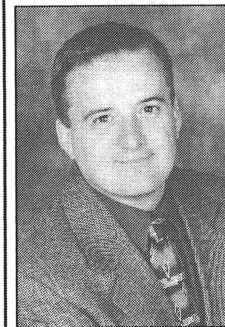
In addition to his work on domestic violence against men at: <http://www.dvmen.org>, Dr. Charles E. Corry currently consults on the design and administration of large databases. He is a Fellow of the Geological Society of America and has published widely in the earth sciences and oceanography. His home page at: <http://boulder.earthnet.net/~ccorry> will lead you to his essays, adventures, poetry, and other publications. Dr. Corry currently resides alongside Bear Creek in Colorado Springs, Colorado, U.S.A.

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Gomorrah's: Hamilton's Lesbian and Gay Retail Store

Let's imagine for a moment that you're 17 years old and have to find a way to tell your parents that you believe you are lesbian, gay, bisexual or even transgendered. Or that you're a 35 year-old female with two children, you've fallen in love with another woman, and you need to break the news to your husband. Or that you're a teacher/doctor/counsellor who realizes that some of the people you meet are GLBT folk and you need to educate yourself. Or, you enjoy Anne Rice, Stephen King, John Grisham, and Maeve Binchey, but you'd like a good mystery/romance that deals with something other than the straight lifestyle.

Well... where do you go? Prior to December 13, 1996, you went to

Toronto. Since that auspicious date however, you've been able to go to Gomorrah's in Hamilton, or it's website at www.gomorrahs.com. Since that fateful Friday the 13th, we have built our stock to over three thousand book titles, over five hundred video selections, forty different magazine selections, lots of greeting cards and pride gifts, and a few naughty little numbers in the back room. If we haven't got exactly what you need, we'll get it for you.

In four years, we've met literally tens of thousands of people from all over who grace our threshold for as many GLBTQ reasons as you can think of... and then some. Our bulletin boards are crammed with community information and events,

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personal notices and political viewpoints. We've heard enough stories, anecdotes and challenging questions to write ten books ourselves. It's fun watching people hold their breath as they step through the door, into the aisles, into the toy-room for the first time, only to blossom as if they'd journeyed a long way to "home."

It's an honour to see them return with their partners, parents, friends and co-workers - the straight ones too. It's a kick to hear the squeal and see the smile when they find just the right book, card, video, toy, t-shirt, sticker, jewellery or artwork. We try to remember everybody's first name, but occasionally we embarrass ourselves and are quickly forgiven.

And now our humble bookstore beginnings have sprung a newsletter, The Hamilton PRIDE! Pages, The Greater Hamilton Gay and Lesbian Business Association, not to mention visiting authors' evenings and an amazing network of service referrals. I guess we're on the right track, because Spring 2001 will see us relocating to bigger and better space on Locke Street South. It's like earning a degree; graduation is coming up!

We've educated ourselves in the process. Who knew that the GLBT communities had such a selection of reading beyond fiction? The histories, the biographies, the self-help, parenting, travel, health and cultural tomes we've discovered! It's amazing what's available and we try to stock as much of it as possible.

Realistically, we are still a minority

facing many uphill battles in our quest for equality under the law and in our daily lives. However, supporting GLBTQ businesses, including bookstores, gives us all firmer ground from which to advance. To the Dr. Laura's of the world, and to the fearful and critical citizens who make no attempt to understand the diversity in their midst, we say we are here to stay. We are here to give dignity and pride to those who have experienced oppression, and to celebrate the joy of being gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgendered or queer.

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GAY MONEY

by Bonnie J. Babin,
Investment Planning Counsel of Canada

Preparing For The Government's Final Tax Bite

Many people do not realize the large amount of tax that they could owe when they die. This problem is compounded by the fact that the government does not wait for the estate to be completely settled before they expect to receive the taxes owing. Life insurance can ensure that this tax liability will be paid in a timely manner so that your estate can be distributed in an orderly fashion in accordance with your wishes.

Although estate taxes and provincial succession duties no longer exist, there are still many areas of your estate, which could be subject to taxation at death. These areas include:

RRSP's and RRIF's

If the beneficiary of your RRSP or RRIF is not your spouse or dependant child, the balance in your RRSP or RRIF will be fully taxable on death. These assets are added to your income for the year of death. If you are in the top tax bracket, the tax could amount to over 50% of the proceeds.

Capital Property

This includes investments such as stocks, bonds and some types of mutual funds. It will also include real estate such as a family cottage or rental property. On death, Revenue Canada assumes that you have sold your capital property. If the investment is worth more than you paid for it, you could have a large capital gains tax bill. Unfortunately, you may not have enough liquid assets available to pay the taxes.

One exception to this is that your principal residence is generally exempt from capital gains tax.

Also, if you have claimed depreciation on capital property, all or a portion of the depreciation claimed could be taxable on death.

*Investment Planning Counsel
of Canada*

Financial Planning Professionals

BONNIE J. BABIN - Financial Planning & Tax Consultant - Phone (519) [REDACTED]

U.S. and Other Foreign Assets

While Canada does not have estate taxes, if you own significant assets outside of Canada, U.S. and Foreign estate taxes could impose a serious burden on your estate.

Family Business

If you own your own business, a capital gains tax could be triggered if the business is worth more, at the time of your death, than when you first started, or acquired, it. If you are a sole proprietor then you may also have a significant personal tax liability.

Probate Fees

These are not an actual tax, but are the fees charged by your provincial government to declare that a will is valid. These fees will range from province to province, but can be as high as 1.5% of the value of your estate.

An Example of Tax Consequences

Let's assume that in the year of your death your marginal tax rate is 50% and you died with following assets:

- An RRSP valued at \$ 400,000
- A cottage, purchased for \$ 50,000 and valued at \$ 150,000 at the time of your death.

The RRSP would be fully taxable and the increased value of the cottage (\$ 150,000 - \$ 50,000) would be taxable as a capital gain.

