

The Voice

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The Voice

FREE

South Western Ontario's ONLY LGBT Magazine

Volume Four

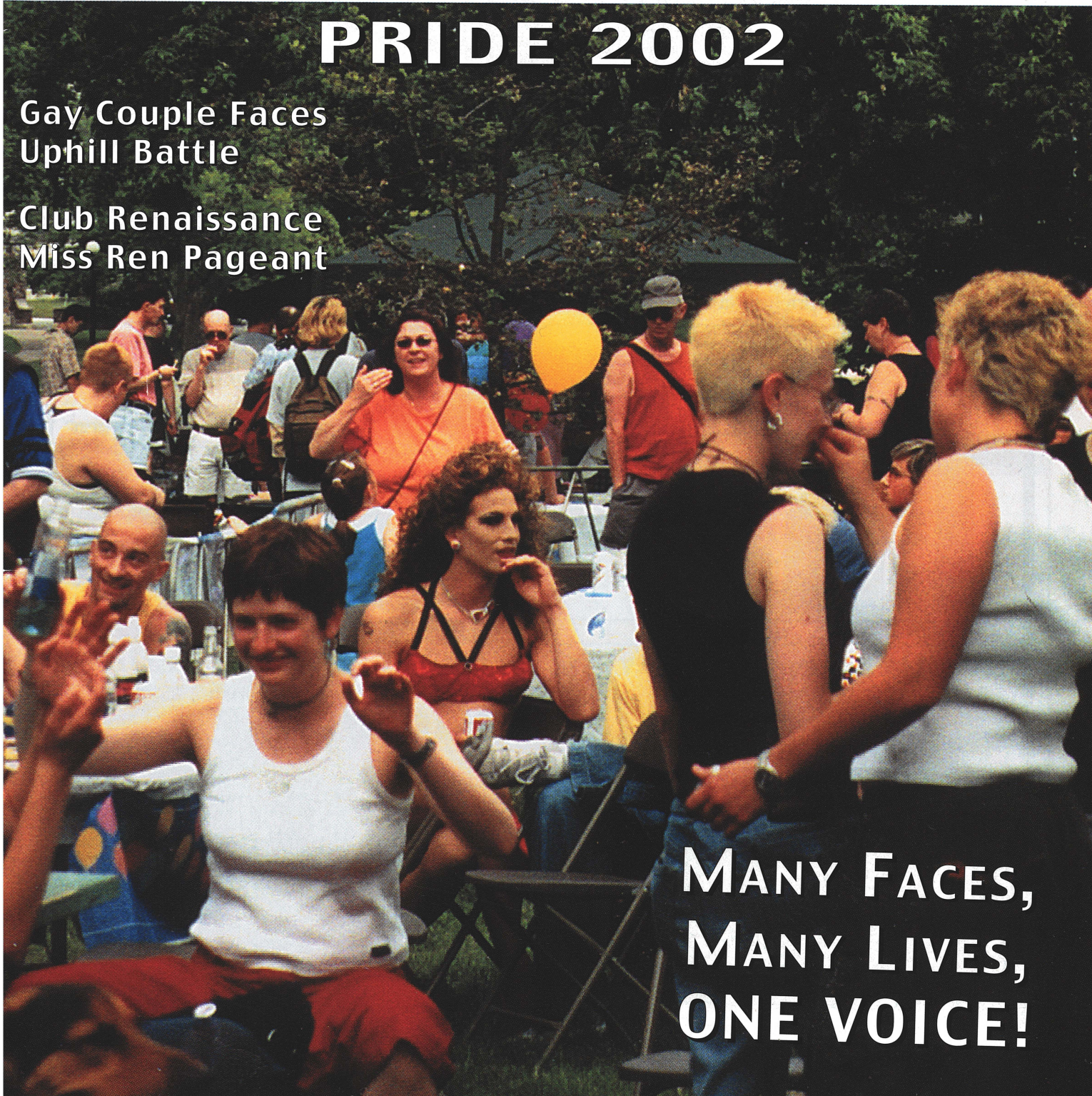
May/June 2002

Issue Eight

PRIDE 2002

Gay Couple Faces
Uphill Battle

Club Renaissance
Miss Ren Pageant



MANY FACES,
MANY LIVES,
ONE VOICE!



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Come out, party, meet the editor,
performances by The Ren Girls,
Fashion Show, Munchies and more!



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The Voice Magazine is a monthly publication presenting an inclusive approach to all segments of the LGBT community. We educate and promote further acceptance, tolerance, and understanding of LGBT and alternative lifestyles and culture. We also address the need to improve communication and understanding between each part of our own sub-cultural mosaic.

The Voice Magazine is an all-inclusive alternative vehicle providing thought-provoking information as an independent media source.

We welcome feature article contributions and encourage writers to contact the editor for submission guidelines.

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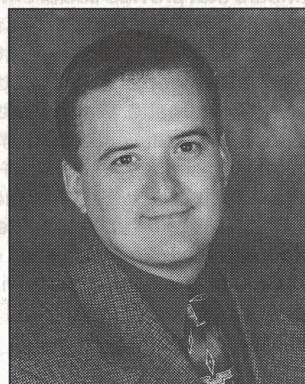
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FIRST WORDS

Well, here we are. A little later than usual but well worth the wait, as promised, we trust.

We are very pleased to be growing again. It is a tremendous amount of work, but well worth it when the end result is a much-widened circulation and dramatic increase in the numbers of each issue.

I would like to extend a very heart-felt thank you to all who helped so much with our format change, to all our writers who are very gracious about meeting deadlines and to two people without whose extra-dedicated help, work and investment our most recent changes would not have been possible -- Lyn McGinnis and Darren Kregar. Thank you for all of your hard work and your unwavering support for The Voice and for myself.

To those of you who will be reading your first-ever copy of The Voice, this month, welcome! This is Volume Four, Issue Eight in total. We've been around for four years. So, on we go....

To our long-time readers, as we turn yet another corner in our four year history of success, you will notice a gradual shift away from all things 'totally local'. The Voice is many things to many people. We have done our best for the past four years to reflect the community in which we are based. Now, however, we are not only read in many more communities throughout Southern Ontario, but our goal is to bring thought-provoking, commentary to you while not being mired in the politics of any particular community. We will still report on some local events (local meaning different things happening in all the cities in which we are read), but this will not be our main focus.

We have changed our Masthead once again. Yes, we really do believe that change and growth are positive and healthy -- necessary for any on-going endeavour.

The word, "only" in our new Masthead is a reference to the fact that The Voice is unique because we continue to be an all-inclusive magazine.

There are many other fine publications out there but none that we know of that have the inclusive mandate and vision that The Voice has -- namely to reflect back to its readers issues and opinions that are relevant for all segments of the LGBT community.



Ms. A.J. Mahari

The Politics of Pride

It is that time of year again - Pride. All year long Pride Committees all over the world have been hard at work planning their area celebrations. We all know that Pride is one aspect of many communities that sees a lot of politics, heart ache and even grief. Whether driven by mandated-purpose or personal agendas a lot of hard work gets done, things that matter are accomplished in spite of 'politics'.

In the end, most who celebrate Pride don't give a hoot about the politics. Most don't give a hoot about the people or the rumours that provide social entertainment, for some, in the form of gossip all year 'round. They often don't give much thanks to those who get all the needed work done either. What matters in the end is that we, as a sub-culture, with all the inherent difficulties and challenges that are part of who we are, celebrate what that means. What matters most is that each one of us can be proud of who he/she is.

The Voice extends best wishes to all Pride Committees and to all Pride Celebrants! Happy Pride!

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In Waterloo at:

Generation X, Wordsworth Books, Princess Cinema University of Waterloo, (Turn Key Desk-Student Life Centre), Adults Only Video, Wilfred Laurier University, The Stag Shop

In Hamilton at:

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In London at:

Fanshaw College, University of Western Ontario, Halo, City Lights Books Shop, Club 181, Our Place

In Stratford at: AIDS Action Committee of Perth County, Fanfare Books

In Toronto at: 519 Church Community Centre, Glad Day Books, Club Toronto

HAVE YOUR SAY

If you have something that you would 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. Letters may be edited for purposes of clarity and space.

Quit Dramatizing the Drama! I found it very interesting reading Ryan Porter's last article (Voice April 2002, "Clubbing: Cannibal Culture; Devouring the one gay bar town") concerning small town gay bars and how the drama that arises can eventually become too much for patrons of that community. Club Renaissance does carry a certain amount of drama just like every other gay club out there. It's a bar: hardly the place to search for some conversation with depth or substance. The bottom line is that there is only one person in this world that can dump on your name, and that's you. I also feel that some of the statements quoted to Ryan Porter in his research were uncalled for and untrue.

The nickname "The Basement" for Club Renaissance is fine as a personal inside joke, but I find it rather malicious to use that mockery as an imagery tool in an article for their perception of Club Renaissance. Secondly, the comments made about the ex-girlfriend and the manager of the bar and the gossip - was a fine example of gossip in and of itself.

I will be sure to send the women who were quoted in that article a dictionary with the word "hypocrite" highlighted. I simply feel that people should clean up their own distasteful qualities before assessing others'. So I'm going to keep going to Club Renaissance.

And, ladies relax; it's just gossip, quit being drama queens! I'm just happy to have a gay bar to frequent.

--Mark Weiser, Kitchener

In response to the conflict that has been going in our community, I think the time has come to quit bickering amongst ourselves. Everyone, and all organizations, should work together. No group or organization should vilify another without just cause.

There are too many people in this world against the LGBT community. Why do we have to fight amongst ourselves?

Let's all take a deep breath and play nice from now on.

--Anna Foerster, Guelph

We just finished reading the April 2002, issue seven of *The Voice*. The article titled "Devouring the one gay bar town". As a frequent loyal customer of Club Renaissance (every Saturday for years) both my partner and I were appalled by the article.

I think these women need to get off their high horse! Do they think that we have nothing better to talk about than who they are currently sleeping with. Give your brothers and sisters in the gay community a little more credit than that. When we get together with friends at the bar we are there to have a good time and discuss our own issues, not to talk about the immature barbie dolls that come and go. Everyone has been the flavour of the week and trust me there is another flavour just around the corner! We didn't even know who these women were until someone pointed them out (after the article was released).

We would like to know why the week this article came out they were at the "basement" for one more week of the drama? People should be thankful that someone is willing to put the money, time and energy into our one gay bar or where would they go every week?

--Dawna and Dawn, Kitchener

My two cents on the whole 'non-issue' between WRRP and *The Voice* and any other factions that fall into the fragmented rifts in K-W is that sour grapes make sour wine. I think that if everyone decides to work together and not slam one another, great things can be accomplished. We ALL need to quit dumping on one another. No more of this "he said/she said" crap.

I've said it before. The time has come to work in harmony. EVERYONE needs to get over themselves. There is an old Dutch phrase which loosely translated says "Don't make a windstorm out of a fart".

--Andrew Keating, Toronto

VOICE SPOTLIGHT

The Rainbow Chorus

The Rainbow Chorus, The Waterloo Wellington Chorus of Gays, Lesbians, Bisexuals and Friends is a charitable, non-profit organization of amateur choral singers who have joined together in song and celebration of the diversity of our community. The chorus welcomes everyone: lesbians, gays, bisexuals, transgendered and straight alike. Our members come predominantly from Waterloo and Wellington counties in Ontario, though some have travelled from outside this region. We believe that through the universal language of music many of the perceived barriers and misunderstandings about sexual diversity can be resolved in a safe and respectful manner.

Rainbow Chorus is in its seventh year of rehearsals and concerts. It began in November 1994

when four friends collaborated to celebrate their musical passion and the diversity of the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgendered (LGBT) community. Rehearsals began in January 1995 with perhaps a dozen participants at a local church in Guelph, Ontario, Canada. That spring the chorus performed its debut at the AIDS Walk for the AIDS Committee of Guelph and Wellington County. Since that time, the chorus has held concerts with a variety of repertoires and themes, including "Wintersong", "A Lover's Tryst", a joint concert with "Cate Friesen and Rainbow Chorus", "Global Harmonies", Cabarets and "Eyenings of Seasonal Song". The chorus has participated in presentations in Guelph as well as in surrounding communities such as Kitchener, Waterloo, Toronto and Hamilton. These presentations include Pride Day events, Hate Crimes and AIDS vigils, union (wedding) ceremonies, celebrations of life and memorial services, community festivals such as the Guelph Spring Festival and community concerts with other area choirs such as the Christmas concert held at the River Run Centre in Guelph. Rainbow Chorus has enjoyed many successes over the years. We have obtained official chari-

table status, increased our support to the LGBT community through our monthly dances and have reached out to local supportive businesses for sponsorship so that we may in turn advertise their support to the community. Our most notable success is indeed that we exist and are so vitally active in a relatively small community, outside a large urban centre. We owe these successes to the energy and commitment of our members and supporters over the years.



The 2001-2002 season has been a busy one for the Rainbow Chorus. In November we participated in the 2001 Hate Crime Vigil at the University of Guelph and in an Ecumenical Vigil in Hamilton for persons whose lives have been touched by AIDS. In December we sang at the

Guelph AIDS Committee AIDS vigil and participated in a community choir event at the River Run Centre, hosted by the Guelph Chamber Choir, called "Christmas Cheer". On March 23, 2002, Rainbow Chorus had its "Sing 'n Swing" concert and dance. The chorus performed an upbeat choral concert of swing and jazz music for the first hour of the evening. The remainder of the evening featured a jazz trio performing lively music while Rainbow Chorus members mixed it up with the crowd. The event was a great success!

Finally, with great pride the Rainbow Chorus will participate in the GALA Choruses Canadian festival in Toronto, June 21-24. We will perform on Saturday June 22 at 2pm at the Toronto Convention Centre. We look forward, with great anticipation, to this tremendous choral gathering.

For more information about the Rainbow Chorus, please visit our website at www.geocities.com/rainbow_chorus or contact the Artistic Director Robert Miller at [REDACTED]

Submitted by The Rainbow Chorus

HAVE YOUR SAY

Continued from page 3

I am very thankful to The Voice for its unrelenting integrity in publishing the opinions of its readers. I've heard a few grumbings in K-W that somehow the opinions of all of those readers reflect a lack of integrity on the part of The Voice. Yeah, right -- sure. NOT! Every publication has an obligation to its readers to allow a forum for open expression. Certainly not everything I've read in the Letters to the Editor section has been favourable to the editor or the publication. I applaud both The Voice and its editor for not backing down from public opinion in any way.

In my opinion the WWRP had better look at what is an obvious failure to fulfill their "community building" mandate. Going after The Voice and its editor are the actions of bitter cowards.

-- Mark Williams, Waterloo

I just had to write and say a great big thank you to The Voice for its continued dedication to all segments of the LGBT community. As a lesbian I am especially very happy to see the "Living Out" column by Sally Sheklow. She's a great writer and it's so wonderful to read what womyn have to say.

-- Christine Zettle, Woodstock

I hear that our local 'Pride' Committee has alienated a lot of people. Too bad. You'd think they'd want to work with the community. Working with the community would include working with other community organizations or businesses like Club Ren and The Voice. It's very sad to see the number of people that are angry and hurt at the way that the WWRP has chosen to "conduct its business" as opposed to serve its community-building mandate.

As an avid Voice reader, I've been very glad to see so many in our area writing in to The Voice and airing their opinions. It's important. Those of us who are not happy at all with the WWRP need to show up at their next AGM and vote accordingly. Sure hope some new blood comes out to run for office and that changes that will better benefit this community will come to pass.

-- Lyle Holland, Cambridge

Have Your Say continues on page 7

SEXY PRIDE



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Curated by Anna Camilleri

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TALLULAH'S SLEAZY CABARET

SATURDAY JUNE 22, DOOR OPEN AT 10:30PM

Step right up and be a part of the sexiest show on earth. Tallulah's Cabaret will take over the entire theatre with burlesque stages, outrageous projections, naughty candy girls (and boys) and much more. Featuring the stylings of TO's hottest DJs, and artistic contributions from some of the city's finest nocturnal talents! Tickets \$12

THEATRE LIFE

By Sky Gilbert, Directed by Edward Roy

A staged reading featuring Buddies' Board of Directors

SUNDAY JUNE 23, 7PM

A celebrated Canadian theatre director assembles a squabbling cast to present a dusty Victorian melodrama. Insults fly, reputations are threatened, and love blooms. An 80's play within a play, exploring the search for love in the time of AIDS, from the pen of Buddies' founding Artistic Director Sky Gilbert. Tickets \$10

FASTER B-GIRLZ, KILL! KILL!

Featuring The B-Girlz, Directed by David Oiy

WEDNESDAY JUNE 26, 8PM

Following on the patent leather heels of last year's highly successful, pill-popping theatrical romp - Valley of the B's - Canada's premiere drag troupe returns to the stage with a slap, tickle and nod to the soft core king of schlock, Russ Meyers. Big boots. Big hair. Bigger than the great outdoors! Tickets \$15

FORTUNE AND MEN'S EYES

By John Herbert, Directed by David Oiy

THURSDAY JUNE 27, 8PM

The late John Herbert was a revered member of the Toronto queer community until his death last year. Perhaps his most famous contribution was his semi-autobiographical play Fortune and Men's Eyes which made it to the New York stage one year before the celebrated Boys in the Band. The landmark play examines, in raw detail, the brutal day to day routine and power struggle of four young men in a Canadian juvenile reformatory. Tickets \$10

KINGdom

THURSDAY JUNE 27, 8PM

The boys come home and blow the stage to KINGdom come. Join Flare and Dirk and a bevy of beautiful boys for an annual outing that won't leave a dry seat in the house. The Drag Kings still rule the runway. Tickets \$15 in advance, \$18 day of

HOMO NIGHT IN CANADA

Curated by Mark Peacock

FRIDAY JUNE 28, 8PM

The cabaret is center ice for some of the hottest cabaret performance around. Feathers will fly as the B-Girlz host this evening of outrageous comedy, no holds barred. We may even get Conchita out of the penalty box. Tickets \$20

CHEEKY

FRIDAY JUNE 28, DOORS OPEN AT 10:30PM

Buddies' annual kick-off to the official Pride weekend - the entire theatre is wide open, featuring two DJs. Dance till your cheeks hurt. Tickets \$15

!!!PRIDE DAY!!!

SUNDAY JUNE 30, IN THE CABARET AFTER 10PM

The park outside Buddies is an official site on Pride Day with an official stage and beer gardens during the day. At 10pm join us inside Buddies as 2002 Pride Festivities draw to a close. Tickets \$5

**BUDDIES
IN BAD TIMES
THEATRE**





SKIP TO MY LOO

By Charles W. Westfall



Sometimes, I think that the only qualification for becoming a Cardinal is that you look good in crimson.

Recently, the Cardinal Archbishop of New York blamed all the sex scandals in his Church on Gays.

Even more recently, commenting on the Marc Hall situation, the Cardinal Archbishop of Toronto, in a peculiarly arbitrary, uninformed and biased statement, declared "Dancing is sexual exploration and that's why we can't let Marc bring his boyfriend to the Prom. It would be condoning a homosexual lifestyle." Now, that's a statement that I just can't let go unchallenged.

Consider the implications. Broadway musicals, ballet, step dancing, square dancing, the Highland Fling and Irish Washerwoman are all about sex. Goodbye good times. Goodbye just enjoying one another's company. Goodbye artistry. Goodbye just doing the natural thing by responding to an infectious beat.

