

The Voice

Publishing History: 1998, October 9 (Volume 1, Issue 1) - 2003, March (Volume 5, Issue 5).

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The Voice

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South Western Ontario's ONLY LGBT Magazine

Volume Four

August 2002

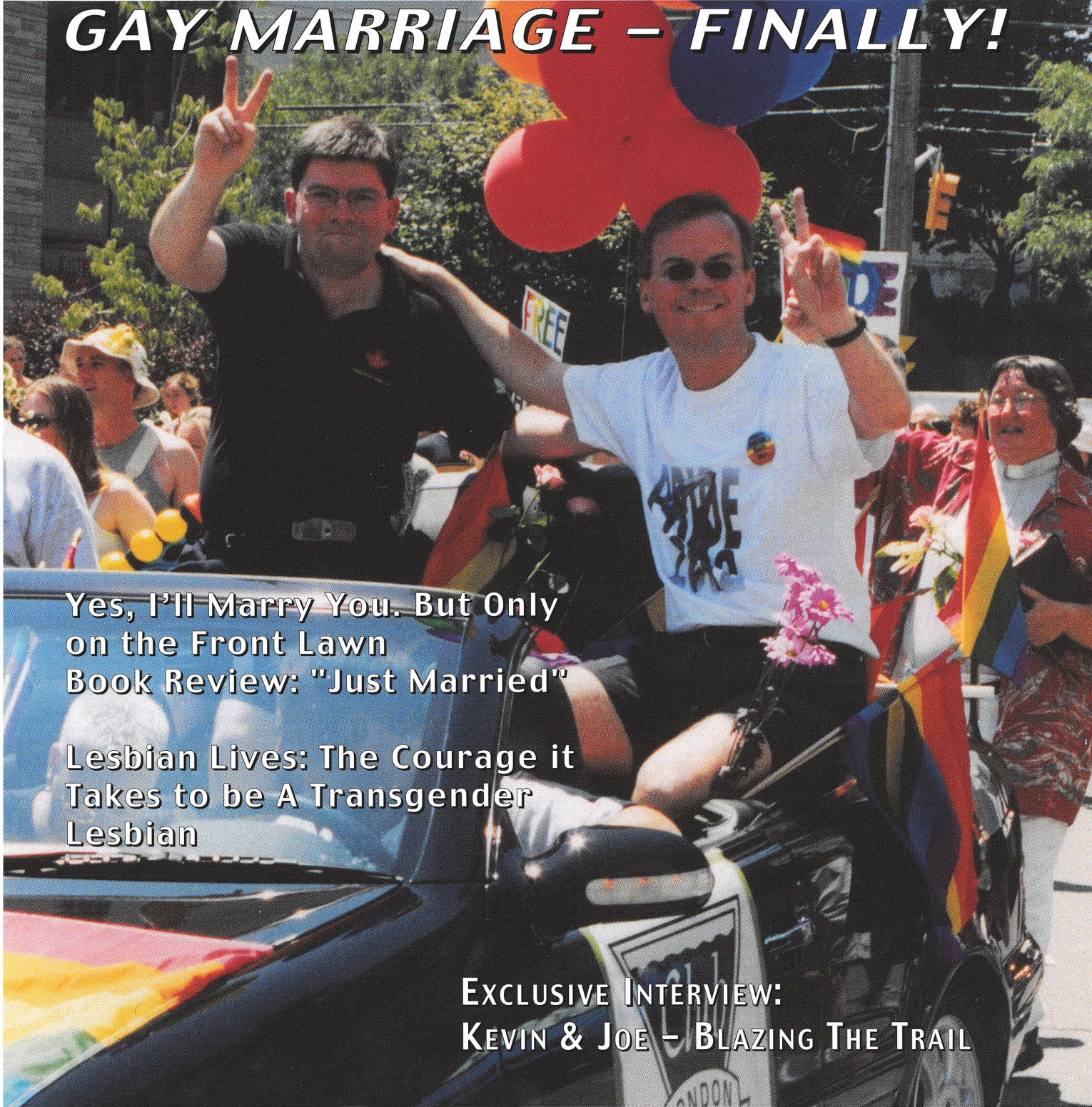
Issue Ten

GAY MARRIAGE – FINALLY!

**Yes, I'll Marry You. But Only
on the Front Lawn
Book Review: "Just Married"**

**Lesbian Lives: The Courage it
Takes to be A Transgender
Lesbian**

**EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW:
KEVIN & JOE – BLAZING THE TRAIL**



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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.

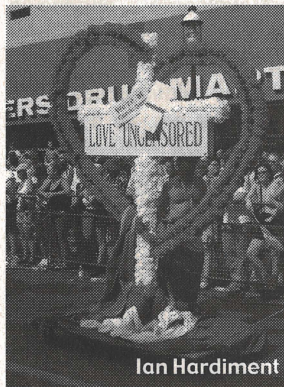
We welcome op/ed commentary, or feature article contributions and encourage writers to contact the editor for submission guidelines.

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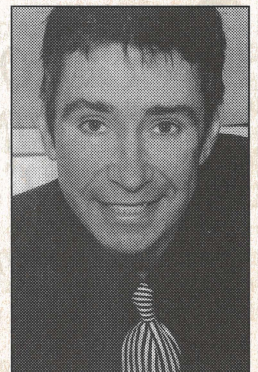
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FIRST WORDS



A.J. Mahari

Gay Marriage! --- Finally?

Whatever happened to the 'good ole' days when being lesbian or gay was thought of by many as a liberating lifestyle, suburbia, only downtown and counter-cultural? What will happen to gay culture if it isn't wallowing in the drama of omnipotent oppression? Can gay culture survive this kind of acceptance and tolerance? Or - will 'it' be the end of gay culture? Who wants to be like them anyway? Resistance is futile, assimilation is inevitable right?

"It," was compared to a 20 minute blow job in an Xtra West editorial last year. That same editorial expressed the "profound hope that lesbians and gays are never allowed to marry in Canada." The crux of that argument, and many like it, has all to do with the claim that "it" is a heterosexual thing -- Balderdash!

Saying that marriage is a heterosexual thing is like saying that we, as lesbians and gays, aren't entitled to full and equal protection under the laws of this country. Utter nonsense.

When, and I say when, the government catches up to the ruling of the court of Ontario, not if, we will all just have one more choice. Why do those who are

against "it", judge and object? Guess there hasn't been enough oppression to go around yet?

Is being gay more about lifestyle or personhood? Are we not people first and lesbian or gay second? Just as our sexual orientations are not the sum total of who each one of us is, neither is gratuitous sex the sum total of what gay culture is.

Obviously many welcome a chance to marry and to have equal rights and protection under the law for such recognized and legally legitimized relationships.

Here, again, is where we, as a culture need to be more inclusive and accepting. We are diverse. There is room enough in our culture for both the married and the unmarried. We can agree to disagree. There doesn't have to be any judgmental or hierarchical value placed upon love. Everyone has the right to pursue their version of love and relationship, or lack thereof as the case may be.

Trying to frame the winning of human rights as some burden that a culture is going to have to fight to endure seems a rather sad statement about the culture.

We can embrace the straight world and be embraced, in return by it. The sun will still come out tomorrow. Guess what? We'll still be lesbians and gays, whether we are married or not.

Kevin Bourassa and Joe Varnell are two very courageous pioneers blazing a trail that is raising awareness of all that it means to be gay and who are educating, advocating and making this province, and indeed country, a better place to live in for all of us.

Gay Marriage - Finally!
(see page 20 Cover Story)

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Ad Graphics & Web Links: Lyn McGinnis
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The Voice is published monthly. Next deadline for submissions and ad copy is August 15th, 2002.

The official views of this magazine are expressed only in editorials. Bylined columns, letters, articles or reviews represent the opinions of the writers and do not necessarily represent the opinions of the magazine.

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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, Grabbajabba

In Hamilton at: Gomorrah's Book Store, The Embassy Club, AIDS Network, The Unitarian Universalist Church, McMaster University, The WERX, Book Villa

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In Guelph at:

The Bookshelf, University of Guelph, Black Mustard Bistro, Cafe Aquarius

In Brantford at:

The PineTree Native Centre, "One"

In London at: The Pride Library at UWO, The AIDS Committee of London, City Lights Bookshop, Club 181, Our Place, Blackfriars Restaurant

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

In Toronto at: 519 Church Community Centre, Glad Day Books, Club Toronto, Good For Her, Woody's

In St. Catharines at: Club Rendezvous, Aids Niagara

In Windsor at: Life Nite Club, The Complex, Milk & Lift, Aids Committee of Windsor, CJAM Radio - University of Windsor

and other select locations in Toronto, Chatham-Kent, Sarnia, Port Huron and other areas of South Western Ontario.

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 e-mail us at haveyoursay@thevoice.on.ca 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.

Hi....I just picked up my first copy of The Voice. WOW!!!! What a great publication. I had no idea that S/W Ontario had its own LGBT magazine. It's very clear that the people who put The Voice together, do it with passion and fire. Keep up the great work....maybe some of the Toronto LGBT publications can learn something from what you have put together.

— Jeffrey Siegel, Toronto, Ont.

I just wanted to say that The Voice has grown (over the last 4/12 years) from a small booklet to a largely distributed "clean" magazine for our Queer community and it's a positive example of what our community is all about. Excellent work.

However, back in the early days, there used to be a youth section and now there hasn't been for quite a while. What happened? I think that our 'voice' should include our LGBT youth and that this publication should encourage LGBT youth to submit their articles as well as for The Voice to include articles that would be of specific interest to our youth. There aren't many positive print media resources for our youth to utilize so The Voice would be the perfect source.

— A. Chunaco, Cambridge, Ont.

I consider myself an adult. As an adult I was really surprised to hear a few friends of mine were "shocked" by the Voice Boy's nudity. (The Voice Magazine, June 2002, Volume 4, Issue 8)

After all, what's wrong with some skin? What's wrong with the naked human body? Nothing! I say congratulations to The Voice for having the courage, and dignity to give us a treat that is in keeping with the "clean" nature of this publication. I thought June's Voice Boy was just fabulous. Lovely eye-candy, sure put a smile on my face. Keep them coming!

— Mike Jolsten, Waterloo, Ont.

I read in your last issue, (The Voice, July 2002, Volume 4, Issue 9, that a printer refused to print your fine magazine. Shame on them! You go girl!

I've read this magazine for almost five years now. I've enjoyed watching it change and grow. It is the best LGBT publication - bar none - that I've ever read. I hope you do "fight the good fight" and stand up for the principles involved by legally challenging that printer. What they did is just not right.

I know that I am behind you and I'll bet the rest of your readership will be too. I am continually amazed and inspired by the hard work and courage of Voice editor A.J. Mahari, who in spite of praise or criticism (founded or unfounded) just continues to work hard and to let her integrity show in what she does. Her actions and work are both to be applauded.

Thanks, A.J., not only for The Voice but for all the wonderful articles that you've written in the Kitchener-Waterloo Record and for caring enough to put yourself out front to educate and advocate for change.

— Karen Fellows, Kitchener, Ont.

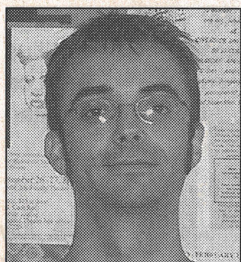
Hey there. Really great magazine. I am so glad that you are branching out and including all of South Western Ontario. We've never seen anything as wonderful as The Voice in a long time here in Sarnia.

— Mary Letterman, Sarnia, Ont.

It is so amazing to see an LGBT publication that truly is inclusive to all parts of our diversity. I'm a new reader, but I'm hooked. I think what you are doing is one of the most positive things I've seen in ages. Keep up the great vision and work. It's very nice to read about other parts of Southwestern Ontario too. Here in Toronto, it's very easy to forget that many of the smaller places many of us moved from are still in need of growth and education.

— Bob Smitts, Toronto, Ont.

Community In Windsor



By Chris Cecile

In the last column I wrote for the Voice I came off as if I could never imagine living anywhere but here in Windsor. Well I've thought about leaving. I've thought about moving to Toronto (as every other gay guy I know has thought). In fact I was born in Toronto... I even like to tease my Mom by telling her that's why I'm gay. The truth is, while I would probably love living in Toronto, I genuinely like living here. This month I'm going to give you some more reasons why, and I promise next month to start showing you that I'm not just a walking Windsor tourist billboard.

Our community here has grown by leaps and bounds in the past few years. I mentioned last month about the bars. We went from two bars, to four bars, to one

bar all within a year. Will Life re-open? Will the legendary Happy Tap re-open? It's hard to say. It's just as hard however to figure out why a bar that has been heard of as far away as Texas would change itself so drastically as the Tap has done. But as of now, we still have the Complex, run by Rob & Dave, two dedicated members of our community. Perhaps that was the Tap's problem. It's owner is not a member of the LGBT community. He may have been a supporter for 18 years... or maybe he just liked our money. Either way, I doubt he ever felt a sense of belonging that may have kept the bar open and gay.

Lets leave the bars for a minute and talk about what else our community is all about. We have community organizations here that help provide a sense of community where the bars can't. Let's face it some people (OK, not me) don't like to drink. They don't like to party every weekend, but that shouldn't leave them out of the loop entirely when it comes to being part of our community. This became very apparent to me a couple of weeks ago when I went to Bowlero Bowl for a bowling fundraiser put on by Womyn Out. We'll talk about them in a minute. I walked in with 3 gay friends & two straight friends. I noticed right off the bat that we were the only guys there. That's fine. I've been severely outnumbered before (the gay boat cruise in May for instance) What struck me, however was that I only recognized a handful of these people. I'm not saying that I know every gay boi or grrrl in Windsor, but you'd think with the amount of people I do know and the number of times I've gone out partying that I would have at least recognized them.

Having said all that (and making sure to mention that I tied for high game that night) lets talk about Womyn Out. They're a group of womyn who meet twice a month to talk, have fun, and apparently once in a while dance or bowl. Back in March the group held it's first event. It was a dance appropriately entitled "Spring Out". It was a huge success



and everyone had a good time. There's also the 2002 Pride Picnic sponsored by Womyn Out and upcoming weekend camping trip. Find out more about these wonderful womyn by going to www.free2marry.com/womynout

There are many other groups in this city that provide that sense of community as well as do lots of good in the community. There is the Windsor Pride Committee for instance. Currently in it's tenth year, this group of dedicated people work tirelessly each year to provide celebrations that bring together the LGBT community from all over Windsor and Essex County. www.windsorpride.com can give you all the info you need about them.

The CAW LGBT Caucus of Windsor has been around for 4 or 5 years (sorry I can't remember Deb). I remember a Windsor Pride parade from at least that many years ago where I ran into a woman from London carrying a gay CAW banner. As a member of the CAW I was stunned and asked what it was all about. Within a year after that, Stephanie Johnstone had helped us form our own local caucus. Add that to the unwavering support that the CAW in general gives to our community, and you've got a bunch of people that truly make a difference.

MCC Windsor is another group that does what it can to help people whether they're gay or not. That can be seen in the huge success of their Friday night suppers where no one is turned away for lack of funds. Also worth mentioning is the ACW where our youth groups find a home, Planned parenthood, and the newest edition to the LGBT community of Windsor, the Windsor Bears.

So you don't have to drink to be part of a community. You don't have to get drunk to meet people. Think of what we could accomplish if we put as much time into volunteering and helping others as we did to partying and helping ourselves. Get involved! Make a difference where you live. It'll make a difference in you.

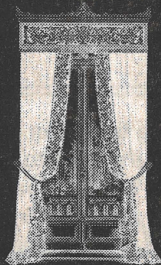
Chris Cecile is involved up the wazoo. He hosts Queer Radio Monday's at 9pm on

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VOICE SPOTLIGHT: Rainbow Chorus Soars at Gala

By Diane Kilby

91.5FM in Windsor or on the web at www.cjam.ca

There are gay and lesbian and/or GLBT mixed choral groups in most major cities across Canada – Halifax, Montreal, Ottawa, Toronto, Winnipeg, Regina, Calgary, Vancouver and Victoria. There are far fewer choruses calling small town Canada home. The Rainbow Chorus of Waterloo Wellington is the only such small town chorus in Ontario. While the experiences and the resources of all choruses differ significantly what is true for all of us is that our activism and our pride is expressed through our singing; we believe that music can bridge perceived differences and transform division into unity.

Also true for us is that most choruses, which are made up of gay, lesbian, bi, trans and our allies, belong to an international choral organisation called GALA (Gay and Lesbian Association of Choruses). GALA membership includes 170 choruses throughout North America, Europe, Australia and South Africa. Every four years the international association holds choral festivals – the next is in Montreal in 2004.

Canadian GALA (the Canadian branch of GALA) also sponsors festivals every four years: the first in 1998 in Edmonton and the second in Toronto on the weekend of June 21-24, 2002. What a stellar weekend this was for the members of the Rainbow Chorus. It was the first time the eight-year-old chorus has fully participated in a GALA festival. We soared!

The festival is set up so that each chorus has a half hour performance in one of four concert blocks either on Friday night, Saturday afternoon, Saturday evening or on Sunday afternoon. We were honoured when the artistic director of the festival chose our chorus to anchor the Saturday afternoon concert. It was a

double bonus that the festival videographer used our performance of Dancing in the Street (with the names of Canadian cities substituted for American locales) to moor the festival video. From the moment we hustled back stage to warm up we were pumped. We sounded “so damn good” in the rehearsal room we knew it would be a good performance. The applause washed over us when we had



finished and as we joined the full auditorium in singing the festival anthem ‘Let there be love’ we were flying. What a thrill to be told by other choristers that their goal was to achieve a blend of voices like ours. How overwhelming in song while eating at a Chinese restaurant and to be rewarded with carrot cake from a total stranger.

The festival also featured a wealth of workshops (on vocal technique, fundraising, choral movement etc.) as well as three festival choruses – women’s, men’s and mixed which provide the opportunity to work under a different director and learn different techniques. More than a third of the members of the Rainbow Chorus eagerly joined the festival choruses despite, for many, having to drive daily back and forth to Toronto.

We saw first hand what government funding support can do for a choir like ours. Prairie Pride Chorus from Regina sang a poignant program called the Watershed Stories written specifically for and about them by their artistic director David McIntyre. The provincial arts coun-

cil funded his work. Moreover, their Chorus received \$17,000 in provincial funding to subsidize its member’s participation. It is an example we will strive to follow.

Chorus members are still high from the weekend:

“I learned so much and had so much fun”.

“GALA was a powerful, affirming and moving experience. I found validation as a gay person that I hadn’t expected. GALA confirmed to me that music really can unify in unexpected and poignant ways. It was a bonus that we got to know each other better over the weekend.”

“I found the incredible variety of music an inspiration and look forward to using some of the music we heard in our own repertoire.”

“We rocked. I know that our performance increased our confidence both as a chorus and as individuals. I am so damned proud of us!”

If you want to sing with us contact our artistic director, Robert Miller at 519-584-1926. Our first rehearsal for our ninth season is on Wednesday September 4 at 7:30 p.m. at Harcourt United Church, 87 Dean, Guelph.



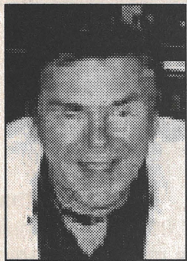
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HOW EVEN A GIRL CAN BE ONE OF THE BOYS

By Charles W. Westfall



Molson's, Labatt's and Hiram Walker Distillery have a lot more in common than the fact that their products contain alcohol.