The tax liability to your estate would be calculated as:

RRSP	\$ 400,000
Cottage (\$ 100,000 @ 50%)	50,000
	\$ 450,000

\$ 450,000 @ 50% = \$ 225,000

The executor of your estate will have to issue a cheque to Revenue Canada for \$ 225,000 within 6 months of your death or by April 30 of the following year, whichever comes later. The balance of your estate, \$ 325,000, will be distributed according to your will.

Life Insurance Can Be The Answer

Life Insurance provides an excellent means of covering the tax liability arising on death. Your estate could sell assets to cover the liability, but there is a risk that their value will be at a depressed level when you die. Furthermore, many assets such as real estate and private businesses cannot be sold quickly, or your family may not want to sell them at all.

Continued on page 33

Sundays

Westminster United Church (an affirming congregation): Services are held each Sunday at 10:30 am. at 543 Beachwood Dr. in Waterloo.

AWARE K-W : Christian gay-positive group Meets every 2nd Sunday of each month. For more information, call Gary at [redacted] or Fred at [redacted]

KW-Friends of Dorothy, 10 Pin Cosmic Bowling - Sundays at 3:15 pm at Brunswick Bowling Lanes - Frederick St. Mall. For more information contact Katherine at [redacted] or Mark at [redacted] or [redacted]

Mondays

The Lesbian Discussion Group meets (New Time - New location) on the 2nd and 4th Mondays of each month. For more information call [redacted] email: [redacted] www.thevoice.on.ca/LesbianGroups

Tuesdays

Guelph Queer Equality (GQE) meets every Tuesday from 7:00 to 9:00 pm in UC536, the University Centre's Mature Student Lounge at the University of Guelph. Contact GQE at: gqe@uoguelph.ca for details.

Wednesdays

Hamilton Coming Out Proud Discussion Group meets every first and third Wednesday of each month. Meetings start at 6:30 pm. Call us for more details: 905-526-1074, toll-free 1-888-338-8278 - info@gomorrah.com

Rainbow Chorus: Holds rehearsals every Wednesday Night. The first rehearsal of the new season is Wednesday September 6th, 7:30-9:30 pm at the Guelph Unitarian Fellowship, 122 Harris St. at York Rd., Guelph. For more information call Robert at [redacted] or [redacted]

<http://www.webpoint.net/~cory>

Discussion Group: A group for people aged 16-25, sponsored by ACKWA and held in Waterloo, 7:00-9:00 pm. To join, or for more information, call ACKWA at (519) 570-3687

GLOW's Coming Out Discussion Groups explore issues in sexual orientation; Hagey Hall Rms. 373/378, University of Waterloo, 7:30-9:00 pm. Information: 884-4569. **A social gathering follows the discussion groups weekly from 9pm to 11pm.**

THE COMING OUT DISCUSSION GROUP

- Wed Dec 6 - Role Models & The Media
- Wed Dec 13 Home for the Holidays?
- Wed Dec 20 TBA
- Wed Dec 27 No Meeting

RAINBOW COMMUNITY DISCUSSION GROUP

- Wed Dec 6 Escapism
- Wed Dec 13 Queer Identity
- Wed Dec 20 Sexuality
- Wed Dec 27 No Meeting

Women For Sobriety - Create a New Life, a drug & alcohol addiction support group for gay women, meets Wednesdays, 7pm to 8:30pm, Oasis Club, 146 Wyndham St., Guelph. For more info, call Marilyn at (519) [redacted]

Alice's Dinner Club, a Hamilton gay and lesbian group of food connoisseurs meets every 2nd Wednesday at 6:15 pm. For information call Joan/Barb at [redacted] or Michael at [redacted]

Thursdays

Hamilton Transsexual Peer Support Group (FTM - MTF) If you are post-op or pre-op transsexual or are dealing with gender dysphoria, come join this bi-weekly peer support group. 6:30 pm to 8:30 pm at the Hamilton AIDS Network, 512 James St. N. For further details, please call (905) 528-0207 ext.43, or e-mail Janet at: [redacted]

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ACCKWA (The Aids Committee of Cambridge, K-W and Area) 85 Frederick St. E., Kitchener, Ont., (519) 570-3687

Anselma House: A crisis shelter for abused women with or without children. 24 hour crisis line: (519) 742-5894

Brethren Mennonite Council For Gays and Lesbians, P.O. Box 43031, Eastwood Square, Kitchener, Ont, N2H 6S9

Coffee Club - Attention: Lesbian and Gays -- If you like to drink coffee and just chat but you don't feel like there is anyplace to go where you can just be yourself, now there is. For more information call - Peter at [REDACTED]

Global: is available to help anyone in the Laurier community who is dealing with LGBT issues. Staff, students, or faculty can reach GLOBAL directly at the club's e-mail address 00global@mach1.wlu.ca Laurier Peer Help Line 884-PEER.

GLOW Phone Line: 884-GLOW. Information and peer support.

K-W Distress Line- (519) 745-1166

Sexual Assault Center:
KW.....(519)741-8633

Waterloo Region Alliance For Equal Rights-Kitchener-(519) 743-[REDACTED]

Women's Centers: UofW (519) 888-4567 ext. 3457

WOODS: Women Out Opening Doors Socially is a social club for lesbians in K-W and area. In Kitchener call [REDACTED] In Guelph call Debbie at [REDACTED]

CAMBRIDGE

Sexual Assault Center:
Cambridge.....(519)658-0551

GUELPH

ACGWC (Aids Committee of Guelph and Wellington County) 2 Quebec St, Suite 206, Guelph Ont., (519) 763-2255

GUELPH QUEER EQUALITY (GQE)
University of Guelph - gqe@uoguelph.ca

HOWL: Hanging Out With Lesbians is a social group for women (lesbian, bisexual, transgender and gay friendly) ages 25 and up who are active in Guelph and area. Women may contact HOWL through Outline (519) 836-4550

OUTline: A support and resource phone line for people dealing with LGBT issues at the University of Guelph. Phone lines are closed Wednesdays and Saturdays (for the summer) Open 7 to 10 pm other evenings. Call (519) 836-4550.
outline@uoguelph.ca
www.uoguelph.ca/~outline

Rainbow Chorus: is a choir that performs and will also be **hosting dances for the LGBT community starting again in September.** For information you can contact Robert at [REDACTED] or Cory at [REDACTED] <http://www.webpoint.net/~cory>

Sexual Assault Center:
Guelph.....(519)823-5806

If you have a group or an organization that you would like listed here please call, write, or email us at The Voice. (contact addresses are on page 2)

HAMILTON

Alcoholics Anonymous--For the location and time of the Gay, Lesbian and Alternative Lifestyles Group in Hamilton call: (905) 522-8399.