I know that dancing can be sexual exploration. It can also be sexual insinuation, exploitation, manipulation and celebration. That doesn't exclude the kind of dancing that is simply a wonderfully so-

cial and acceptable way of being together, enjoying the fact and enjoying the music. To establish a blanket category for dancing as sexual exploration is sheer ignorance, foolishness or blatant bias. Cardinal Archbishop, wake up and get with the real world.

So, if dancing is sexual exploration, I wonder how you address the common practice of Pastors dancing with people at wedding receptions and anniversaries, including the brides and the children? Are they engaged in sexual exploration? Have you reprimanded their imprudence and commanded them to cease what is obviously a custom in direct violation of their vows.

Whatever the outcome of the Marc Hall case, your statement deserves to be singled out as a classic example of accommodated homophobia. By generalising your impressions about dancing, you are doing little more than rationalising what is, in essence, an untenable position.

If you had read Marc Hall's letter to his principal, you would have realised that he not only was desperately trying to avoid conflict, but he had a very clear understanding of the Roman Catholic Church's position on homosexual relationships. It seems that his understanding surpassed yours in many respects. I believe that most of those areas involve the spirit of the Pastoral Directive that those who oppose his request are so fond of quoting.

That Directive goes out of its way to stress the importance of understanding, acceptance and inclusivity. It draws the line at sexual intimacy. Barring that, it urges compassion, encouragement and support. I find none of these present in either your or the Board's stance.

Whenever the letter and the spirit of the law seem to be in conflict, there is bound to be pain in finding a peaceful and mutually beneficial solution. In this case, it would seem that the forces of the establishment have united in opposition to a simple request to participate in a significant rite of passage has been blown up into proportions that vastly out-measure its radical importance. To have acceded to Marc's request would not have compro-

mised Roman Catholic morality. It would not have opened the door to wholesale gay outings in Oshawa. It would not have, in the slightest way, appeared to condone what is so glibly and so prejudicially termed a homosexual lifestyle.

Admittedly, the homosexual counter culture that is currently emerging, has elements that could be offensive, not only to the Roman Catholic Church, but to many sectors of society. That is not the point. It is patently wrong to paint everyone with the same brush. If that were not so, the Roman Catholic Church would most certainly suffer by comparison. It is, in fact, a tragedy that the many, many, wonderful, generous, and dedicated members of that tradition have to live in the shadow of those who have betrayed it.

It is, therefore, doubly tragic that the current dispute seems, at least in the words and actions of those who oppose Marc Hall's request, also to betray that tradition. It is a spectre that brings back sad memories of times past when that Church was known for its inflexibility, intolerance and insensitivity. At a time when flexibility, tolerance and sensitivity are valued, perhaps, as never before in history, the Oshawa situation is sadly reminiscent of former, darker days. I have to applaud Marc's position, his actions and the actions of those who support him. It is time for the silent majority to speak up. As Albert Camus wrote so eloquently, "Sometimes you just have to say 'No'." (Translation mine.)

I doubt that my words will have much effect. I do hope, though, that they help thinking individuals think about this situation and the Church's response to it. I also hope that those same thinking individuals will let their voices be heard in what has clearly become a turning point in history: at least local history — for now.

As for dancing being sexual exploration, that could become the best joke of the new millennium.

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

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HAVE YOUR SAY

Continued from page 4

Dear Editor:

It was with great dismay I picked up and read the most recent issue (April 2002) of *The Voice*. As a once committed and avid reader of *The Voice*, a publication with what I felt was considerable journalistic integrity, I found the mood, and letters to the editor to be just a rant. Responsible journalism requires analytical balance. That issue was nothing more than a rag, its sole purpose to drag Pride through the muck.

I don't believe in further community fracture; that's all this kind of journalism is accomplishing. How will those letter writers show their Pride this year?

The Pride Pages are modeled after Pride initiatives across Ontario; it's only sad that the Pride Pages couldn't be bundled with *The Voice*.

Where I come from, there is only one Pride. It is about acceptance, tolerance, diversity and perhaps most importantly, a collaborative effort to raise awareness in this community. Its message is possibly important, both for the insular community (ie: the message to gay youth) and for the community at large (ie: political awareness).

As a conscientious reader, and a person having had involvement with many major local, national and international LGBTI groups over the time I've spent in this community, I'd like to suggest the first place we need to look, when we seek the source of fracture, is within ourselves; our motives and actions.

I choose to support both the WWRP Pride Committee *and* *The Voice*.

--Thom Ryan, Waterloo

Thank you for your April edition of *The Voice*. What an amazing group of writers you have. There were excellent comment articles, good news about what is going on, and great profiles about GLOW and Muses Cafe. The quality of *The Voice* just keeps getting better and better. I was very glad to see so many letters about those Pride Pages. A lot of people are pretty pissed off at WWRP for their aggressive and underhanded sales tactics. It is no surprise they had little success in stealing *Voice* advertisers and have had to go to Hamilton. Thanks to Ms. Mahari for taking the high road. She's done an excellent job of allowing her readers to speak up and of not being publicly pulled into the fray.

--Dan McKay, Waterloo

LONDON: An LGBT MECCA

By Brad Lister

I like London, I really do. It is an interesting town that's full of all sorts of crazies and weirdos. In addition, the LGBT community is well kind of "neat", for lack of a better word. Neat because there is such a fabric of people there that I find so fascinating.

Ever since I came out and started making first furtive outings in the gay community, I have discovered that there are so many different shades to the city. First you have your old time crowd who were there in the beginning, they were the ones who have seen it all. They hardly ever speak out now I find except to decry what has happened to the community.

Then there are the women who have really formed some tight knit groups like AWOL (Adventurous Womyn of London) and ALMA (All Lesbian Mothers Association) that any new out lesbian could find so many new friends that a little black book would be filled in no time at all. I'm sure I'm leaving out some ladies group but there are just so darn many, I'm sure dear reader you get the picture.

Of course through my years at Western I discovered all kinds of new-to-town gay folk who are sort of tourists on the scene. The funny part about them is I always found them to be so closeted. The gay guys I met at Western were always so afraid of anyone knowing that they liked to suck dick. Of course, I never understood why they were like that 'cause I always found the university to be the space that allowed gay thought and ideas to run free. It was such a freeing space for me that I know I would not have developed as a writer and gay man without it.

It is also, where I met Matthew. Every-

one has a Matthew, the one that stole your heart. The one that got right under your skin until you could not breathe and yet he got away. Like most Matthew's they were never yours to really have.

Then I met my current partner and he introduced me to the bar community. It is a whole other segment of that gay network. They are the ones who exist solely to go to the same club every weekend and drink the same drinks repeatedly. I should know I spent some time working as a bar back and a patio bartender. I was tipped

better and better and I was remembering what every person drank. As they got drunker and drunker, they kept marveling at my feat. I thought nothing of it. I am after-all a font of useless, knowledge (but that's another column). Therefore, whether they were gay or les-

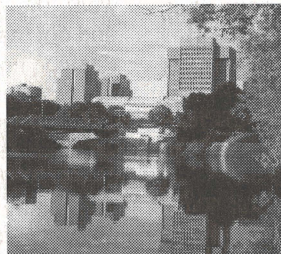
bian I was giving them what they wanted before they even ordered it.

So now I do know that a lot of women and men just hate being in London. "It's boring", "There's no community", and "The community is so fragmented". They are all common refrains I hear but, you know if you look really close you see such an interesting group of people that are close in so many ways. In addition, they have so many interesting stories. Maybe I will write about them one day. I love London. Of course, London's community feels small next to Toronto. London is not Toronto and I like it just that way.

Brad Lister loves London if you didn't get that the first time. And no he hasn't slept his way through it that's not why he does.

He can be reached via email at:

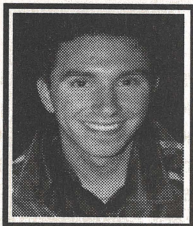
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CLUBBING



Twinks, Meet Bears. Bears, Meet Twinks. 5ive nightclub blends gay sub-culture

By Ryan Porter

To my delight, most of my memories of the Police Academy movies have been repressed. But one standard joke has stuck with me. Engaged in a wacky chase, the Police Academy gang stumbles into The Blue Oyster Bar. The patrons are all men, and their super-butch, leather style is a quick visual cue to the gang that they've stumbled into a, gasp, gay bar!

Hilarity ensues. While this joke plays today like a politically incorrect atrocity, the only question I had was, "Why are all the gay men wearing leather?"

Some of the patrons at 5ive nightclub might be asking that same question. In recent months, the club that promotes itself as "where the boys are" has become "where the bears are." On a recent romp at the club, the bar was packed with its regular clientele of twinks and circuit boys. One corner, however, was bulging with muscular leathermen, stacked shoulder to shoulder.

Steve Buczek, the promoter and host at 5ive, is thrilled by the diverse crowd his club is attracting. Older guys, including Buczek himself, are tired of the same stale clubs. Though, he insists the new mixed crowd isn't divided, the obvious camps in different corners does speak to a split. Part of this divide arises from confusion, the same confusion I experience over Police Academy.

The stereotype of the gay man usually runs on the power of the femme queen, making the leatherman a hefty wrinkle for those who wish to categorize gay men as the male-women. This accelerated masculinity began with a calculated bitch slap against these very stereotypes. In the fifties and sixties era defined as "pre-Stonewall", gay masculinity was a flaming contradiction.

Gay culture was fueled by the stereotype of the "nelly". High culture, like opera and theatre, collided with fashion and gossip, bitchy humour and celebrity worship.

When gay was brought out of the closet by 1969's Stonewall riots, some things were put back in. The opera records went to the back of the shelf and were replaced by disco anthems. The handkerchiefs were replaced by bandannas. The leatherman

style caught on in a big way as a hyper-masculine statement to renounce the stereotypes associated with the "nelly".

Through the 70's and early 80's, the leatherman reigned. Gay masculinity had received a heavy shot of testosterone, though underneath the imposing outer wear, the guys still loved Judy Garland, and got their kicks out of big, diva voices. Fashion narrowed into types, such as Police Academy's leatherman, the military uniform, the cowboy and the woodsman. These types became so entrenched, gay bars would be named for the type of clientele they wished to attract, like Badlands for a Western theme or The Spike for leather. Often, a dress code of this type would be enforced.

While these templates didn't disappear (Toronto Pride's biggest party is still the military/uniform gala "Unity"), they never caught on with the younger crowd. The accentuated masculinity was played down and replaced by a teen boy aesthetic, called twink.

Though 5ive's segregated dance floor attests to the divide between twinks and bears, the two were originally the same. "Twinkies" in the seventies were young gay men who ran in the leathermen culture. Also called "kid brothers," the men would be introduced to gay culture by the older men. Today, young gay men usually cut their teeth, so to speak, with men of a similar age.

Twinks typically dress with an eye for fashion that, like the leathermen, separates them from the worn for comfort styles of straight men. Neat, clean shaven and boyish, the twink look has caught on in a big way.

20 year old Darryl Byrne, who is the president of Gays, Lesbians, or Bisexuals At Laurier (GLOBAL) has noticed the divided subcultures of the gay world. The students who attended GLOBAL's meetings had personal definitions of their style, but many indicated the importance of masculinity. Darryl has often encountered the attitude that, "I'm a guy who is attracted to guys. I don't want a woman."

"I've noticed even within the gay community, there is a stigma towards acting

feminine," Darryl says.

Though twinks and bears might dance on different sides of the bar, one thing they have in common is the desire to be perceived as masculine. Often this masculinity is a front for the inner-fag that loves Madonna or can't get enough of Absolutely Fabulous.

"If you pay enough attention to a bear, you'll find out for the most part that they're just as girly as any small little twink boy." Darryl says. "After going out to a few leather parties, you'll find that even though guys are dressed up all masculine, then you hear them talk and maybe they're not so masculine after all.

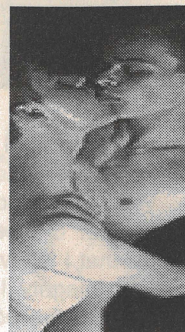
"Definitely just because someone is hairier or bigger doesn't mean they'll be more masculine. I've known guys who are 6' 4" who've gone on the Internet looking for My Little Pony. At the same time, there are guys who are, like, 5'7" who I'd be scared to make the wrong impression in front of because they just are so butch."

Buczek is optimistic that 5ive's appeal to both bears and twinks is indicative of a loosening divide in the gay community. The bears he says, "think it's great" while he's noticed "younger guys are wearing more leather."

Despite the trepidation apparent on both sides, the appearances put on for the clubs are only superficial. Stereotypes associated with the sub-cultures don't stand up when there's some exposure to the other side.

Ryan Porter completed his English degree at The University of Waterloo and he is currently a Journalism student at Ryerson in Toronto. He is also an editorial intern at fab magazine. A Voice Exclusive.

In our April 2002 issue (Clubbing: Cannibal Culture: Devouring the one gay bar town) featured a picture of women at Club Renaissance. The Voice regrets any inconvenience caused to anyone in that picture. The people in the picture were not, in fact, the people referred to or quoted in that article. The Voice also wishes to make clear that the the experiences at Club Renaissance of those quoted in that article were not meant to be representative of the experience of the majority of the patrons who regularly go to Club Renaissance. -- Editor



LIVING OUT



Making Sense

By Sally Sheklow

My mom's best friend Marian came over once a week. Mom shooed me outside during those sessions, but I could hear them from my tree fort.

"Mmm-hmm," Marian's familiar voice hummed one day. Mom was asking about "lesbian tendencies." "Something to do with girls who hated boys. Did she mean me?"

Later, my friend Helen and I sat on my bedroom rug, the Ouija board balanced on our knees. Helen was still a tomboy and could be trusted. Her fingers rested on the Ouija Board's heart-shaped plastic "planchette." "Thick lashes cast pointy shadows on her cheeks. Ribbons of sandalwood incense curled in the air. My knees felt warm where they pressed against Helen's jeans. Hot, in fact.

"Go ahead and ask your question," Helen coaxed. My face burned. "Do I have lesbian tendencies?"

Ouija jerked into action. It pulled our hands in rhythmic circles at the center of the board. The planchette's widening orbit brushed equally close to YES and NO.

It stopped circling and shot to YES and stayed there.

A jumble of feelings spilled over me. I was embarrassed, relieved, shocked. I had hoped to rule out the possibility, not prove it. Would Helen still be my friend? Was I sick in the head? Would this excuse me from wearing lipstick like my teenage babysitter? How reliable was a Ouija board, anyway?

I wished I could faint and wake up with amnesia.

By the time I was in college, I knew that lots of artists and free thinkers were homosexuals, but I didn't know any personally. Or so I thought.

One day Thea, the coordinator of the Women's Center where I volunteered, invited me to stay for a collective meeting. "As a lesbian . . ." Thea pressed her palm to her chest. Lesbian? A real lesbian right here in the same room? The next day a guest in Women's Studies class introduced herself and added, "I am a lesbian." I nearly fell out of my seat.

Before long I experienced the sexual side

of homosexuality. A group of us had gone for a moonlight swim. I dunked under the cool water and swam with my eyes closed. I imagined being a whale, a sleek sea mammal at home with her pod in the black liquid night. When I surfaced, one of the women in the collective, Kitty, swam up behind me. We floated together in the wavy band of moonlight on the dark water.

"Would you like to come home and make love with me?" Kitty whispered. Indecision was not one of the feelings that surged through me. My official lesbian papers were notarized that night. The next day I wrote, "Dear Mom, I am a lesbian. It feels natural. I'm happy and fulfilled and part of a movement to liberate women from stifling, sex-role stereotyped relationships."

She never mentioned that letter. When anyone asked about me she said, "Sally is doing very well at college." Her standard reply for the next twenty-five years.

She carried a wallet snapshot of me — taken years after I'd told her I was a lesbian — with a guy from the food co-op giving me a birthday kiss on the cheek. I never did get her to replace that picture with one of me driving the forklift or competing in a Kung Fu tournament or, God forbid, kissing a girlfriend. On a visit home I pressed her about it, "Why can't you accept me for who I am?"

She screwed up her face, disgusted. "It's unnatural, Sal. Like mating with an ape."

I was stunned. This bigot was my own mom. My Jewish mom who lost countless relatives to anti-Semites of Czarist Russia and Nazi Germany. My liberal mom who had her window broken by racists because she spoke out for civil rights in the 1950s. Couldn't she make the connection?

After Enid and I had been together for a few years, Mom began to warm up. I like to think that given a little more time, Mom would have become proud to have a lesbian daughter. But cancer overshadowed those concerns. My world became focused on positioning her pillow, the warm wash cloth, the spoonful of broth.



During those final weeks, our time together was sweet, affectionate. I had set her up with a hospital bed in the family room and I slept in her bedroom. I snuggled with her in the mornings while the hospice nurses took vital signs, adjusted tubing, kept her clean and dry.

Visitors stopped coming. They couldn't stand to see her so weak, eyes sunken, hair lost to chemo, death hovering. To me she looked beautiful, angelic, extra-terrestrial.

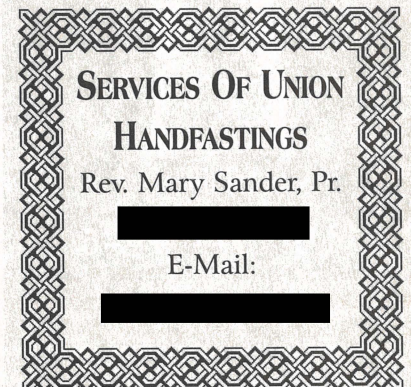
On what turned out to be her last day, I woke up early and climbed in with her. The night nurse still dozed in the easy chair. Mom reached for my hand, drew me in, squeezed hello. Welcome. Stay close.

I kissed her cheek, more bone than flesh now. I petted her arm, thinner than a child's wrist. Her shrunken body, tiny next to mine, leaned into my caress. I stroked her silken skin, her bloated abdomen. Slow soothing circles. Belly that bore me, my first home, I thought. My touch spoke my wordless truth. My sweet mother. I honor you. Thank you for life. I love you.

Mmmmm, she sighed. Pure acceptance.

Sally Sheklow lives and writes in the Pacific Northwest. Her "Living Out" humor column appears in several newspapers and magazines around the US, as well as in New Zealand, South Africa and Australia. Email comments to:

"Making Sense" first appeared on www.1stPerson.com This article was submitted to The Voice by Sally Sheklow.



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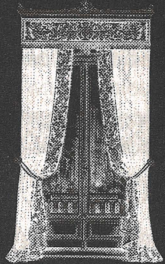
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"How Do You Celebrate Mother's Day When Your Mother Isn't Speaking To You?"

A family's coming to acceptance of their gay son despite being conservative Christians

By Patti Ellis

Mother's Day is supposed to be a celebration but to many of us moms it's a reminder of how deeply we've failed our own children. And conversely, how profoundly our kids have disappointed us. Each of us has our own story of how we became the "failed mother" or the "disappointing child." Some mothers have sons who marry outside their faith.

Some mothers have daughters dating men outside their race. And some mothers, like me, have children who've told them they're gay.

I felt like my son had betrayed my deepest-held moral, familial and religious principles. I anguished about what to do. I am a conservative Christian. How could I reconcile the teachings of my church with the love for my son? I couldn't. And with every passing day I could feel a greater distance passing between us.

I thought about mothers who abandoned their grown children, simply cut them out of their lives for being gay, for seemingly turning away from the values and principles they spent their whole lives instilling in them.

I thought about these "emotionally orphaned" adult children and what they must go through on Mother's Day. Would they buy cards that said, "Mom, Even Though You Refuse to Take My Calls I Still Love You?" Or worse, "Mom, Still Wishing You Well Even Though You Won't Open the Door When I Knock?"