These three companies have embarked on advertising campaigns that are blatantly male oriented. It would seem, according to the ads, that using their brand of booze is a sure sign of masculinity and guarantees membership in an exclusive and exuberant boys club.

I thought that that kind of approach died with the Marlboro Man. I guess not.

I'm concerned about this trend for a particular reason and not the one you might suspect.

I'm concerned because I feel that it supports and strengthens homophobic attitudes.

I began thinking about this after being interviewed by a local newspaper reporter recently. He was doing a piece about why people use such derogatory names when referring to homosexuals. His conclusion, and the conclusion of several of the university professors he interviewed, was that it demonstrated a strong heterosexual bias in our society.

That reminded me of an evening spent with a gay couple who were trying to explain to a straight relative that one of them was not the male and the other was not the female in the relationship. They were both males and that's the way they wanted it. The straight relative just couldn't understand.

I think that the tendency to belittle queers comes from a strong macho male bias in our society. The worst epithets a homophobe can muster are those, which label, especially a gay male, as effeminate. The stereotypes, too, are all cross-gender: lesbians being too masculine and gays being too feminine. While those images may sometimes be accurate, there is no way that gays and lesbians have exclusive access to them. There are a lot of heterosexuals who wear leather pants and have limp wrists.

On consideration, though, it dawned on

me that the attitudes displayed indicate a very negative perspective about womanhood. It is after all a pretty bad state of affairs when the worst thing that you can say about a man is that he is too much like a woman. More than that, the societies that are least tolerant of homosexuality and most abusive in their treatment of queers are those in which Women are treated as little more than chattel.

The fight against gender stereotyping is in its second generation in this country. In spite of that, there is still a strong bias against women. That bias is reflected, still, in the language we use and the attitudes we manifest.

I have worked with and for many women in my life. Some, who were deeply involved in the struggle for women's rights, had found a solid confidence in who they were as women. They were not only easy to be with but were supportive and understanding. Others had not yet found that degree of self-worth. They were much more difficult to deal with.

Our society has, nevertheless, come a long way. The increasing prevalence of Mr. Mom's, the number of men supporting movements like "Take Back the Night", positive efforts to employ inclusive language wherever possible, in religious, political and business contexts, the increasing acceptance of same-sex partners as parents and neighbours: all of these will undoubtedly have long lasting and far reaching benefits.

I can't help but wonder how many individuals think about the fact that the most primitive images or ideas of a God were feminine. That is true even of the Judeo-Christian Tradition. I have to think about the fact that in history some of the most affluent and powerful societies were matriarchies not patriarchies. Some of the greatest heroes of all time were, in fact, heroines. Why macho males have to dominate and control and put down is beyond me. Why that perspective is allowed to proliferate and infiltrate our

homes and schools and workplaces is subversive and insidious.

With increased understanding of gender and sexual orientation, more avenues will open for increased tolerance, acceptance and mutual respect. That is why I believe that the roots of homophobia are somehow inevitably to be found in how women are regarded and treated. Knowledge, however, is not, nor has it ever been, virtue. The mere enunciating of a principle does not put it into action. The road to hell, and that road begins here on earth, is indeed paved with good intentions. The evil of the few is truly made possible by the inactivity of the many. The buck stops at my front door and yours. The time for action is now, not later.

We still have a long way to go in the whole matter of equality of rights and true inclusivity. Women are still regarded in many venues as second-class citizens. The "weaker sex". They have to fight for promotions at work and often have to settle for lower pay than their male co-workers. They are still the main victims of spousal and sexual harassment and abuse. In popular culture, they are still promoted as sex objects, if not sex goddesses. That may sell records; but, it doesn't do much for the dignity of women.

Nor does the obvious policy currently being displayed by companies like Labatt's, Molsons and Hiram Walker.

For some myopic and manipulative marketers, at least, it would seem that for a woman to gain the kind of acceptance and respect she needs and deserves, in this country, she has to do only two things. She has to chug back a bottle or two of their client's booze and proudly shout, "I am Canadienne."

Come to think of it, I guess they expect us queers to do that too.

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



Deep Water

By Sally Sheklow

Maybe it's the heat. I don't know what's happened to me. I used to be a radiant, powerful Amazon warrior. I trained in martial arts, ran 10Ks and marched on Washington. Now I barely have the pep to spend half an hour with Pat and Vanna.

It's not like I don't have good role models. Even my own Sweetie works out. She's been doing water aerobics and loves flaunting her new-found 'buffitude'. Other than squeezing her bulging biceps-one of my wifely duties-I haven't shared much in her resurgent athleticism.

My little jockette was eager to turn me on to her fountain of youth. I tried it once, but I can't stand indoor pools. I grew up in Southern California where they keep their pools outside, which makes sense to me. But here in the Northwest where you need pontoons on your shoes nine months of the year indoor pools are the norm. Where is the health benefit in snorting chlorine fumes and scudding around on athlete's foot fungus in a dank shower stall? It wasn't until Sweetie's deep-water class moved to an outdoor pool that I could refuse her no longer.

The new place is clean and bright and out in the open. To my surprise, I'm now happily spending my afternoons toning my glutes and obliques in our town's new municipal aquatic facility which by no unappreciated coincidence is called "Amazon Pool." (Somebody should tell the Chamber of Commerce that lesbian tourists flock to our town just to get their picture taken under that sign.)

One session of splashing around in my aqua-jogger belt and I'm already hooked. I love bobbing merrily in all that turquoise water under the sunny sky. Not only do I get a good workout, but I also get to see my adorable bride in a swimsuit-well worth the price of admission.

And yet, my eyes do stray from my beloved now and then. With all those spandexed bodies parading around, I admit that from time to time my attention is not dedicated to the one I love. Today, during our warm-up laps I notice an intriguing tattoo on a new shoulder in class. I casually float over for a closer look. Right away I realize that I am not wearing my glasses and that people look a lot different when they're wet. Tattoo Woman turns out to be an old acquaintance. There's something disconcerting about being caught staring at the tattoo of a person you actually know. It's too late to pretend that while I was doing my side-to-side shoot-throughs I inadvertently drifted two inches from her decorated deltoid. I have to say something.

Most eyes are on the instructor as she demonstrates the wide-tire-legs-paddle-wheel-arms exercise from the ladder. The keenest conversation opener I can manage is, "What's new?"


Tattoo Woman proceeds to tell me the whole saga of how she

and her boyfriend had to get married because her workplace doesn't provide partner benefits to unmarried heterosexuals, only to same-sex couples. Maybe she mistakes the water droplets on my face for sympathy tears. I'm not up for turning my happy leisure activity into a political flare up over heterosexist discrimination. Granted, it's cool that her employer recognizes that same sex couples can't legally marry, but what I wouldn't give for an insurance company to recognize my marriage.

What's the big deal with benefits, anyway? Tattoo Woman's partner deserves benefits, just like we all do. Everyone should be entitled to health care coverage regardless of who or whether they've married. But water aerobics is supposed to be healthy fun. Must I think about bigotry while I'm doing my sit-kicks?

Tattoo Woman glides away and I go back to admiring Sweetie's adept ab crunches. I feel good that I am strong enough to keep up, but I'm reminded that even though we're all flouncing around in the same pool, not everyone gets "liberty and justice for all." I suppose some of us will always struggle for more than just keeping our heads above water.



Sally Sheklow struggles hard to take life seriously. Send your punny fanmail to sally@wymprov.com



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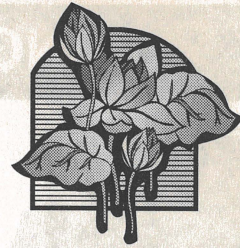
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Spiritual Life: The Quest for Freedom

THE ULTIMATE QUEST

By Noel Springwood



St. Paul was right when he wrote that it is not an easy thing, even for a good person, to die.

More certain than birth, death is an inevitable and unavoidable fact of life. Thinking about it too much can sap much of the joy of living. Not thinking about it could terminate a lifespan unexpectedly.

When I first suggested to A.J. that I was thinking about doing this article, she gave me a puzzled look and very mildly said something like, "Oh." I think that her reaction is undoubtedly characteristic of most people when the subject of death and dying is raised. No one really wants to talk about it. It's morbid, isn't it?

Death certainly has had its detractors and is not considered a welcome visitor anywhere. There are few fates considered worse than death. John Donne reminds death not to be proud and Dylan Thomas enjoins his readers not to go gentle into that good night. Julius Caesar, on the other hand, wondered why people feared death seeing that it will come when it will come. John Keats, in fact, was half in love with easeful death. Most couples get married till death parts them; but, Mormons get married from here to eternity.

Whether or not death is an end or a beginning is a moot point and open to all kinds of scientific, philosophical, psychological and theological speculation. I have always admired the statement in the Roman Catholic Mass for the Dead that declares, "In death life is changed, not ended."

Jimi Hendrix had an interesting viewpoint. "Life is pleasant. Death is peaceful. It's the transition that's troublesome."

For my part, I don't think I fear death. I don't want to have to suffer too much and I want to do it well. I really only get one chance, though, and not a lot of opportunities to rehearse.

In the latter part of the 20th century, Dr. Elizabeth Kubler-Ross pioneered the concept of dying as a phase of human life. Her research and published writings have led to a greater understanding of this phenomenon and a more merciful and humane way of dealing with those experiencing it. The provision of hospices to ensure this is a definite step forward and a sign of hope for even greater understanding and care.

Kubler-Ross broke the process down into five steps. However, while each step can be analyzed and described individually, it must be remembered that this is not normally an orderly process that permits such a simplistic approach. As with grieving, the stages are intertwined and confused at times. Awareness of what the dying are experiencing is, nonetheless, important if we are to help them make the ultimate transition well and peacefully.

The stages, in short, are denial, anger, bargaining, depression and acceptance. Remember that they don't occur in order but can overlap and twist about. The signs of each, however, are fairly recognizable.

In denial, a person avoids others, blames others, refuses to believe medical reports, blames caregivers for what is happening and doesn't talk about their own illness or those of others.

Dying persons can be angry about why they are dying while others are allowed to live on. They accuse family members of not understanding or caring. They may well blame God for their problems, if they are religious.

Bargaining begins with promising that same God all sorts of things in exchange for life, to the extent of offering major changes in lifestyle or retributive acts.

Depression manifests itself with worries about the survivors and what the dying person's loss might mean to them. It can often include a negative estimate of the significance of that person's life.

In time, there is acceptance of the fact of death. The dying person seeks solitude, quiet, and release from the things that concern the living.

You can help the dying. You can help make the process less challenging than it already is.

If the dying are in denial, do not be judgmental, do not take remarks personally and listen when they want to talk.

When they are angry, put yourself in their position, remember that their anger is not directed at you, stay close but find time for well-needed breaks from what can be a stressful and painful time for both of you.

Bargaining can arise from feelings of guilt, insufficiency or unfinished business. Listen carefully to the dying person's concerns and help them resolve issues or

matters that can be resolved. They could seem very trivial to you. To the dying, they are very important.

Depression tends to be a quiet time. Attempting to cheer the person up will not help. Listening as they express their feelings and reminding him or her how important they were to your life will help greatly.

When acceptance finally comes, sometimes mere presence is enough. Holding hands and sitting quietly will show far greater support than trying to force a conversation. It is all right not to talk and just be there in silence.

Kubler-Ross doesn't specifically mention it; but, in my experience, there is also a factor that deserves attention.

When my father was on his deathbed, he never failed to manifest the generous concern and hospitality that he always did to visitors in his home and especially to me. Sometimes, this was rather comical. For instance, strapped in a hospital bed, hardly able to move or care for himself, he would never fail to ask me, "Can I get you anything?"

I fondly remember one occasion when he told me in an appropriately hushed voice, pointing to the bed stand as he did so, "If you have to use the toilet, it's in there."

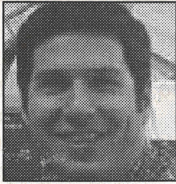
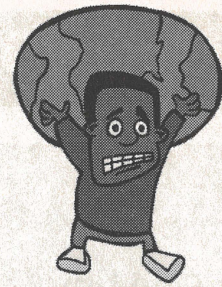
The question he asked most often, however, was one it took me a while to decipher. "Are you packed and ready to go?" At the time, I was traveling frequently as part of my job; but, I knew that's not what he meant. Finally, it hit me. He wanted permission to die. He wanted me to assure him that it was O.K. for him to go.

Once I realized that, my answer was always the same. "Yes, Dad, I'm packed. I'm ready to go whenever you want." The dying often need the permission of the living to finish their task peacefully.

Living well does not mean walking constantly in the valley of the shadow of death. Nor does it mean living as though that ultimate threshold doesn't exist.

Living well, I believe, lies in finding strength in every new dawn and finding excitement in every new horizon. It lies in the knowledge that in some mysterious and as yet inexplicable way, in death life is changed not ended.

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



Stress prevention and management

By Jeffrey Chernin, Ph.D.

Definition of stress

Stress can be defined several ways, but one working definition is that stress occurs when your demands exceed your resources. Both demands and resources can be internal and external. Internal demands include traits like perfectionism and impatience, plus limiting and rigid beliefs and attitudes. External demands include work and relationship obligations, threats of terrorism, and living in a heterosexist society.

Internal resources include characteristics like resilience, forgiveness, and confidence, plus flexibility, a positive attitude, and open-mindedness. External resources include good self-care, such as taking up yoga or meditation, having good friendships, and owning a pet.

Types of stress

While some types of stress (or demands) are obvious, others are very subtle. When you think of stressors, you usually think about emotional or psychological ones. But keep in mind that stress that impacts your physical body will also affect your mind and emotions. So, in addition to emotional and psychological stressors, such as relationship breakups and internalized homophobia, physical stressors include pollutants and chemicals, chronic pain, drugs/alcohol/cigarettes, inadequate sleep, allergies, germs, and viruses.

Signs of stress

A certain amount of stress is to be expected. And generally speaking, people have ample resource reserves to help them cope with the stresses of everyday life. Sometimes, however, demands pile up to the point where our resources aren't sufficient to handle them. When this happens, some of the signs of too much stress include:

Physical - muscle tension, head aches, stomach ailments, skin problems, nervous tics, and fatigue. Emotional - feeling blue, anxious, hypervigilant, over-concerned, excessive worrying, and guilt. Psychological - trouble concentrating, memory lapses, confusion, irritability. Behavioral - escape into drugs/alcohol, avoiding people, irritation with delays, angry outbursts.

How to manage and prevent stress

Even though it might seem that stress management and prevention are two dis-

tinct activities, there are a lot of similarities. So, the following suggestions apply to both management and prevention, with the few exceptions that immediately follow:

To prevent stress, you can find ways to plan ahead. When coming out, for example, you can avoid face-to-face conversations by writing "coming out letters" to family and friends. Another form of stress prevention is avoiding drama. Examples include keeping people's confidences (to avoid the "Round and round") and declining your best friend's partner's clandestine sexual advances.

Physical exercise is not only a great way to manage stress, it is one of the building blocks of stress prevention. Just remember that with weight training, you build up lactic acid and you will need to do cardio afterward to bring the level back down. Stretching also helps to regain muscle flexibility. One of my favorite things to do is to take walks. With the help of my dog (who, by petting it, reduces my blood pressure!) nudging me every morning, I have logged at least 2,500 hours of walking in the last five years, oftentimes in beautiful settings. The only gear you need is a good pair of walking shoes.

In addition to exercise, the two other building blocks for managing and preventing stress are sleep and nutrition. So much has been said about these two subjects, the only thing I'd like to add is for nutrition, the 80/20 rule, along with portion control, can keep you healthy and trim: 80% nutritious foods, 20% fun foods.

Another important, overlooked form of stress management is to make sure you

have fun and that you laugh. Laughter, like crying, releases chemicals that reduce stress in your body and provide feelings of calmness and well-being when you are through.

Having a good social network is a buffer to stress. Getting support and talking about your feelings act as stress reducers. If you're prone to get into arguments, it is important for you to learn how to get along with others. There is something to be said for having harmony in your life. Even though doing drugs and getting drunk can be fun and a way to forget about your problems, I have a rule-of-thumb. If you haven't gotten it out of your system by the time you're 30, you probably have a problem worth looking into.

I'd like to leave you with my favorite tips for reducing stress:

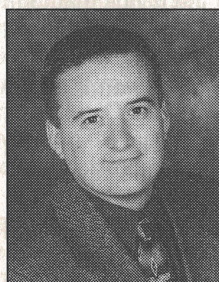
- Keep an open mind
- Everything in moderation
- Reacting is a choice
- Keep close friends
- Be part of a community
- Avoid multiple changes when possible
- Develop and maintain traditions
- Relax
- Have fun

To conclude, stress can be managed by having a sound balance of exercise, sleep, and nutrition. Add planning ahead, flexibility, reducing drama, fun and laughter, good friends, and a loving pet combine to help you reduce stress to manageable levels.

Jeffrey Chernin, Ph.D. is a Marriage and Family Therapist in Los Angeles. He can be reached at [redacted]@AOL.com

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LAMMAS: Celebration of First Harvest



By Rev. Mary Sander

Lammas, the celebration of the first harvest, is celebrated on August 1st. The Goddess most often associated with Lammas is Habondia. She is generally depicted as a voluptuous woman in the prime of her life--fertile and joyous and surrounded by the fruits of the earth. We are blessed, in this part of the world, with an abundance unknown in many cultures. Our supermarkets and markets are full of the bounty of the season--the gifts of the Mother--which is why for me this is the time of thanks giving.

Some have said to me that, given the times we live in, how can I be thankful? It is all too true that wars rage; women and children are the victims of horrific violence and violation; hate crimes against different cultures, religions and our own community happen far too often to deny their existence; children starve and greed works to destroy our environment. I would be a fool to deny these things. And I would be a bigger fool, and worse, a bad priestess, not to work in any way I can to eradicate the horrors that exist within the humanity. So I must acknowledge all of this. But does this acknowledgment also mean that we must deny the beauty of the earth? the wonder of the magick that brings us the gifts that sustain us? the joy of love? or the many other gifts that we know and experience in our lives? I think not.

So what are some of the things that I am thankful for in my own life? Here are just a few:

- the song of a robin on a warm, sunny Sunday morning
- a full moon and a sky full of twinkling stars--especially away from the city lights
- the first bite of a crisp, tart, juicy apple
- the sharing of laughter with a good friend
- the freedom to choose the one I love
- the freedom to worship as I choose

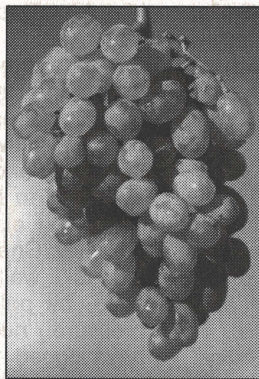
- blue skies, cool breezes and sandy beaches
- a really good book and the leisure to enjoy it
- that the woman I have loved for more than 13 years, chooses to also share her love and life with me

I think my list could go on and on, but you get the idea. I am truly blessed and I believe that most of us in our culture are as well. Our lives are not perfect. We deal with health issues, money issues, family issues... But when we take just a few minutes to stop and think about what it is we might want to be thankful for, it can be quite a revelation. One of the practices that I try to keep is to keep a Thanksgiving Journal. Each day, first thing in the morning, I write down one thing I am

thankful for. That simple exercise colours my entire day. I am reminded each day just how much I really have. Just how much the Goddess has blessed me with. May you be so blessed.