Alternatives for Youth- 126 James St. South, Hamilton - 527-[REDACTED]

Anonymous HIV testing by appointment 905-546-3541--walk-in sites:YWCA--75 McNab Street Hamilton, Ontario Wednesdays 4:00 p.m. - 7:00 p.m. 905-546-3541 for more information Hamilton General Hospital Outpatient Department Thursdays, 3:00 p.m. - 5:30 p.m. 905-546-3541 for information

Community Education 546-3541 to book a presentation or consultation

Emmanuel House Palliative Care
Good Shepherd Centres (905) 308-8401

Gay, Lesbian & Bisexual Centre at McMaster University, Hamilton Hall Room 412 - Call 525-9140, ext. 27397

Gay, Lesbian and Bisexual Youth Line
1-800-268-9688

Gay Fathers Support Group-3rd Tuesday of each month. For information Call 522-[REDACTED]

Greater Hamilton Gay & Lesbian Business Association (905) 526-[REDACTED]

GLBT Centre at McMaster Office
Hours: Monday to Friday, 9:30 to 4:30 at Hamilton Hall, Room 412. (905) 525-9140, Ext. 27397 or e-mail: glbt@msu.mcmaster.ca
www.msu.mcmaster.ca/services/glbt/glbt.htm

Hamilton Aids Network -- 528-0854
Anonymous Testing for HIV appointment only --546-3541

Hamilton-Wentworth Regional Police--General Assistance: 546-4925
Jane Mulkewich,
GLBT Task Force 546-4910
Complaints against Officers 546-4776
Street Crime/Hate Crime: 546-3831

Hamilton-Wentworth Regional Public Health Department--Sexually Transmitted Disease Services, Tuesdays and Thursdays, 4 to 5:30 pm. A walk-in clinic; no Health Card required. Hamilton General Hospital, Outpatient Clinic

Kindred Spirits:a social and recreational group for lesbians and bi-sexual women in the Hamilton/Burlington/Niagara area. (905) 541-[REDACTED]@hotmail.com

Narcotics Anonymous
Hamilton: (905) 522-0332
Brantford: (519) 759-2558
St. Catherines: (905) 685-0075

PFLAG--Parents, Family and Friends of Lesbians & Gays. For information call 662-[REDACTED]

Sexual Assault Center:
Hamilton.....(905)525-4162

Sexual Health Information Line
905-528-5894--Confidential telephone counselling and information provided by a Public Health Nurse regarding sexual health issues--M-F 8:30 a.m. - 4:30 p.m

Street Health Centre-- Wesley Centre 777-7852

The Golden Horseshoe Leather Association (Hamilton) Monthly meetings are held on the first Wednesday of each month & there is a bar night on the second Saturday of each month. Men interested in the Leather/ Denim lifestyle are invited to attend both. For more information email Secretary - Ron at [REDACTED] or phone (905) [REDACTED]

Women's Centre of Hamilton-75 MacNab Street South, Hamilton 522-0127

Friday December 1

World AIDS Day The United Nations and World Health Organization Joint Program on HIV/AIDS has declared December 1st World AIDS Day. This year's theme from the UN AIDS Project is "Men Make a Difference". **(ACCKWA's local plans see page 15)**

Wednesday December 6

is the anniversary of the Montreal Massacre, when 14 female engineering students at a Montreal University were shot and killed. There will be a memorial in Siegfried Hall at St. Jerome's University (U of W) (room 113) hosted by the Womyn's Center, starting at 5:30 on this date.

Friday December 8

GLBT Community Monthly Dance at the CAW Hall, 611 Silvercreek Parkway North, Guelph. Doors open at 9:00 pm. Presented by the Rainbow Chorus. Contact Robert at [redacted] or phone (519) [redacted] for more information. members.home.com/rainbow.chorus/. Next dance is on December 8th!

Sunday December 10

Singing Out's Holiday Concert, at the Jane Mallett Theatre, 27 Front Street in the St. Lawrence Centre for the Arts (between Yonge and Jarvis), Toronto. Tickets are \$16 each. For more info, e-mail singout@interlog.com, or visit their website at www.interlog.com/~singout

December 14, 16 & 17

"The Broken Hearts Club" plays at the *Princess Cinema* at 9:15pm. A film about a group of gay friends in West Hollywood: "I can't decide if my friends are the best of worst thing that ever happened to me." The Princess Cinema is located at 6 Princess St. W., Waterloo; their website is at <http://princess.sentex.net/>. (see page 7)

Friday December 15

PFLAG (Parents, Family and Friends of Lesbians and Gays) meet at 8:00 pm. PFLAG is a support group for those with an LGBT family member. Call Evie at [redacted] (Kitchener) or Sue at (519) [redacted] (Cambridge) or email them at [redacted]

Sunday December 24

10% - Qtv broadcasts Sunday's at 11:30 pm. Tune to channel 20 in KW, channel 8 in Guelph, or channel 13 in London. For more details, surf over to <http://10percent.interlog.com/>



B R A N T F O R D

A Rainbow of Hope.
Brant County HIV/AIDS Support Group. Call 753-4937 ext.261 for information. All calls confidential.

GLBT adult social/support group of Brantford and area. A safe place to meet people and be yourself. call 752-5132 ext.34

GLBT youth support group of Brantford and area. 753-4937 EXT 261

Pine tree Native Centre Of Brant Presents: PFLAG... Parents, Families & friends of Lesbians & gays Support group meetings held 3rd Tuesday each month. 7:00-8:30pm. all welcome. call 752-5132 ext.34 for details.