I was scared. I didn't want to be that kind of Mom. I didn't want to get that kind Mother's Day card. I was as scared as you can be when society says you've failed as a mother. Fortunately, one thing scared me more than society's judgment of me, and that was the possibility of losing my son forever to a world that was openly hostile to him.

I recoiled at the idea of leaving my precious son "motherless" in the face of so many that could make his life miserable.

I would not, could not, consider the idea of abandoning the son I cherished all these years, no matter how angry, ashamed or betrayed I felt.

And I also would not, could not abide the idea that he would go through his life convinced he had disappointed me. I didn't want to receive a Mother's Day card that

said,
"Thanks,
Mom, for
Loving Me
Even
Though I
Killed Your

Hopes and Dreams for Me." I wanted something more, something bigger. I wanted a card that said, "Thanks, Mom for Loving and Accepting Me When No One Else Would."

I was lucky. I found a way to heal the breach with my son and still keep my religious values intact. I descended into a darkness that frightened me. I looked for

God in all the empty spaces in my heart. I turned my faith inside out. In the end, it was a re-affirmation of my religious principles that allowed a profound reconciliation with my

son to take place.

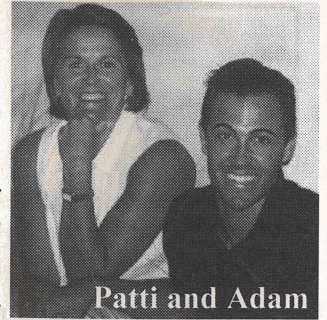
Whether a child dates someone outside their race, marries outside their faith, bears children out of wedlock, comes out of the closet, or simply repudiates the value of hard work and education, it can strain the relationship between mother and child to its breaking point.

And it's exactly at that point that every mother has to make a decision about how to go forward. To most moms Mother's Day is simply a day they get affirmed by the kids they raised. But to a lot of moms with gay children it's not. It's the day they're reminded of the children they abandoned.

To those of us who've had to journey through the stages of separation and alienation into forgiveness and acceptance, Mother's Day has an added dimension that has yet to be captured in gift cards.

Maybe someday Hallmark will come up with a card reflecting the elemental story of reconciled love between mother and child. But until then, every mother who rediscovers unconditional love will have to receive a card written by their child's own sentiments.

Patti Ellis is the mother of two sons. Along with her husband Jeff she is co-creator of www.familyacceptance.com, a non-profit resource for parents struggling to accept their gay children. This article was submitted to The Voice by Patti Ellis -



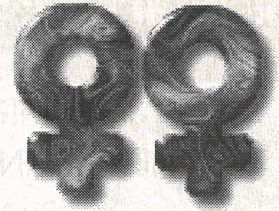
Patti and Adam

Family
Acceptance

HERSTORY

Ecofeminism: Is it worth the fuss?

By Alex Phillips



I have been asked on various occasions if I am an ecofeminist. I generally pass on the opportunity to categorize myself under one single philosophy, especially the ecofeminist philosophy. Let me explain: I feel that if you align yourself under one philosophy and belong to some sort of 'ism' movement then you are in danger of limiting yourself ideologically and becoming close-minded to other ideological possibilities. It is excellent to maintain certain morals and ethics, but the possibilities to change and alter these should be flexible. With time, we grow and we begin to change our personal philosophies; our life experience often alters our perceptions and allows us to see the world around us differently. In short, instead of limiting ourselves to one philosophy, we should strive to explore many philosophies and examine each in accordance with our personal morals and ethics. My intent in this article is to clarify some myths about the ecofeminist philosophy from my perspective. These are exclusively my interpretations of the movement. Being a feminist, which in my opinion means that women are equal to men, and being an environmentalist, and by environmentalist I mean holding an interest and commitment to the well-being of the environment, does not necessarily make one an ecofeminist.

To define the philosophy in one sentence, ecofeminism is the notion that women are to nature as men are to culture. Some believe that women have a spiritual connection to nature because they are the ones who create life within their womb. This paralleled with creation, led to the belief that women should be the primary care-givers of the earth. The notion of Gaia, the Greek goddess who saved the earth from chaos, is associated with the self-regulating earth. James E. Lovelock constructed the Gaia hypothesis, which has been misinterpreted with the belief that humanity can run amok within the environment and Gaia, now the earth mother (or housekeeper?) will clean up the mess and regulate conditions on the planet. The very notion of the earth being feminine is pronounced within our society. I am guilty of using the expression, "love mother earth" without even thinking of the fact that I have given the environment a gender.

Nature has been subjected to (male) domination and control on various occasions; this has become common place and we do not live in a pristine environment. It can be argued that women have also been subject to domination by men and the connection between women and nature has been severed by them. Pagan religions were nearly lost forever during the spread of Christianity replacing a largely matrilineal society with a patriarchal one. Had goddess worship been saved from the depths of lost religious movements, would we live in a different world today? One run in harmony with the earth's natural rhythms and women's spiritual connection with the environment was recognized and sacred. Although this may seem like the ultimate fantasy for some ecofeminists, I think that this is a major problem with the philosophy; envisioning the present if something else had happened differently in the past. Linger on the past and not embracing the present is non-productive and leads to uncalled for confrontation between genders. To correct the mistakes of the past, in this case, the domination of women and nature by men, we must look for contemporary solutions, not ones that dwell on mistakes made in the past.

The main flaw with ecofeminist philosophy is the fact that it dwells upon constructions of the past and biological differences between genders. It is correct that women have been associated with nature, more so than men; however it is unfair to keep this judgment today because it may not be true. The fact that women menstruate, give birth and lactate does not mean that women have a greater ability to nurture than men. I believe that both men and women are both capable of being care-givers. Maintaining the philosophy that the earth would be in better shape in a woman's hands limits men's ability to be care-givers. The ecofeminist philosophy limits men's role and further entices gender antagonism. Is this worth the fuss? Do women have more to gain than men have to lose by adhering to a strictly ecofeminist philosophy? How does it serve us? Does it keep us too closely linked to the past?

The question that also begs to be asked is, do we want to tie ourselves to the past when this shift from the era of the Pagan religions' influence -- matriarchy -- to the

Christian patriarchy took place? We can't re-write history. So, how do we deal with this seemingly inherent flaw in ecofeminism? Do we throw the 'baby out with the bath water'? Or, do we, as women, as nurturers, extend ourselves and reach out to those males who want to express more of their nurturing nature and be more understanding and supportive of this?

I, as an ecofeminist strongly assert others who adhere to the ecofeminist philosophy to give thought to moving beyond the past and biological differences and embrace a mode of thinking which considers both women and men as capable care-givers of nature.

We are constantly bombarded with what separates the genders. We all stand to benefit if we can find some common ground to share once in a while despite the philosophies that we adhere to. Really, it's not that much of a fuss, it's just about having an open heart and mind. It's about self-acceptance and the acceptance of others and not allowing ourselves to be caged by all the espoused rigidity of any and all philosophies.

Alex Phillips is a currently studying at the University of Waterloo. A Voice Exclusive.

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Spiritual Life: The Quest for Freedom

THE SPIRIT AND THE LETTER OF THE LAW IN CONFLICT IN ONTARIO

By Noel Springwood

"The teaching of the Roman Catholic Church about homosexuality is very clear."

That's what the Durham Roman Catholic Separate School Board thinks. They go on to say that it is also clearly understood by many people. I, for one, don't think that they understand it themselves. I also don't think they understand homosexuality, sexual orientation, or sexuality. I'm not sure, in fact, that they understand themselves all that well.

The fact that the chair, Mary Ann Martin, was reduced to tears as she read the verdict prohibiting Marc Hall from taking his boyfriend to the School Prom would seem to indicate a deep inner-conflict over the issue. That, in itself, is admirable. What is not so admirable is the shortsightedness and basic ignorance demonstrated by the board's refusal to budge on what should actually be a non-issue.

The Roman Catholic Catechism does, indeed, teach that homosexuals should be accepted *"as persons who should be treated like any other person ... with respect, compassion and sensitivity."*

But, and it's a capital letter **BUT**, homosexual activity, or lifestyle, or behaviour is unacceptable and cannot be approved. The Roman Catholic Church in no way condones or promotes a homosexual lifestyle.

That makes me wonder when the practice of men dancing with men became something that represented a homosexual lifestyle, behaviour or activity. Hey, don't get me wrong, homosexuals do it. They do dance together. But, same-sexes of other religions and cultures also dance together. In fact, there are cultures and religions, the Roman Catholic tradition among them, in which there are same-sex hugs and kisses and same-sex dances. OKAY -- I know the next objection. But those aren't romantic. They're certainly not necessarily erotic.

Is the corollary to this objection, then, that a Prom is a romantic, potentially erotic event? If so, given the Church's position on any kind of sexual intimacy outside of marriage, why have one at all? And also, if so, where does one draw the line? I remember high school dances from my youth and beyond where nuns acted as moral monitors. They would blow shrill

whistles to separate any couples who weren't leaving room between them for the Holy Spirit. These days they'd have to look pretty hard to find which couples were actually dancing together.

Perhaps the misunderstanding arises from the nature of homosexual activity, behaviour, or lifestyle. Again, it is hard to know what these moral midgets would allow and what they would object to. They seem to think that those words include any kind of social, friendly, or affectionate contact between two persons of the same gender who happen to care about one another. Balderdash!

I hope that they don't allow players on their athletic teams to pat one another on the butt by way of support or congratulation. That, according to their logic, could be interpreted as condoning homosexual activity.

And if there are open showers for same-sex groups, I hope that they realize that some homosexuals pay for that kind of entertainment at a bath house.

So, I wonder what those authorities would say about a same-sex couple walking hand in hand on school property? I'm willing to bet that up to a certain age and if they were young women, there would be little or no objection. Let two young men try it and cries of "homo" would soon be bouncing off the walls.

Would a homosexual couple be allowed to share a movie, tennis match or lunch table without being questioned, challenged or targeted for treatment? Where does one draw the line between social and cultural standards and moral precepts? When does moral rectitude devolve into simple bigotry?

To pretend that the case of Marc Hall involves anything but homophobia is myopic. To defend the Board's position in the name of Roman Catholic moral teaching is, I believe, a classic example of how intolerance is fostered and nurtured. I also believe that there are nuances within that moral teaching that would not prohibit a same-sex couple going to a dance together. This is not the first time, though, that moral rectitude and absolute obedience have been used to defend intolerance and persecution.

A certain perverse inclination in my im-



agination likes to dwell on what might have happened if Hall and his boyfriend, suitably tuxedoed, had just shown up at the Prom without prior warning. Would the Police have been called in to eject them? Or, perhaps, the Clergy, to exorcise and absolve them? Maybe they would simply have been made to *sit out* the whole affair on the sidelines: being there but not daring to dance. Would they have been made to wear a symbol indicating their sexual orientation so that others could avoid them or taunt them?

As a matter of fact, the Pastoral Directive used by the Board to defend its actions goes out of its way to implore a wide reaching scope of understanding, support and tolerance. I guess the Durham Roman Catholic Separate School Board didn't read that part. Or, maybe, they just conveniently forgot. Besides that, aside from reaffirming its stand on no sex outside heterosexual marriage, the Directive does not define homosexual lifestyle at all.

The whole Roman Catholic stance on sexual morality seems to be in disarray. So much of what is considered sinful by that Church is ignored. Just think of all the sexual sins possible in the R.C. catalogue. Masturbation probably tops the list. It tops the list not only of sins committed but sins ignored. Few people even consider it a behavioural problem any more. Next to masturbation, fornication ranks second, in my estimation. The number of couples living together without benefit of clergy increases daily. Then comes adultery. According to Church teaching, if even one member of a relationship is divorced and the couple lives together before the previous marriage has been annulled, that couple can only live together as brother and sister. Fat chance!

In my own estimation, and a far greater sin, is the number of couples who are forced into marriage because of religious values or untimely pregnancies. That group of sins and sinners is largely overlooked in the Church's catalogue. A monolithic male hierarchical structure continues

to maintain what is increasingly becoming an untenable position. All the posturing, pomp and pontificating, however, no longer have the power to intimidate and control that they once had. People are beginning to think for themselves and to trust the power of the human spirit that enlivens and unites them. That power has enabled them to stand up, speak up and demand a more human and humane stance of matters of sexuality and sexual orientation.

I have to applaud Hall's bravery in confronting the forces before him. I applaud the widespread support he has received and hope that he will continue to receive. I can only hope that he will not become either a mere pawn in a bigger game or a casualty along the road to growth in understanding.

That his case has now been championed by the likes of EGALE, Allan Rock and Liberal M.P.P., George Smitherman is most encouraging.

At the time of writing, I don't know anything about the outcome of this current struggle for Equity, if not Equality, in Human Rights for Homosexuals. I do know that it suspiciously resembles the "Don't ask. Don't tell." policy of the U.S. Military. Like that policy, it has a bewildering and contradictory level of legal support. At the same time, like that policy, which contradicts the spirit of the American Constitution, the Durham Roman Catholic Separate School Board position contradicts the spirit of the very teachings it claims to uphold. I believe that it is an inner realization of this contradiction that ultimately brought Board Chairperson, Mary Ann Martin, to tears.

Oddly enough, as I follow the progress of this story, though, another image keeps coming to mind. It is that of Martin Luther walking up to the church door at Wittenberg and nailing a piece of paper to it. That simple action had widespread and long lasting results. It ultimately changed the course of history.

Marc Hall, you do not have a hammer and list of theses. You just want to take your boyfriend to a dance. But, you are not the first, nor will you be the last, to stand up for what you know in your heart is right and good. Would that there were more like you. You are a credit to your Church, your School, your Family and the Communities you represent.

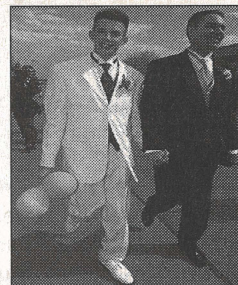
God speed you in your quest and God bless you on your journey.

NOEL SPRINGWOOD served most of his life as a Roman Catholic Priest. A Voice exclusive.

Marc Hall: Teen Attends Prom - A Movement Celebrates

By A.J. Mahari

Many in the Canadian gay-rights movement see much to be optimistic about!



Magic is afoot. Finally! Gay teens stand by -- it may begin to get easier to be yourself in any publicly-funded Ontario high schools -- reason for us all to celebrate?

Seventeen year old Marc Hall and his twenty-one year old boyfriend Jean-Paul Dummon attended Hall's Catholic High School Prom Friday May 10, 2002 after the judge granted Hall the injunction he sought.

Most agree that the case that remains to be argued in court is one that sees gay rights on pretty solid ground, legally.

Hall was relieved to have won the injunction and by all accounts had a great time at his prom. There was, however, one report of a class-mate of Hall's yelling the ever-popular, all-too unimaginative, and over-used comment, "God created Adam and Eve, not Adam and Steve."

The coalition in support of Marc Hall and his legal challenge is a considerable group of very influential gay-rights activists and sizeable in number. This augers well for all of us as these dedicated people continue to be on the forefront of what results in you and I having more of the legal rights that we are fully-well entitled to have in Canada.

That said, there are those in the LGBT community, Canada-wide, who feel that Marc Hall's legal battle to go to his prom and all that entails is not as big a deal as it has been made out to be. There have been other gay teens who have attended proms in other communities. Some, without effort and others only after fighting for that right. A recent news story in the Kitchener-Waterloo record quoted Waterloo-Wellington Region's Catholic School Board as saying that a same-sex teen couple attending their prom in this area would not be a problem at all.

Some see this whole prom issue as being blown out of proportion in terms of its importance. But, say those who back this fight one hundred percent, these issues are of paramount importance for our youth. LGBT youth have a suicide rate that is three times the national average of those who are in the same age group but who are straight.

So, clearly, the issue is not just about attending one's prom openly as a same-

sex couple.

The issue is also very much about teens being accepted for who they are by their peers. Something that those of us who are much older didn't even have an opportunity to have. We must not be ageist here, we must not allow any remaining pain or bitterness about what we may not have had access to. We must get behind and support Marc Hall and his on-going legal case. We must get behind our lesbian and gay youth. Let them know that we care about them and their plight and that while they have more freedom than most of us older folks knew at their age, they still don't have enough.

We want the lesbian and gay youth of today to appreciate their history and all that previous generations of us have done that has enabled them to lead much more open lives. Therefore, we must reciprocate this by lending whatever support we can as strong and courageous gay teens like Marc Hall step forward to claim what is rightfully theirs in life. Marc Hall is, by all accounts, an accidental-activist. A young man who just wanted to take his boyfriend to his prom. Having done that, Marc Hall has become a role model for a generation of gay and lesbian teens.

There will be much more to come as this case gets back to court. Whether you agree with it all or not there's no denying that there is great interest in this. Interest rarely extended to anything that is not equally as important as it is interesting.

Another victory down, many many more to go. I'd like to express the appreciation and respect that I have for Egale, Liberal M.P.P. George Smitherman, who is openly gay, the C.A.W who have been such a big part of the coalition in support of Marc Hall as well.

Canadian LGBT have a lot to be thankful for to the activists who ensure that the quality of our lives as LGBT continues to improve.

Bravo to Marc Hall for standing up for himself and for refusing to be shoved back into the closet!

Freedom and Remembrance

Unique Queer Lives

By Mary Ann Moore

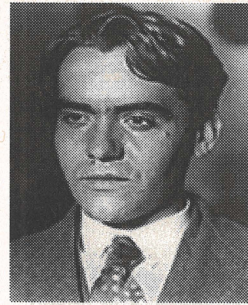
All queer lives are unique. All lives are unique period. But the word came to me for a title for this column to celebrate the uniqueness in us all. As for that word "queer" it's one of those great reclaimed words. When I was one of a group of other self-employed people in 1997, I described the word "queer" as meaning lesbian, gay, bisexual, transsexual, transgendered and those people who hang out with us and speak up for us.

Queer folk have not been free to love whom they choose or even to go to their high school prom with their boyfriends or girlfriends. But we do have the freedom to remember those who have gone before us and to celebrate them. I'd like to celebrate those who have been executed for the way they have lived in the world as well as people who are still with us creating their way in the world on a daily basis.

As a poet, I'm always interested in learning about the lives of other poets. Federico Garcia Lorca is one of those poets, as well as a playwright, I see quoted a lot in other things I've read. He was born in Fuente Vagueros, Granada, Spain of Arabic-Andalusian roots on June 5, 1898. His friend, Chilean poet Pablo Neruda, described Garcia Lorca as a winged heart and a crystalline waterfall, an extravagant *duende* with a magnetic joyfulness who was easily alarmed and superstitious.

The *duende* (meaning "lord of the house") was traditionally an Andalusian trickster figure but Garcia Lorca used it as a name for creative possession, for inspiration in the presence of death, for that "scorched spirit", as poet Edward Hirsch describes it, that sometimes takes over in moments of artistic creation. In Garcia Lorca's speech, "Play and Theory of the Duende", he said, "The magical property of a poem is to remain possessed by *duende* that can baptize in dark water all who look at it, for with *duende* it is easier to love and understand, and one can be sure of being loved and understood".

"They paint hospitals blue for him" Pablo Neruda wrote in his "Oda a Federico Garcia Lorca". For Neruda, blue was the most beautiful colour "like the dome of the sky, rising toward liberty and joy." Even the sadness of hospitals could be transformed into beautiful blue buildings by Federico's personal magic that instilled a mood of joy around him. Garcia Lorca wrote his own *odas* or odes including one to another gay poet, Walt Whitman, published in *Poeta en Nueva York* and probably composed while Garcia Lorca was in residence at Columbia University during the depression of 1929-30.