Happy Thanksgiving, Happy Lammas

Rev. Mary Sander is an Ordained Priestess who is dedicated to honouring and celebrating the Goddess in all areas of her life. She is the founder and organizer of Guelph Celebrations - community Sabbat celebrations open to all women.



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Freedom and Rememberance: Unique Queer Lives

By Mary Ann Moore

There are two pieces of sculpture, *Turkey* (c.1932) and *The Harvester* (1938), in the Donald Forster Sculpture Park at the Macdonald Stewart Art Centre in Guelph by Loring and Wyle, respectively. Frances Loring and Florence Wyle lived and worked together, as creative partners, for 60 often difficult, sometimes delightful, years.

Both were American and met at the Art Institute of Chicago in 1905. Frances's father Frank moved the family to Cobalt, Ontario in 1906. Frances would join her family in the summer and take her friend Florence along. The first studio Florence and Frances established was on Macdougall Alley in New York's Greenwich Village. In 1913, when Frances' father closed down their studio, they moved to Toronto.

In a studio over a carpenter's shop on Adelaide Street where there is a post office located now, they started over. A second studio was on Church Street, south of the present-day "gay village". The home they are most identified with is a former church at 110 Glenrose Avenue. There's a plaque in front of it commemorating Loring and Wyle who became known to the neighbourhood children as "the clay ladies".

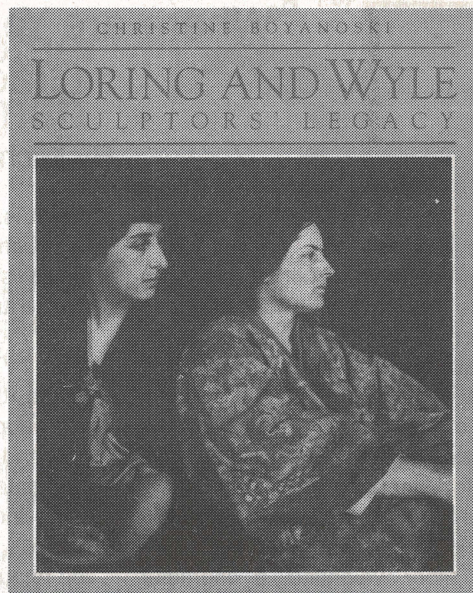
Inside their home/studio would be various works in progress, some shrouded in plastic to keep them damp. Their work was traditional: war memorials, fountains and some private commissions. Frances, the larger of the two women, remembered as "serene and bountiful", did the larger pieces and much of her work was architectural. Florence, the smaller one remembered as brusque, impatient and "peppery", was more prolific and sculpted smaller pieces such as infants and angels. They honoured their subjects and were generous with their limited and unpredictable income. Frances was instrumental in helping to establish the Sculptors Society of Canada.

Another sculptor, Rebecca Sisler, wrote a biography called *The Girls*, published in 1972. She attempts to make a case for the women not being lesbians by giving examples of men Frances had dated and saying someone's comments about being lesbians was a "slur" and "innuendo". They seemed to be part of that era where they shared a love "that dare not speak its name". Without calling them lesbians, their friends acknowledged Florence and Frances as "The Girls", a term the press later used to describe them. Their friends included the members of the Group of Seven and the photographers Ashley and Crippen who were known as "The Boys".

Some of their pieces are in the Art Gallery of Ontario such as Frances's bronze head of Sir Frederick Banting. On the grounds of Toronto General Hospital is a bronze relief created by Florence Wyle and dedicated to Nurse Edith Cavell. In Galt (now Cambridge) is the Galt War Memorial Frances Loring and W. L. Somerville created in 1930. Florence used sumac to carve with what I call, the hands of erotica, female forms to represent rivers and the seasons. She travelled to British Columbia in the twenties to record totem poles in plaster and a few in iron.

Although I haven't seen it, there's apparently a large relief of farm animals in the McNabb Memorial Library at the Ontario Agriculture College in Guelph by Florence who was a nature and animal lover. She also wrote poetry and a chapbook of her poems was published by The Ryerson Press.

More than ten years ago I started writing a novel called *Ordinary Life* and *The Girls* made their way into it. The protagonist is a playwright who is writing a play about Loring and Wyle and their



spirits start appearing to her in various places in Toronto and out west where they both spent some time. I learned by writing about the two sculptors that they lived for their art and worked diligently to give sculpture its rightful place alongside other works of art. As my character, Zoe, communed with the spirits of the dead, she realized that people go on learning after they die and give advice to we mortals about what they have learned.

The Girls died in 1968 within three weeks of one another at a nursing home in Newmarket. In the end they apparently became the reverse of their usual personalities. Florence became her happier childlike self and Frances, who had been full of good humour and loved to gossip, became angry. A retrospective of their work was held at the University of Guelph in 1978 and at the Art Gallery of Ontario. There is a catalogue of the latter exhibition in 1987 written by Christine Boyanoski.

The Girls expressed their passion in their sculpture from the time they set up their first New York Studio to their final days in their church studio in Toronto. They didn't make decisions about monogamy versus non-monogamy but dared to have their names linked like a daisy chain from Greenwich Village to Church Street.

Mary Ann Moore's novel, *Ordinary Life*, has not yet been published but two excerpts from it have been published in *Prairie Fire* (Winnipeg).

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Mary Ann Moore

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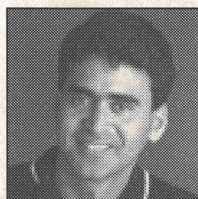
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Slouching Through Gomorrah



Where are You in the Beauty Gradient?

By Michael Alvear

You'll almost never see a beautiful gay man dating an ugly one. In fact, you'll hardly ever see a beautiful guy date even an average looking guy. That's because of a universal dating law author Steve Almond calls "the beauty gradient."

His book, *My Life in Heavy Metal*, is a collection of short stories, mostly involving heterosexual sex. But what he says about straight people is true about us too. Even more so, in some cases. Exhibit A: His theory on the "beauty gradient."

In one story, Valentino, a character named Holden does an unforgettable rant on the tyranny of beauty, its lottery-like fraternity:

"You can't get out of your depth aesthetically. You do that and you're done for...All men and women are divided along aesthetic lines, see. That's just the

way it is. There's maybe twenty, twenty-two such strata. At the top you've got the movie stars and models, okay? Tom Cruise and that skinny bitch he is married to, all those fuckers. Then the soap stars and TV anchors. Then commercial actors, then actual non-televized attractive people, down to the average, sort of ugly and at the bottom the real sad cases, cleft palates and the like.

The trick here is that every person recognizes intuitively where they belong on the beauty gradient. This is the first thing you gauge when you walk into a room. Right? It's like: 'Okay, better than him, worse than him, way better than him.' That's how people know who they're supposed to end up with."

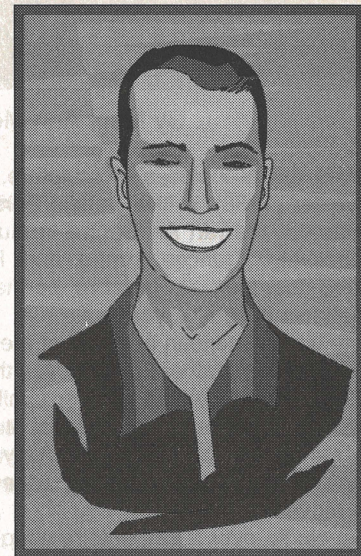
When Holden's friend points out the success of a young woman in the middle of the "beauty gradient" hitting on a guy at the top of it, Holden points out that the guy is drunk and all the woman can hope for is a one-night stand. "He's got a few beers in him," says Holden. "Beer can blur the picture, but it can't repaint the lines."

If Almond thinks the lines can't be repainted in his world, he ought to try ours. Our lines aren't painted; they're cemented. The only time you see the lines crossed is when cash gets involved.

Almond could never have set this story in a heterosexual post-college context. That's because the "beauty gradient" falls away for straight women after their early 20's. They do what we men won't: Grow up. And so they look for more than just beauty. Walk down any mall in North America and you'll see what I mean: Fat toady straight guys with gorgeous women as far as the eye can see.

You'll hardly ever see that with gay men. In real estate terms, we're always looking for oceanfront property. We'll buy it, move into it and stay, no matter how lousy and decrepit the house may be. We prefer the view to everything else. If we didn't, then why don't we ever see gay couples on the opposite end of the beauty gradient?

Almond's character is right about liquor



being able to blur, but not repaint the lines. In my own life I've never seriously dated anyone who wasn't within reach of my station in the beauty gradient. And the only times I've ever taken home guys way above my pole position was when they were drunk.

And come to think of it, the only times I've gone home with guys who were way below my own gradient status was when I was really drunk. Liquor, thy name is Opportunity.

We don't go "bada-bing-bada-bang" over beauty because we're gay. We do it because we're male. Straight or gay, guys aren't that impressed with experience, compassion, personality and intelligence in potential mates. Unless they're hotties. Then we wax rhapsodic about all their inner qualities. Think about it: When was the last time you saw straight guys pant when Madeleine Albright walked by? When was the last time you saw gay guys pant when Sir Ian McKellen walked by?

It's not that women aren't interested in male beauty; it's that they're willing to give up beauty for other aspects of "power" they consider more important: kindness, generosity, a sense of humor.

And it's not that men aren't interested in kindness, generosity, and a sense of humor; it's that we're not willing to give up beauty for them.

And that, in scientific circles, is known as the human condition.

Michael Alvear lives with Zoey & Zack, his lesbian Labrador and girlie-boy Vizsla. He can be reached at [redacted]@attbi.com

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DYKE RANT: Womyn, Labels & Judgement



A Woman by any other name is still a woman

By Holly Hope

Growing up I was taught that a rose by any other name is still a rose. Whether budding, blooming, or wilting, long stemmed or short stemmed a rose is a rose.

Names. Labels. Judgment. These are a few of my least favourite things. How is it that so many feel the need to thrust people into tiny slots, acting as judge, jury and executioner? We as women (womyn if you prefer) are all guilty.

I have always struggled with being "different" in the straight community and upon entering "dyke-world", sadly, this did not change. The lesbian sisterhood that I had hoped to find alludes me still. The fragmented mess that I encountered was riddled with superficial judgment.

Is it not the lesbian community that fights day in and day out to be accepted as they are by society? Whatever age, race, religion, size or grade of beauty a woman is, she is still a woman who deserves respect.

People have often judged me by my crazy hair styles and funky clothes and called me names such as a 'hippy', 'freak', 'femme' or even some days a 'butch'. I've got more labels than the clothes in my closet -- I'm a lesbian, Buddhist, vegan, friend, daughter, sister, etc. How dare anyone define my uniqueness or my right to belong. I am a woman. I'm just me. Get over it!

"Who do you think you are?!" is the phrase that goes through my mind every time anyone judges someone's supposed bad fashion sense. They don't have the slightest idea who that person is or what they have lived through. This may be a moot point, but really it is a small piece of a much bigger picture. Let's take "fat" people for instance, this one really gets

my goat. I hear people making fun of larger people all the time, not once thinking that the person in question may have a medical condition, or maybe, imagine this, they may just be built that way (gaspl!).

Why can't we all just get along? Shame on all lesbians who spend their time labeling and judging others.

So, where is the lesbian "community"? Not unlike the rest of queer culture, many lesbians come from a place where we feel like we do not fit in at all. We come out of the closet to a "community" that "welcomes" us with a type of judgment that is far more severe than that of the straight world.

Where is the sisterhood? Where is the real welcome? Where's the acceptance? Where is the tolerance that should

"The best that 'beauty' offers is given to us all by right of femaleness. When we separate 'beauty' from sexuality, when we celebrate the individuality of our features and characteristics, women will have access to a pleasure in our bodies that unites us rather than divides us."

- Naomi Wolf

extend past things like whether one is fat, thin, old or young, trendy or "beautiful" in the cliquy pretentious mindset of a shallow self-proclaimed "goddess".

All women need to empower each other. We especially need to stop all the labelling and judging and put that love into action. We need to respect each other. Let's celebrate our differences rather than constantly be divided by our lack of tolerance and acceptance for those differences.

When it comes to looks, or to beauty, truthfully, is there anything uglier than judgment?

True beauty goes much deeper than just one's body or surface packaging.

Whether adolescent, middle-aged, senior, big or small a woman is a woman.

Holly Hope is a resident of Kitchener. A Voice exclusive.

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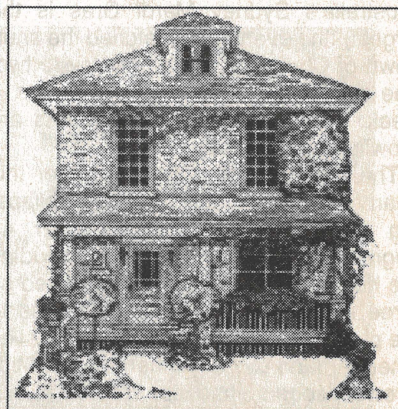
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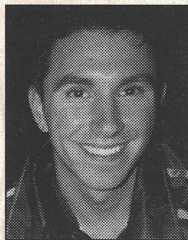
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TORONTO PRIDE: The Bare Facts



By Ryan Porter

On the sweltering Sunday evening after the Toronto Pride parade, Pride committee co-chairs Kyle Knoeck and Kim-Ellen Hurst were dashing to their next responsibility amongst scantily-clad revelers when Knoeck posed the question: "I wonder what it's like to go to this thing?"

He's only half kidding. "Pride 2002 - Uncensored" was Knoeck's fifth year volunteering for Pride. The last time he attended without shouldering some responsibility was 1997.

"The event has grown hugely," he says from the Pride committee office above The Second Cup on Wellesley. "It's not even the same event as when I first got involved."

The increasing number of attendants - which police estimate quivered around one million this year - is probably the catalyst for all other changes to Toronto's annual Pride festival. To accommodate the burgeoning crowd that's tossed Toronto into a hot heat against New York city for the world's second biggest Pride (Australia's Sydney Mardi Gras is the largest), the event has stretched the shut-down of Church St. from one day to two. The entire event now officially lasts a week. Thankfully, the beer gardens are growing exponentially.

The parade itself was a scorcher this year. Amongst rumours of people collapsing from heat exhaustion under 43 degrees Celsius temperatures, including the humidex, the parade was delayed so three ambulances could gain access to the parade route. The parade also stalled when Amanda, the winner of the Miss Crews pageant, had car trouble in her fabulous 1968 Convertible Satellite.

Another rough spot at this year's Pride involved a nudist group.

The TNT! MEN's nudist group, who strut in the buff down the parade route annually, were warned by police they would be arrested for public nudity if they marched this year. Undeterred, about twenty of the men marched in the parade, six of them showing their genitals. All six of these men were arrested, plus one man wearing a codpiece. At press time, the six men had been ordered to appear in court Wednesday, August 7th.

However, as a bizarre qualifier to public nudity laws, there's a requirement that the charges must be laid directly by the attorney general. A group member and lawyer, Peter Simms, is optimistic the charges will be dropped because to successfully prosecute a public nudity charge, it is essential to prove an offense to public decency. Simms says the group has clashed with police in the past, and the charges have consistently proved groundless.

"We have ended up spending an inordinate amount of time and effort dealing with police actions which ultimately prove to be legally groundless," Simms says. "The job of police is to enforce the law as it actually is and not to use their badge to enforce their own personal views."

Superintendent Maher says he proceeded with the arrests after complaints from the public last year, which he received this year as well. While he concedes public nudity is an unusual charge, he denies accusations that he acted before fully understanding the law.

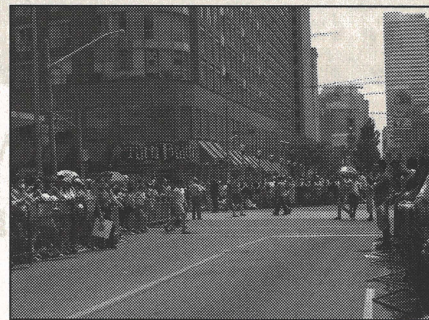
"I sought direction," he says. "I had discussions with our legal service, I had discussions from the crown attorney's office and that's what we took our direction from and that's what effected the arrests."

The press given to TNT! MEN has fed into a public misconception that Pride is a festival teeming with the erotic exposure of naughty parts.

"There isn't a lot of nudity in the parade," says Knoeck. "It's TNT! MEN, and it's a nudist group."

In what has become an annual tradition, the most spectacular and showiest floats were brought to you by corporations, peddling wares from liquor to home decor. While there are annual rumblings of protest over the increasing corporatization of Pride and the decreasing political activism associated with the parade, Knoeck believes the attention Pride focuses on the community is in itself a political manoeuvre.

"There's an argument that the most fundamental political action a queer person can take is to come out of the closet and Pride does that on a grand scale," he says.



Political or not, the event is raking in heaps of greenbacks for the city of Toronto. An economic impact survey compiled in 1996 found Pride dumped between 42 and 56 million dollars into the economy. Since the event has grown much larger in the past six years, logic dictates the cash brought in will also reach beyond current estimates. Another survey was taken this year and results will be available in September.

Annually the Pride committee has produced an event that Knoeck considers to rank as a major Canadian event. It is produced on the strength of their volunteers. The municipal government has chipped in, assisting the Pride committee through policing, trash collection and barricades. The Government of Canada, too, contributed between \$25,000 and \$55,000 as a strategy to increase their visibility, earning them "gold sponsor" status (alongside Schick Xtreme Three and Showcase). Considering the magnitude of the event, Knoeck believes the government could dig deeper.

Queer Canadians have the luxury of hosting one of the world's biggest Pride celebrations in a global culture where our equal rights aren't necessarily recognized. While Pride has become an international phenomenon, the garish gala in Canada where the arrest of a group of nudists incites a battle cry of repression signifies how far we've come in our struggles. Knoeck has networked with other Pride organizers around the world and appreciates how each group must challenge their individual obstacles.