The Coalition for gay, bisexual, lesbian and transgendered youth of Brantford and area. (519)753-4937 ext.261. call and leave message. All calls will be returned. We advocate for you.

**For any further information about events in Brantford
email: gbltadultsocialbrant@yahoo.ca**

Alternative Youth Centre

Fundraiser - Wednesday January 17th - 8pm at Club Renaissance, 24 Charles St. W., Kitchener. Cost is \$20.00 a ticket. DJ, dancing, food and fun. For more information contact Laura Shell at 745-[redacted]

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Christmas Trees made of feathers and Christmas tree decorations of all types are popular with collectors. The first decorated Christmas tree in America is claimed by many states, including Pennsylvania (1747) Massachusetts (1832) Illinois (1833). The first glass ornaments were imported from Germany about 1860. Dresden ornaments were made about 100 years ago of paper and tinsel. Manufacturers in the United States were making ornaments in the early 1870's. Electric lights were first used on a Christmas tree in 1882. Character light bulbs became popular in 1920, bubble lights in the 1940's, twinkle bulbs in the 1950's and plastic bulbs by 1955.

Starting A Small Business The Financial Plan - Pt. 2 By Darren Kreger

As previously discussed, the business plan contains a section relating to the finances of the business. Some of the statements that will be included in this section include a projected cash flow statement, income statement and a balance sheet.

The Balance Sheet:

The balance sheet is a summary of the firm's financial status at a given point in time. Most often, that point is the end of the firm's calendar or fiscal year. If you are not incorporated your calendar year or fiscal year will be the same, December 31.

The balance sheet contains three sections: assets, liabilities and owners equity.

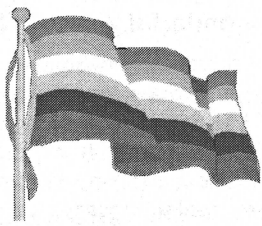
Assets are items such as money and other property of value that the company owns or due. Assets are further divided into 2 sections: current and fixed assets.

Current assets are assets that the company will use in its operation during the year. Cash on hand and in the bank, short term investments, accounts receivables and inventories are examples of current assets.

Fixed assets is property acquired for long-term use. Such items are recorded at their original cost less accumulated depreciation. Canada Customs and Revenue Agency refers to depreciation as capital cost allowance (CCA). CCA may be claimed annually as a percentage of the original cost against the revenues of the business. Examples of fixed assets are buildings, machinery, equipment, furniture, tools over \$200.00, cars, trucks and patents. Incorporation costs and franchise fees are also depreciated over time as are leasehold improvements.

Liabilities are obligations that the business must pay. These are also divided into two components: Current and Long-term Liabilities. Current liabilities are debts owed to suppliers and creditors that need to be repaid during the current year such as accounts payable, short term notes, accrued payroll, and taxes. Long-term liabilities are obligations with a maturity date beyond the current year such as mortgages, bank loans and equipment loans. Leases are not considered to be a liability if there is a buyout amount at the end of the lease for a fair market value of the equipment being leased. In this case the lease costs may be expensed and no asset will be shown on the books. If there is no buyout at the end of the

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lease or the amount is nominal, the lease would be considered to be a liability and the leased asset would be depreciated.

Owners Equity is essentially the difference between the assets of the company and it's liabilities.

The Income Statement:

The income statement offers a picture of the company's sales, expenses, and profit (or loss) over a specific period. This statement may also be referred to as a profit and loss statement. The major sections of this statement are: Net Sales, Cost of Goods Sold, and Expenses.

Net Sales are the revenue that flowed into the business during the period specified for goods sold and for services rendered.

The cost of goods sold is the cost of all goods sold during this period. It is determined by taking the value of the inventory at the start of the year, add all inventory purchases made during the year then deduct the value of the inventory at the end of the year.

The difference between net sales and cost of goods sold is the companies gross income.

The next major section of this statement is the expenses. These are costs incurred by the business to earn revenue during the period. Expenses include the following: Salaries and wages, Rent, Depreciation, Telephone, Supplies, Advertising and promotions, Utilities, Office Expenses, Maintenance and repairs, Insurance, Auto Expenses, Meals and entertainment, just to name a few.

The difference between gross income and expenses is the companies net income for the year.

Cash Flow Statement:

This statement is best prepared by using a

spreadsheet program. It contains 2 sections cash inflows and cash outflows, with the difference being either a cash surplus or deficit. Cash inflows includes items such as sales, loan proceeds or owners contributions where cash outflows include items such as expenses, loan payments, lease payments, and purchases of equipment and owners withdrawals.

It is highly recommended that you include your personal expenditures and debt obligations in the cash flow statement. You may find as a result of the cash flow statements that some months will have a negative cash flow. During these months you may need to have access to a line of credit or use credit cards. In months of cash surpluses, money could be allocated to short term investments so it would be available during months of negative cash flows.

The above three statements should be attached as appendixes to your business plan and be referred to in the financial plan section. Most investors or lending institutions will look at this section to see whether or not your business can not only support itself but also you as the owner. Your financial requirements will also be determined based on the above statements. Next month will look at determining how much money you need and the sources of financing available.

Darren Kreger is a graduate of Wilfrid Laurier University's Diploma in Accounting Program. He is also the owner of Economical Tax Services in Waterloo. Economical Tax Services has been providing tax preparation, bookkeeping, payroll and consulting services to small business for over 3 years.



Confessions of a Late Bloomer
Napping in the Middle of the Day

By Randy Siegel

I just awoke from a deep sleep. I was taking a nap in the middle of the day.

I am lying on my canopied, queen-size bed. A soft cotton blanket is thrown over my legs. My sweet but frantic Dalmatian, Lucy, is finally quiet. She sleeps soundly, cuddling against my side.

I am totally at peace. I am relaxed and comfortable. December seems a world away.

My blinds are drawn. The room is dark, warm and quiet except for Lucy's deep breathing and the ticking of my clock.