Federico Garcia Lorca

Not for one moment, Adam of blood, male,/lone man in the sea, beautiful aged Walt Whitman,/because through the terraces,/clustered around the bars,/pouring out of sewers in bunches,/trembling between the legs of chauffeurs/or revolving on the platforms of absinthe,/the pansies, Walt Whitman, dreamed of you.

And that last line in Spanish: *los maricas, Walt Whitman, te senalan.* From "Ode to Walt Whitman" translated by Stephen Spender and J. L. Gili included in *The Selected Poems of Federico Garcia Lorca* edited by Francisco Garcia Lorca & Donald M. Allen

Garcia Lorca was assassinated by the Falangists when they were occupying Granada on August 19, 1936 about a month after the Spanish Civil War began, by being dragged into and shot in a field, his body tossed into an unmarked grave. The man who had "brightened and perfumed like jasmine the stage set" of Spain, as Neruda described him, was gone forever as well as the Spain that had existed while he was alive.

The first of his plays to be produced in Spain (in 1950), *La Casa de Bernada Alba* or "The House of Bernada Alba" is the first of Federico Garcia Lorca's plays to be produced at the Shaw Festival this summer with preview performances beginning in June. It's one of three folk tragedies he wrote about the pressures of convention. It's not about a gay man but could be. One of the themes of the play is female sexuality curbed and frustrated to having to wait for an acceptable match. "To understand poetry," Garcia Lorca once said, "we need four white walls and a silence where the poet's voice can weep and sing." The four white walls evoke space, solitude, a shelter where one can experience simplicity. As poet Edward Hirsch has written, "It must be a silent space because only in such silence can one listen to the words and daydream one's way back into the house of being". In "The House of Bernada Alba" five sisters are confined and denied as the Shaw calendar says "something intangible but vital to life - the need for love".

Mary Ann Moore is a Guelph poet and writer, founder of Flying Mermaids Writing Circles and Retreats. She intends to go to Spain, learn Spanish and read the work of Federico Garcia Lorca in its original language. A Voice Exclusive.

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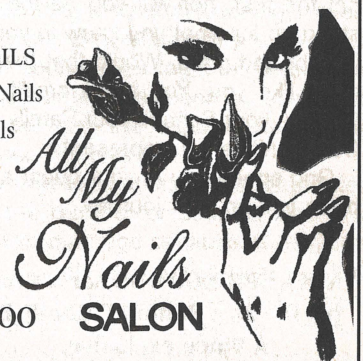
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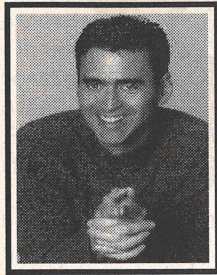
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Pride: Marching for the Right Reason



By Michael Alvear



Watching a Pride march is like watching Ralph Reed, Jerry Falwell and Gary Bauer go over the Grand Canyon in your new convertible.

On the one hand you get to see freaks go over the edge. On the other hand, it comes at a tremendous personal sacrifice.

Pride marches went over the cliff a few years ago when we decided all that crap about rights and equality was cutting into our partying. In the early years going to Pride was an admirable, courageous act, the equivalent of going on a firewalk.

Today, Pride marches are more like freak shows than rites of passage. And bad ones at that. My biggest beef against them isn't that they suck (they do—I've seen better floats in high school homecoming parades) or that they tear down everything we work for (we act out every offensive stereotype we spent the past year trying to break down).

No, my biggest beef against pride marches is that they celebrate the wrong thing—being gay. Why? Because there's nothing intrinsically good about being gay. For every Walt Whitman there's a Roy Cohn. For every Elton John there's a Jeffrey Dahmer. For every gay hero there's a gay asshole.

If we're going to celebrate anything, it should be the way we *handle* being gay. Like surviving it, for starters.

There is no other group in America—none—that is so systematically and publicly attacked by society. From birth to death we're constantly faced with the threat of abandonment, isolation—even physical attacks—from friends, strangers, teammates, families and churches.

Things have improved dramatically but we still live in a society that bares its fangs at us every chance it gets. And you just never know whether it's a pose or a poise to strike. Ask Judy Shepard.

You can't live under those conditions without it profoundly affecting you. **The real source of pride in our lives isn't that we're gay; it's that we're survivors. And our survival is a testament to our resiliency, our character, not our gayness.**

For those of us who faced the sometimes mortal danger of being different and didn't turn to the bottle, a razor or a fake marriage there is real reason to celebrate, real reason for pride. We've

kept our humanity in the face of brutality. We've learned how to bloom in barren soil.

In straight life, heroism is a usually a one-time phenomenon. A dangerous event happens *once* and the hero rises to the occasion with strength and courage. In gay life, the dangerous event happens over and over and over again. Every day somebody says they hate fags. Everyday some church wants to excommunicate us. Everyday the military wants to banish us. Every day some parent throws their gay kid out the door.

Like most gay people, my life is filled with the opportunity for fear to flourish. Cowardice and heroism are wings that beat simultaneously, jerking me in one direction and then another. The times I am heroic I'm quite clear that I'm not forging a gay identity; I'm forging human character.

And that's what we should be celebrating at Pride—character. Not homosexuality. Self-esteem isn't built by wearing buttlers chaps at an all-gay event straight people won't attend. It's bringing a male date to the company picnic. Pride isn't forged because you sit in the back of a convertible wearing a dress. It's earned when you don't let go of your boyfriend's hand, even when you see straight people coming. Self-respect doesn't come because you flash your tits to a drunken crowd. It comes from telling that nice lady sitting next to you on the plane the real reason why some girl hasn't snatched you up yet.

A lowered voice, a hand unclasped, a fact omitted—these are the words and gestures that make up the language of being gay. A raised voice, a hand clasped, a fact clearly stated—these are the words and gestures that make up the language of being a hero. Celebrating our gayness is like congratulating grass for being green. Celebrating our heroism, now *that's* worth a parade.

Michael Alvear lives with Zoey and Zack, his lesbian Labrador and girlie-boy Vizsla. He can be reached at [REDACTED] Submitted to The Voice by Michael Alvear.



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Transgender Story



Gender is Fluid

By Lyn McGinnis



"Transgender" is a noun equivalent to "man" and "woman", and as such should not be spelled or pronounced with an "-ed" suffix. Just as we would not say a person is "manned" or "womanned", we should not say a person is "transgendered". Not all of the transgender community is in agreement about the use of "transgender" and "transgendered". When adding transgender to the already long list of bisexual, gay and lesbian people, it is important to include transgender at the end, preceded by "and/or". We do this because it emphasizes that people can be bisexual, gay or lesbian, and transgender, but are not always both.

The message that is conveyed by the actual living of everyday life by those of us who are transgender is that gender is not a static either/or proposition -- gender is fluid.

For some time our community has made a conscious effort to be inclusive to all those identifying with those of us who are transgender. Lesbians and gay men began the modern liberation movement. For the longest time bisexuals, who always worked and fought for this community, were shunned for not fitting the either/or dogma of *acceptable sexual identity*. This debate raged during the previous decade and has largely settled with level heads finally acknowledging bisexuality as a real and legitimate orientation and biphobia as just another form of homophobia. For lesbians and gays to say, "you can only be gay" just sounded too much like 'hets' say-

ing "you can only be straight."

But what about that pesky new definition of queer - *transgender*? Unlike lesbian, gay, and bisexual, it cannot easily be reduced to what someone does or prefers sexually. It embraces a spectrum of identity and activity ranging from recreational cross dressers to someone going through the immensely heroic process of gender reassignment surgery (transsexual) to completely change their biological sex.

Our culture uses the terms sex and gender as if they are the same. Very simply put, sex is about biology, gender is about psychology. Gender is an inherited package of behaviour, varying dramatically from culture to culture and throughout history, artificially attached to biological identity. Throughout history there has always been a small minority who just don't fit the mold. While sex and sexual behaviour are, generally speaking, universal (with the exception of intersex persons possessing both sets of genitalia), gender behaviour is not.


There is a lot of room on this spectrum between transvestites and transsexuals for ambiguity in presentation and personal identity. As such, transgender is a very general term applying to a broad range of behaviour and identities. Its primary focus is on gender, not sexuality. It is possible to be both transgender and lesbian, transgender and gay, transgender and bisexual and even, transgender and straight! This makes this aspect of our community the hardest to pin down and categorize. To be transgender in our community is to be simultaneously highly visible and completely mysterious. In our dogmatic, hierarchical culture insisting on either/or categories, this means transgender persons are the queerest of us all.

Despite much growth and change, this ambiguity is seen as suspect in our society. It is easy to point to other parts of the

world and judge how intolerant they are to sexual and gender diversity. It is far more difficult to acknowledge it among ourselves. I have a couple of Male-to-Female Transsexual friends, who always knew they were women and have always loved women. After their surgery they changed from men loving women to women loving women. After all their anguish and pain they now have to suffer yet another indignity - having lesbians reject them because they are not viewed as *real* women. The need for "level heads" in this community understanding these basic facts and showing just a tiny bit of humanity is urgent.

As a bisexual and transgender person, I speak both from personal experience, long conversation with transgender friends, and excellent resources published in the last few years. Many older lesbians and gay men can recall when there was little or nothing positive written about their experience. Bisexuals do not have to think as far back for this to be the case for them. Transgender need only look back to the mid-1990's.

In each case, a courageous individual or a group identifying with the marginalized population, with the right academic and literary credentials, opened the door. Often this began with anthologies of many writers initiating the flood of material available today. Now every bookstore and library has significant space set aside for queer issues, including information about transgender people. Along with publishing, the other outlet which has surely been the salvation of the shunned is the Internet. It is now completely impossible to visit all the web sites out there created to celebrate every facet of queer culture. These range from organizational sites representing communities all over the world, to the innumerable and lovingly tended personal sites. No part of our community has benefited more from the Internet than the



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broad spectrum of persons and groups identifying as transgender - the last let out of our queer closet.

As any marginalized person knows, these external voices are vital to helping us deal with isolation and to grow to accept our identities. We are social beings and need to feel we are truly part of the human race.

For me as a transgender person, the first time I saw my reality clearly reflected was in a pioneering book titled: "The Spirit and the Flesh: Sexual Diversity in American Indian Culture," by gay anthropologist Walter L. Williams. There I learned about the rich tradition of "Two-Spirited" persons existing quietly throughout most First Nations peoples in North, Central and South America in the past and continuing today. Boys who were identified early as being "feminine" were trained differently and took on unique roles in their community. Girls who were more interested in hunting and other traditional male pursuits were likewise distinctively brought up. It was the first time I encountered the heretical concept (in this culture) of gender being fluid and in such traditional societies, gender roles being optional. It is here I discovered my identity as being "between" this culture's gender extremes of "feminine" and "masculine." Many of the world's older, less dogmatic, non-Christian/homophobic cultures, have always known and honoured these persons in their midst and given them important roles in their community. The other work that solidified my own identity and opened my eyes to my hidden history in the world was "Transgender Warriors" by Leslie Feinberg, where the long history of repression of transgender persons throughout history was carefully detailed.

Can we even imagine transgendered persons actually having an honoured place in our society? Perhaps in a small way we can begin to see something of what this would be like when we see how loved and admired cross dressing performers are in our queer community. We have given those with the talent to cross the supposedly solid gender boundaries a significant role in our Pride celebrations and as a regular part of our club culture.

In enthusiastically cheering these daring and flamboyant personalities we celebrate our own crossed boundaries. We enjoy the dynamic tensions created by men dressed as women in a culture so rigid in its definitions of masculinity. Women dressing as men is an equal form of exuberant defiance of "femininity."

As human beings we are all far more mysterious and ambiguous than we care to admit. Transgender persons are a highly visible reminder that we are complex creatures refusing to fit into any insecure cul-

ture's gender rules. **As transgender people we are the ultimate queers.** We are, by our visibility, the first target of abuse by homophobes for so blatantly defying gender norms. We are, by our visibility, the first target for censure by insecure lesbians and gays when we are "too visible" at pride events and other public gatherings. **By our existence we reveal the lie of gender absolutes.** We are as deeply

part of this community as any of you and we are elusive and different enough to slip out of any binding definitions and remain ourselves.

It is the very fluid nature of what gender truly is, and all that it just isn't, that we must learn to not only accept but celebrate.

Lyn McGinnis, of Waterloo, is a writer, web and graphic designer of BlueStarWeb Design, Voice Assistant Editor and ad graphics designer. A Voice Exclusive.

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Jade cannot be carved because of its hardness. Shapes are achieved through sawing and grinding with wet abrasives, such as quartz crushed garnets and carborandum. Prior to 1800 few pieces are signed or dated. Stylistic considerations are used for dating. The Ch'ien Lung period (1736-95) is considered the "golden age" of jade.

SHADES OF GREY



'GayLand' is Fragamented:
Pride in the name of the
blame the shame game

By Ms. A.J. Mahari

Fragmented LGBT communities. Everyone wonders why. Wonder no more. The answer is simply-complicated.

'GayLand' is an enigmatic pseudo-utopia nestled knee deep in a roaring rapt river, and yet, oh so thirsty.

This is the time of year so many focus on Pride Celebrations. What "Gay Pride" actually is seems to be getting less clear for many with every passing year. Is it just a party? Is it a chance to be as outrageous as possible while on public display? Is that the purpose? Or, does it mean more than that? What, I wonder might the opposite of pride be? In a word -- shame.

There is healthy shame, but here I refer to toxic shame. The kind of shame that is internalized when difference and diversity meet with oppression as opposed to acceptance.

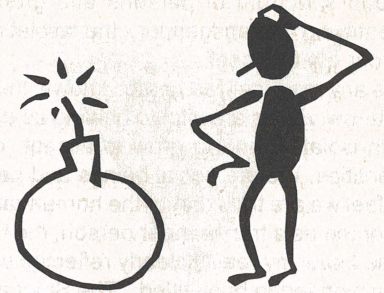
Writes M. Scott Peck, in his book, "The Road Less Traveled", "Toxic shame, the shame that binds you, is experienced as

the all pervasive sense that I am flawed and defective as a human being. Toxic shame is no longer an emotion that signals our limits, it is a state of being, a core identity. Toxic shame gives you a sense of worthlessness, a sense of failing and falling short as a human being. Toxic shame is a rupture of the self with the self."

This oppression leads the oppressed to, in essence, live outside of themselves. Authenticity is lost through the rupture of self that is toxic shame.

If one does not have his/her differences affirmed this gives rise to a false-self -- the shamed self -- which then fails to accept and celebrate difference in others. The very projective nature of this shamed false-self leaves those who are shamed actively trying to shame others in order to feel better about themselves. This is most often done by attempting to control others instead of controlling oneself.

This is not just an LGBT thing. This is a



human thing. But, you take this human thing mix it with low-self esteem, low self-worth, lack of confidence (often misrepresented through bravado as an abundance of confidence) and mix it with the myriad of issues that we have to go through as LGBT people, on top of what those who are straight go through, and the result is often a very profound woundedness that seeks to wound.

This woundedness, toxic shame, is a bomb waiting to go off in the lives of many. It is a bomb that goes off all-too-often between the different segments of the LGBT community.

Peck also writes, "All of us have a smattering of neurotic and character disordered personality traits. The major problem in all of our lives is to decide and clarify responsibilities. Such clarification requires a good relationship with oneself. This is precisely what no shame-based person has. In fact a toxically shamed person has an adver-

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arial relationship with him/herself. Toxic shame—the shame that binds us—is the basis for both neurotic and character disordered syndromes of behaviour.”

It is this adversarial relationship to self that creates so much of the controlling unhealthy behaviour between members of the different segments that make up our cultural mosaic. I can see no place where this plays out more than between men and women, particularly lesbians and gays.

Gender warfare and tremendous divisions, philosophically, morally, and spiritually, between lesbians and gays, is a by-product of this toxic shame. It also extends out to those who are transgender, bi-sexual or in any other way different.

May the deity of your choice (or lack thereof) help you if you don't fit the box. The most cherished box in our patriarchal race-conscious society is that of white male. Still, in many areas of our society to not be white and male is to be subject to much insidiously-implied shame.

Not that those who aren't white and male feel shame about being female or people of colour -- no. It's not about how one feels inside, this effect of shame, it's all about how one is constantly treated "less than" by the projected out shame of those who feel a false sense of entitlement to omit and devalue.

Tell me that "Gay Culture" is not 'male-driven'. The very word "gay" has become synonymous with male for most and "Gay Culture" is often experienced as meaning "man's culture" in the LGBT community. Just ask a more effeminate gay man or a transgender person or a lesbian. There are gay men who don't fit the stereotype I describe. However, all-too-many gay men do fit it. Their misogyny, I theorize, comes from deeply rooted toxic shame that they have not yet healed. The result is that they often subjugate women.

While many might like to think that we are past this, or better than this, the truth is we aren't. We are very much in the trenches of gender warfare. Many lesbians feel held hostage by the tyrannical terrorism of such subtle omission by "Gay Culture". *Should we separate? Have separate communities, "L", "G", "B", and "T"? Ever heard the "joke" about how an LGBT firing squad lines up --- in a circle?. What's that say? Telling isn't it?*

We are not going to see the fragmentation in our communities end any time soon. It won't end until the majority of those who are self-absorbed and sex-crazed stop

long enough to take a look in the mirror and take stock of what it is they most fear about difference and heal the very shame that drives so much of what it is that they value and espouse as being worthy.

"Gay culture" needs healing. "Gay culture" needs to work hard at ending the perpetuation of the "us" versus "them" mentality that for so long it has hidden behind in the name of the oppression that the straight world shames it with.

Is it just some gay men? No! Many lesbians also must work at their acceptance of difference. This work must be done in the shadows of a culture that is largely invisible and quiet. Most lesbian lives are lead far from the glare and glitter of many gay males lives.

While there are exceptions within each gender clearly we shame each other. The ways in which we so often fail to relate to each other inclusively with respect and dig-

nity are the roots of most of the fragmentation that exists, to one degree or another, in all LGBT communities.

Whatever toxic shame that one holds inside will pollute many efforts to build bridges between the genders. While women and men, lesbians and

gays, stand at opposing ends of this bridge of shame, all the while denying that there is a problem, imagine the plight of the transgender or the intersexed. How on earth can we begin to extend respect, acceptance, and understanding to them until we can first extend it to ourselves, and to each other? If you don't really understand the vast differences between the boxes, those being, the male and female genders, how on earth will we stop the holocaust of horror that is inflicted upon those who live outside these two gender boxes?

Toxic shame is the root of oppression. What isn't healed is acted out over and over again. Perhaps the greatest shame of all is that far too many in our communities continue to deny the root causes of so much of our divisiveness. They'd rather just party. They'd rather celebrate (false) Pride once a year and play the blame game the rest of the year than do the necessary work to grow into an authentic pride that is lived all year 'round. A pride that celebrates personhood, irrespective of gender. A pride that celebrates healing and not the perpetuation of wounding. A pride that refuses to play the blame the shame game by ducking or deflecting personal responsibility. A pride that doesn't cel-

ebate just being "gay". "Gay Culture," it seems, would rather celebrate its mere "gayness". Why? Being gay isn't the sum total of who we are.

The politics of Pride, in so many communities, are born out of this very gender warfare that has its roots in toxic shame. Many would rather "power-grab" and play at building community then actually build it. Why?