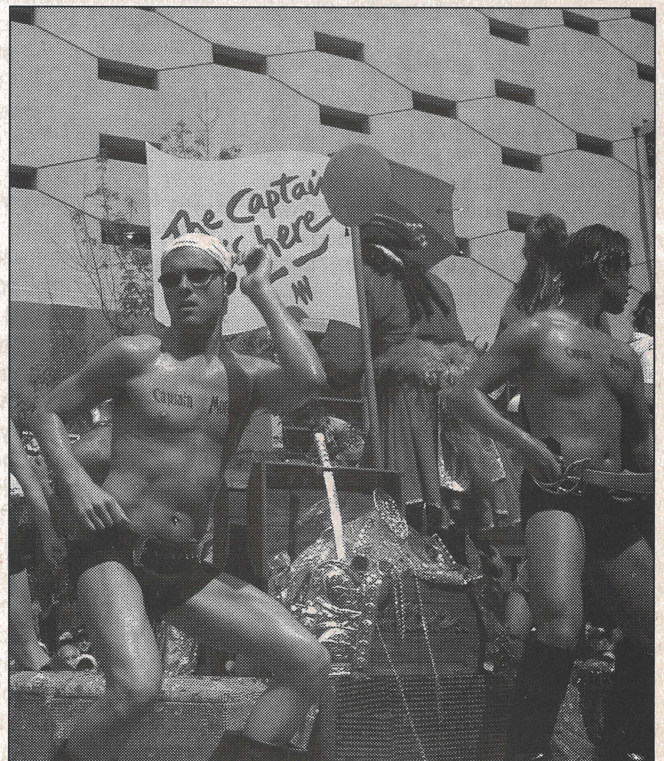
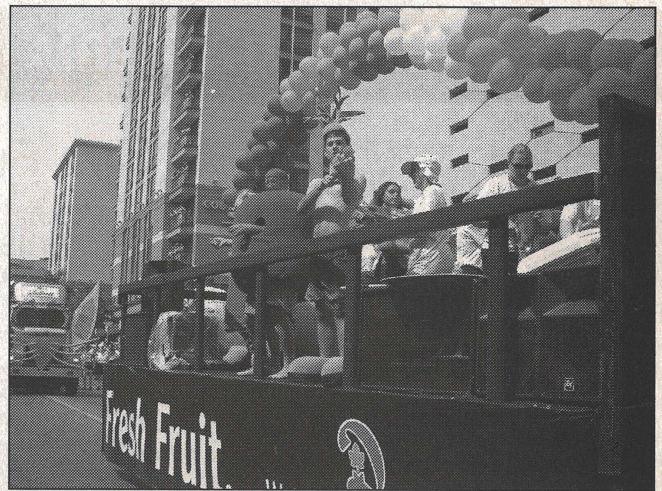
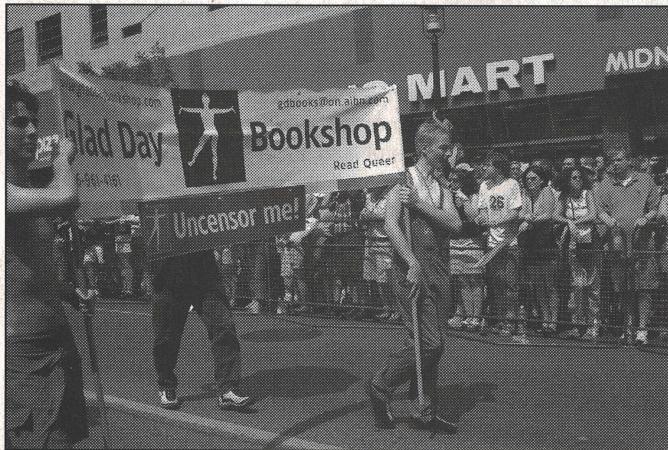
"What we face here is very different from what Pride in Lima, Peru faces where this year they were denied a parade permit," Knoeck says. "There are Prides in cities that have established queer communities that have successfully fought for a lot of their rights and then there are places where those struggles are just beginning."

Ryan Porter, of Toronto, is currently a Journalism student at Ryerson in Toronto. He is also an editorial intern at fab magazine. A Voice Exclusive.

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All Photos by Ian Hardiment



NAKED HYSTERIA



What's All The Fuss?

By Lyn McGinnis

The June issue of *The Voice Magazine* saw the introduction of a new feature: "AJ's Voice Boy." It pictured a young nude man sitting and looking into the camera. This picture didn't display any sexual activity, it was simply a seated nude. Along with pleasant surprise expressed and other positive feedback to *The Voice*, our first Voice Boy's nudity also resulted in some negative reaction. I choose to call this response "Naked Hysteria."

I define "Naked Hysteria" as the body phobic neurosis of North American culture around nudity, let alone sexuality. Having traveled the world and seen places unaffected by our bizarre body phobia, I can attest to the fact that this is not universal.

Perhaps the notable and comical exception to this is in Italy. Italians, like most Europeans, have a very healthy attitude towards the body. They are comfortably surrounded in historic settings full of depictions of nude bodies – ancient and modern.

The Vatican, which is situated in the heart of the city of Rome, is the absurd exception. Anyone who has seen pictures of the thousands of classical sculptures in the Vatican Museums knows they have a unique feature – a fig leaf. Notably, female nudes are free of this silly addition, but all nude males have them. At one time there were even fig leaves painted over the nudes in Michelangelo's frescos in the Sistine Chapel. Thankfully these ridiculous additions to these famous frescos have since been removed.

What these prudish additions did was draw one's attention to what was hiding underneath. They set up the disturbed notion that while all the body could be viewed and celebrated, this one aspect was somehow dirty and shameful. Of course, this is entirely the fault of the traditional Judeo/Christian/Muslim heritage, with its disturbed distaste for what are now called healthy attitudes towards our own bodies and sexuality. "The vestiges of this tradition still haunt us and result in 'Naked Hysteria.'" The opinion that our

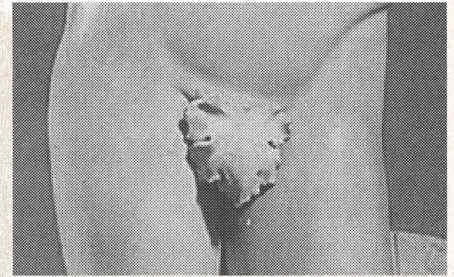
bodies are anything but natural in their nudity. It's all pretty silly when you think about it.

While Europe also has this religious burden, they have been spared the "puritan" hatred of the human form. While there are some exceptions, in general our culture sees any form of nudity as sexual. As we are quite screwed up when it comes to sexuality, we project this onto any nude figure we encounter!

I am reminded of the pathetic "Puppetry of the Penis" controversy that happened in a smaller municipality outside Toronto a few months ago. This cabaret show consisted of two men who manipulated their genitals into various shapes, objects and landmarks. They subtitle their show "the ancient art of genital origami." In larger communities, this show has met with rave reviews and sell out performances. But in this smaller town, a tiny, noisy group could not see past the nudity to what the show was about and there were 20 or so letters in the local paper protesting it. Of course, all this free publicity meant the theatre sold so many tickets they had to put on additional shows!

I hope the same statistics apply to *The Voice*. In the *Voice Grrl/Boy* section, there will always be those who will wish to be depicted with more or less skin exposed for your approval. A few may protest, but I hope the majority will have the emotional security to smile and move on to the real content. As for the June *Voice Boy*, a few more cosmopolitan readers might have even missed the image entirely. Only after seeing the protest in the July issue will they go back to see what the fuss was about. What a laugh they must have had when they did so.

Speaking of cosmopolitan, at Toronto's annual Pride parade this past June six members of the TNT MEN's nudist group were arrested - well for being nude - during what has to be one of the hottest Pride events Toronto has hosted. The group has marched in the buff in past years and when they have been charged with offending "public decency." Clearly these charges are based on complaints by those not getting what Pride is about.



Given the acres of sunburned skin in evidence, it seems particularly absurd in this momentarily free and uninhibited context to go after those able to bare it all, especially since the charges never stick. At such large events like this, we seem to momentarily liberate ourselves from this hateful and toxic body phobia. How sad that when the parade is done we crawl back into our body phobic shells.

I have had occasion to attend a camp where there is a bathing suit optional beach. Not surprisingly, the bathing suit required beach is mostly deserted and the optional one very popular. What I discovered the first time I went was that after the first few moments of novelty, what I saw around me were people, in all shapes and sizes and age groups, comfortable in their own skin. There was no sexual element in this setting, whatever happened at campsites later, it was a gathering of relaxed and happy nude persons enjoying a summer afternoon. Imagine that. A group of relaxed nude persons.

I can only hope, as our society continues up the path to complete secularization, these primitive body phobic attitudes will fall by the wayside. Troubled as our straight cultural mentality is, I am livid that some in our LGBT community, at least out in the boonies, uncritically buy into this cultural neurosis. This body phobia is one of the roots of the homophobia we all face. Why then do we mirror it instead of aggressively and joyously rejecting it, as they are so happily able to do in the larger Canadian centres and elsewhere in the world?

I think our ability to openly celebrate this aspect of our LGBT culture is a good indicator of our general health as a community. It also says how far we have come in freeing ourselves from our own internalized homophobia and other linked body and sexuality oppressions.

I hope we can find a way to loosen up around this kind of pleasant diversion. *Voice* readers know the publication is dedicated to quality content. The fact that you can occasionally find something to smile about is also a good thing. So relax.

Pride

TORONTO

All Photos by Ian Hardiment



GAY MARRIAGE



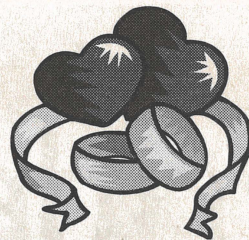
Yes, I'll Marry You . . . But Only on the Front Lawn

By Mark Weiser

There has been so much controversy surrounding the issue of homosexual marriage for quite some time. I feel that most people thirst for some kind of lasting relationship – an emotional and spiritual bond with another person. I admit that I have been swallowed by jealousy when watching happy couples of any sexual orientation engage each other on that “soul-mate” level. Watching an emotional meeting that is fascinating. I can completely appreciate and understand why couples want to solidify their love for each other publicly, to scream it from the clouds so the whole world knows that they are in love. All of us should enjoy that right. Having said that, do I ever want to get married? Yes. When I fall in love and know it's real, I want to get married. I want to be 55 years old and be spending my time with whom I have had an inexplicable connection with since being 25 or 30, knowing it'll last forever. But, after taking the time to contemplate what “marriage” really means, I've decid-

ed that I would never get married in a church or by a minister.

Why? To me, the word “marriage” was based upon the Adam and Eve theory. That God had created the perfect mate for male, and that mate was female. Whether I agree with this theory or not is irrelevant. However, if the basis of the church's marriage ceremony simply revolves around male and female becoming one, I don't want to disrupt it or be a part of it. Religious groups should not have to change their views and practices because homosexuals demand rights to equal those of the heterosexual community. The law has finally granted us the right to be married, but they will never be prepared to dictate to religious groups what they are allowed to believe, and if that were ever to happen we would have to consider Canada a communist country. I personally think that people should be able to get married no matter who or what they are, but I am also prepared to accept that people have a right to their own belief



system and opinions, just as much as I do. I feel that life long commitment to another human being is the biggest event of someone's life. I don't want the most important day of my life to take place in a church where I am not 100% welcome just because I should have the right. Besides, there are plenty of other places that people get married: On a beach, at a City Hall, a drive-through in Vegas, their parents' home, their own home. ***?? So let Church keep their marriage ceremonies until all are welcome. ***?? This is not to say that I am not spiritual. I do attend church fairly regularly with my mother. I just don't want to get married there, that's all. Certain religions have certain values that I feel everyone should respect. There is no smoking allowed in my home, and I expect those who enter to respect my wishes. Similarly, when I go to church with my mother and I am in the home of the congregation, I respect their wishes. I don't want anyone to challenge my no-smoking rule, and I am sure

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that many religions do not want their beliefs challenged either, as we are all entitled to our own thoughts. Every place has rules: Grandma's house, High School, Churches, Arenas, Restaurants, Bars, Parking Lots...and no matter which one of these places a person goes they are given the same option: "If you don't like it, don't come". However, now that the law is being completely re-evaluated, if churches welcome homosexual marriage, I will be unapologetically sitting in the front row, and I may even someday change how I feel about getting married in a church. I truly hope that the entire world someday accepts homosexuality - that we can display public affection, get married, have children without even the slightest hassle. Together, we have come a long way in educating people and trail-blazing, and I long to see the day when all unpleasant connotations associated with being homosexual have disappeared. In this world there are so many social-political issues: racism, religion, abortion, homosexuality, the list goes on. Sometimes activists for such groups take a wrong approach. My goal is to promote the acceptance of homosexuality, and if I can educate just one person and help them reach this acceptance, then I have done something to be proud of. The execution of my game-plan does not include barging into a church and demanding that they allow me to marry my boyfriend because I should be allowed. Would that encourage people want to be accepting and understanding?

I have my wedding all planned out. I want to get married at my home, outside, in the summer, by a Justice of the Peace. A few close friends and family to witness it: to see me and my life long soul-mate promise spend the rest of our lives together from that moment on. The ceremony would be followed by a wonderful dinner and some presents. And then of course, the huge party where I get completely wasted and puke on the cake. I will make sure it is a day that I will never ever forget. Will I be bitter at the fact that I have to do it this way to make my day enjoyable and be politically correct? No. My reason: I simply don't give a fuck! Adam had Eve, Dad has Mom, Barbie has Ken, and I have James. All four couples in love - that's all that really matters. And I don't need a law or a church or acceptance to prove it.

Mark Weiser resides in Kitchener and is a Mortgage Consultant and Activist. A Voice exclusive.

Gay Marriage In The News

From the Globe & Mail, Saturday, July 20, 2002, "From the closet to the altar" By Margaret Wentle

"Michael Leshner freely admits that some people think he's obnoxious. He certainly is relentless. When Toronto City Hall turned down his application for a marriage licence on Thursday, he harangued the helpless city clerk mercilessly.

"The fight over gay marriage has become a fight over ownership of a word. But what a potent little word it is. No one knows what will happen to the Ontario judgment. The province or the federal government can appeal it, but to do so they'll have to file for leave by next Friday.

The province, courtesy of Mr. Eves, doesn't seem inclined. The federal Justice Minister is currently a 39-year-old social liberal from Quebec who "of course" smoked dope.

Perhaps the Supreme Court will eventually clear the whole thing up. Or maybe Parliament will pass a law. Or maybe the City of Toronto's lawyers will change their minds and let the Michaels have their licence. Two things are certain. One is that the opposition is quite literally dying out. The other is that the institution of marriage these days needs all the recruits it can get."

From the Ottawa Citizen, Monday July 21, 2002, "Government still opposes gay unions - No plans to appeal Ontario court decision," by Shannon Kari

"The Department of Justice has until July 29 to formally file a notice of motion for leave to appeal this month's unanimous ruling of the Ontario Divisional Court.

The panel of three judges found the common law ban on same-sex marriages violated the equality provisions of the Charter of Rights. The majority of the panel decided to suspend the ruling for 24 months to allow Parliament time to correct the Charter violation.

The two-year suspension gives the Justice Department the option to avoid appealing the Ontario decision and focus on the case that will be heard by the British Columbia Court of Appeal in February. That case follows a B.C. Supreme Court ruling in which a judge found that the ban is valid and suggested a constitutional amendment would be required to permit same-sex marriage.

From The Toronto Sun, July 20, 2002, "Why be afraid of a gay or lesbian wedding?" By Rachel Sa

"Allowing gay couples to marry does not somehow diminish the marriages of heterosexuals. If anything, opening marriage to gays and lesbians makes the institution of marriage more noble - a fuller, all-encompassing celebration of the love and commitment of two people. It will only diminish the idea of the state of marriage in small minds.

But in the days following last week's court decision, some have voiced the opinion that allowing gays to marry will not only damage the institution of marriage, but will somehow have far-reaching, cataclysmic effects on individuals - married, single or otherwise. A caller to a local radio station even expressed worry for his children - worry they will now be growing up in a more dangerous world.

One wonders how a gay marriage could possibly have a direct effect on people who clearly will not ever have a close relationship with any gay person, married or single, in their life. So why the uproar folks? It confuses me.

From Hour.ca, Three Dollar Bill column, "For whom the bell tolls", By Richard Burnett

"The Ontario Superior Court of Justice unanimously ruled that excluding same-sex couples from marriage is discriminatory and unconstitutional.

But it was Justice Laforme who really went in for the kill. "I find that there is no merit to the argument that the rights and interests of heterosexuals would be affected by granting same-sex couples the freedom to marry," Laforme wrote, adding, "I cannot conclude that freedom of religion would be threatened or jeopardized by legally sanctioning same-sex marriage."

Furthermore, Laforme stated, "I do not accept that the objective of procreation is a basis that can support the restriction against same-sex marriage. Rather, it could reasonably be argued... that it appears to be a mere pretext used to rationalize discrimination against lesbians and gays."

The ruling is good news for gay-marriage posterboys Kevin Bourassa and Joe Varnell."

EXCLUSIVE FEATURE INTERVIEW: Gay Marriage



Kevin Bourassa & Joe Varnell Pioneers Blazing The Trail

By A.J. Mahari

New-age pioneers thrust into the forefront of the gay rights movement in Canada in this young millennium, Kevin Bourassa and Joe Varnell are definitely blazing a trail in our storied history. A history and movement that continues to witness Canada leading the way for the world.

I had the chance to catch up to Kevin Bourassa and Joe Varnell, the day after the court decision was announced. They were celebrating at London Pride. For all they've been going through and all the media scrutiny they've been under Friday July 12th's decision was exciting and energizing for them.

In speaking with Kevin and Joe one quickly gets a sense of their gentle, passionate and courageous journey. They are two very intelligent and articulate men. Very well versed in the nature and scope of the issues at hand. They are wonderful ambassadors to the straight world on behalf of all of us, whether we want to get married or not. They are wonderful examples of the kind of devoted love that can carry two people through the eye of a storm and see them safely to the other side. The other side of the storm for this couple is apparently 24 months away. However, having come this far it is clear that they get stronger and more determined with each passing day.

In describing himself, and husband, Joe, Kevin said, "Besides the media, the politics and the religious elements we are just two people who are in love and want to live our lives."

Reaction To The Court Decision

Our conversation began with my congratulating them and asking how they felt just one day after same-sex marriage was (technically, for now) ruled to be a right to which they and the rest of us are entitled.

Joe recounted how they were both very nervous walking in to hear the court's decision. He said, "It was hard to wait for

the answer to the question, 'are you a second class citizen or not?' But when we heard the news, the first thing was, we were in complete shock and then there was a lot of screaming, yelling, and a great deal of crying. It's wonderful to finally hear a court in Canada say 'you can't treat gays or lesbians as second-class citizens anymore.'"

When asked how the news was setting in just twenty four hours after their victory was announced, Kevin said, "Well, we are walking around London. The feeling today is as amazing as it was yesterday. Joe and I woke up this morning and we felt so HAPPY and I think I said to him,

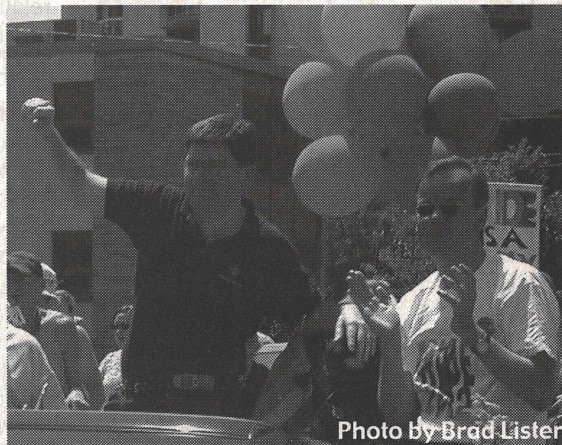


Photo by Brad Lister

'good morning my legal husband. It's a strange and very nice feeling. We hope that it is one that won't be taken away by the government and that in fact they will resist the temptation to fight this all the way to the Supreme Court.'