Tic. Toc. Tic. Toc. All I can hear now are the sounds from my clock. My solitude is shattered.

Apprehension strikes me, and anxiety's cold fingers squeeze my pounding heart. My chest tightens as I hear my mother's memory call out to me, "Go outside in the fresh air and play."

"Be productive," she says. "Don't be lazy! Make the most out of each day."

I feel guilty. She does not approve of napping. I have cards to write and gifts to wrap. I still have not found the perfect Christmas tree. Value is in "doing," and just "being" is a waste of time.

Now I am not present. I am ungrounded. I feel like a child's toy boat bouncing wildly on an open sea.

Wait! I am the captain of my own ship now,

and I know her message is untrue. There is value in being, and it's okay to nap, sit quiet and be alone with my thoughts.

I breathe a deep breath pushing air into my tight chest. As my breath flows into my spine, I relax. I give myself permission to be.

I allow my mind to wander, observing my thoughts like passing clouds. One by one they float into my conscious then slowly drift away.

By observing my mind's chatter, I begin to quiet it. A silky softness falls over me as my racing mind slows and begins its rest.

Once again, I am relaxed and present. I am grounded and my thoughts are clear.

I reflect that I have taken little time to sit and think. Most my life has been about doing, and most of what I have accomplished I accomplished through sheer force of will.

Setting goals and meeting goals. Action and reaction. Living life with my nose pressed flat against the grindstone.

"You can do anything, son, if you work hard enough," my father lectured through my youth. Ashamed to be gay, I worked even harder. I had to be a success.

But success did not bring happiness. At midlife, I lacked meaning. At 39, I came out and reclaimed my life.

Now I want to be different. I want to both be and do.

No longer do I want my "to do list" to trivialize and control my life. Instead of focusing only on the outcome, I want to be more present in every task I undertake.

I want to always examine my intention. By tuning into intention, the simplest of tasks find meaning and I enjoy the process more.

I used to scoff at those who spoke of process. Like my father, results mattered more to me. I now understand how being attentive during the process enhances the final results.

I write this monthly column for gay men and women who have lived, or are living, a straight life; my column addresses the challenges of coming out later in life.

In the past I would only feel productive when each column was complete. Now as I write each piece, I savor the writing by remembering the men and women who will read my work.

Even with my newfound awareness, I am not always successful. Sometimes I write the column mindlessly and for the wrong reasons: to gain approval, look good or appear smart.

Still, my intention is to do all tasks differently, and by doing so infuse more meaning into my life.

I breathe in my resolve. My mother's voice is now silent and my guilt has disappeared.

Lucy stirs; she is now awake. She stands, stretches and jumps from the high bed. Toe nails clicking against the hard wood floors, she resumes her post at the living room window. Within minutes she spots a rabbit hopping across the freshly raked lawn and she begins to bark madly.

My nap and quiet time are over. With renewed attention and intention, I climb out of bed. Rested, I am ready to face the busy Christmas season.

Randy Siegel is an Asheville, NC-based writer, trainer and speaker who specializes in the challenges of coming out later in life. He can be reached through this publication or [redacted] - A Voice exclusive.

GAY MONEY

Continued from page 23

How Much Insurance and What Kind?

It is difficult to determine what your tax liability will be because you don't know how long you will live, what your assets will be worth or how the tax rules will change. You can purchase life insurance equal to the amount you estimate you will owe when you die, or you can purchase a flexible insurance policy, which will increase in value as you get older. It is important that you use a permanent insurance policy to cover this tax liability; if you use a term insurance plan, you could outlive your coverage because most term plans end at age 80 or earlier.

If you intend to leave your assets to your partner, once legislated, the tax liability will be deferred until his/her death. However, at that time an even greater tax liability could arise. One solution is to use a policy commonly known as a 'joint and last to die' policy. This type of policy will only pay after the death of the second partner. It is suited for this situation because it is significantly less expensive than each partner having their own individual policy. Also, if one partner is in poor health but the other is healthy, the policy is still likely to be issued because it will not pay until the death of both partners.

Conclusion

It is important to review your life insurance coverage and needs on a regular basis. When tax laws change, or when there is significant growth in your assets, your tax liability at death can increase dramatically in a short period of time.

Your comments and suggestions are welcome. Please respond to e-mail address: [redacted] Fax: (519) [redacted]

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Gratitude 2000
By Dr. Jeffrey Chernin



Imagine yourself going into a bar that lacks a sign outside to inform you where you are going. Once you're in, it's

very dark, but not for ambiance. It's because if the cops bust the place, you can escape out the back door without being seen. And it's because maybe you'll get away with committing the crime of touching another person of the same sex while you're dancing.

Imagine that most of the people around you think that you're a pervert. An invert to be more precise. If people know who you are, you'd risk being fired. Losing all of your friends. Dreading discovery. And there's no where to turn for support. Well, there is a small gay community; it's hidden so deeply so under-

ground, however, that you have to scour the seediest part of the city to find it. And it's limited to bars and tea-rooms.

No gay volleyball or baseball league. No Pride marches. No public figures out of the closet. No LGBT television shows or movies—with the exception of those loathsome characters who get retribution for the heinous transgression of being gay or lesbian. And of course, no legal rights anywhere in the U.S. whatsoever.

The time is 35 years ago. In terms of history, it's the blink of an eye. Now let's go back just fifteen years: Imagine that we have a president who has not uttered the word "AIDS" during his term. Our discerning president is vocal about his hostility to our community, however, and thus has not made one gay governmental appointment. Adding insult to injury, people with HIV can

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be legally discriminated against. You could most likely be fired from a job anywhere in the country and refused housing, without any form of legal retribution, for being LGBT. You could not register your relationship as a domestic partnership.

To make matters worse, coming out was highly risky in the public arenas of entertainment, business, sports, and politics. The people who "came out" were actually outed and had to fade from public view. So, there were very few public role models.

Simply put, thirty-five years ago, we did not have a voice. Fifteen years ago, our voices were being heard, but legal changes lagged. Today, we are making progress toward full, equal status as citizens.