There is a bridge. Every day each and every one of us makes a choice whether or not to honestly walk halfway across that bridge that is the healing of our own toxic shame and the acceptance of difference. Each and every day we are faced with decisions about inclusion or exclusion. More often than not so much of what is "Gay Culture" is working hard to find ways to exclude. Gender, body size, race, political ideologies, life philosophies, the list is endless. The list that divides us when we let it -- is endless.

Yes, I guess, 'GayLand' is really just a microcosm of the macrocosm. Pride, in 'GayLand,' is an illusion. What can we do about it, right?

Some of us still have hope. Some of us believe that in spite of all the oppression, misogyny, invisibility, rampant-commercialism, patriarchy and shame-driven pride that lesbians, and bi's and transgenders will feel like the shoe of "Gay Culture" fits us too. Or is it worth having it fit anymore?

Why are LGBT communities so fragmented? Do you still wonder? Wonder no more. The answer is simply-complicated. There is something about the chaos -- something about the "infighting", something about the false belief driven by a deeply rooted toxic shame that many still have that just screams out to be the "winner." The winner at all cost and no matter what the cost. Hollow perceived 'victory' after hollow perceived 'victory' -- loss in actuality -- nobody wins. Who benefits? There's just something, so many think, that is so damn special about being a "trendy-gay-male" -- balderdash!

Pride, oh yeah, there's something to be said for celebrating the fact that all of us, together, male or female, in between, both or neither, are all standing knee deep in the river of GayLand -- and make no mistake about it until we heal the shame that results in such fragmented reality -- we will all continue to be dying of thirst.

Bloody shame!

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. A Voice Exclusive.

Gay couple faces an uphill battle

By Jules Graham

Young gay male couples? Are they a rarity? We hear so much about young gay men not seeming to maintain relationships. I know two young gay men who are dating each other and defying the stereotypes seemingly swimming upstream within gay culture. They are engaged and fighting their way through this tough and often homophobic world. I sat down with them to ask them about becoming engaged, breaking the stereotypes and everything in between. This is their story.

Media coverage over the past 20 years has been portraying homosexuals in more of a positive light and stereotypes about gay men and women have been getting better. However, according to two gay men, in spite of the positive changes, being homosexual in a small town remains difficult.

Living together in Woodstock Ont., Matt, 20, and Dave, 19, who did not want their last names used, first dated in 1999.

However, the relationship soon came to an end. "Dave was my first boyfriend. Right after I came out, one of our friends hooked us up together, originally just to talk and it progressed from there. But it didn't work out. I wasn't ready to be open with my friends and be in a serious relationship. So it kind of broke off," recalled Matt.

According to Dave, they did not talk to each other for a year and a half after the breakup. Then, in 2001 at a party, they started talking again. Before they knew it, they were spending a lot of time together and things once again became serious. They have now been together for 10 months, and live in Woodstock, Ont.

Uphill Battle

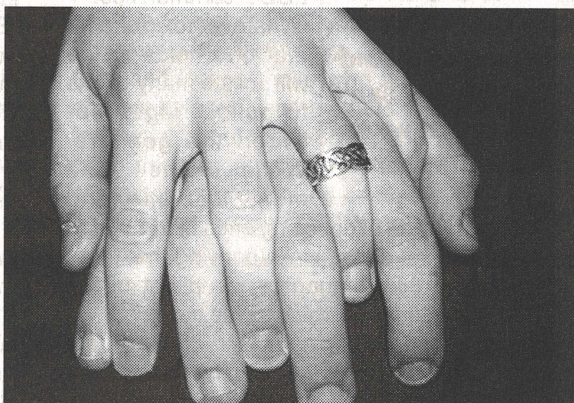
Long before Dave and Matt began dating, the two individually faced the initial reaction from friends and family when they came out. Dave knew around the age of 14 he was bisexual and Matt said he easily came out on his 18th birthday.

"I think more than anything else, I was more paranoid about what the media made coming out look like. But I didn't have a hard time coming out at all," said Matt.

However, Dave has had to continually face an uphill battle with his family, who

have a hard time dealing with his lifestyle. "I've been out a lot longer than Matt and I'd have to say the hardest thing I've faced has been my family. Because they don't acknowledge it at all, they won't talk about it at all," said Dave. "I'll try to talk to my mom about it and she'll just completely pretend it doesn't exist, like I'm straight and that this is a phase I'm going through. She's extremely Christian so her point of view is that I'm going to go to hell for it. She's literally put up a wall."

Matt said the situation with Dave's family has been really hard. "I can literally count, without exaggeration, the amount of times his mother has actually said any-



thing to me. No, I can count the words she has said to me on one hand," Matt said.

Dave added he feels stuck between Matt and his family. "It's also hard for me because I'm in the middle of it," said Dave. "You can't just completely turn your back on your family so what do you do? In my opinion, I think my parents are being completely irrational and wrong. But I also have to be really careful not to sound like I'm defending my family to Matt when I'm not." If that was not enough to deal with, Dave has even had to face physical hatred. "I've been called names. I've been beat up twice. I've been shot in the shoulder and ass" said Dave, who is now able to laugh about when he was traumatized but fine after being shot by a neighbour with a BB gun.

My two dads

In addition to having to deal with pressure from family, Dave is also raising his

two-year-old daughter, the result of a past relationship. Dave said he has spent a lot of time thinking about how Matt fits into his daughter's life.

"I think she sees him now as an uncle figure. She knows we're together because when she sees Matt she's like, 'Matt. Dad.' And when I'm out with her she'll bring up Matt," said Dave.

"She's not a stupid kid. She's going to grow up and know daddy has a boyfriend or fiancé," Matt said.

Dave said he will never keep his homosexuality a secret from her. He said since she has always been around people with piercings and tattoos, she tends to stare more at people who don't have any piercings. "So, I don't think she's going to ask, 'Why is daddy gay?' She'll probably ask, 'Why don't other daddys have boyfriends?'"

The next step

In September 2001, after asking Matt's mother for her blessing, Dave asked Matt to marry him while they were out at a local bar. Matt said he was surprised but answered yes right away.

"He gave me a ring he's had for years and we had people coming up to us left, right and centre congratulating us," said Matt. "Big huge guys that I would have thought would've flipped out or been paranoid, were coming up and congratulating me. It was a great night."

The two said they are in no rush to be married. "There's no reason to rush into it because I think the idea of marriage is more of a promise because the whole thing is only ceremonial and symbolic for us because there's no legal basis to it. Not in Ontario ... not yet," said Matt.

Although they have ideas about what they would like the ceremony to be like, they have not set a date and said the only plan they are sure of is that they want to be surrounded by friends.

"That we even have this promise with each other is good enough for us. There's no reason to rush into it," said Matt. "We're 19 and 20 and we have a lot of time."

Changing the movement

If you want to see Dave get upset about something, ask him about the gay-rights movement.



"I think there are huge flaws in the gay-rights system. It's pathetic! And I think one of the biggest problems is that our country is based so much on Christianity," said Dave, who had to stop talking because he became too flustered to carry on.

After taking a deep breath, Dave continued. "It's almost like we're a novelty, we don't really exist, we're only seen on TV and people think we're big sex fanatics and all we do all day is go around and find the next boy to sleep with," said Dave. "But it's not like that at all."

"I think a lot of the negativity is coming from people who ask, 'Why are we going to pass a law for these queers to go out and get married when they are probably going to end up cheating on each other, getting AIDS and dying off in 10 years?'" Matt also sees flaws within the movement. "I think the problem with the gay-rights movement is that there's no action behind it. Look at (Gay) Pride (Day). Pride is supposed to be one of the biggest events within the gay-rights movement with the parade and such every year. But look what happens! You have a whole bunch of people walking around topless, bottomless, soaking each other with super soakers." said Matt.

"It's putting us on display!" Dave said. "It's not helping us fit in and be normal. They see us as these guys with big fairy wings and we wear short shorts and run around topless and bump and grind with everyone!"

"For 364 days a year we're normal. But the one day it matters the most and the whole world is going to take a look at us we go out there and we're a bunch of exhibitionists and now I totally disagree with the whole idea of Pride," said Matt. "People won't take us seriously because we don't present ourselves seriously."

Breaking the stereotypes

Matt and Dave also said they have a problem with how gay males are portrayed on television. They said they're tired of seeing gay males as men who cannot main-

tain a positive monogamous gay relationship.

However, even worse than television's portrayal they said, are the stereotypes about gay men that are out there.

"All queers are sissies. That bugs me the most," said Matt. "Everyone's different. You hear people say that they don't want to sit in the same room as queers ... well, I'm sorry you have! It's so dumb! I can play basketball, I can play volleyball, I can play any sport that boys can play."

"My biggest pet peeve is that everyone thinks 'You're gay, well where's your lisp? Where's your credit card only for Le Chateau?'" said Dave.

"We don't all dress the same. We don't all talk the same," said Matt.

"They all think we're Jack from (NBC's TV show) Will and Grace," said Dave.

Matt also has his thoughts on nature versus nurture. "Everyone has their own theory on it. The whole idea of being an 'ex-gay' or 'ex-ex-gay,'" said Matt.

"Once you're gay, you're gay!" added Dave.

"You can't have nature without nurture and vice versa. I think it's biological but it's also environmental," said Matt. "I think you have to have it in you to be homosexual from birth but I think some homosexuals can repress it or hide it if their environment is harsh."

Woodstock vs. Toronto

In order to be able to live a normal life, Matt and Dave both want to be living in a larger city, preferably Toronto.

"When you live in Toronto, you can walk down the street holding hands and it's just another couple, not two guys -- a couple," said Matt, adding they do not display their relationship when they are out in public in Woodstock.

"If we flaunted our homosexuality, it'd be like Marilyn Manson walking down the street in Tillsonburg! It just wouldn't go over well and people would stop and stare. But if we were in Toronto, no one would stop to look," said Dave.

They said living in Woodstock has not been too bad. "Like at the bars we used to go to, everyone knew, but heaven forbid we got out on the dance floor together and slow danced!" said Matt. "People see it as being rubbed in their faces while we see it as a normal life."

"You're constantly walking on eggshells. You don't want to offend. And you don't want to provoke. It's not so much that you live in fear, you just don't want to bring anything on yourself that you don't have to. It's much easier for us to be happier in our own little world with the people who accept us. It's a small sacrifice. No one wants to see anyone make out at the bar anyway! That's offensive gay or straight," said Matt.

The future

Matt and Dave both feel the acceptance of homosexuality is increasing and the perception is growing positive. They said they do not care if they are "officially" married within the next 10 years.

"Even if we don't have that piece of paper there will be an understanding between us," said Dave.

"People get married to show that they'll promise each other they'll be together for the rest of their life and whether you have a slip of paper or a symbolic ceremony, who cares if the province of Ontario or the country of Canada recognizes you as a couple? Are relationships for the country?" asked Matt.

The two want others, who may be homophobic or believe the stereotypes, not to be too quick to judge. Also, they said straight people should think about what they do together out in public.

"Remember that when you sneak a little kiss here or a hug there with your partner, your boyfriend or girlfriend, there's people that can't do that and you're actually pretty lucky," said Matt.

Jules Graham is a second-year journalism student at Conestoga College in Kitchener. A Voice Exclusive.

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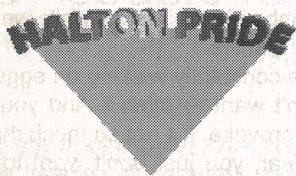
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AREA PRIDE EVENTS



www.haltonpride.org

Saturday June 8, 2002

The Halton Pride Committee is please to announce the 3rd Halton Pride Picnic will be held on June 8th at Sheridan College's Trafalgar Campus in Oakville 12noon - 6pm.

The picnic will remain a family event with entertainment for all ages, clowns, magic acts, jugglers, fortune tellers, bbq, raffle prizes and 4 live bands. "For this community, this style really works, we have such a large area to provide service to and this is the one and only day where the Halton LGBT community can come together with friends and family and be themselves and meet others in their own community." says Logan. "We love being able to provide this day for the LGBT community and for the whole Halton region." All the money collected from the bbq will be donated to The Friends For Life Bike Rally, an annual six-day bike ride from Toronto to Montreal, which raises money for people living with HIV/AIDS.

Two new features of the Annual Pride Picnic will include:

1) Halton LGBT Parenting Group Inaugural Meeting at 2pm. "We identified a service gap in Halton for LGBT parents and parent wannabes at last years Pride Picnic, so we thought we would start a group." says Logan who will be attending the meeting himself with his partner of 14 years.

2) The after Pride party dance will run from 8pm to 1am at Sheridan College's The Cage. "We hope that with the picnic and then the after pride dance that we are covering a diverse range of interests for the Halton LGBT Community."

Website www.haltonpride.org for more information or contact Marcus at



Waterloo-Wellington Regional Pride June 6-9, 2002

**Kitchener Ontario,
June 7-9, 2002**

Queer Film Festival, June 7 - 9, 2002 at the Princess Cinema, 6 Princess Street West, Waterloo

LGBT themed Art Show - TBA

Saturday June 8, 2002

Workshops, Conestoga Room, Kitchener City Hall

10:15am - 11:15am ACCKWA (AIDS Committee of Cambridge, Kitchener, Waterloo and Area) "HIV Workshop"
11:30am - 12:30am PFLAG (Parents and Friends of Lesbians & Gays) "Family Values/Keeping Families Together"
12:45pm - 1:45pm DAVE VERVOORT (Marriage and Family Therapist) "Who We Are In The Community"
2:00pm - 3:00pm PATTI MOSES (Anselma House) "Abuse In Lesbian Relationships"
3:15pm - 4:15pm D i a n n e Roedding (Regional Health Unit) "Safer Sex In The New Millennium"
4:30pm - 5:30pm ROBERTA ROBINSON "Learning About Transgendered Issues" to be announced - LEE DICKEY and LEE HORTON "Unitarians and the LGBT Communities"
5:30pm - 6:00pm followed by a question and answer period.

Community Dance - Bridgeport Community Centre, Kitchener (Bridgeport)

Sunday June 9, 2002

Outdoor Pride Festival -Roos Island, Victoria Park

Website: www.rainbow.on.ca for more information contact wrrp@rainbow.on.ca



**Hamilton Ontario
June 14-16, 2002**

Thursday, June 13, 2002 (7pm to 11pm)
·Opening Reception

Friday, June 14, 2002 (9pm to 1am)

Women's Dance at the MacNab Street YWCA -- Men's Dance at The Werx
Admission to the Men's and Women's dances are \$8 in advance and \$10 at the door

Saturday, June 15, 2002

·Rally at Hamilton City Hall (12pm to 12:30pm)
·March from Hamilton City Hall to Dundurn Park (12:30pm to 1:30pm)
·BBQ, Vendors, Licensed Bar, Musical Entertainment and more at The Dundurn Park Pavilion (12pm to 6pm)

·Exciting Pride Events at THE WERX located at 121 Hughson Street North. Evening events also planned at bars The Embassy Club and M in Hamilton and One in Brantford at 8pm.

Admission to all Saturday afternoon events is free! Admission to Saturday Evening Bar events may involve a cover charge at the door.

Sunday, June 16, 2002 (1pm to 3pm)

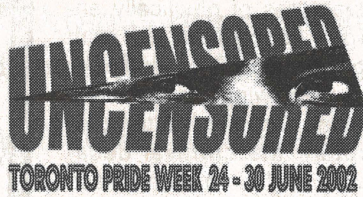
·Outdoor Brunch, concert, and tours at Whitehern Historic House and Gardens
Admission to this event is \$15 in advance and \$18 at the door.

Tickets to all events that have an admission cost will become available at Gomorrah's come May 17th. Gomorrah's is located at 233 Locke Street South.

Website: <http://gayhamilton.com/pride> for more information contact pride@gayhamilton.com

AREA PRIDE EVENTS


Pride
TORONTO


UNCENSORED
UNGENJOINED
TORONTO PRIDE WEEK 24 - 30 JUNE 2002

June 24 - June 30, 2002

Parade: Sunday, June 30th, 2002 at 2 p.m.

Did you know that there are Cash and Trophy Prizes to be won? The Parade Judges decide on the following category winners:

Best Celebration of theme: UNCENSORED; Most FABULOUS Float; Most FABULOUS Costumed Individual; Most FABULOUS Costumed Group; Most FABULOUS Choreography; Most FABULOUS HAT; Most Outstanding Community Marching Group; Most Outstanding Community Float

Saturday, June 22nd @ 9pm

WRIB Pre Pride Dance - Where: The Winchester Hotel 537 Parliament Street, Info: Hosted by WRIB (Women for Recreation Information and Business) Admission \$7, no smoking and wheelchair accessible. An all women's event...Pre Pride Dance to get all revved up for the following week of partying, great tunes, good looking women, shooters, lots and lots of dancing and door prizes! Drop in and join us for a special night. Happy Pride!

www.gaycanada.com/wrib

Vona Smith Social Coordinator or [REDACTED]

June 27th, 2002

The AIDS Candlelight Vigil - Location: By the AIDS Memorial in Cawthra Square Park behind the 519 Church Street Community Centre Contact Info: Bill Ekins, tel. [REDACTED] ext. 106 or [REDACTED]



SATURDAY, JUNE 29th, 2002... 2PM
DYKE MARCH

The Dyke March is an event within Pride week that provides a much needed focus on Dykes. This event is open to Women Loving Women of any race, culture, orientation, gender, ability, health, economic group, family structure, faith or age. This is an event where dykes, from all of our different and varied communities and our supporters, can come together once a year and celebrate women

loving women. It's an informative, healing, positive, joyous event that increases understanding and appreciation of each other, ourselves, and our resources, as women loving women.

Website: <http://www.torontopride.com> for more information contact - office@pridetoronto.com

Parade: Sunday, June 30th, 2002 at 2 p.m.

LONDON PRIDE 2002
Back to Our Roots

London Pride - July 13, 2002

With the financial strain on HALO, (Homophile Association of London Ontario) reorganization came to be in order and this year Pride Event's are a bit more downscaled. All the Pride-partying has been centered around one day; Saturday July 13. That is the big day. All the events kick off at 11:00 am at Centennial Hall and the day does not stop until the wee hours of the morning.

The day includes live entertainment, the crowning of Mr. and Ms. Gay London, a fashion show and lots of crafters and vendors and so much more. Along with that Museum London is hosting the exhibit Boys with Needles and as part of their ongoing alternative art cinema series Rainbow Cinemas is hosting the Argentinean film Burnt Money. Therefore, even though HALO's sponsored event had to be downscaled; there are an ever-growing number of grassroots organizations that are filling the social void. For further information please check out:

<http://www.halolondon.ca> and <http://www.pride.london.on.ca>

Thanks so much and see you in London!

Submitted by Brad Lister for London Pride

July 13, 2002
London HALO Pride:
"Back To Our Roots"

The day will commence at 11:00 a.m. in Centennial Hall and will run until 2:00 a.m. Evening shows will include the Fresh Fashion Show, the crowning of Mr. & Mrs. Gay London and The International Court Show.

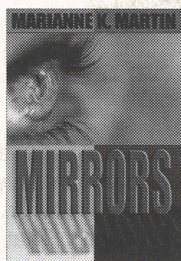
Please come and share with us what our community has to offer.

The London Halo Pride Committee
www.pride.london.on.ca

BOOKS

Mirrors

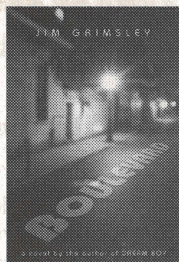
by Marianne K. Martin



Attorney Shayna Bradley's life is under control. And that is just the way she wants it. A successful law practice and an attractive girlfriend fill her time until her best friend suddenly leaves her husband . . . Jean Carson is passionate about her work but not her husband. She has spent her life helping her students and short-changing herself. Finally, Jean finds the strength to leave her marriage but will she find the courage to follow her heart?