Response to The Language of The Court's Ruling

Kevin and Joe are confident that they will, in fact, be a legally married couple, officially, within twenty four months. "I thought what was wonderful about the July 12th ruling was Justice Blair, in his ruling, when he said in twenty four months if parliament hasn't acted they will have made a choice not to act. And, at that point his ruling very clearly stated

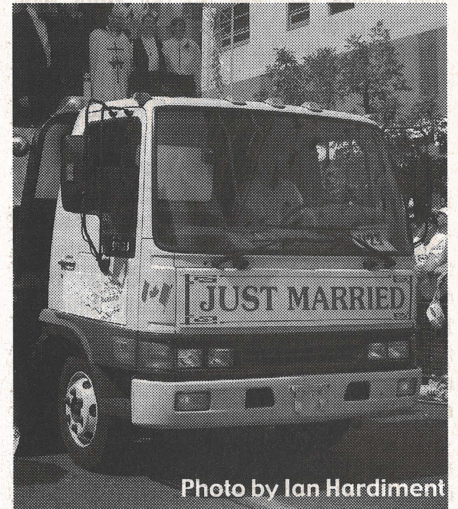


Photo by Ian Hardiment

when parliament makes the choice not to act, and look after its citizens, it is just as damaging as taking a negative action against them. Choosing to do nothing is in itself an action that is discriminatory and he will not permit that to go on any longer."

After remarking on what strong language was used, Kevin interjected, "The onus now is on government. They have a choice, do something, do nothing, it doesn't really matter, or in two years it will be done for you if you don't act."

Joe then said, "We firmly believe that anything other than full equal marriage will not stand up under scrutiny again. The only question was whether they would make us fight again, and the court said, 'no, we're not going to make this go on any longer'."

Kevin added, "The courts have really shown that they are going to honour the pretension that the law is for people. If not activism at the court level, the real focus should be the way that the government has abdicated its responsibilities. That's the problem and dysfunction that we are facing in Canadian Politics."

What Lies Ahead Legally?

At the time of the interview there hadn't been any response from the Provincial Government. Days later, Premier Eves surprised many by saying that the Provincial Government would not appeal the ruling. Stay tuned to find out what the Federal Government's response will be.

When asked what they believe lies ahead in their legal challenge, Joe said, "I think that an appeal is likely but given the strong wording of the judgment, here in Ontario, I don't see how any appeal that they would make can win. We think that we are going to get a positive ruling coming down in Quebec soon. We think

that there is a positive ruling coming in the appeal in B.C. And all of this will just continue to put pressure on the government. We think really what the issue before the public is going to be is how much money the government wants to waste fighting something that the public has said they are ready for. So, how much time, money, and effort does the government want to waste in discriminating against its citizens."

Accidental Activists

In the beginning they weren't activists. They were just two gay men of faith who wanted to be legally married. Then by virtue of their love for each other and that strong desire to both be married and to not be second class citizens anymore, Kevin Bourassa and Joe Varnell became reluctant activists.

Agreeing to be one of the two first-ever "legally" married couples in the world, at the Toronto Metropolitan Community Church's (TMCC) brave and cutting-edge marriage ceremony conducted through the process of the "reading of the banns", Kevin and Joe were thrust into a whirlwind media frenzy. They summoned the courage from others, all the supporters in their lives, and the supportive strangers they've met along the way to embrace the label and meaning of being activists.

When asked if they thought of themselves as activists before they were married, both Kevin and Joe said, "No, no, no!" as they chuckled. When asked how they feel about that now their responses indicate the kind of growth this journey has yielded for both men so far. Kevin responded, "Well, I will admit, and proudly wear the title of activist now and Joe will as well. That is something that we will proudly claim although we didn't initially. On this journey we have learned that activism doesn't have to [only] mean being in the papers or being on television and having opportunities to talk to the Canadian public. Activism also means going into that card store and saying, 'gee, how come you don't have wedding cards for my two sons.'"

"Activism is my sister calling a radio station when all of the religious fundamentalists are ranting and saying, 'just a second, what about my brother, he has this right,' and standing up to talk about that. I think that activism is something that all of us can share in. That's been a lesson I've learned by becoming involved in this. Activism can happen by speaking at the office water cooler, raising an issue in your school or congregation. My hope is that Joe and I are encouraging people to do that." Joe then added, "That's why we

are going to some of the smaller Pride Celebrations around the province too. It's easy to be out at Toronto Pride when you are surrounded by a million people. It may be cold comfort for many to win their equality in law but still be ostracized in their communities. We aren't just about showing up for the photo 'op'."

At first it was mostly about getting married and that specific court challenge. Now though, for Kevin and Joe, it is just as much about human rights. They've learned first hand how powerful advocacy can be and that it does change lives.

Gay Marriage versus Gay Culture

We all know that for many in our culture, the idea of marriage is still considered a very hot topic. Many view it as "selling out" to straight culture. Many fear that somehow having the right to legally marry will mean the end of gay culture or further to that, the sub-culture that exists within gay culture. Some also believe that there is a fracture of "class-like" proportions taking place in this debate -- that somehow those who marry and/or want to have and raise families will be viewed as the "good" queers and those who don't might be thought of as the "bad" queers.

"The argument that we are somehow selling out to heterosexual society and that this is going to be the end of gay culture isn't a logical one." Joe pointed out.

"We are not gay first. We are people first. We will not lose our identities or our sexual freedoms. All of the victories that have been won -- remain -- if we embrace our role in the larger world. I think this is a very important lesson and that the gay community is going to be mature enough to handle it. I think we are strong and we are coming to realize that we have tremendous power and that while we need the safe spaces of the villages because there are still people out there who will attack and will abuse, the safe spaces are going to get bigger. They are going to extend beyond where they currently do. Gay people will find themselves with an even richer culture." said Joe.

Wedding Tribute To Trudeau

Asked if the roses at their wedding were a tribute to Trudeau, Joe and Kevin both eagerly and simultaneously replied, "Yes!" Joe then said, "The red roses were a very definite nod to Trudeau. We consciously decided that we wanted to pay tribute to a Canadian that we felt had opened the door for us, not only with the decriminalization of homosexuality, but also when he brought the constitution home and he put the Charter in. We have no doubt in our minds that he left the issue of analagous grounds open

because he knew at that point he couldn't win the fight to put the sexual orientation in but he knew one day it could be used in that manner. He wanted to ensure equality and dignity for all Canadians.

In our community, where we have had to fight for so long for equality and dignified treatment, paying honour to a man who really embodied those characteristics was very important to both men.

Politics & Politicians

In their book, "Just Married," Kevin and Joe discuss what the process leading up to their wedding was like. They chronicled their attempts to get the attention of politicians. When asked how they felt when all their attempts to have notable politicians attend their wedding failed, Kevin recounted that it was, "so disheartening. I'm a little older than Joe and so my childhood was in the Trudeau years. I was raised in what I thought was the liberal tradition of tolerance and inclusion and diversity. These were all things that were very popular in the late 1960's and early 1970's and were a part of the culture in my schooling, in my socialization, and suddenly to see a Liberal Government, IN THEIR THIRD TERM WITH A MAJORITY -- the people that are descendants of the Great Trudeau -- betray that tradition with cowardice and blatant discrimination -- was very disheartening."

The Media

Kevin and Joe both believe that the media has helped them more than it has hurt them. They believe that there is tremendous amount to celebrate just in terms of the amount of coverage and the positive effect that it is having in educating Canadians. The fact that most of the straight media has shifted from past coverage angles that focused more on gay individuals fighting for certain rights to the portrayal of lesbians and gays as families within the Canadian mosaic they see as being very significant.

"By portraying us as families I think it's very difficult to keep denying us rights. That is something that has resonated with Canadians and I think that is something that the media has come to understand." Joe pointed out.

The Gay Agenda

When asked about the 'gay agenda' that some fundamentalists claim includes gays and lesbians wanting to recruit children to our orientation, among other deluded accusations, Joe responded, "I have to admit, first of all, I was never given my copy of the 'gay agenda'. It can be argued that we have a movement, not an agenda. Joe continued though saying

that if there is a 'gay agenda' as far as he is concerned it consists of one thing -- equality.

Joe then added, "There is no purdicious plan ahead to overthrow heterosexual society and this is not part of that. I have the great faith in straight people. I believe that if I'm allowed to marry they will continue to fall in love, they will continue to marry and they will continue to procreate as they would like. I don't think that this portrayal of a "gay agenda" is realistic."

Fundamentalism Versus Change

While most straight media has been fairly supportive there has been the expected reaction from the 'right wing' fundamentalists. Organizations like Focus On The Family are invoking what Joe refers to as, "the Chicken Little" defense.

Kevin added, "They have one definition of family that excludes other people. They've begun to drop the kind of argument that Joe has presented - the issue of procreation - it seems to be something that is no longer being raised since they lost in court. Instead they are falling back to the same old fear-mongering that was used when civil marriage was introduced in Canada or when divorces was introduced in Canada. They are saying the sky will fall. The sky will fall. They can't tell you when, they can't tell you where. It really is the last grasp, the only thing that they are going to be able to do now is simply say, 'disaster will strike' because gays are allowed in, they won't be able to tell you why or how disaster will strike -- just that, to them, this is bad."

Joe mentioned that when Enza "Supermodel" Anderson attempted to run for the leadership of the Alliance Party, which wasn't a joke, she really set out to engage them on the issues. In speaking to Enza, Joe said that she got a lot of feedback from Alliance members that was positive. "Which just proves that we have to start engaging [the other side] them in dialogue and not just slam doors on them." said Joe. He continued, "Because that's where understanding will come from and how we [fundamentalists and queers] will get to respectful disagreement on things. We have to stop cutting ourselves off or shutting them out. Those people have views and opinions that have to be respected. They also have contributions to make to our society. We can't shove them into a closet and lock the door just as we are finally getting our own closet door wide open."

Small Town Ontario versus Toronto

As we move from tolerance, which the law mandates to more acceptance, generally from the Canadian public, what is reflected in Toronto, and other larger cities in Canada, is not often the reality of gay life in small town Ontario.

In raising this issue with Kevin and Joe, I pointed out that in South Western Ontario many of us still believe that we are still, in essence waiting for a much needed Stonewall-variety of enlightenment. Even in the face of such social and legal progress, smaller communities are still very conservative and homophobic. It may sound rather American, but there is sort of this bible-belt in South Western Ontario and I've heard many say that the Kitchener-Waterloo, Cambridge area of it is like the buckle on that belt.

Kevin said, "We are well aware of that. In fact, I believe your buckle was in our wedding" referring to Cambridge native Erika Kubbassek who is well-known in this area as a 'self-proclaimed profetess of the Lord' who blames all the ills of society (like the Walkerton Water Tragedy) on the fact that homosexuals continue to be granted their human rights. Kubassek was present at the MCC service that preceded their wedding where she was accused of assaulting the presiding minister. Kevin and Joe felt that their safe space was polluted by her abusive rhetoric.

Fundamentalist Argument Against Same-Sex Marriage

"When they (the government) take a cowardly approach what they end up doing is getting into bed with the Catholic Church, presenting exactly the same argument in court and that ought to be disturbing. We are both people of faith but I can tell you I don't want to live in a one faith country. This is not a church state. Maybe the Attorney General doesn't mean to be portraying [Canada] as such but they argued the same argument as the Catholic Church argued. Of course they were rejected. The court said it was irrelevant." said Kevin.

When asked what exactly the crux of that argument was, Joe replied, "The crux of the argument was that the fundamental goal of marriage is procreation. And procreation only by the means of heterosexual intercourse. That is the essence of marriage at its core as far as they are concerned. The court unanimously rejected that. We know that gay and lesbian people procreate. We also know that there is no standard in this country, no line on the marriage form that says that one promises within two years to procre-

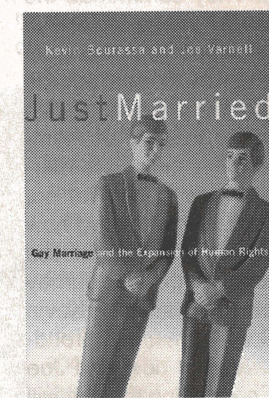
ate or you can take my marriage license away. [laughter] When a 78 year-old man and an 81 year-old woman get married procreation really isn't in the cards. No one would ever dream of saying to them that they can't be married. So why are we holding gay and lesbians couples, in this country, to a different standard?"

The essence of their argument is locked in an archaic notion about the essence of marriage that no longer holds true for society. The Justices all said clearly that this has no place in the argument. That the goods and goals of marriage are about two people and gays and lesbians fulfill those requirements admirably.

Their Book "Just Married"

I wondered how they decided to write the book?

Kevin said, "Well when you're on the front pages of all the newspapers life changes a little bit. We realized that we would have an opportunity for further advocacy and further education. I said to Joe one day, on a train track, I think we could probably write a book about this experience and do some good with it, and I asked him what he thought." Joe then



added, "As we got further and further into the story people said people are going to write about your case, they are going to write about your lives. Then someone said to us, 'no one can tell your story like you can.'"

They decided to write the book to make sure that their story was told accurately and that their opinions were made clear to those following their story. They also saw, as a result of a lot of the media coverage, some of the positive effects they were having on other people's lives. "You know you're tired of talking to the media and you don't want to talk to them anymore and then you hear that two kids who were thinking of committing suicide didn't be cause they saw the wedding coverage. Now I'm willing to face the media a hundred times over if I can keep touching even one person's life and stopping something bad from happening by saying, 'it's okay, you are not alone and you are going to have a full set of choices.'" asserted Joe.

He continued, "This is what excites me so much. In two years time we are not

going to have any child in this country born thinking they don't have the full suite of options available in their relationships. We're going to have a whole generation of kids grow up and recognize that they are full and equal citizens in this society and never again are they going to feel marginalized, terrorized, or alone as the result of any government policy."

When asked what the reaction to their book has been Joe said, "The reaction to the book has been very positive. People like the story. They are a little surprised by the story in that they are finding that it was a lot more personal than they thought it would be."

I admitted that was what surprised me when I read their book. Kevin compared it to stripping in public. Kevin then pointed out that Joe, said one of the main reasons they wrote their book, was to effectively put the HUMAN in human rights.

(Voice Exclusive Book Review page 31)

Web Site

I asked why they decided to create and maintain a web site. Kevin said, "Just before we went to Toronto in November of 2001 and just after we had finished the first draft of the book we felt that a web site would be an excellent resource for our friends."

They had received tremendous support, information and knowledge from friends, family and supporters who were on an email list with them throughout the process of the banns and their wedding. They just decided to enlarge the concept. Kevin said, "After all it's all about advocacy." They saw this as an opportunity to do some further networking and team-building with the other couples in Quebec and British Columbia. They didn't see the additional benefits that have come out of the site, like working with unions and world-wide communications.

There web site is a very up-to-date account of their own story and those of other same-sex couple's legal cases in Canada.

It also features a lot of the media coverage that their story has generated.

They have launched a trust account in aid of all five marriage cases across Canada. They encourage all Canadians who want to help them fight the fight to donate funds to help cover all of the legal costs that they are incurring. 100% of funds go directly to the cases. If there are any book profits they are being used to help Kevin and Joe with out of pocket expenses, like travel and the web site.

Joe proudly announced that there web site now generates over 10-,000 to 15,000 visitors a month from all over the world. There web site can be found by going to either:

www.equalmarriage.ca

www.samesexmarriage.ca

Gay Media versus Straight Media

When we spoke about religious fundamentalists I said that I believe we have to meet them from a place of love. Joe agreed saying that if we fire back at them what they fire at us, "we will not be beating them, we will be joining them."

Kevin added, "We challenge the gay community to work in dealing with those who disagree with us and not just take the win and snub your nose. We have to work with the community somehow. We

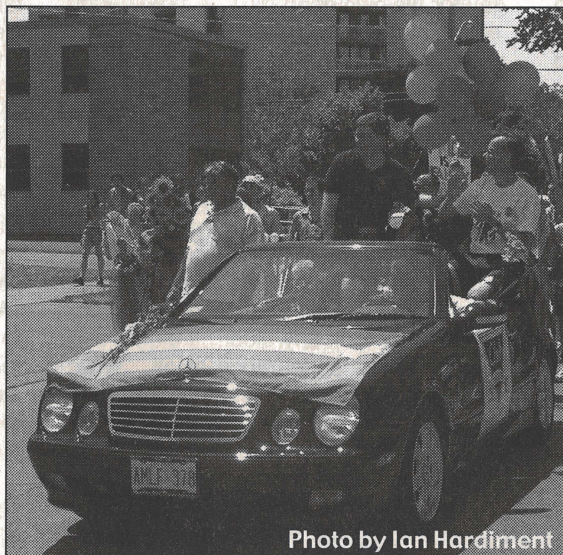


Photo by Ian Hardiment

have to encourage groups that are traditionally against us, embrace them and question our gay media's strangle hold on some things. For example, XTRA West, [last year] said that they hope that we lose our case. XTRA West and XTRA Toronto have come out in editorials against us using the argument that a ten minute blow job is as good as a ten year relationship." Kevin continued, "Now it's great to have those kind of views, but, the gay media have a responsibility not only their own readers but they also have an obligation in the community that they serve. I don't think that XTRA has looked at this issue with fully mature eyes. I think that the gay community is growing up out of its adolescence and some of the gay media is not coming along with us. They could be doing more to effect positive change for everyone. Why should there be some notion that there is a hierarchy of love?" concluded Kevin.

It is worth noting that some of the gay media has been far less supportive of the

fight for gay marriage rights than the most of the straight media in Canada. Kevin and Joe both feel that mainstream media has embraced the essence of the human rights issues involved for same-sex couples in the challenge to the "traditional" institution of marriage. While the mainstream media has also shifted to focus on lesbian and gay couples as being part of the Canadian Family mosaic much of Canada's gay media has seemed to hold the "party" line that purports that defining our relationships or unions within the framework of marriage is a "sell out" -- a straight thing to do -- not a gay thing to do.

The Voice Stand

The Voice Magazine has been an ardent supporter of the fight for same-sex marriage and the increased human rights and awareness that this legal challenge will mean for all of us.

Joe said at the end of our interview, "We'd really like to thank you for your interest in this story and for picking up this story. You know, we talked about the role of the media and its people like you, sitting down and talking with us, engaging us on the issues that really allows us to speak out. Whereas often in the twenty-second sound bytes we get we can't express issues very clearly so we really would like to thank you for this opportunity."

Kevin added that media plays a big role in increasing tolerance, whether they agree or not.

"You should congratulate yourself as well because you are educating Canadians and changing Canadians views." Kevin said.

Kevin and Joe shared that they became aware of The Voice Magazine while they were in the centre of the hurricane following their wedding in early 2001. They said that the coverage given to their story in January and February and up to May of 2001 in The Voice helped them catch up on their own story. Must have been quite the whirlwind. They admitted that being in the centre of such a mainstream media storm didn't give them much time to really read much that was being written. The coverage that The Voice gave the issue allowed them that opportunity. We're glad for that and more importantly we are very glad that Kevin and Joe, in their quest to be legally married have further raised the bar in their carrying of the torch of activism and advocacy that is increasing the quality of queer life in Canada.

A.J. Mahari, of Kitchener, is editor of The Voice Magazine. A Voice Exclusive.

A Short Story: How Much Pink Is Too Pink?

By Richard D'Ambrosia

Tony's hands gripped the steering wheel tight enough to make his knuckles turn white. Antoinette was on one of her rolls and badgered the older man, her husband of some fifty odd years. Her words had long since stopped being more than noise in his head as the airless car sped west over the Long Island Expressway toward New York City. As the green fields and pastures gave way to the grayness of sprawling suburban towns Antoinette suddenly stopped her endless chattering and poked her nose around the car as if looking for a buzzing bee. Tony noticed neither her actions nor that she had ceased speaking.