This brings us to Gratitude 2000—taking this time of year, the time of Thanks-giving, to appreciate the times and conditions under which we live. We have a lot to be grateful for.

To illustrate a minor, yet significant, victory, a couple of years ago, I went to visit my cousin. While I was at a dinner party, a friend mentioned that my cousin's son was cute and that he'd be a real lady's man when he grew up. My cousin replied: "Don't assume that my son will grow up to be straight!" I was proud of her for saying that, and I realized that it was the result not only of her own growth as a person, but it was the culmination of years of people risking their reputations, livelihoods, and even lives to get to where we are.

And just this morning, on the phone, my father sent his long-distance regards to my boyfriend. This kind of respect for same-sex relationships was unthinkable 35 years ago for the vast majority of LGBT individuals, less likely 15 years ago, but not so uncommon today.

I am grateful to those who have come before us, who have made all of our strides possible. Here's to the quiet, persistent efforts in the 1950s and 1960s of the Mattachine Society, the Daughters of Bilitis, and the Society for Individual Rights. To the fierce drag queens in 1969 who resisted their oppressors at a little bar called the Stonewall Inn.

A toast to the zappers who literally danced in the halls of city buildings, flaunting their sexuality in the 1970's. And to the first mainstream LGBT politicians in the community with their suits, ties, and agendas. In the 1980s and 1990s, to the queer activists in ACT UP and to the buttoned-down Log Cabin Republicans.

And today. A salute to the "establishment" GLAAD, HRC, and NGLTF, PFLAG, and LGBT centers everywhere. And to the anti-establishment, raucous, grassroots queer movement.

In short, let's take a moment during Gratitude 2000 to honor the courageous LGBT individuals and straight supporters who have fought and continue to fight for our equal rights, and who have made our diverse communities and increasing freedoms possible.

Jeffrey Chernin, Ph.D. is located in Los Angeles. He can be reached at

Gay Blessings Recognized

After 23 years of caution on gay and lesbian issues, the United Church has taken a substantial step in its human sexuality policy.

The church agreed to work actively for the civil recognition of lesbian and gay partnerships, and to recognize them in church documentation and services of blessing. Congregations will be encouraged to enter into the Affirming Congregation study process that openly welcomes gays and lesbians.

This is the first major policy statement in this area since the bitter controversy in 1988 around the ordination and commissioning of gay and lesbian candidates for ministry. It arose from four petitions, from British Columbia, Saskatchewan, Hamilton, and Toronto Conferences and was dealt with by one of three commissions handling Council's work simultaneously. The petitions touched off long but sensitive and responsible debate as commissioners on all sides of the issue treated each other's views with respect.

In the end, commissioners also renounced a 1960 General Council statement that homosexuality is a sin and encouraged its courts, congregations and members "to learn ways to offer healing for the damage inadvertently caused by the historic stance of our church on ho-

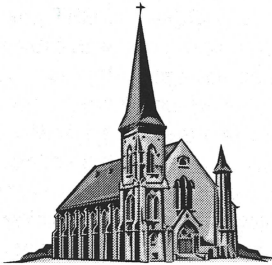
mosexuality." More groundwork for the approval of blessing of partnerships came in resolution to "affirm that human sexual orientations (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgendered, Heterosexual orientations) are a gift from God, part of the marvellous diversity of creation."

Early on in the discussion, it seemed most of five related resolutions might be referred to the Division of Mission in Canada, whose own members encouraged sending them back for further study. Others worried about the reaction back

home. Norma Hendrickson of Bermuda asked commissioners to "give me more time" before she had to take some of the recommendations back to the congregations in her country. And Jack

Witty of Cariboo Presbytery in British Columbia expressed fear that the approvals "will lead us into places we haven't been since 1988."

But there was considerable support for pressing on. When an amendment proposed to drop the phrase "a gift from God," Barbara Lloyd of Guelph, Ont., stated that the issue wasn't about God, but rather "about our brokenness." Very Rev. Bruce McLeod warned against delay, saying the "gifts from God" motion came out of implications of work the

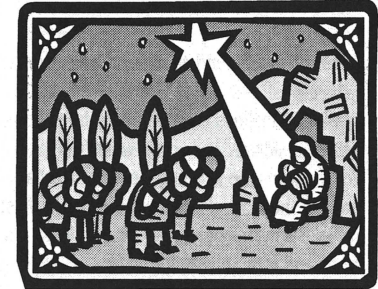


church had already done on sexuality; "the last thing a congregation needs to enliven it is another study on sexuality."

sometime they'll still be able to sing Jesus Loves Me."

Taken together, the resolutions appeared to be more welcomed than feared. A youth member who said he'd been "waiting a very long time" for the church to take this action, urged commissioners to "stand up and be bold." And Rev. Gary Boratto of Westminster United in Waterloo, Ont., spoke of his congregations which had submitted one of the petitions: "I'm so proud of them. This is about the kids in our Sunday school signing 'Jesus loves me, this I know, for the Bible tells me so' — some of those kids will grow up to be transgendered, bisexual, homosexual. ... I hope

Submitted to The Voice by Paul Warde. Re-printed, with permission, from the October Issue of The United Church Observer.



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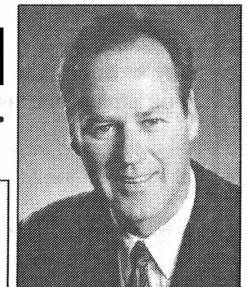
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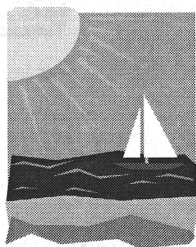
St. Thomas

By Julie Casto (Travel Only)

St. Thomas, one of the three U.S. Virgin Islands is home to a bustling duty-free port with a dazzling array of shops, an outlet for every watersport under the sun, and restaurants and nightspots to suit you every mood.