Boulevard

by Jim Grimsley



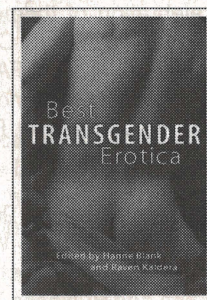
The transformation of a gauche country boy from Pastel, Ala., into a latter-day Narcissus, circa 1978 (when to be young, pretty and gay was almost heaven), is the subject of Grimsley's new novel (after Comfort and Joy). Newell, a sweet-natured rube who has never bought a newspaper or used an umbrella, finds a room in the French Quarter. His fresh good looks attract the attention of Curtis, the manager of the restaurant where he finds a job as a busboy, but he's fired when he rebuffs his boss's advances. Luckily, he's soon hired at a pornographic

book store stocked with glossy, plastic shrink-wrapped magazines relating the photogenic adventures of phallically enlarged young men and with movies that are available for group showings in curtained booths. Grimsley's attempt to capture the carnival decadence of that time and place is smoothly done through naive Newell's gradual understanding of the milieu he has entered, but somewhat undermined by the stereotypical portrayal of the Quarter's young male habitués as campy, empty-headed schoolgirls.



Best Transgender Erotica

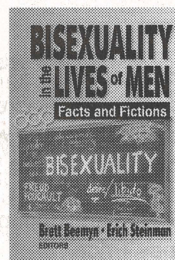
by Hanne Blank (Editor),
Raven Kaldera (Editor)



Best Transgender Erotica brings together twenty stories by writers of every gender. The first book to celebrate exclusively gender-bending, crossing, and breaking sexuality through erotic fiction, Best Transgender Erotica includes representations of many forms of 'trans' identity. Whether blurring the line between masculine and feminine, or making the transition from female to male, or vice versa, these characters (and authors) had to put on their sexiest, most alluring, heart-racing show in order to make the cut. Including selections from Thomas Roche, Saachi Green, Todd Belton, Simon Sheppard, M. Christian, and many more of today's best-known erotica writers, Best Transgender Erotica follows on the smashing success of Best Bisexual Erotica, which was released in 2000. Like 'Best Bi,' 'Best Trans' drew its contributors from within the gender activist community, providing a unique and stimulating look at gender issues from an erotic perspective.

Bisexuality in the Lives of Men : Facts and Fictions

by Brett Beemyn (Editor),
Erich W. Steinman (Editor)



Where are the bisexual men? Why are bisexual activist usually women? If the whole world thinks bisexual men are the ones guilty of spreading AIDS to "innocent" straight women, then why are they so invisible? These are some of the questions that this anthology attempts to answer. A big and important question they pose is the following: "too often writing lumps gay and bisexual men together, so how do bisexual men differ from gay men?" The editors specifically state that they would like readers to read this book next to/ along with their other book "Bisexual Men in Culture and Society." This book is the academic-scientific book compared to its more pop culture, literary companion. As much as this book complains of women dominating the bisexual rights movement, with few exceptions, the articles in this book are written by women.

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BOOK REVIEW

Dress Codes: Of Three Girlhoods My Mother's, My Father's, And Mine (\$35.00)

By Alex Rowlson (of Glad Day Books)

If the only time you think you've seen a transsexual is on the Jerry Springer show, Noelle Howey's thoughtful, funny memoir of her suburban childhood with a cross-dressing dad may leave you wondering where all the fireworks are.

Noelle is 12 years old and going through an identity crisis. Her games of boy/girl, where she and her friend dress up and indulge in their pre-teen bondage fantasies leaves her wondering if she's a prude or a slut.

Her mother, Dinah, is going through a crisis of her own. Stuck in a loveless marriage, she hasn't been touched by her husband in so long that she's assigned the roll of lover to her trashy pulp romance novels.

Her dad, Dick is having problems all of his own. Namely, that he's tired of being Dick, or at least having one. For the past forty-odd years, Dick's been nourishing a desire to be a girl, and he's about to do something about it.

Dress Codes is Noelle Howey's first book. In it, she seeks to present us with the facts behind her family in an open and all-inclusive way. And believe me, when it's done, you'll know everything about them.

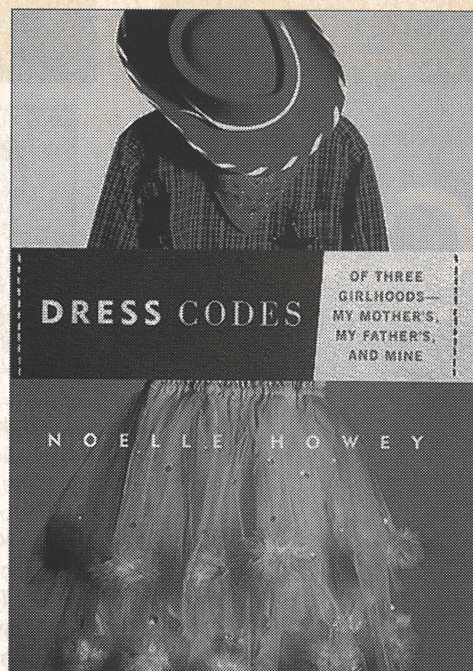
At first glance, this book is simply about a father coming out as a woman and the ways that it affects them as a family unit. But once you start to read it, you realise that its focus is on identity. Every character in this book is struggling from some type of identity crisis, be it gender or not.

This book could have easily fallen into the trap of being overly sugary or even of being un-objective. But because it was written with love and honesty, what we are left with is a stunning, genuine and complete look at her family. As your reading, she shows you what your biases are and then quickly disarms them, leaving you only able to continue reading so you can find out the back-story and motivations of these characters.

The book starts off with a portrait of Noelle's childhood. She tells us about how her father was always vacant and drunk; a balding, beer-bellied, bellowing man who couldn't stand for one second if you used your salad fork for the main dish. To her, he is lost. She has numbed herself to his indifference.

And then he comes out. As Noelle says in the introduction: *"When my mother told me the secret about my father, nothing was actually changed, but change was made possible. The secret, once revealed, sliced through the hazy inertia of our average, dissatisfied, suburban lives. Like most real-life coming outs, the event itself didn't need to be harrowing or humiliating to be life altering. My father's coming out was not the crowning climatic moment of my life; it was a beginning, a point of departure."*

Although the writing is a bit awkward in places, and she has a tendency to beat you over the head with a couple of things, the book is a fantastic read. It's funny, depressing, uplifting, and engrossing. The depths that she is able to dive into her family life and still be able to poke fun at it the whole time show how much love is in this family. The other thing that's so great is that any-



one can identify with this book. The issues are universal; happiness, family, love, identity, sex, gender roles and acceptance. You also come away from this book with a need to reach out to your family, to overlook all the little things that might get you down about them and just go up to them and give them a hug. So do yourself, and your family a favour, and pick up a copy of **Dress Codes** today.

Alex Rowlson is a writer, student and ad manager/designer at Glad Day Bookshop in Toronto. A Voice Exclusive.

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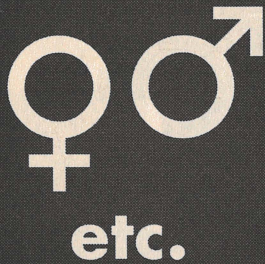
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TORONTO PRIDE WEEK 24 - 30 JUNE 2002

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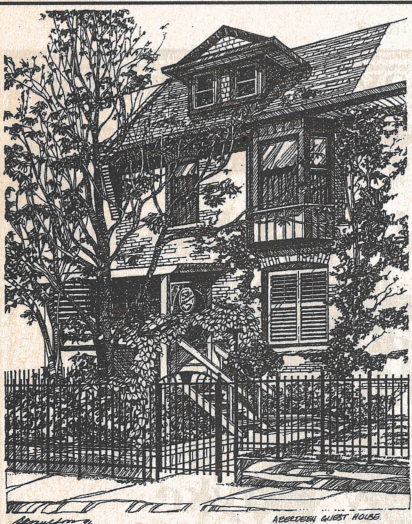
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GAY BIZ



Marketing to the LGBT Community

by Darren Kregar

Over the next month, many of us will be celebrating in Pride events throughout the province.

One of the first Pride festivities will be held in Kitchener on the first weekend of June. The biggest celebration of course is held in Toronto.

In addition to all of the partying, it seems that businesses are also attempting to cash in on the celebrations. As with any major event whether it be the Super Bowl, the Olympics or Toronto Pride, advertisers will be promoting their products and services. When you have a captive audience of over 1,000,000 people, why wouldn't they?

What bothers me is that every business, if not gay owned or operated, is 'gay' friendly in Downtown Toronto during Pride weekend. Even businesses locally will support their Pride events by maybe placing an ad in a directory. However, once the celebrations have passed, so does their advertising. Little do they know that the LGBT community will buy things throughout the year. If you are only going to advertise to the LGBT community once, do you really think they are going to remember you -- especially if the only time you are advertising to the gay community is in June.

To gain the support of any community, you should continuously be promoting your business to that community. A good example of a business that consistently advertises to the gay community is Dominion Supermarkets.

They have been advertising on the inside cover of the gay magazine, Fab for quite some time. Their most recent advertisement states 'Proud to be part of the community'. The picture is of a set of double doors with the words 'OUT' on them. Other Dominion ads include a slice of watermelon in the shape of

the triangle and a rainbow of fruits. When gay people shop in Toronto for groceries, maybe those ads will be just the incentive to have them shop at that store. Other consistent advertisers in the gay community include Absolut Vodka, Molson Breweries and Mazda.

Marketing to the gay community should occur throughout the year. Many small businesses cannot afford to advertise in a publication like The Voice, Extra or Fab on a regular basis. Cheaper alternatives are sponsoring a local gay event, donations to a gay organization or even placing a rainbow sticker on their door. What is most important is not how much you advertise in the community but how much you support the community. Show your support for the community during Pride by getting involved. Many small businesses throughout Ontario do get involved in local pride events.

Businesses that only advertise once to a community hoping for quick results will be disappointed. Like most people, I tend to shop at businesses or buy products that are consistently being promoted.

In summary, if you want the LGBT community to support your business, you too should support the LGBT community on a regular basis.

Darren Kregar is the owner of Economical Tax Services. Economical Tax Services has been advertising to the LGBT community since 1998. ETS is a member of the Rainbow Business Network of Waterloo-Wellington. A Voice Exclusive.

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BUSINESS FEATURE: Club Renaissance

By Jana Biron

Nestled in the heart of Downtown Kitchener, Club Renaissance is KW's night time hot spot for the LGBT and alternatively minded community. Their pledge is to provide a friendly diverse atmosphere combined with high energy and superior customer service.

The vision was simple— to provide our community with an upgraded gathering spot suitable for patrons searching for a safe, non discriminating environment. A great deal of blood, sweat and tears have gone into the making of the "Ren." Acquiring the premises in February of 1994, co-owners Fran Furlong and Cheryl MacDonald tediously renovated and painted for five long months. Finally the day of reckoning arrived. On July 9th they held their breath and opened the doors for business. While not expecting a bed of roses, they still needed to pay the bills and their staff. It soon became evident that local clientele alone could not sustain the bar. The advertising budget was small but by sheer luck, radio station Energy FM sought them out to become the first gay

nightclub to advertise over its airwaves. Slowly more out-of-towners came to party on weekends and the club spread out to host live concerts and shows with some legendary guest performers such as Carole Pope and Elvira Kurt. An innate sense of what would work has helped to sustain the business as well. Eight years later Club Ren stands strong in unity and fierce in its determination to survive the odds.

With an atmosphere that is small enough to be personal yet large enough to accommodate all, Club Renaissance continues to offer a party central with all the perks. From Wednesday to Sunday their wizards of mixology are brewing up a storm of exceptional cocktails, martini's and shooters. On-going events are always a creative and exciting way to liven up an evening. From uniform parties to large events, the nights are never dull. Let's not forget Ms. Drew and the rest of the Renaissance Girls who perform live drag and host numerous fund raising events. Additionally, R&B, Hip Hop, Reggae, Funk,



House, Dance and Alternative invade the club walls with some of our best local DJ's including Toronto's own TK Shepherd spinning nightly for your listening pleasure. Most importantly the staff and owners of Club Renaissance strive to provide an ongoing responsible service. With care and courtesy, food and drinks are served and presented quickly and always with a touch of pride.

In conclusion, Fran and Cheryl wish to thank their extraordinary staff, both past and present, for all their tireless efforts. Additionally, a heart felt thank you goes out to all their loyal patrons for the much appreciated support and generosity.

Be prepared! Some exciting changes are in the works this summer at Club Renaissance.



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OUT OF STEP

A Night In Town (Part Two of Two)

By Stephen Erastes

Part One can be found on the web at www.thevoice.on.ca - From the end of part one:

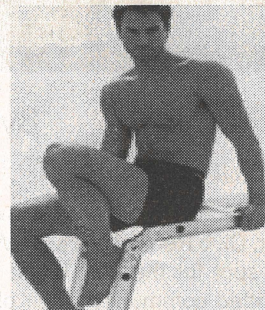
The night was still young and I was going to 'enjoy myself' and push my boundaries, as so often I've done in Gayland.

I have come to let my hedonism prevail. I am being careful that I'm not consciously using other people without their consent and mutual need for touch and pleasure. This is now done so easily for me, it continues to amaze me. I recall the shaking nervousness of earlier encounters even ten years ago, when I'd be thinking so much about meeting another for sex. I've stopped wondering about where I fit in, in this so varied a community of communities ---- this 'gay' community! As much as we are coming into our own, and out into the mainstream, so much of our evolved underground lifestyle remains out of sight and barely touched by the 'decency' of the moral majority. Even within our own community, there is much discussion and disgust about men just enjoying one another,

this promiscuity that seems to define our group. I don't care. Tonight I want to experience the touch and feel of other males, and the night is still so young.

Part Two:

I became bolder, privating an obvious sexual "handle" (name) and quick exchanges of information made it clear that we could meet. A few subway stops later and I was in his modest room, which appeared to contain his life! (This is Toronto living). We came together in a kiss, body to body, and his quick focus on pleasuring me was welcome, and I responded. We did a dance of exploring, rising and falling and it seemed like this is what I was seeking lying naked with a young man and gentle touching, with passion rising and falling. His informing me of a third person coming was a surprise, but such is the nature of such encounters (people often don't show, so someone else is lined up). Bob's arrival dramatically changed



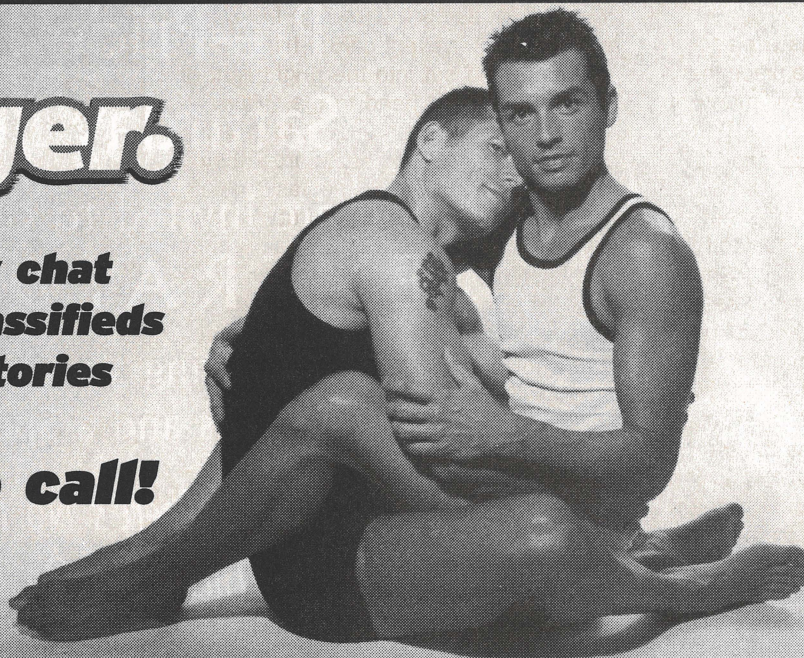
the dynamics. His protruding belly and grey hair and 'daddy' manner disengaged me sexually. Ironically, he's probably my age, but it doesn't do anything for me sexually. We played together for a while, but with both of us older guys more interested in our young host, I decided it was time to exit 'I'll let you guys enjoy each other'. It felt right to move on...

Back on Yonge St, the occasionally visited "Barb Wire" (next to the sauna) drew me into its den of hedonism. After engaging my Chinese friend, and thereafter sitting and talking with him in the porno room, I gave him my card, and I exited. I was still not satisfied though. Back in the cyber room I engaged a 24 year old who wants "fun and LTR" (interesting juxtaposition I thought, as I chuckled at both him and myself, from different parts of the age continuum). We negotiated, but it was obvious that 'spending the night' between this now homeless man at a downtown

bigger.

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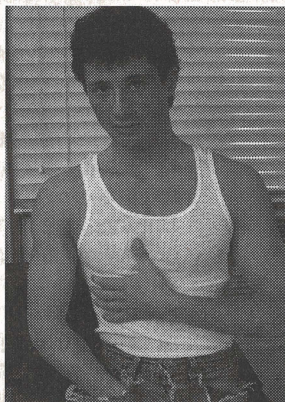
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café, and a young guy living in a condo in the burbs with his mother, was going nowhere. We exchanged ICQ numbers and I moved on. I was being drawn to "go home" ET. Another possibility of a massage on the way home by a 'hot 28 year old bi (sexual) who loves to massage' brought a smile to me — he turned me down after I told him the size of my feet!

Another chatter turns out to be a 'friend' who recognizes me by my picture, but who won't say who he is. He seems more embarrassed than me. His 'rejection' of putting me up overnight I accept without reservation, and am amused, because I know who it is!

On my way to my car, going through the village though, I lock eyes with a smallish pony-tailed man. We turn, I make a quick decision, and we start walking together. My question about whether he's a hooker is answered as he finally pops the question of payment as we near the bathhouse (the hotel of the poorer gays). After encouragement and congratulations on his business finesse, we part ways. I'm not prepared to pay for sex (a little rule I've made for myself a while ago). I don't need to, and in ways it cheapens the act, and seems to have even less intimacy for me.



I enter the Bath House as a place of pleasure and relaxation: it's a place that I can be naked with other men, many of whom are quite plane (like myself), but some of whom are quite stunning. If I enter as 'not looking for sex' I am often rewarded. I've wondered if the 'desperateness' is not a paradoxical turn off for the very men you hope to attract. Showering with a small built man who seems distorted in his standing and speaking, I think about the various types and shapes of men (in mind and body that inhabit such wonderfully gay settings. Sitting alone in the sauna, I give thought to my own prejudices of body size and shapes, and the CP man gives me a chance to redeem myself. He gingerly sits beside me and I listen closer to what and how he is saying. I'm still not sure how intelligent or drunk he is.... But I agree to share a jay with him in my cubicle in "short while". Surprisingly, he soon shows up and we sit naked on my single 'bunk' in my 6 x 10 'room' — exposing ourselves a bit more to each other. Upon mentioning his sore back, I tell him to lie face down between my legs and I'll massage him. The mas-

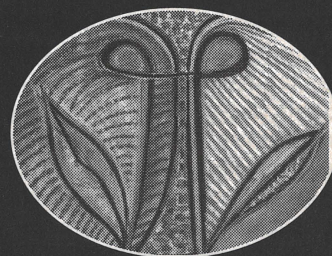
sage reveals an almost fat-less organ of skin, with his ass hardly having substance to it at all. His black hair rests on my chest, and his chest against my primary focus of my own sexuality. There is a peace and tranquility between us, which rises above just sex we are being intimate with one another. I pull him up over me a bit more, like a blanket and we both fall into a light sleep. I like this guy, his innocence, his seemingly optimism, and his lack of embarrassment as he wanders through the bathhouse and through life generally I assume. He exhibits some crass habits I'd noticed, and certainly his declaring, "I've never been out of Toronto" surprised me.