Suddenly she began yapping again and Tony had to listen, since what she was saying was both shocking and, in his mind, out of the blue.

"Tony, I don't give a damn that he's gay, or queer, or whatever it is that he wants to be called these days, but I don't like the idea of our son getting so involved with that new friend of his. It was bad enough when he went out with that foreign boy, but this is just unacceptable. Is he doing this to see how far he can push us or is he just trying to kill us completely?"

Tony rubbed his hand over his receded hairline and pushed the electric window button down to let some air into the stifling car, "What are you talking about? What's so wrong with this Lester kid that's driving you so crazy?"

"First off, roll up that window. If you're so hot put the air conditioner on. As it is we're running late and the last thing I need to do when we get there is worry about what my hair looks like. And what do you mean what's wrong with that kid? What do you mean by that? Can't you see for yourself that that kid is just too gay for his own good?"

Antoinette stared straight at Tony not noticing that the hairs in his ears were sprouting like spring reeds and his eyebrows had begun growing over his eyelids. She didn't notice those things any longer. She stopped noticing practically everything about her husband's looks the day she decided she wasn't going to dye her hair jet black any more. In less than a few months her hair was soft white. A pretty grayish white that didn't necessarily make her look any older. It didn't really change her appearance at all. What did change was her attitude about her-

self. She no longer felt the need to be pretty and started worrying about things that bugged her, like new carpets for the house, her tulips not blooming for Easter Sunday that year and Lester being too gay. Unable to stand her eyes on him any longer Tony finally blurted out, "Well, what's too gay?"

Antoinette pursed her lips and said in

her well-practiced sarcastic tone, "That's like asking what's too pink!"

Tony knew he was in for it but he had to ask, "How much pink is too much pink?"

"Lester is too much pink! That's what too much pink is. Too much pink is wearing pink shoes and stockings with a pink skirt and pink blouse with a pink broach. And pink make up, pink lipstick and pink rouge and a pink headband. That's too pink. It's wearing only pink and that's the same thing with this Lester kid. He never wears anything but pink!"

"Damn you Antoinette, what are you talking about? I never even seen the kid wear pink. I've seen your son wear pink and you didn't say he's too gay."

"How dare you say my Perry is too gay? My son is all man. You just can't get it through your thick skull, can you?"

"I didn't say Perry was too gay or too anything at all for that matter. All I said was Perry wears pink every now and then and I never thought it was too pink. Just pink."

Antoinette's face looked like it was going to boil over. Her lips pulled back over her teeth giving her the overall appearance of a rabid rabbit. She fixed her stare outside the window at the new concrete walls along the sides of the expressway.

"Why the hell did they have to put up these ugly walls? It used to be pleasant driving along and looking at the views. Now all we see is this shit."

"It's to keep the sound of the traffic down so the people who live there won't hear it or smell the exhaust fumes."

"Jesus, when they built the houses didn't they notice that they built them on the side of a highway? It's like not noticing how gay Lester is."

Tony scratched his neck and asked, "Because he wears pink?"

Antoinette flared up. Her nostrils grew wide as she spat, "Not because he wears

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pink. I never even seen the kid wear pink. Just forget pink, why don't you, Tony? He's gay because he wears his homosexuality all over his-self like a color. That's all I meant. I didn't mean to say he wears too much pink. All I meant to say was he was"

Her words dropped off as she lowered her window and sighed. Tony was going to remind her about her hair but let the thought go. Instead he reached over and flipped off the air conditioner. Antoinette sat quietly for a few moments and then said, "I don't know what I mean. There's just something about him that is very gay. Too gay."

Tony said, "He doesn't have a lisp. You can at least be grateful for that."

"Oh, Tony, grow up. The day when they wore dresses and acted like girls is long gone. I doubt it really even existed the way we thought it did.

Its not because he likes flowers around the apartment and tidies up after coffee and cakes. It's not because he wears his clothes too tight, God knows he's got the body for it. I sometimes wonder why he didn't become an athlete or didn't get a job in construction or some manly work. Oh, I don't know what it is. Maybe it's that he dyes his hair that ghastly color. I mean, really, tipped blond streaks. Or those God awful perfect manners he has. Or the way he looks at Perry like, like he's some starry eyed teenager or something."

Antoinette sighed. The life had seemed to drain out of her body as they paid the toll at the Midtown Tunnel. After maneuvering the car into the right lane Tony put his hand over Antoinette's and gave her a quick look. She turned and gave him a half smile. She looked at him longer and harder then she had in a long time. She saw he, too, had grown older. His eyes seemed smaller and his head larger. Her eyes welled up and she stopped herself from loving him too much, as she always had.

The sunlight was coming through on the

Manhattan side of the tunnel when Tony took his hand back and laid it back on the steering wheel. He spoke slowly, trying to understand his wife of more than fifty years, "Maybe it's all of those things that make you feel Lester is, the way he is."

Antoinette eased off a bit and said, "No, it's none of them. In our day we didn't have to accept as much. You asked me to marry you and I did. I knew you loved me and that was that."

Tony started to speak, to defend himself, but his wife stopped him. "No, no, there aren't any excuses. It's how things were. My father never told my mother he loved her and she never told him. It didn't mean there was no love. Our friends don't shout it from the rooftops, but this new generation, oh, this new generation. I just don't understand it. They have to say everything they think. If we would have done that we'd all have been divorced years ago."

The car halted for the light on the corner of 36th Street and 10th Avenue. Tony looked at his wife. Her hair was gray and her face was soft. He whispered, "I've always loved you. Antoinette, I've always cared."

She shrugged, "I've never complained. I never doubted" the way we felt, feel about each other. We met, we fell in love, married and had children. All healthy, knock wood. It was how it was done. No parades. These kids have to prove to the world they're as good. And they are, don't get me wrong, my son is as good as any man out there. People just have to learn to accept them like they do everything and everyone else. Except of course electric appliances. People buy them like there's no tomorrow and never question if they need

them or not."

Tony laughed and added, "And computers and the latest cameras and whatever the manufacturers throw at us."

Antoinette sighed one of her endless sighs, "If only we could sell this homosexuality thing as some new fangled appliance or digital what-cha-ma-not, Lester wouldn't have to act so gay." And she blushed and a slight shiver swept through her body before she added, "He wouldn't have to be so turned on all the time."

Tony completely ignored her last comment.

As they stepped up the stoop and rang the bell to Lester and Perry's apartment Tony nudged Antoinette to look at their names next to the buzzer.

Tony leaned over and whispered in his wife's ear, "And Lester wouldn't have to act so pink all the time."

Antoinette held her large black pocket-book close to her chest and smiled at her husband and said, "I guess he's just saying he loves Perry. What the hell do I know?"

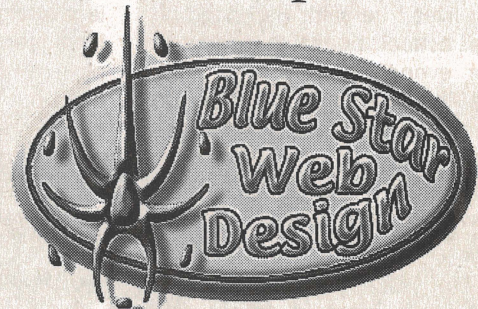
"From the heart of Hell's Kitchen in the heart of his beloved New York City, Richard D'Ambrosia tells stories about memorable characters, times and events that help define the vitality and resilience of that remarkable community." Submitted to The Voice by Richard D'Ambrosia.

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Mark Hall at London Pride



By Brad Lister

"We have a lot to celebrate," said Rick Brown of London's Holy Fellowship Metropolitan Community Church, (HF MCC) as he opened this year's London Pride celebrations. Celebrate indeed as members of the HF MCC congregation turned out for special guest Marc Hall to accept the annual Rainbow Justice Award.

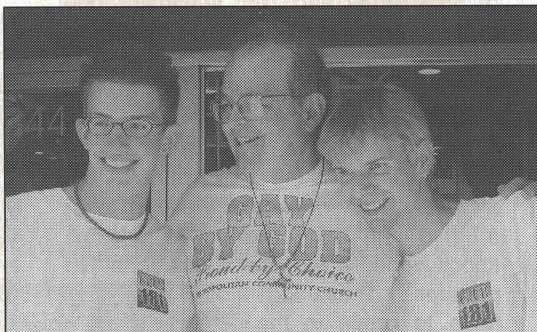
Roma Harris, president of the Homophile Association of London Ontario said of Marc's visit for Pride, "Marc is a courageous young man and his visit was a wonderful symbol of the importance of working together to make the community more inclusive of GLBT people." Said Hall of his work, "I would never have been able to do this alone."

This newly anointed media celebrity has had help. He credits George Smitherman Liberal MPP (Toronto Centre-Rosedale) for his help and of course David Corbett, Marc's lawyer. For Corbett being involved with, Marc's fight has been a good one. "I've had the privilege of representing Marc Hall." When Hall hears of the quote he says, "that makes him feel very special."

The initial injunction is just the first step and the client and the lawyer are up for the fights ahead. "We will give them the fight of our lives," he said. He added he hopes the school board is ready to answer for everything they have said. Hall added, "If I have to go all the way to the Supreme Court then I will." For those

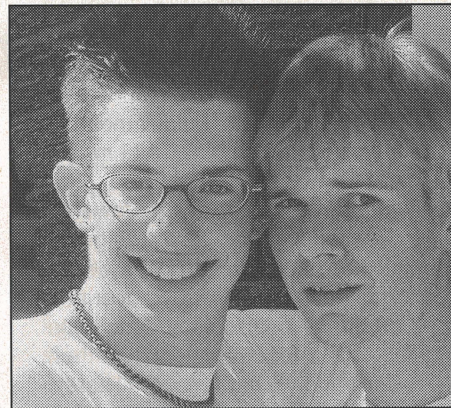
that do not think a young gay man taking his date to the prom is something to go to court over he does not think that's true, "It's a battle involving all of us."

The feelings of everything being odd, different or weird seem to be a common refrain from Hall. He still finds it strange that everybody wants to hear his story. The home life of the Hall's is a little different as well. When you call the house Marc's voice is on the answering machine



along with, "and if this is the media then call O" Not too many families need to worry about media calls. This family has gotten used to it and Hall's parents are, "proud of him," said Hall.

Do not worry about him though, Corbett said, "Marc's good at protecting himself." He will just make sure he is protected legally. Hall also knows that with all of the increased publicity for himself he chooses his words carefully. "I still speak my mind but I kind of have to watch what I say."



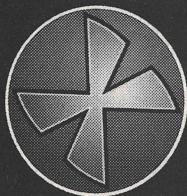
Of course, not everything has been completely serious lately. You would have to have been hiding under a rock not to notice XTRA's recent Pride issue with Hall all made up to like an angel. "It was weird," said Hall of the experience. It was their idea and for about two hours, he was made up to look like the angel as depicted on the cover. It also took forever to get all the glitter and glue off him. "It was fun though," said Hall. Corbett says though with a chuckle that with the XTRA shoot the picture he liked the best was Marc as the devil. "Very true to form," he said with a laugh. Corbett obviously sees the personality of a mischievous teenage boy whose taking the spotlight in stride.

Ray Smith is Hall's new boyfriend. Most people when they see him with Hall assume he is JP; the boyfriend Hall took to the prom. Hall said the two actually knew each other from school and Hall actually confesses, "I did not like him much at first."

What about when he returns to school in the fall? "It will be the same," Hall said. He feels as if he has gained more friends than he has lost and that the majority of students support him. This experience has also prompted Hall to provide support for other youth. Take Pete from Coburg for example. Hall said the fourteen-year-old youth called him and told him Hall was "his idol" and asked him how to come out to his parents. Now Hall talks to him every week. This is what Hall sees as his importance in the gay community. "Other community supporters see this as one of the steps towards equality," he adds.

What has Hall gotten out of this whole experience? Smith pipes up and says "a free t shirt," pulling on the fabric of the London Pride Volunteer t-shirts the two are wearing, and the pair laugh again. Getting serious Hall adds, "A sense of community." They are perfect sentiments for Pride Weekend in London.

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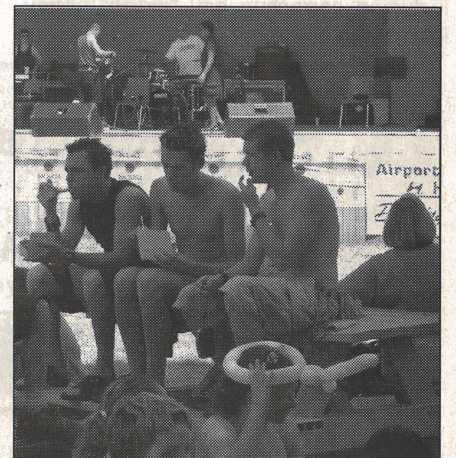


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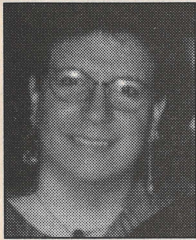
LONDON PRIDE 2002

Back to Our Roots

Photos by Ian Hardiment and Brad Lister



Lesbian Lives: A Transsexual Lesbian's Story



By Lyn McGinnis

When you meet Roberta and Michelle you are struck by how loving a couple they are. Their lives are very much like any happy lesbian couple you know and are enriched with children from a previous marriage. Their intimate home is filled with beautiful artwork celebrating the feminine, a great collection of sci-fi videos and stacks of well read publications about women, lesbians and queer life. What is different is Roberta was born male and, due to provincial government cutbacks, has yet to finish her very long and courageous journey towards womanhood.

Roberta says about this journey that "I have come as far as I am able now, and I am a woman. A woman with unsightly birth defects! A horror I must see, and feel, every day."

Roberta's journey as a male-to-female transsexual began in early childhood. She said she grew up in a comfortable home with loving family, and "within this atmosphere I inherited a role to play, a part society and my physical biology had written for me, that of the good little son, grandson and brother. I knew of no other way than to do and be as what was expected of me."

As with any young child in a happy home, Roberta's parents were everything to her. In turn, they did their best to properly raise the "boy" they saw in their eyes, including correcting any "girlish" behaviour.

"My parents thus unknowingly contributed to my great physical, emotional and sexual confusion, and sense of shame. It didn't take many 'well meaning helpful' comments of what boyish behaviour should be, or rather what it shouldn't be, for me to begin feeling bad about myself."

Some of the comments she recalls included:

"Don't walk like that, it's like a girl."

"Don't hold your hand like that, it makes you look girlish."

"Your voice is too soft, it sounds like a girls."

Outside of the house, her childhood was fairly happy. The neighbourhood stayed the same and everyone was comfortable with everyone else. When the children were still very young the boys and girls mixed freely and there was no segregation of genders. While Roberta would play with boys and boy games, she enjoyed playing more with the girls.

"But then as we grew older, and segregation of boys and girls began taking place, came my first true awareness that something was different about me. I had become the only boy still invited to play girl games, and one day the girls sang how all the boys were 'snails and puppy dog tails,' I was included in with the girls as 'sugar and spice and everything nice.' I remember how even though the boys teased me of this, I felt warmly pleased. For it was the first time I felt a sense of



Roberta, kids & Michelle

acceptance that fit with my inner feeling."

Unfortunately, when Roberta then had to go to a catholic school, which insisted on boy and girl segregation in the playground. While she had no choice but to play only with the boys, she refused to take part in the rougher games, and quickly become known as a 'sissy.' "I even began to have it pointed out to me by teachers how it wasn't right for me to play girlish games."

One of her strategies for dealing with this situation was to seek out others who had been ostracized. "I instinctually gravitated to boys who were outcasts, the too fat, too skinny, too small, to slow, too different, too shy, etc. They became my friends, and so glad to have friends we all accepted each other as we were." But even these friends would occasionally make gender phobic and homophobic remarks, so Roberta kept her secret. She also sought out female outcasts, and while they didn't utter phobic comments, she still did not reveal herself to them either.

During this period in her young life Roberta had a very painful episode which she considers a defining moment. It was in grade seven, the first afternoon of a once a week trip to the then experimental junior high, and in shop classes with many boys she didn't know.

"In the closing moments of the end of that first day, while I was walking across the room to replace some tools, the king jock resounds out loud and clear for all to hear. 'Jesus, do you always have to walk like a girl? What are you some kind of a fag? You're an embarrassment to the rest of us do you know that?'"

"That evening, was spent in front of my mirror, vainly trying to see what those boy's had seen. The next week would be full of furtive observations of the differences in girls and boy's, which I used to compare with what I saw of myself in my mirror. Then the weeks of practicing secretly in front of my mirror, trying to learn to be a boy, and the fearful days of gauging its success by the shop class.



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"About three months later, on the last day of the shop class, that same boy took me aside, and as gently as he could be, as if offering me a kindness, privately said, 'It's not working you know, but at least you're no longer embarrassing us!'"

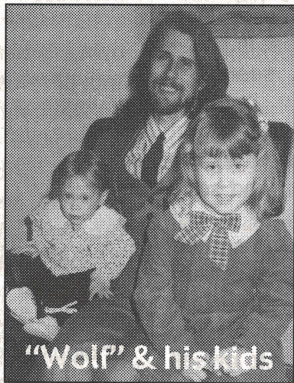
Her attempts to be a boy were a failure to outsiders and exacted a heavy toll to her personally. When I asked what was the price of this attempted deception, she said, "The price was in never giving myself the chance to grow as a human being. The price was the passed opportunities to interrelate with life. The price was becoming unresponsive, unmotivated, and a coward. And, the suicide attempts." As a child she once attempted to run and jump down the stairs, resulting in some significant injuries.

Her only refuge was in her dreams, when she was alone, she would dream of being a girl. She would sneak catalogues and moon over the girls/women's sections and would write feminine stories and tear them up when done.

"In my teens, I saw myself as mentally ill. I saw myself as a perpetual outcast. And to maintain my charade to the outside world, I became a caricature of what I thought they wanted. I was only alive in my hidden dream life, both in my sleep, and when awake. I became a stranger to myself, and accepted this as my reality in life. And in my twenties I became a shadow person. I felt unreal, and only alive in my fantasy world as a female."

Despite of all this, as an adult Roberta met a woman who became her spouse and they had two children. "When I fell in love, and she fell in love with me as a male, I clamped down my fantasy world and buried it in a deep mental dungeon, and 'played' the role expected of me. I became a man, a boyfriend, a husband, and then a father."

But as hard as Roberta tried to play these roles, because of her deep hidden gender confusion, over time her spouse began to see her as distant, unresponsive and unmotivated. Despite her best efforts, the pretense wasn't working and she was miserable. "The longer I continued my attempt to play out my 'role,' I was dying inside. In becoming a stranger to myself, I was becoming a stranger to my spouse, my children, and my family, and was leading myself into a constant conflict with suicidal feelings."



"Wolf" & his kids

Surprisingly, cable television was the beginning of her liberation from this life of pretense. One day a program came on about transgender and transsexuals. "It was as if someone had thrown freezing water in my face, and had hit me in the head with a hammer, I felt myself going into shock and almost fainted. 'My god,' I thought, 'that's me!' In one stroke, I had gained identity, an explanation, and freedom from my belief that I was mentally ill. But by that same stroke, my pretence of being male became torturous, but one I had the duty to endure as a husband and a father for the sake of my spouse and children. Suicidal thoughts were now my constant companion."