Green hills surround the harbour where the picture-postcard city of Charlotte Amalie sits. Charlotte Amalie is filled with duty-free shops, historic buildings, and scenic waterfront views. Not far from the bustling downtown area lie some of the most glorious beaches in the West Indies. Balmly weather and warm, gentle waters, the island is a retreat for water-sports enthusiasts, sun worshipers, and those just seeking rest and relaxation.

A tour of Charlotte Amalie provides a fascinating look at St. Thomas's past. Stately buildings constructed centuries ago and painted in pastel hues line its crowded Main Street. The waterfront, a haven for ships since the 1600s, is flanked with warehouses once used by pirates



to hide their treasures, now is home to duty-free shops.

One of the most imposing structures is Fort Christian, a national historic landmark and the oldest building still in use in St. Thomas. The brick-red fort, which dates back to the 17th century, has been used as the governor's residence, a Lutheran church, a rectory, a courthouse, a police station and a jail. Now it houses the Virgin Islands Museum.

You will notice numerous stairways climbing the hills around town, which is the result of impractical planning by Danish engineers. One of the most famous set of stairs is the 99 Steps, which begin on Government Hill.

Near the top of the 99 Steps lies a national historic landmark called Blackbeard's Castle, a hotel built around the remnants of a 17th century watchtower.

Should you decide to explore beyond Charlotte Amalie, you'll find several interesting attractions. For breathtaking panoramic vistas from the north side of St. Thomas, a trip to Mountain Top, at the peak of St. Peter Mountain, should be on your itinerary. Here you sip a banana daiquiri at the spot where the drink was supposedly invented and enjoy the view of more than 20 Virgin Islands sprawled out in the sea.

On the southern side, Paradise Point offers panoramic views that includes St. Thomas Harbour, Hassel Island, Water Island, downtown Charlotte Amalie, and a silhouette of St. Croix in the distance. The Paradise Point gondola whisks you up to the top, or you can drive up by car.

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On the other extreme, a deep-water submarine takes visitors 90 feet below the surface in the waters surrounding St. Thomas, offering non-divers a once-in-a-lifetime view of corals, colourful sponges and fish.

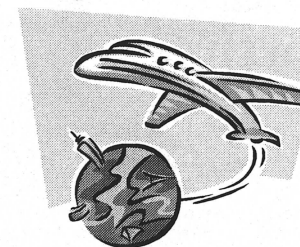
The captivating beaches on St. Thomas will provide visitors with endless hours of pleasure. The wide sandy beach at Bolongo Bay is a good place to catch some rays. Snorkelers like it for its underwater scenery. Some other beaches include: Limetree Beach, Magens Bay, Sapphire Beach and Honeymoon Beach, located on the newest member of the U.S. Virgins - Water Island, located just outside Charlotte Amalie harbour. A new ferry provides transportation for a day trip on the 50-acre retreat.

St. Thomas is home to some of the most sophisticated restaurants in the Caribbean. Menus feature everything from local Caribbean dishes to French and Continental cuisine.

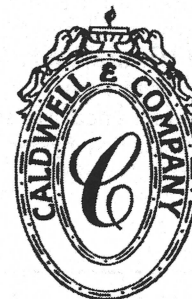
Frenchtown, west of the downtown area, is bursting with both fine and funky restaurants and bars. Fishing is a major industry here and you'll find fresh fish served in many area restaurants.

There's always something going on in St. Thomas. The island is a thriving arts center, with plays, concerts and art exhibitions underway year-round. No time is better than to experience local West Indian culture than April's Carnival, when Mocko Jumbies (stilt walkers), quadrille dancers and partiers fill the streets of Charlotte Amalie.

A vacation in the U.S. Virgin Islands is one you'll not quickly forget.



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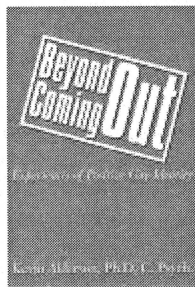


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Beyond Coming Out : Building a Positive Gay Identity



by Kevin Alderson, Ph.D.

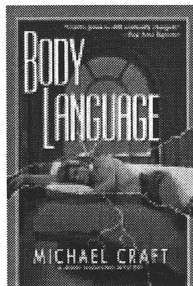
Paperback - 206 pages (October 2000)

A revealing study on gay esteem Psychologist Kevin Alderson explores why some gay men manage to construct overwhelmingly positive self-images while so many others never overcome low self-esteem or outright self-hatred. In interviews with sixteen gay men, ages 16 to 61, Dr. Alderson (who came out himself in 1993) reveals that there are definite patterns in the development of a positive gay identity. He presents these men's stories, from childhood to adulthood, in their own words. These in-depth case studies pave the way for Dr. Alderson's trenchant, insightful analysis of the major themes emerging at each stage of development.

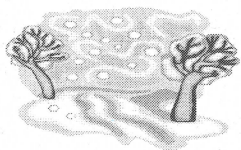
When gay journalist Mark Manning buys the rural Wisconsin family estate and the local newspaper, his wealthy, prestigious family reunites for Christmas for the first time in more than 30 years. With the house, Mark also gets childhood memories of early homoeroticism, decades of secrets, and 67-year-old Hazel, the family retainer, who is going blind but doesn't miss much. And then cousin Suzanne, who heads the family printing company, is brutally bludgeoned to death moments before dinner is served. A long, frustrating investigation by the unusually accommodating sheriff ensues. Could the culprit be Thad, Suzanne's sulky, homophobic teenage son? Her somewhat retarded brother? With beautifully drawn characters and a neatly twisted plot, Craft's winning first mystery should satisfy many a reader.

Body Language

by Michael Craft
Paperback - 273 pages (May 2000)



When gay journalist Mark Manning buys the rural Wisconsin family estate and the local newspaper, his wealthy, prestigious family reunites for Christmas for the first time in more than 30 years. With the house, Mark also gets childhood memories of early homoeroticism, decades of secrets, and 67-year-old Hazel, the family retainer, who is going blind but doesn't miss much. And then cousin Suzanne, who heads the family printing company, is brutally bludgeoned to death moments before dinner is served. A long, frustrating investigation by the unusually accommodating sheriff ensues. Could the culprit be Thad, Suzanne's sulky, homophobic teenage son? Her somewhat retarded brother? With beautifully drawn characters and a neatly twisted plot, Craft's winning first mystery should satisfy many a reader.