Our balance is lost by his need for chocolate, and he springs forward to go searching for this. I wonder if it's the drugs he's consumed, the grass, or the nature of him — this jolting behaviour that he demonstrates in broad strokes as much as his walking and talking. I turn over and attempt to fall asleep, naked with door open (an invitation for company), and the night slips away. I awake in the morning, with some recollection of my friend having visited. A trip to the shower reveals a young man whom I engage, and we enjoy each other under the shower, him being focused on his watch and some other event calling him.

Upon going out into the bright light of Toronto morning I head to the village — my home away from home. I love sitting with gay men, and just being around gayness my consumption of the past 5 years. I sit, and write and think about my journey. I feel no sense of shame about my last 12 hours. I have enjoyed the company of a number of men, we've exchanged a lot of information, and enjoyed one another, to varying degrees of sex although most of it was fairly innocent, and

in reality it had been sex light. I wonder about my own shifting sexuality and aging and potential partnerships, feeling that slipping away with time. I will enjoy men probably in a more incidental way like the last night, although probably more so one at a time and for short bursts of a weekend or a week.

Stephen Erastes is the pen name of a resident of Waterloo who has come into the gay lifestyle "later in life"... and who is curious about his new found life. A Voice Exclusive.



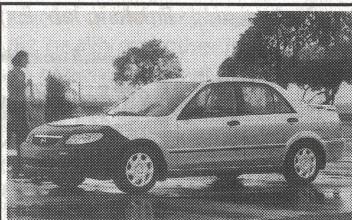
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Review: The Play is the Thing



Theatre & Company's "Transit of Venus"

By Roger Albrecht

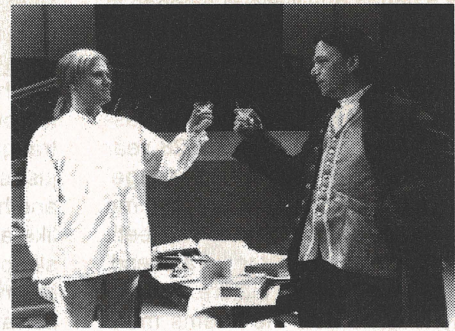
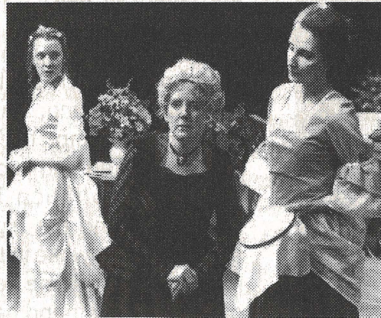
Let me first state that I've never been able to really get into live theatre. My bias is toward motion pictures. The experience both for the actors and the audience is much different. In the past year I've seen *The Sound of Music* in Stratford and at The Waterloo Stage Theatre, *Garage Sale*. The latter reminded me of actors in high school who simply try to remember their lines and get them out. The principles were a little better, but over all I didn't enjoy the play too much.

In Stratford you have 'professional' actors and as such it was that much easier to watch. It was also one of the best known musicals of all time, compared to that of a little known play. It was almost a case of apples to oranges.

Recently however, I was at the opening of Theatre & Company's latest play, *Transit of Venus*. Firstly, I must say that the new theatre they have in downtown Kitchener is very cool. It is classy without the pretentiousness of Stratford. The walls are brick and the seats are a little uncomfortable. But the seating, like Stratford, surrounds the stage on three sides. This means there are almost no bad seats in the house.

Their audio and lighting system is no where near as good as Stratford but I didn't expect it to be. So, letting go of expectations compared to larger venues, I hoped for some 'professional' acting. I wasn't disappointed. The troupe is good. All of them.

The play, written by Canadian playwright Maureen Hunter, was the first Canadian play to be staged by the Royal Shakespeare Company of Britain. It follows an eighteenth-century French astronomer, Guillaume Le Gentil, who attempts to track the planet Venus as it passes in front of the sun, which only happens twice every hundred or more years. It spans eleven years as he travels around the world, leaving at home, a fifteen year old fiance, Celeste. A young protege of the astronomer, Demaris and the parents of both Celeste and Guillaume are the other characters in the production. It's a tragic story that gets a little deeper into the issues of love, commitment, career, gender roles, social status and then meaning in life. What a fifteen year old knows of love compared to when she's twenty one or twenty six is quite inter-



esting. Melissa Good plays Celeste and she's good, but I felt that she needs more experience to really pull off this role. Alan Sapp plays the arrogant Le Gentil. Very sure of himself and full of himself, Sapp nails this character perhaps too well. I mean, I really disliked him! Maybe that's the point.

Linda Bush plays Celeste's mother, Margot. She was quite solid and I look forward to seeing more of her work. Kathleen Sheehy played Le Gentil's mother, Mme. Silvie, and she kicked butt! I wanted more of her. She had the best lines for sure, but also seemed to project the subtlety necessary in the best of actors. How does an actor use body language and facial expressions 'softly' and still be able to throw it out to the back row? That's tough to do. It's much less of a problem in film. But this ain't film.

Andrew Lakin plays Demaris, an odd character that has a few wonderful lines. I wasn't sure if it was the actor or the character that made me question this guy. He was just odd.

What did surprise me was that the whole production lasted three hours and that it didn't feel like it. The first act felt long as it introduced the characters and plot. But the next two, delving deeper into the human condition, flew by. To me, that says a lot. The costumes seemed authentic and sets were minimal in size but worked well. Both of these were designed by Mike Peng.

Overall, I enjoyed the experience very much and look forward to further productions. Theatre & Company runs six productions a year. The next one is *The Art of Dining* and runs May 30 to June 15. This one ends April 27. Kitchener can be proud of the fact we have a new, professional, classy theatre with a team of quality craftspeople. For some 'The play's, the thing' but movies are still better (grin). However, I encourage everyone to check out productions at Theatre & Company. They're located at 36 King St. W. and tickets range from \$19 to \$29.

Roger Albrecht, of Kitchener is a graduate of Conestoga College's Film School, a film-maker, and the co-owner of the photo-finishing lab, *Exposed Photo*. A Voice Exclusive.

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Dyke Rant: Lesbian Image

By Judy Preston

I want to talk about our image as lesbian women -- one that is all too invisible -- and what kind of image we as lesbian women want to give to others as a community. Honestly, this is something that I suppose I never really gave a lot of thought to when I was younger. I was too busy having a good time, and in the same moment, too busy turning my head away from situations and issues, that today have gotten to be totally unacceptable.

In the good old days of the 60's, everything was okay with us, no one questioned anything or anyone about what they were doing, and we just opened our arms to everyone, regardless of how they were conducting themselves or their behavior at the time. Booze, pills, kinky sex, pornography, S/M, prostitution and God knows what else was okay. The sexual revolution that we thought we started has gone amuck, folks.

The Catholic Church is in a shambles because of priest-predators who are being associated with the homosexual lifestyle, and the beat goes on! We have fed the straight media just what they want to blast over the talk shows and serve up in daily headlines in the nation's newspapers. I am tired of everything that goes wrong in society being linked to our community.

And, since we long ago included gay men in our community, the criticism is directed at the entire community, regardless of who is doing it. Just stop and think about it, how many lesbians do you know that have sex in public recreational areas or pick up women in public bathrooms. I have never met one, have you?

How many lesbians do you know that get off by being around young children? I don't know any, do you? But, because we are all included in one big basket, lesbians suffer the criticism just as much as gay men. I think something about that is very unfair to us, as lesbians.

It is high time for us as lesbians to speak up and stand firm against our gay brothers on the occasion when things are just too far to the edge. Those who chose to live unsafe and kinky lifestyles have no place in the lesbian community, in my opinion. I can remember how in the old days, gay men I knew, would laugh and say they were going "chicken hunting."

We may have laughed back then, but you know that is not funny in this day and age. It is not a laughing matter any longer

and it is not the image I want for myself as a lesbian or for the lesbian community.

There's often talk about fractures in our communities. Wonder why? How long will gay men go on perpetrating a hateful and hurtful type of discrimination against lesbians? How long will we sit back and take it?

Not that I know all the answers, because I don't. But, I know one thing: all the bad things that are happening in society today that are being labeled and placed in the gay community are wrong and it's high time for lesbians to speak up for ourselves. There is an identity crisis in our community. I thought when I was younger that we could include each and every one in our community. It didn't matter what you did, it was okay. I no longer think that.

Maybe it is time to be more separatist in our thinking. Some sex practices and types of promiscuous behavior just aren't acceptable anymore and never should have been in the first place. Perhaps, to get back to *real* community, some folks should be excluded, simply because they do not demonstrate the image we want for ourselves. Put some pride back into being a lesbian and stronger women proud of what we stand for. Besides, don't the men exclude us every chance they get? Why do you think it's called the "gay" community -- it's a man's world, even in the LGBT world.

We are not gay men and most of us do not live like many gay men do. Most of us take care of ourselves and are responsible for our whole beings as women. We have different values. We find that there is way more to life than just the almighty "whoopie". What have gay men done for lesbians over the years? Most gay men are not in the least bit interested in any concerns of the lesbian community, like aging, health and other issues. If they pay much attention to us at all it's mostly about lip-service and deflecting a very narrowly-self-absorbed focus - sex, sex, and more sex - away from themselves with all kinds of rationalizations and excuses. They will whine about how hard done by they are by the straight world. Clueless as to why. Amazing! Many are clueless as to what we do, care about and value. There have been many times over the years that gay men have excluded their so-called sisters from their social functions and even, their bars -- a usual subtle exclusion, an exclu-



sion nonetheless.

There is a "gay" version of the "old-boys network" in LGBT communities and women aren't welcome. They are so busy networking with sex being the main goal no matter the facade that we just end up being object obstacles in the way. Lost is our humanity. Lost is our right to belong. Lost is our right to be heard and to be valued.

Come on ladies, wake up! Let's stop pussy-footing around and stand strong as lesbian women. And, that means being interested in our lesbian community and all lesbian women. Let's just take care of our own for a change. Let's stop allowing our differences to matter more than what we have in common.

Why is it that every person that is different is supposedly welcome to seek refuge in our community? Enter the intersexed. Who/what is next? Image is important and do not fool yourself into thinking it is not. Lesbian image is tarnished mainly by "gay male" lifestyles.

A good image and good role model is what I want to be to younger lesbians and the general public. I never cared that much years ago, but I do now. I am ashamed of myself for participating in some of the behavior that I did when I was younger, foolish and mostly, under the influence. For me now, that is a totally unacceptable lifestyle. I realize there are many of you who may disagree with my opinions, but what I want most of all is to inspire you to think and re-think.

Search inside yourself for better answers and better ways. I think that we as lesbians are special; we have too much to lose to risk our image. We must find ways to take our real identity back and create more faith from others. Isn't that what image is all about? It would also help if more people understood more about us and that we are in fact not just "gay". Being lesbian is not the same as being "gay" and there are just way too many men who don't get that don't you think?

I think so.

Judy Preston, is a writer, and an long-time activist living in Woodstock.

Centre For Experimental Arts & Communication

The controversy that remains: gay art

By Geoffrey Young

By 1973, Andy Warhol had long become repetitious. The hippies were either in jail or working full time for big business or the democratic/liberal party. Music was at its lowest point in recorded history; punk rock was years away. Statements made by the modern movement and Warholians were taken far too literally and most aspects of culture had become irreversibly contrived.

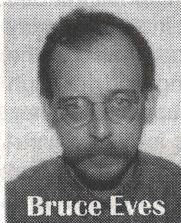
The Stonewall riots had happened four years previously against the backdrop of what was a dismal cultural landscape. There was an obvious need for serious gay activism.

Also in 1973 the Glad Day bookstore (now located on the 600 block of Toronto's Yonge St.), the legendary Body Politik publication (predecessor of Xtra) and Toronto Gay Action came together at number 4 Kensington Avenue and sort of incorporated as the Kensington Arts Association. Before too long, The Arts Association outgrew its location. It was moved to 15 Duncan St and became the Centre for Experimental Arts and Communication (CEAC).

The space on Duncan Street was used

for many things. Archives, library, art gallery, video production space, performance space and lecture hall all describe the general goings-on at the centre. At one point, notorious punk venue "Crash and Burn" were its downstairs neighbors.

For four years, CEAC continued to promote events on an alarmingly regular basis until it died in a blinding flash of rampant bureaucracy and media wankery.



Bruce Eves

After a brief, far reaching scandal involving large sums of grant money given to the subversive, majority gay and unapologetic arts group, members scattered, some to New York, some to Europe and some remained in Toronto.

Because of the content and aims of CEAC's work, they have been skipped over in Canadian art/culture history. Despite this, CEAC is among the most important arts groups in Canada's history.

Sick of the grotesque aspects of life in

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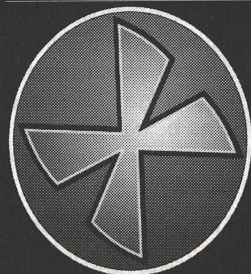
New York City, one member of CEAC, Bruce Eves recently moved back to Toronto. He is one of many members of CEAC, whose contribution, according to journalist Dot Tuer *"infused performance with an interest in gay aesthetic and sado-masochism."*

Eves recently had a show at the Cambridge art gallery and continues his artistic endeavors. He recently spoke to me about the "CEAC scandal", the forces at work behind it and how the going really hasn't gotten any easier for any artists, especially gay ones in New York, a place for which he has lost all affection.

One might think that New York City, theatre for the Stonewall riots, home to the Chelsea gay ghetto, supposed cultural Mecca would have a lot to offer its gay artistry.

"NYC changed in the mid -80's there was suddenly no more room for eccentricity. What I used to like about the place was

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this peculiar type of old line upper west side Jewish communist. They fell from power and the nerviness became mean-ness." recounts Eves.

Indeed things didn't get much better under the reign of the famously anti-controversial art Mayor Guliani.

"Now, there is only one gallery in NYC mandated to show gay work and it's in the basement behind the furnace room of a building in Soho. I think America hates the arts although its really much better in Canada. All these artsy types are such hypocrites, really overcompensating for being in an effeminate and suspect profession."

Eves doesn't produce painting. His work is interesting visually and intellectually; some are prints, photos, cut-ups or digital pieces with a diverse subject matter. It lashes out at typical, mass

produced gay aesthetic and tries to break down the spectacle-salesmanship that is mass gay culture. He openly refutes all the should's and musts almost as if to say that he, or in fact, anybody is closer to the real homosexual identity than any of those folks who are incessantly trying to shove it down people's throats.

Art is a far cry from what it could be. The formula of art to sell, to eat, to do more art has become a bigger barrier to real creativity than ever before. This puts any artist that is interested in the advancement of his craft into new areas in a pretty bad position. If what you produce isn't nice enough to go in the commercial galleries, then the eating part of the equation becomes increasingly difficult to maintain. And the explanations as to why any given commercial gallery declined to show progressive works only salt the wounds. Eves says, "nothing is ever stated bluntly, the usual line is "his work conflicts with our directions as a gallery".

According to Eves, "if they [gallery owners] had any nerve, then they would realize that controversy could be a good thing. The stuff is a hard sell - I realize that if they're not intelligent enough or educated enough about art history to deal with challenging work they should think about selling used cars". Thus, eating becomes an ever growing barrier facing the artist." "There should be a system of guaranteed income in place. Being forced into a position of constant poverty, forcing artists into a sell or die positions is a form of self-im-

posed censorship".

It was this very sort of implied censorship that CEAC had taken to task years earlier. Realizing that the only hope any groundbreaking artist was Canada's state sponsored art system, CEAC put said system in the cross-hairs. Throughout their four years of existence, they were able to take full advantage of state funding while being able to consistently highlight the censorship inherent in such a system. They received sizeable grants from the Canada Council, Ontario Arts Council, and Wintario, most of which went into obtaining equipment, touring performances and promoting events, least notable of which was Phillip Glass' Einstein on the Beach. Eventually, these events caught the eye of the funders.

By 1978, the CEAC publication, "Strike" had become the home of radical journalism, not only about art but also about geopolitics and localized repression. The second issue of "Strike" ran transcripts from the infamous Red Brigades exposing human rights violations in Ecuador.

In May 1978, the coup de grace was committed in the "Strike" editorial, which stated "The questioning through polemics of the cultural, economical, and political hegemony should be fought on all fronts. An infamous trial of the Red Brigades exposing a 'we support leg shooting/knee capping' to accelerate the demise of the old system".

By the 5th of May, in '78, CEAC was well on its way down the slippery slope of scandal. That day the Toronto Star published the headline "Ontario Grants Supports Red Brigades Ideology - Our Taxes and Blood-Thirsty Radicals". Before long the Globe and Mail, CBC and trash-obsessed Toronto Sun had chimed in and by the end of July, CEAC had lost all funding.

To Eves, it was not the loss of funding that was problematic as much as the response of Toronto's arts scene, which immediately distanced itself from any controversy.

In Eves' opinion, "there's too much peer pressure against rocking the boat. When the scandal with the CEAC happened 25 years ago there was zero support from the art community because nobody wanted their grant affected.

The downside of a decent funding situation is that it breeds complacency and ultimately self-censorship. From my experience the alternative, sell or die is gross and produces really bad art".

Eves hasn't slowed down all that much since then and continues to challenge any boundaries he can

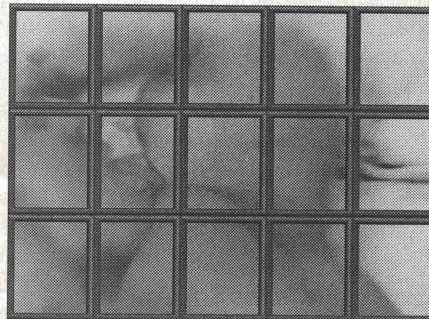
find with almost perverse fascination and zeal.

"I was hired by artists space in New York to create a work about aids that would raise their profile and lots of cash by causing a scandal. The problem is that artist-run places in the states have boards made up of rich people who want to scoop up good work cheap, but I caused a scandal all right, by offending all the little black dresses and the director was fired. The piece was called "Interrogation" and was rather simple, a row of blow ups of head shot of government scientists, journalists, organization executives beneath text accusing them of fraud" brags Eves.

Brings to mind the old adage "When art that actually says something is outlawed, only outlaws will produce art that actually says something."

Geoffrey Young is a journalist and activist who now resides in Winnipeg Manitoba. A Voice exclusive.

CEAC building picture and artwork are the work of Bruce Eves and were submitted to The Voice by him.

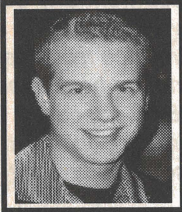


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Miss Renaissance Pageant



Miss Drew, Miss Ren for seven long years, passes the torch on in Club Renaissance's first ever Miss Ren Pageant

By Mark Weiser

It was all so very fitting. The Queen of all Queens, her two sexy go-go boys, glitter, sparkles and streamers, patrons waiting with eager anticipation, and of course seven worthy contestants. It was Club Renaissance's first ever Miss Renaissance Pageant.