This led to a great deal of tension in the relationship. After a long period of difficulty, Roberta's spouse consented to her cross dressing in private. Roberta began to dress almost constantly in woman's clothing whenever indoors, but the relationship was too far gone by that point.

"While my spouse had been willing to at least tolerate my transgender self, the transsexual she could not accept much less understand. She felt betrayed by the man she had married; felt that the woman in me had made a fool of her. She felt threatened of her heterosexual woman-hood to have fallen for a man who might have turned out to be a woman, and also of her mother-hood, feeling I was stealing that away from her."

They were divorced and for a time Roberta's ex threatened to disappear with the children. This phase passed and gradually there was greater understanding, although she never fully accepted Roberta's identity. As for the children, after much agonizing Roberta came out to them.

"Finally, I could stand it no longer, I felt

suicidal again, and I took the chance of coming out to them. I changed to my feminine attire, and sat down and talked with them, to try to explain what had been happening with me, and why I had to do this. My eldest daughter, not more than six years old, gave me a hug and said 'It's nice to see you back.' I could have fainted from joy, they liked the real me, they loved the real me, they felt the real me. My ex soon took them for professional counseling for whatever emotional harm I was doing to my children. However the resulting diagnosis was that they happy, loved, and well adjusted."

There have been other hurdles since, including Roberta's parents and siblings and their reactions. With the exception of one brother, all of her family to varying degrees accept Roberta as a woman. What followed after this was the long process of psychological and medical work at the Clarke Gender Clinic in Toronto. "At the Clarke, five psychiatrists, seven psychologists and an endocrinologist examined me. Over and over again I had to repeat my story, only each asked the question in different ways or styles, the idea to see if my story remained true."

She had to wait several months for the results of the Clarke's findings to be released. There has to be a unanimous decision for her to 'pass' the judgment as a real true female. "I was overjoyed, not because the experts agreed with me, not because it proved anything to me, I already knew this truth about myself, but I could now take the finding to my family etc and say, 'see!'"

That was five years ago. Since then Roberta has lived as a woman, waiting for the day that she can afford to continue on to complete the process and have the sex-change operation. She also thought she would be alone for the rest of her life.

Then she met Michelle. They would see

Continued on Page 30

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Lesbian Lives

Continued from Page 29

each other at a bar or at the local AIDS organization and Roberta was fascinated with a very different type of woman than she assumed she would go out with. They became very good friends and after a long time, Michelle asked Roberta to be her girlfriend. When Roberta told her she was transsexual Michelle was shocked.

"I honestly say that it was a new experience for me," Michelle said. "One that I really didn't know anything about. When Roberta told me that she was a transsexual, I did run, and spent my time trying to sort out all my feelings that I was having including my fears. The friends that I had talked to were telling me to go back. I had fears of my past and the fear that I may have just destroyed the relationship that I had been looking for a long time."

She did go back and they fell in love and have now made a life together. "We laugh about it sometimes, and still marvel at it!" Roberta says. "We are partners, lesbian partners. We have taken the 'Union Ceremony,' my children, now our children, have even adopted her. Even my ex has accepted her as their stepmom."

Michele adds, "We live it day by day, my wife Roberta and I. We struggle and wait for life to get better, to find good work, and keep trying to get better for each other. I have learned many things from Roberta, I'm better than ever with her help, and she says that she has gotten to be a better person with me being with her."

While their emotional lives are now happy and full, there remains some problems. "I won't lie," Roberta says. "It hasn't always been easy for her, or for me at times. For I have not yet had the operation, and, well, that part of me is a regrettable impediment to our full union. That part of me is my curse, my birth defect, and the unwanted relative that will just not go away. Thankfully, the hormone regimen has caused 'it/them' to be totally unresponsive except for urination, and I always, always, keep covered and hid-

den. Not because my partner demands it, but because of my own embarrassment and disgust of them."

While these two have managed to find happiness together and a measure of peace with their families, there is also the issue of their relationship with the LGBT community, particularly other lesbians.

Michele says, "My friends think that Roberta is the greatest person and they have the up most respect for her and also for our relationship. They don't see Roberta, as a transsexual, all that they see is a bright, compassionate, beautiful woman. The same woman that I have fallen deeply in love with. I have had some lesbian friends say that how can you be a lesbian when you are with a Transsexual. Well I tell them that Roberta is a woman and that is how I have always seen her since we became friends. I don't think that they understand that, but I am a lesbian and so is Roberta."

Roberta has also had some unpleasant experiences with other les-

bians. "There have been several who have been offended that I refer to myself as lesbian. They have felt I had no right to the name, that I am in fact belittling the struggles they have had to live through, after all, I have led a male existence with all it's inherent privileges. I have been told that as I have a male body so how can I possible know what it is to be a woman? Which, incidentally, is also precisely what I have been told by heterosexual women. I may not have been blessed at birth with a female body, to my eternal regret, but I was blessed at birth with a female spirit, mind, intellect and soul, and she, is attracted to women! I am a woman, and I am attracted to women!"

I asked Roberta what many lesbians ask of transsexuals, 'how can biology be ignored?' She responded by saying "But I was also created by nature and her biology! How can they ignore that?"

We also spoke of lesbians having negative experiences with male sexuality. I said they will want to know how she can know how it feels to be a woman when biologically she was 'born a male' and still has 'a male body.'

"I would never choose to belittle the

experiences of other women, but I too have had negative experiences with male sexuality, perhaps not as they have, but I have had them. How do men feel when a feminine male threatens their sexuality? In how many ways will they go out of their way to degrade the feminine male, to treat them as badly, or even worse, than a woman, in revenge? I myself have had men sexually assaulted me, and I too have been left in the woods to find my own way home with my shame. I have had men verbally degrade me with feminine adjectives on more times than I can count. Often viciously! My mind is female, my mental and emotional being is female, and there are times I have cried because an accident of birth makes carrying and birthing children of my own forever beyond me."

Roberta has done extensive study on the internet and many publications to better understand her situation. "Medical and scientific research has learned that we LGBT's are born, as we are, which by my own life I know to be true. They learned that all fetuses begin as female, and then subsequent washes of chemicals and hormones determine if it will remain female, or become male. And that one's physical sex and psychological gender are not exclusive to the other. It was learned that there is not one wash of chemicals while in the womb, but rather several. One wash will determine the psychological gender, another the physical sex, another yet our attractions, etc. And such studies have shown, that in transgender and transsexual, the body and brain as not in gender unison."

So these two move forward in their lives, dealing with some ignorance and prejudice, but far more acceptance and of being welcomed and celebrated as a couple.

Michelle summed up their life together and one of their greatest hopes. "I only wish for the day that I will be able to give Roberta her wish to fully become the woman that she wants to be. I know that the day will come, but until that day arrives she is and always will be the woman I see every morning when I wake up to and the woman that I kiss when I go to bed at night."

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

Watch for upcoming Lesbian Lives in future issues of The Voice Magazine.



"Just Married" Book Review

By A.J. Mahari

"Just Married"

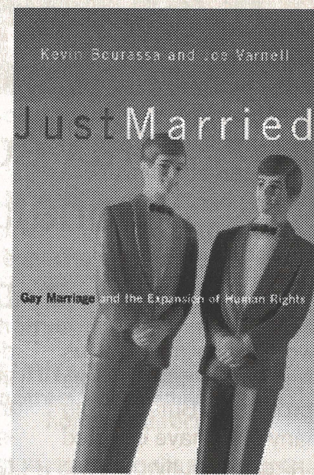
Gay Marriage and The Expansion of Human Rights

By Kevin Bourassa & Joe Varnell

Released June 1, 2002

Doubleday

\$34.95 (hardcover)



"Just Married" is a very well-written book and a very interesting read. Kevin Bourassa and Joe Varnell chronicle their journey from the day that Rev. Hawks announced to the congregation that the Toronto Metropolitan Community Church that the church would begin performing legal same-sex marriages (a day that Bourassa and Varnell did not attend church, ironically enough) detailing how they were asked by their minister to be one of the same-sex couples, first in the world, to be legally married up to the point at which their law suite was launched.

The facts that surround their legal challenge and their fight for the right to have their marriage license registered by the Province of Ontario are skilfully woven into an otherwise very human story.

These two men open themselves up wide. They tell a very honest, touching, and at times, heart-wrenching tale. Weaving back and forth between what were current events and what had happened to them in the past, moving with ease between what they were doing and how they were feeling, Bourassa and Varnell accomplished what they set out to do. They put the human in human rights.

One of the most tender parts of the book as I read it was the part where Joe shared where he was emotionally, inside, during the church service that took place in the morning on the day of their wedding. Such a safe, comforting and welcomingly-warm place was this church, this second home, for Joe. Amidst all the activity, all the security, and all onlookers, Joe was in a sweet and peaceful place inside. He was remembering the last days he spent with his mother, Mary, who passed away March 18, 2000. His mother's last words to him were not only such comfort but they offered him strength and courage. Joe dramatically describes the way in which he was violently jolted from this wonderful place inside himself and his memories by the abusive

voice of a woman who had come to the church that day to protest the impending wedding. He felt violated, and terrorized by the hateful rhetoric she spewed in what had up to that point always been such a safe, respectful and welcoming place.

Joe's mother's message to him had been simply-complicated. She told him to live. From this Joe knew that he had to be who he was and to seek from life all that he could grasp from it.

Both Bourassa and Varnell delve deeply into their experience with the media and what that was like. They share the toll that it was taking on them in the beginning and how they managed to support each other through what were some fairly stressful times.

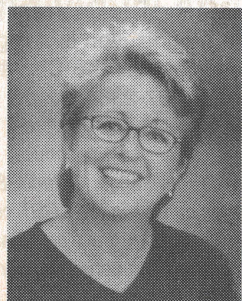
Driven by their desire to be equal citizens and to end their second-class status as a couple these two men tell a heroic tale that has transformed them from accidental activists to proud, active and inspired spokesmen for the legalization of same-sex marriage and the furthering of human rights for lesbians and gays.

The book is written in such an intimate way that it invites the reader in as if one were right there, a heart-beat away, witnessing every step in this most historic pilgrimage.

If you've followed this story in the media, you can't begin to appreciate the service that these two men have done all lesbians and gays in Canada until you read their story up-close and personal, the way it was, for them, as only they can describe it.

On page 79 they share an email that was sent to them from a man who lives in France. "Though we all have different paths from which we come and upon which we travel, there are points where paths intersect, and it is at those points that the synergy of combined energies grows exponentially and one has enough power to change the world."

Kevin Bourassa and Joe Varnell are changers of the world.



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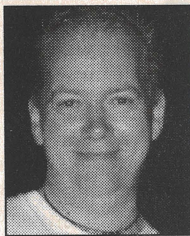
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GAY BIZ



Tax Advantages of Donating to Charity

By Darren Kregar

Over the last two months many of us have been celebrating Pride events throughout the province. But the big question is how many of us have donated money to the organizations putting on the celebrations. I have noticed over the last few years that those donating to charities seem to have decreased.

Unfortunately many of the smaller pride organizations are groups of individuals putting on the events. Even though they are not-for-profit organizations, they are not a registered charity so any donations you give will not be recognized for a tax credit.

Charities play a vital role, both in Canadian society and around the world. Canada Customs and Revenue Agency have created generous tax incentives to encourage individuals and corporations to donate to registered charities. A registered charity is an organization, corporation or trust that has been registered as a charity by the Minister of National Revenue for the purposes of the Income Tax Act. They must be either created or established in Canada and be a resident of Canada. To be registered, the organization must operate for charitable purposes and must use its resources for charitable activities. These organizations cannot make their income available for the personal benefit of its members. Only registered charities can issue official tax receipts for donations and gift they receive.

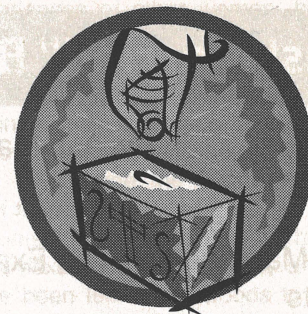
What is considered to be a gift or a

donation? For there to be a gift the following conditions must be met: a) the donor transfers ownership of property to a registered charity; b) the transfer is voluntary; c) no benefit is provided to the donor, unless the benefit is of a nominal value.

CCRA considers a benefit given by a charity in return for a gift to have a nominal value if its fair market value is less than 10% of the amount of the gift, as long as the value of the benefit is not more than \$50.00. For example, if you donate money to a charity to meet a celebrity, there is no way to establish a fair market value of the benefit, the charity cannot give you a tax receipt. Another example may be that you donate \$500.00 to a charity and the charity gives you a gift valued at \$40.00. As the gift is valued less than 10% of the value of the donation, a receipt can be issued. The fair market value of a gift generally means the price that a property could be sold for in an open market. The fair market value does not include GST or PST.

Benefits of Donating to a Charity

In addition to helping a charity, individuals can claim a tax credit, to reduce the taxes you owe (or increase the refund you may be expecting). As an individual donor, you will receive a tax credit of 17% on the first \$200.00 donated to a registered charity. Any amount over \$200.00 will receive a tax credit of 29%. The credit is applied directly against the tax you owe instead



of deducting it from your taxable income.

For example, if you donate \$1000.00 to a charity, you can claim a credit of 17% on the first \$200.00 (\$34.00) and 29% on the remaining \$800.00 (\$232.00). The total credit you can apply against federal tax is \$266.00. You can donate up to 75% of your net income to charities. If you die you can donate up to 100% of net income to charities. You also have the option to carry forward charitable donations for up to five years.

When donating any substantial amounts to an organization, I suggest you inquire if the organization is a registered charity. However, I do encourage you to still donate to organizations that you believe in.

Recently Toronto's Pride had to deal with additional costs relating to garbage removal and increased insurance costs. If each person who attended Toronto's Pride donated \$2.00 as part of the Toonie Drive, they could have raised \$2,000,000.00. I am sure that this amount would have covered the costs of garbage removal and insurance.

So when you are celebrating Pride, thank the organizations that put on the events by making a donation, even if it's only a few dollars. Other organizations that you can donate money to in the LGBT community include: local AIDS committees, PFLAG, COLAGE (Children of Lesbians and Gays Everywhere), Rainbow of Hope (Brant County) and EGALÉ, to name a few. For more information on how to contact any of these organizations in your area, please see the community listings section of 'The Voice.'

To find out if an organization is a registered charity, you may call the Charities Directorate at 1-800-267-2384.

Darren Kregar is the owner of Economical Tax Services (ETS) located in Waterloo, Ontario. ETS has been providing tax service in the LGBT community since 1998. In addition to tax preparation ETS provides bookkeeping and consulting services to small business.

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Unitarians say: HOMOPHOBIA IS AGAINST OUR RELIGION

The Canadian Unitarian Council applauds the Ontario Superior Court ruling that provinces must register same sex marriages just like any other marriages. The CUC and Unitarians around the world have affirmed the dignity and worth of same-sex marriages for decades.

In Canada, the CUC has specifically supported Gay and Lesbian couples as they challenged marriage laws in Ontario, British Columbia and Quebec. Last December, CUC President Rev. Dr. Mark Morrison-Reed signed an affidavit supporting the eight couples who successfully challenged the Ontario marriage law.

Unitarians' support for Gay and Lesbian rights is long-standing and unequivocal," said Dr. Morrison-Reed. "Ours is an open-hearted, tolerant, non-doctrinal faith." Canadian Unitarians have been performing "services of union" for same-sex couples since the mid-1970s.

All forty-four Unitarian churches and fellowships in Canada gladly accept openly-gay members. Sixteen congregations, including the First Unitarian Congregation of Waterloo, have completed educational programs helping them to become more welcoming to people of all sexual orientations.

"The first principle of Unitarianism affirms 'the inherent worth and dignity of every person', said Dr. Morrison-Reed, "and the second promotes 'justice, equity and compassion in human relations' - not just for straight people, but for all people." Therefore, Unitarians are called to celebrate same-sex marriages, on the same terms as heterosexual marriages.

Unitarians believe that marriage is the legal and sacramental recognition of the love between two individuals and their commitment to care for and support one another in good times and bad. Such familial commitments form the bonds that hold society together. When two people declare themselves a family, and take on all the responsibilities for each other, they strengthen all society.

"Same-sex marriage is about giving individuals a choice to celebrate their love and commitment, not just between one another and with their friends, but with the full sanction of society," said Dr. Morrison-Reed. For Unitarians, the choice is clear. "Justice requires this of us."

The Canadian Unitarian Council/Conseil unitarien du Canada (CUC), is an association of forty-four congregations located across Canada with 5,200 individual members. Arising out of the work of outspoken reformers and dissenters within the Christian tradition five centuries ago, the Unitarian movement today flows in a broad religious stream augmented by Universalist, Humanist, Pagan and other progressive contributions.

For more information, contact Rev. Anne Treadwell, Minister,

First Unitarian Congregation of Waterloo (741-0158, treadwell@golden.net) or Lee Dickey, President of the Congregation's Board (884-0733, ljdickey@uwaterloo.ca), or come to a service (10.30 am Sundays) at 96 Dunbar Road South in Waterloo. You will be most welcome!

Some other congregations around South Western Ontario:

CHURCH OF THE UNITARIAN FELLOWSHIP OF ST. CATHARINES
225 Church Street, St. Catharines (905) 687-8433

THE FIRST UNITARIAN CHURCH OF HAMILTON
170 Dundurn Street South, Hamilton (905) 527-8441
hamuu@idirect.com

GUELPH UNITARIAN FELLOWSHIP
122 Harris Street, Guelph (519) 836-3443
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ELORA & FERGUS UNITARIAN CHURCH
Services: Victoria Park Centre
150 Albert Street West, Fergus (519) 843-2518

UNITARIAN FELLOWSHIP OF LONDON
557 Clarke Road, London
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Submitted to *The Voice* by Rev. Anne Treadwell, minister at First Unitarian Congregation of Waterloo.

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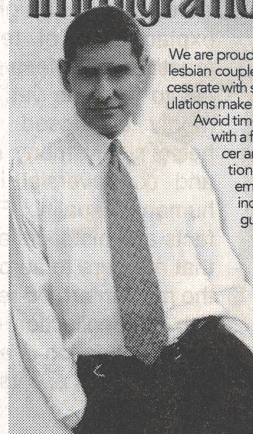
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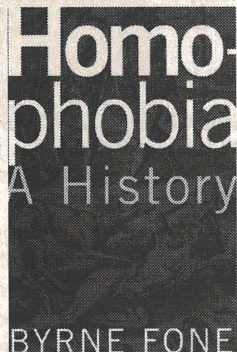
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BOOKS

Homophobia: A History
by Byrne R. S. Fone



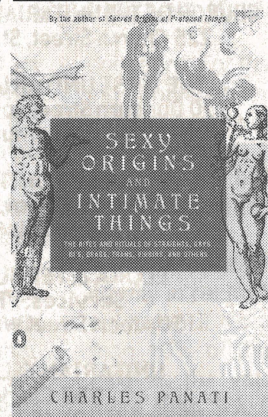
The first comprehensive treatment of the history of homophobia—from ancient Athens to the halls of Congress.

A tour de force of historical and literary research, Byrne Fone's chronicle of homophobia is the first book to give a complete account of the evolution of hatred toward homosexuals. Delving into literary sources as diverse as Elizabethan poetry, Greek philosophy, and the Victorian novel, as well as historical texts such as papal bulls and trial transcripts, Fone finds that same-sex desire has always been the object of social antipathy and of legal, social, and religious persecution, even during periods of relative tolerance.