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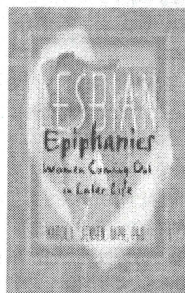
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Lesbian Epiphanies: Women Coming Out in Later Life



by Karol L. Jensen
Paperback - 228 pages (1999)

Exploring identity development and gender orientation, **Lesbian Epiphanies: Women Coming Out in Later Life** contains firsthand information about the experiences and difficulties of women who discover and reveal their newfound lesbian sexuality in later life. Psychologists, social workers, counselors, and professors will find that **Lesbian Epiphanies** is the first book to extensively quote from interviews of lesbians and bisexuals who had entered into heterosexual marriages. From the analysis of these 24 interviews, the psychological, erotic, and social processes of women who come out as lesbians or bisexuals after a heterosexual marriage are clearly explained so you can better assist your clients throughout this coming-out process. Discussing the personal and societal standards which clouded early self-awareness for these women, **Lesbian Epiphanies** lifts the veil of confusion to clearly illuminate the issues at hand to assist you in understanding and helping your clients.

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Lesbian Epiphanies provides solutions to the challenges that women experience in establishing their other-than-heterosexual orientation in a heterosexist society.

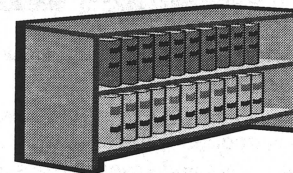
From Wedded Wife to Lesbian Life : Stories of Transformation



by Deborah Abbott (Editor), Ellen Farmer (Editor)

Paperback - 290 pages (November 1995)

43 married women share their journeys of discovery. Any heterosexual woman who is discovering herself to have woman-loving feelings will find support and guidance in these pages. Friends and family members of married women who "come out" into lesbian or bisexual life, will better understand this complex transformation. From **Wedded Wife to Lesbian Life** has 43 unique personal narratives of a wide range of women with before-and-after photos, as well as poetry and resources. It is a popular, enjoyable book which readers have overwhelmingly described as a "lifesaver" and "a coming-out-of-marriage bible."



Would you like to share a review of a book that you've read recently? Call us at [redacted] or email us at: [redacted]

Spiritual Life: The Quest for Freedom Home for the Holidays

By Noel Springwood

The last time I was home for the holidays was when I was 16. Six months later, I left home to return only infrequently in the subsequent years. Distance, professional obligations and other priorities always seemed to prevent my going home. It got to be the norm for me and I got used to spending the holidays with an adopted family or a family that adopted me.

Many people find this surprising. There is a cultural and religious expectation and tradition that draws families together at this time of year. From my observation, however, it is one that places a lot of stress and strain on family relationships. In many of the families that took me in, two hours was about the time that would pass before squabbles and arguments broke out and people began leaving in a huff. The holidays often present an opportunity to reopen old wounds or create new ones.

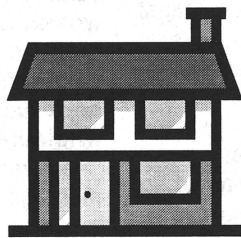
This is frequently the case with Lesbians, Gays and Transsexuals. For many of us, even if we are invited, we just don't feel welcome. And while we might feel welcome, as individuals, our partners wouldn't. Exceptions do exist; but, they are certainly more rare than we would like.

For many of us, the holidays bring on bouts of depression, feelings of

resentment and anger and an almost unbearable sense of being alone.

These feelings are sometimes hard to avoid. But, there's nothing wrong with feelings. We are just uncomfortable with some of them. It's what we do about feelings that matters. They are manageable.

So, here are a few ideas that might help. Some of them might present tough choices. I don't submit that the same idea is good for everyone. Some of them, however, might just help you have a better holiday celebration. They might even help you feel better about yourself.



Consider keeping your visits home brief and, perhaps, on the day before or after the main celebration. That leaves you free to have your own celebration in the way you want.

If there are family members who give you flack, consider inviting just your parents to your home for a private celebration at a mutually convenient time.

More and more people are spending the holidays at resorts or on cruise ships. If you can afford it, follow the crowd. It's a very good reason not to put yourself in a stressful situation.

Contact a few friends and celebrate the holidays at your own home. That means things will be the way you want, when you want them and with the people you're most comfortable with.

Convince yourself that there is nothing wrong with the way you feel or with breaking from tradition. You are your own person. Apron strings have to be cut sometime: why not now?

Don't be afraid to spend the holidays alone. Loneliness can become solitude and solitude is a very positive thing. Some of my best holidays have been spent alone. There's something about getting away from the hustle and bustle and crowds and noise that is calming and relaxing.

American writer, Thomas Wolfe, wrote a book called *You Can't Go Home Again*. He was right. You can't. The next time I entered my home, over a year after I had left it, I was amazed at how it had shrunk and how my own pattern of living had changed.

The fact is, you can't go home again. Not the one you left. That one exists only in your memories, dreams or imagination.

You can be at home, though, with yourself and all you are and represent and believe in.

Be good to yourself, then. Give yourself the gifts of lightness, love and integrity that will enrich your own life and the lives of all who know you. After all, no home suits you better than the one you fashion for yourself and the one you fill

with your own heartfelt sensitivity and love.

With that, I offer the hope that you can be at home and happy for the holidays, throughout the entire year ahead and for the rest of your days.

NOEL SPRINGWOOD (a pen-name - "Out of respect for his former associates") served most of his life as a Roman Catholic Priest. He now lives in voluntary exile from that ministry in order to live and work openly within the LGBT community as a Gay Man. You can contact him through THE VOICE or email him at

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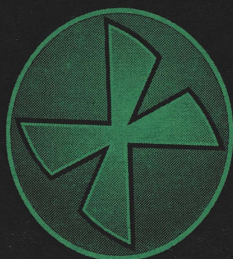


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