For the last several years, the clientele of Club Renaissance has enjoyed the presence of the first and only Miss Renaissance, Miss Drew. After years of wowing the crowd, hosting benefit shows, organizing the drag shows and touring around the province as Miss Renaissance, Miss Drew had decided that she needed a sister to help hold the torch.

The first ever Miss Renaissance Pageant took place on Thursday, May 9, 2002 at Club Renaissance, and as one of the contestants, I can say that I will always look back on that night with fond memories.

The pageant was run in the most classic, professional way. There were five categories: presentation, swim wear, talent, evening wear and question and answer. There were four judges who collectively would determine the fate of the contestants. Two of the judges were female impersonators with titles in other cities, one was a former female impersonator who used to rock the walls of Club Renaissance, and of course a bar regular to help call the shots. The judges seemed a bit nervous, the contestants more so, and Miss Drew the most nervous of all.

The pageant began with a fabulous group number, which included all seven contestants. We all entered in white, looking fierce and confident, however underneath self-reassurance had definitely eluded all of us. The contestants (in order) were as follows: Miss Muffy St. Bernard, Miss Venus Flytrap (myself), Miss Annie Droginy, Miss Bang-Bang Ladesh, Miss Tia Forever, Miss Ivanna Bump, and Miss Ashley.



After the group performance, each contestant came out and gave a little wave, and then introduced themselves to the cheering crowd and the analytical judges. Turning on our heels, we each exited to the dressing room where we ripped off our gowns in a rush attempt to get ready for the swim wear category. In that time, Miss Drew entertained the audience in her usual fashion. Later in the night, the crowd would also get a taste of three other great performers - three of the judges: Christina Dior, Rasha and Taylor Mayde.

Much to all of the contestants surprise, the swim wear portion of the pageant was not as nerve-wracking as we had anticipated. Bang-Bang Ladesh and Ivanna Bump, two of the pageant's bigger ladies, had very tasteful swim wear and received much audience appreciation. Tia Forever, the only one of us who dared attempting to wear a two-piece swim suit, soaked up the applause like a sponge - she looked fantastic!

After a brief intermission, where I was able to suck back a couple of cigarettes and a shot of tequila, we returned to the talent category. To open the category, Miss Drew came out looking more like Reba McEntire than ever, and performed a number with back-up dancers. The talent portion of the competition was very im-



pressive, not because all of us had done a lot of preparation work, but because we all had very contrasting styles. Muffy St. Bernard waltzed around the stage to a 1940's Ann Miller number with special guest drag king Sebastian, a choreographed routine, confidence and a ton of feathers. Being the first contestant, she really set the tenor of the category. The different styles was what mattered: Muffy and her classical look and routine, Ivanna with her heart felt country music number, Annie with her shaved head, and of

course myself with a dress that did not pass my crotch. Bang-Bang Ladesh came out and kissed a few different boys from the

audience during her performance, and Miss Ashley moved her feet more than Michael Jackson ever could have in 1984. Miss Drew smiled and watched as we helped her make her event a success - the sense of approval from a drag queen that none of us could ever live up to was welcomed.

The evening wear portion of the competition was evaluated at the

same time as the question and answer portion. Each lady would come out, strut her stuff, then meet beside Miss Drew, select an envelope, and answer the question that awaited inside. We all had fantastic evening gowns, once again different in every way. Muffy had a yet another classic dress to show off, I was wearing a blue sparkling floor-length gown, Annie was wearing a sassy gown that she had designed and sewed herself, Bang-Bang a smart velvet number, Tia was wearing a silky apricot dress and Ivanna a flashy purple gown. However Ashley stole the show with a satin dark green floor-length dress that was classy, but a little daring at the same time. At that moment when I looked at all my fellow sisters and Miss Drew, I knew we were all beautiful. Not just because we looked great, or because we had spent many hours preparing for the event, but because we had all risen to the occasion and were enjoying the moment. When we all took our turn with question and answer, each of us answered our question in a professional manner, but Bang-Bang won the crowd with her humour.

When asked if Bang-Bang would quit female impersonation for a lover, she responded "no, because happiness is more important than -- well, his". That time of night was coming. The audience appreci-

ation had done nothing but accelerated, as did the heart rates of us contestants: It was time for someone to be crowned Miss Renaissance 2002. However, before

the crowning, I watched what must have been the most touching moment of the entire night. Miss Drew's finale. She performed the Madonna number "This Used to Be My Playground", which was fitting and unfitting for the moment.

The judges brought her flowers, the patrons tipped her money, roses, and even a sentimental picture. My mascara almost started running when Miss Drew's mother came out to give her daughter a warm hug, and the two of them shared a couple of tears. It was nice, sad, emotional yet happy all at once - a very strange moment for everyone who witnessed it.

There were individual awards for each portion of the competition: Muffy St. Bernard captured the talent award, Miss Ashley took the evening wear award, Bang-Bang Ladesh walked away with two,



up for the first runner up award, and then made way for the second ever Miss Renaissance, Miss Bang-Bang Ladesh. Christina Dior presented the winning trophy, and then gave a speech to let Club Renaissance know that they haven't lost Miss Drew, that she would always be around, and acknowledged the winners and all contestants. It was all so very overwhelming. After we all shared hugs and

compliments and pictures, all of us ladies went up to the bar and had much deserved drinks.

The audience members were congratulating everyone involved - it was just fabulous. At the end of the night, when all of our feet were in pain, Miss Drew gave us one final remark: "All of us are Renaissance girls, don't any of you ever forget that". I can't think of a better way to end the evening by

receiving acceptance from one the all-time great.

Mark Weiser of Kitchener is a drag queen (Venus Fly Trap) himself. Photos by Lyn McGinnis. A Voice Exclusive.



both question & answer and presentation, and Tia with Swim Wear. Surprisingly, my fellow contestants had voted me Miss Congeniality - and we all know that being nice is better than being queen (okay, who am I really kidding).

In the end, Muffy St. Bernard took second runner up, Miss Tia Forever stepped

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Rainbow Triangle Business Network. LGBT communities of Kitchener-Waterloo and Cambridge. Gordon Husk 747- [REDACTED]

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Interfaith Counselling Centre, 151 Frederick St., Kitchener, 519-743-6781

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Club Renaissance - 24 Charles St. W., Kitchener, 570-2406. Toll free 1-877-635-2352

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Paula's Pride Cattery - Himalayans. [REDACTED] Rose Street, Kitchener. [REDACTED]

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VOLUNTEER

The Voice is looking for volunteers to join our growing crew. Do you like socializing, partying, organizing parties? Do you take pictures? Get in touch with us? Want to find out more? Email us at: [REDACTED]

PERSONALS

48 year old single white lesbian looking for a soul-mate 38-55 years of age, likes movies, dining, dancing, travel, animals and fun. Hoping to find that someone special to have a long-term relationship with.

Reply to The Voice (address on page 3) to the attention of Ad L-1

40'sh lesbian not into the bar scene looking to meet other lesbians to pursue friendship and common interests. Interests include quiet conversation, music, movies, reading, walks. Reply to The Voice (address on page 3) to the attention of ad L-2

Voice Boys/Voice Girls

Send us your pic and a bit about yourself to be featured here. [REDACTED]



A.J.'s VOICE BOY



Mark Weiser

Birthday: May 16, 1979 (Taurus), **Hair:** Blond (for now), **Eyes:** Green, **Height:** 6'1, **Occupation:** Mortgage Service Consultant, **Education:** Business Marketing Diploma from Georgian College, **Hometown:** Mount Forest, Ontario, **Residence:** Kitchener, Ontario, **Hobbies:** Writing music, playing piano, going clubbing, playing tennis, anything that involves Madonna **Participated In:** AIDS Walk 2001, KW Pride Day 2001, Fundraisers at Club Renaissance, now writing for The Voice, member of Cancer Society **Goals:** To become a gay rights revolutionary/trailblazer/pioneer (I remember you liked that, AJ!) **Future Plans:** To become a famous vocalist/musician **Words to Live By:** "You will receive whatever you give", "make sure people you love know that you love them", and "revenge is a dish better served cold".

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JUNE EVENTS

Friday June 7th

The Voice is holding a launch party at Club Ren beginning at 10pm. Performances by Drag Queens, Fashion Show, munchies and more.

Saturday June 8th

Club Renaissance presents a **Pre-Pride Party at Emerald City**. Drink and Shooter Specials. *"If you think there's no place like home try this party on for size"*

Have an event that you'd like to publicize? Get the word out by letting us know about it. Call us at (519) [redacted] or email us at: [redacted]

Social events listings in The Voice are a community service and are listed free of charge.

For Pride Events See page 22

2nd & 4th Wed's in June

On the second Wednesday of June Glow will hold its Heart to Heart Discussion Group. On the fourth Wednesday in June the Diversity Discussion Group takes place.

For more information on either group or the Coming Out Discussion Group call GLOW at 884-4569

ONTARIO COMMUNITY LISTINGS

BRANTFORD(519)

A Rainbow of Hope. Brant County HIV/AIDS 753-4937 ext.261

GBLT adult social/support group of Brantford and area. Call 752-5132 ext.34

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

Narcotics Anonymous - 759-2558

Pine tree Native Centre Of Brant - PFLAG 752-5132 ext.34.

The Coalition for GLBT youth of Brantford 753-4937 ext.261 and leave message.

CAMBRIDGE(519)

PFlag - Sue [redacted]

Sexual Assault Center: Cambridge..... 658-0551

GUELPH(519)

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

GUELPH QUEER EQ-UALITY University of Guelph - gqe@uoguelph.ca

HOWL: Hanging Out With Lesbians - social group for women (lesbian, bisexual, transgender ages 25+ 836-4550

OUTline: the University of Guelph. Call 836-4550.outline@uoguelph.ca

Rainbow Chorus: Choir and hosts LGBT dances. Bob Miller at [redacted] or Dave at [redacted]

Women For Sobriety - drug & alcohol addiction support group Marilyn at [redacted]

HAMILTON(905)

Alcoholics Anonymous-- (905) 522-8399.

Alice's Dinner Club - Joan/ Barb at [redacted] or Michael at [redacted]

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

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

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

GLBT Centre at McMaster -(905) 525-9140, Ext. 27397 or e-mail: glbt@msu.mcmaster.ca

Hamilton Aids Network --

528-0854 appointment only --546-3541

Hamilton Coming Out Proud Discussion Group 905-526-1074, toll-free 1-888-338-8278 - info@gomorrah.com

Hamilton Transsexual Peer Support Group (FTM - MTF) - 528-0207 ext.43, or e-mail: htspg@gto.net

Hamilton-Wentworth Regional Police--General Assistance: 546-4925 Jane Mulkewich, GLBT Task Force 546-4910

Kindred Spirits - lesbians and bi-sexual women 541-[redacted]

Narcotics Anonymous (905) 522-0332

PFLAG -- 662-[redacted]

Sexual Assault Center: Hamilton.....525-4162

Sexual Health Information Line -905-528-5894-

Street Health Centre-- Wesley Centre 777-7852

The Golden Horseshoe Leather Association - Men interested in the Leather/ Denim lifestyle. 549-[redacted]

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

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ONTARIO COMMUNITY LISTINGS

KITCHENER(519)

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

Anselma House: A crisis shelter for 24 hour crisis line: 742-5894

AWARE K-W : gay Christians, their parents and friends. Gary at [redacted] or Ada at [redacted]

BMC (Brethren Mennonite Council for Lesbian & Gay Concerns): Colleen at [redacted]

Gay Men's Group: social group for men of all ages and orientations. Gordon [redacted]

K-W Distress Line- 745-1166

KW-Friends of Dorothy, 10 Pin Cosmic Bowling - Katherine at [redacted] or Mark at [redacted] or [redacted]

PFlag - Evie at [redacted]

Sexual Assault Center: KW.....741-8633

The Rainbow Parenting Network - A forum for GLBT parents, parents-to-be, 743-[redacted]

Tri-Youth Pride - Gail - [redacted]

Youth Discussion Group: ages 16-25, 570-3687

LONDON(519)

AIDS Committee of London - 379 Dundas St. Suite 120 434-1601

Gay and Lesbian Alumni of The University of Western Ont - 432-[redacted]

GLB Student Affairs - U of Western Ontario - 661-[redacted]

HIV Care Program - 646-6207

Homophile Association of London(HALO) 379 Dundas St. 433-[redacted]

London Pride Committee - 379 Dundas St. Suite 210 433-3551 ext 3.

MCC-645-0744 PFlag-451-[redacted]

NIAGARA(905)

LGB Youth Line - 1-888-679-6884

ST. CATHERINES(905)

AIDS Niagara - 111 Church St. 984-8684

Friends of Dorothy Dance Committee - 988-[redacted]

Gay & Lesbian Alliance - 984-[redacted]
Narcotics Anonymous - (905) 685-0075

STRATFORD(519)

AIDS Action Committee of Perth County - 86 John St. S. 272-2437

Down The Street - 30 Ontario St. 273-[redacted]

TORONTO(416)

Affirm United - 466-[redacted]

Aids Committee of Toronto - Hotline - 340-8844

Amnesty International Members for LGBT Concerns - 469-2100 ext. 264

Equality For Gays and Lesbians Everywhere (EGALE) - Laurie Aaron, [redacted] www.equality.ca

Canadian Gay and Lesbian Archives - 777-2755

Central Toronto Youth Services - 924-2100

Coalition of the Support of Lesbian and Gay Rights in Ontario - Box 822, Stn. A. Toronto, Ont., M5W 1G3, 405-8253

CounterPoint Community Orchestra - 658-[redacted]

Gay Fathers of Toronto - 410-[redacted]

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

Gay Partner Abuse Project - 876-[redacted]

Hassle Free Health Clinic - 922-0603

Metropolitan Community Church - 406-6228

Ontario Gay and Lesbian Chamber of Commerce - 410-1174

Out! Spoken Advocacy - 927-[redacted]

Pride Information - 927-7433

Rainbow Ballroom Dance Club - 363-[redacted] or 534-[redacted]

Rainbow Voices of Toronto - 944-[redacted]

The 519 Church St. Community Centre - 392-6874. Community information, support groups, anti-violence programme, the AIDS Memorial. www.the519.org

WATERLOO(519)

First Unitarian Congregation of Waterloo - 96 Dunbar Road South, Waterloo

Gays & Lesbians of Waterloo - University of Waterloo - Peer support & info line & Coming Out Discussion groups 884-4569

Global: Wilfrid Laurier University LGBT support. Laurier Peer Help Line 884-PEER. 00global@mach1.wlu.ca

Westminster United Church(an affirming congregation): 543 Beachwood Dr.

WINDSOR(519)

ACW Youthline - 973-7671

Aids Committee of Windsor - 973-0222

GLBT Book Club - 973-[redacted]

Lesbian and Gay Council - 973-[redacted]

MCC - 977-[redacted]

Organization of LG Students University of Windsor - 253-[redacted]

PFlag - 973-[redacted]

The Voice

South Western Ontario's ^{ONLY} LGBT Magazine

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“The oppression of any people for opinion’s sake has rarely had any other effect than to fix those opinions deeper, and render them more important.” --Hosea Ballou

A SURVIVOR’S GUIDE TO PRIDE

Woohoo, boys and girls. It’s Pride Time again and I just know that you all want to have lots of fun with as little worry as possible.

Don’t worry. The Princess, always a Princess: never a Queen, has some never fail strategies for your survival and enjoyment.

First of all, Pride is about being proud. So, look and act as proud as you can. Strut your stuff. Let whatever endowments you have bulge and billow in the breeze. Expose yourself for who you are, wiggle the things you can and cover up with natty clothes the things you can’t.

Wear your colours: beads, earrings, body jewelry, lots of make-up and make sure you’re well-coiffed. Boys, if you’re a twink or a wannabe twink, try multi-coloured hair dye with glitter added. That should get you noticed, even in the parade.

If you’ve got a beautiful boy or girl friend, show them off and make sure you let everyone know that they belong to you and

are not available, even for rental. More than a little hugging, kissing and fondling might be needed to get the point across. Oh, hell, you know what I mean.

In terms of other people, the biggest danger is running into X’s and former X’s and even former, previous, repeat X’s. Don’t be whimpy about it, darlings. Just smile as you pass them by and make sure they know that they’re not in the least missed and that there are no regrets. Hey, they’ll probably thank you for not making an issue of what might have once been a kind of relationship.

If there’s a parade, you can be either a marcher or a watcher. Either way, water guns or cannons seem to have become a necessary part of the whole spectacle. Whistles, too, should be blown almost incessantly and with all the gusto you can muster. Wave rainbow flags and generally applaud everyone and everything in sight.

If you’re offended by nudity, close your eyes at the appropriate times. Actually, a lot of the people who decide to bear it all on Pride Day are simply a kind of visual pollution that should be draped with tarpaulins anyway.

You’d better take lots of money, hunnies. Booze and food tend to be on the pricey side. If you can’t afford the tariffs, then pack a lunch and do as many of my friends do, make sure that you have lots of Spring Water or Loaded Soda stowed away in your back pack or baggy jeans.

Also, some of the souvenirs can cost a week’s wages or a proportional amount from your pogeys cheque. Think twice about buying that T-shirt. Come to think of it, I rarely see anyone wearing a Pride T-shirt except on Pride Day and then it’s mostly the vendors. I wonder what people actually do with them. Frame them? Give them to someone else as gifts?

It’s a good idea to visit all those commu-

nity service tables and ask questions and hrm and harr as though you really are interested and understand what they’re all about. It’s the least you can do to make those people feel that their organization and its work is welcomed and appreciated. Take some of the literature, whether you want to read it or not. If you don’t want to read it, you can give it to your straight friends to show that some of us are not as off the wall as they might think.

Be sure to pick up anything that’s free. Usually, that includes party packs of condoms and lube and all sorts of neat goodies. Don’t just take one. Take a handful. Lately, the bars haven’t been stocking much free stuff so you’ve got to take advantage of the opportunity. Set a goal and make sure you get an ample supply for your upcoming needs.

Say “Happy Pride” to everyone in sight, wave and smile and pretend you’re having a good time, even if you’re not. Applaud the performers and join in the group shouts assuring the M.C.’s that you’re having a good time. Save your criticism till the whole thing is over. Then, over a quiet drink with a few confidants, you can tear the whole thing to shreds and tell everyone how you would have made it better.

Then, you can go back to your normal life until next year’s Pride comes plodding and prodding along. That is, you can if you’ve survived this one. I hope that this survivor’s guide has helped you do just that.

Happy Pride from The Princess.

-- Princess Titty Pooh, Hamilton

*Do you have an opinion about this topic or any other? If so, please write to us and **Raise Your Voice!** Our contact information is on page three. We want to hear from you!*



519 Beer Gardens
in celebration of Pride Weekend

Saturday June 29, 2002
3 pm to 8 pm
includes a womyn-only space

Sunday June 30, 2002
1 pm to 8 pm

in Cawthra Park
behind The 519 Community Centre

no cover

proceeds to  Pride  sponsored by

**SUPPORTING
THE LGBT
COMMUNITY
SINCE 1998**



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YOU HAVE TO **COME OUT** TO LIVE IT.



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TORONTO PRIDE WEEK 24 - 30 JUNE 2002

Saturday, June 29th, 2002: 7th Annual Dyke March, 2 p.m.

Sunday, June 30th, 2002: 22nd Annual Pride Parade, 2 p.m.

Live entertainment all weekend on 7 outdoor stages.

Watch the website in June for event updates, entertainment listings,
The Official Pride Guide, and more.

www.pridetoronto.com

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