Fone shows how the biblical story of Sodom became the scriptural source for later prohibitions against homosexuality. He examines changes in sodomy statutes over the centuries to discern subtle shifts in public attitudes and trace the remote origins of our own age's obsessive fear of homosexuality. Fone concludes that homophobia thrives during periods of rapid social and economic change, when traditional notions of gender come under intense scrutiny.

A bold and original work of scholarship, *Homophobia* is certain to become a classic in its field.

Sexy Origins and Intimate Things: The Rites and Rituals of Straights, Gays, Bi'S, Drags, Trans, Virgins, and Others
by Charles Panati

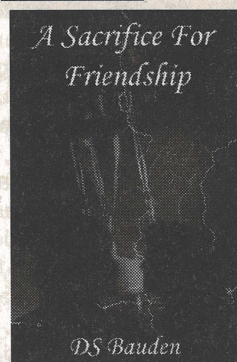


Where did the word "love" come from? Has there ever been a gay pope? Who invented the condom? How did Valentine's Day originate? From the lascivious to the romantic, from the hard-core to the scientific and the scholarly, this engaging and eye-opening compendium of little known facts about sex is both informative and endlessly entertaining.

Charles Panati explores the histories of myriad unmentionable subjects—dirty words, kissing, risqu clothing, courtship, birth control, drag queens, sexual paraphernalia, wedding rituals—and brings them into the light of day where they belong.

He offers straightforward explanations of terms and practices of widespread interest to humans yet not commonly discussed. He also helps clarify many confusing and controversial issues of human sexuality. Filled with facts and historical anecdotes that are sure to surprise even the most informed reader, this rich new collection of browsable information is as fun and provocative as its subject matter.

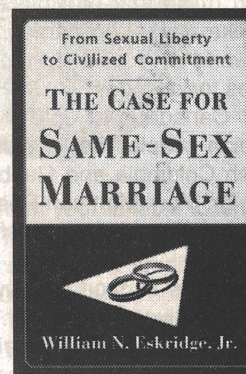
A Sacrifice for Friendship
by D. S. Bauden



A Sacrifice for Friendship is a story about Frankie Camarelli, the owner of a movie memorabilia shop and her adventure through time.

Frankie hears a voice in her dreams that sends her back more than 20 years into the past. There she meets the person attached to the voice, Annie Parker, a waitress and a student at Loyola University. Annie and Frankie become friends and when Frankie convinces Annie that she doesn't need to be abused by her boyfriend any longer, Frankie finds herself back in the present. Feeling the pain of losing a new friend, Frankie does everything in her power to find Annie again. Follow Frankie and her childhood best friend Crystal Jacobs, through the streets of Chicago as they look for validity of Frankie's adventure. This is a tale that defies the odds of reason, belief, and the power of love and friendship. Using a gift so rare to most, Crystal shows Frankie the true meaning of unconditional love.

The Case for Same-Sex Marriage: From Sexual Liberty to Civilized Commitment
by William N., Jr Eskridge



Eskridge puts pounds of flesh on the bones of Andrew Sullivan's eloquent plea for gay marriage in *Virtually Normal*. He summarizes the history of same-sex marriage from Mesopotamia to Adam-and-Steve/Madam-and-Eve relationships among American Indians, which were accepted by the U.S. government. He analyzes gay activists' 40-year-old argument about marriage, the "mainstream" objections to gay marriage, the constitutional arguments supporting the right of any U.S. resident to marry, and also arguments for limiting that right. He is squarely in favor of same-sex marriage. Finally, he avers that suppressing homosexuals is bad for society and that failing to extend marriage to them is a blot on a nation that prides itself in legal equality.



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BOOK REVIEW

By Alex Rowson (of Glad Day Books)
Cumberland By: Michael V. Smith

In Michael V. Smith's novel, *Cumberland*, he introduces us to a small town in the middle of Quebec. The inhabitants of this town have become accustomed to the feelings of loss and longing. Over the years, the government and industries have raped the land of its resources and manpower and then deserted it for greener pastures.

It's these same green pastures that the town folk also yearn for. The glittering lights of the new mall built across the river in America (That place even has a skating rink.) drives home the feelings of envy for a way of life that is so close and yet completely inaccessible.

It's against this backdrop that Michael introduces us to his cast of characters. And indeed, this novel is more than anything a study into dealing with the past and the growth process of his characters.

Earnest is fifty-two years old. Recently laid off from his latest factory job, Earnest can't be bothered to try and insert himself back into the workforce. He's been around long enough to know that no factory owner wants an old hound over a new pup and can't bring himself to swallow his pride and apply for UI.

Instead he moves in with Bea, a beer puller from his local bar. Approaching her mid-forties and still with no husband and no child, Bea is in desperate need of someone to love and care for. Stuck waiting tables and cleaning up vomit for a living and coming home alone every night, Bea couldn't be more happy when her slightly flirtatious friendship with Earnest turns into her first long-term relationship in god knows how long.

Amanda is Bea's other roommate, a high school drop out who can't handle living with her mother and her new beau. Amanda is on a quest to shed the last of her childhood and embrace what she thinks is the life that she's destined for anyway, serving tables and flirting with married men for tips. Her loser boyfriend is getting on her nerves, so in an attempt to piss him off for good and bag herself a nice, mature man at the same time, she starts to spend a lot of time with Nick.

Nick, the local cable repairman and Earnest's drinking buddy, is dealing with a completely different loss. After the death of his wife the previous year, he was left alone with a nine year-old son to care for, and a happy past that needs to be avoided at all costs. Amanda soon starts babysitting Aaron, the boy, leaving Nick with more time to drink away his grief.

As the one-year anniversary of his wife's death looms near, Nick starts to break down. Showing up at Bea's apartment in search of a shoulder to cry on, Nick pours out his feelings to Earnest. But Earnest has his own secrets that he has to get out. Why does he always go for long walks? Why does he refuse to go out by Old Sault Road? And why did that lady at the bar tell Bea if you're sleeping with Earnest Mackey, I hope to god you don't have kids.

Each character in *Cumberland* is longing for something that is forever out of their reach. It's almost a modern day myth of King Tantalus. But through making mistakes, accepting them and moving on, all of the characters find redemption in the end. And this is the message that we should take away from this book.

If I had to make one complaint about this book, it would be that he takes a very long time to set up everything for the action. But

this only bugged me until the action finally started, and then I was thankful for the depth of insight into the characters he was able to give you. It truly allows you to feel empathy for someone that has a completely different life experience than you're own.

I find that if you finish a book with a sense of absolution but are still left wondering how these people will live their lives in the future, the author has done a bang-up job. And being his first book, Michael V. Smith has secured himself on a path to a great literary career. Pick up a copy for \$22.95.

Check out www.michaelvsmith.com for more info.

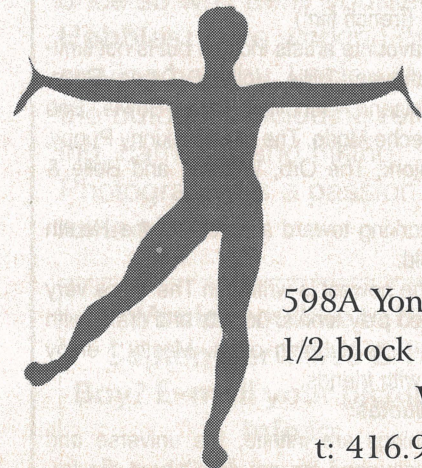
Alex Rowson is a writer, student and ad manager/designer at Glad Day Bookshop in Toronto. A Voice Exclusive.

Cumberland



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VOICE GRILL



Holly Hope

Residence: Kitchener

Favourite Sport: Tennis (to play), Rally racing (to watch)

Best all time movie: (a tie) The Godfather II & Delicatessin (french film)

Music: My favourite artists include but is not limited to; Beethoven, Billie Holiday, Diana Ross, Barbara Striesand, Donovan, David Bowie, Bob Marley, Depeche Mode, The Clash, Skinny Puppy, DJ Hype, Bjork, The Orb, Weezer, and Belle & Sebastian.

Goal: I'm working toward a career in the Health Sciences field.

Hobbies: The newest is writing in The Voice very exciting! I also play tennis, do arts and crafts with children, and go clubbing often. Mostly I enjoy quality time with friends.

Favourite Quotes:

"Only two things are infinite, the universe and human stupidity, and I'm not sure about the former." - Albert Einstein (1879-1955)

"I'm tough, ambitious, and I know exactly what I want. If that makes me a bitch, okay." --Madonna

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 exl.34.

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

CAMBRIDGE (519)

PFlag - Sue 650- [REDACTED]

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

GUELPH (519)

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

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

HOWL: Hanging Out With Lesbians - social group for women (lesbian, bisexual, transgender ages 25+ Women may contact HOWL through Outline (519)836-4550

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

Rainbow Chorus: Choir and hosts LGBT dances. Bob [REDACTED] at 584-[REDACTED] or Colleen at 836-[REDACTED]

Women For Sobriety - drug & alcohol addiction support group Marilyn at 823-[REDACTED]

HAMILTON (905)

Alcoholics Anonymous— (905) 522-8399.

Alice's Dinner Club - Joan/ Barb at 905-318-[REDACTED] or Michael at 905-528-[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:gibt@msu.mcmaster.ca

Hamilton Aids Network - 135 Rebecca Street 528-0854

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]

LGBT Youth Social Group 905-528-0207 ext. 66

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

KITCHENER (519)

ACKWA (The AIDS Committee of Cambridge, K.W and Area) 85 Frederick 51 E.. Kitchener, Ont.570-3687

Anselma House: A crisis shelter for 24-hour crisis line 742.5894

BMC (Brethren Mennonite Council for Lesbian & Gay Concerns): Colleen at 836-[REDACTED]

Gay Men's Group: social group for men of all ages and orientations. Gordon 747-[REDACTED]

K-W Distress Line-745-1166

KW-Friends Or Dorothy, 10 Pin Cosmic Bowling - Jason Boyko at 578-[REDACTED]

PFlag - Evie at 742-[REDACTED]

Sexual Assault Centre KW.....741-8633

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

Tri-Youth Pride. Gail. 743-[REDACTED]

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

ONTARIO COMMUNITY LISTINGS

LONDON (519)

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

Gay and Lesbian Alumni of The University of Western Ont - 432-████

GLB Student Affairs - U of Western Ont. - 661 3S74

HIV Care Program 646-6207

Homophile Association of London(HALO) 379 Dundas St. 433-████

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

MCC - 645-████
PFlag - 451-2697

NIAGARA (905)

LGBT Youth Line - 1-888-679-6884

ST.CATHARINES (905)

AIDS Niagara - 111 Church St. 984-8684

Friends of Dorothy Dance Committee.....988-████

Gay & Lesbian Alliance - 984-████

Narcotics Anonymous. (905) 685-0075

STRATFORD (519)

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

Down The Street - 30 Ontario St. 273-████

TORONTO (416)

Affirm United - 466-████

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, 532-████

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 1 G3, 405-8253

CounterPoint Community Orchestra - 658-████

Gay Fathers of Toronto -410-████

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

Gay Partner Abuse Project - 876-████

Hassle Free Health Clinic - 922-0603

Metropolitan Community Church - 406-6228

Ontario Gay and Lesbian Chamber of Commerce-410-1174

Out! Spoken Advocacy 927-████

Pride Information - 927-7433

Rainbow Ballroom Dance Club - 363-████ or 534-████

Rainbow Voices of Toronto - 944-████

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

Memorial. www.the519.org

Rainbow Services, Centre for Addiction and Mental Health- 1-800-463-6273, ext 6781. Group and individual counselling for LGBT people concerned about drug and alcohol use.

Peel HIV/AIDS Network
77 Queensway W. Suite 101 Mississauga, ON L5B 1B7
Tel. (905) 896-8700
toll free. 1-866-896-8700
fax: (905) 896-9980

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 Helpline 884-PEER.
OOglobal@mach1.wlu.ca

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

She-Devils On Heels Radio Show: Every second Sunday from 10pm til 12am 100.3 CKMS.

WINDSOR (519)

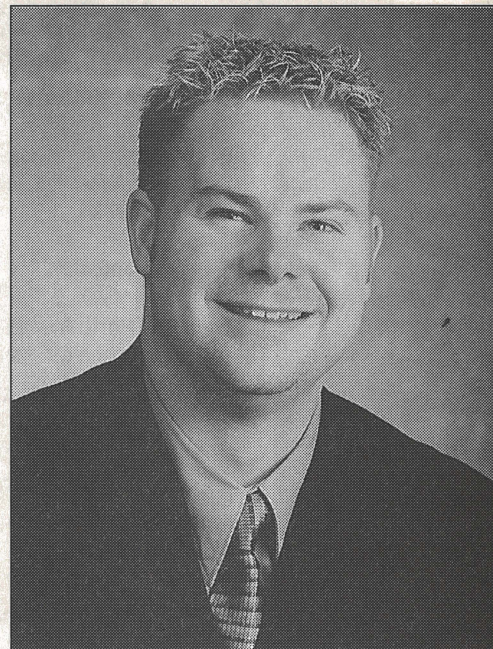
ACW Youthline - 973-7671
Aids Committee of Windsor - 973-0222

GLBT Book Club - 973-0222
Lesbian and Gay Council- 973-████

MCC - 977-████
Organization of LG students University of Windsor - 253-████

PFlag - 973-████
Queer Radio
Mondays 9pm - 10pm CJAM 91.5 Windsor

VOICE BOY



Aaron Wouters

Occupation: Real Estate

Residence: London ON

Goals: Backpack in Australia, Snorkel off the coast of Thailand, Find that special someone.

Future Plans: To become top in my profession. Also see goals...

Sign: Capricorn

Words to Live By: You only live once so why deny yourself?

Hobbies: I like working out and staying healthy. I enjoy life and the outdoors including rollerblading, camping and hiking. Photography is a passion of mine also.

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vboy@thevoice.on.ca
vgrll@thevoice.on.ca

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Waterloo North Mazda - 115 Northfield Dr, Waterloo, 519-746-1666

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Glad Day Books, 598A Yonge St. Toronto, 416-961-4161

Words Worth Books, 100 Kings St. S., Uptown Waterloo, 884-2665. "Independent minds support independent book stores"

Business Networking

Rainbow Business Network. LGBT communities of Kitchener-Waterloo and Cambridge. Gordon Husk 747-████

Counselling

Susan Cox, MASc. (psychology) Individual and couple counselling, LGBT positive - anger management, 279 Weber St. N., Waterloo, 519- 747-████

Entertainment

Generation X Alternative Video and Media, 10 Regina St. N., Waterloo, 888-GENX

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

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Economical Tax Services, 207 King St. S., Waterloo, 746-6500

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Accountant, 519-741-████

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Paula's Pride Cattery - Himalayans. 22 Rose Street, Kitchener. 519-570-████

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Alan Goetz, Sales Rep., Re/max Twin City Realty Inc. 519-885-0200, toll free - 1-877-450-████ kwhomes4sale.com

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PERSONALS

40'sh lesbian not into the bar scene looking to meet other lesbians to pursue friendship or more 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

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

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ONE FOR THE ROAD



Dear John

As I wait for you in the shadows of the street we both know too well, I can't help thinking of what draws us here in the first place.

I am here because I need the money. It's that simple. Why I need the money is not so simple.

In the beginning, I needed the money because my parents had booted me out of the house and everyone else in the family had written me off as a loser. The money I got from working the street helped put a roof over my head, clothes on my back and food in my belly. It made me feel at least somewhat independent.

As time went on, I developed a taste for other things. Then, the taste became a need too.

So, I continued to work the streets for booze money, drug money and fun money. Part of that was because I couldn't help hating myself just a bit for disappointing a lot of people I cared about. Part of it was because I desperately needed a sense of belonging to some sort of community, however dysfunctional and fragile. You were there as a ready opportunity for me to achieve that, at least for a time.

Just because you pay me for what I provide and what you need, though, doesn't make you any better than me. I need to have a sense of belonging. You need to have a sense of domination. I want to be part of a group. You want an escape.

So, I wait, not knowing what you will look like tonight or what you will expect.

You could be young or old, well-groomed or unkempt, experienced or a total novice. Whatever the case, you should never forget that I'm the profes-

"People take different roads seeking fulfillment and happiness. Just because they're not on your road doesn't mean they've gotten lost."

- H. Jackson Browne

sional. I belong to the oldest profession known to society. My sisters, who work more publicly and in another part of town, get most of the publicity. Among men, though, there is a secret bonding that draws us together in the remotest times and places.

I could work the bars or join a cruiseline. That's O.K. in the winter, when it's cold out here on the street. I could work the parks. That's a bit dangerous. Too many crazies out there and too many undercover cops and no money. Not really worth the risk. Working my favourite block is dangerous but safer. The cops rarely patrol this area. They don't want to be bothered with scum like us. And the other street workers watch out for me.

So, when your car slows down and you eye me, sitting on the steps, leaning against a railing or slouched against a wall, I give you the once over too. You're just interested in whether or not I'm cute enough, young enough and naive enough to strike a good deal.

I wonder whether, this time, you're married or single, priest, politician, doctor, lawyer, athlete, entertainer, businessman or cop. If you're a cop, I have to wonder whether or not you're out for a freebie or a sting. As for the others, I have to decide, and quickly, whether or not you are a business opportunity or a threat.

You tell me what you say you want. If I believe you, we decide on a price. I get in the car and we drive off. Maybe we go to a nearby parking lot, to a motel room or to what you say is your house. Once there, if I'm lucky, I provide the services we agreed upon and you drive me back to where you picked me up. We're both satisfied. You with the sex. Me with the money.

Often, though, that's not the way it happens. Sometimes, you take me to a remote place and beat me up. Sometimes, you rape me. Sometimes, you degrade me in ways that you might find funny; but, leave me in bad need of a shower. Me, even if I'm still looking for a place to live. Worse than that, you could well have infected me with an STD. I'm clean and get tested regularly. Can you say the same?

I remember once you wanted me to let you make a plaster cast of my manhood so you could fashion a personally sculpted dildo out of it. That was kinky but fun. Better still, when you paid me for getting other models for your personal and private art form, I thought I had finally made good. Then I ran out of models. The story of my life.

I have to admit, that sometimes, I have enjoyed your company and our intimacy. Most of the time, however, my participation was out of sheer necessity, as I mentioned earlier.

I'm writing this letter to let you know that you're no better than I am just because you can pay me for what no one else can provide for you. I don't think that that makes you better. I don't think that it gives you privileges beyond what we agree upon. And remember, I do lie about my age. I may well be older or younger than what I own up to. I guess that puts you in a risky position, too, doesn't it? Besides, as you well know, I may dress like a woman; but, that doesn't mean I'm not all man.

So, dear John, I wait in the shadows for you to show up. I've waited here for years and will be here for years to come. I know who I am. Sometimes I like me and sometimes I hate me.

I also know who you are. Sometimes I like you. Most of the time I don't. For me, the money makes it all worthwhile. There are limits to what I can and will provide; but, I am quite liberal and generous at heart.

What about you, John? What about you? Do you know who you are? Do you like yourself? Do you ever think about me or am I just one more sexual conquest?

Finally, will I see you again tonight? I'm waiting.

Yours from the shadows,

Billy Bob, Niagara Falls, Ontario

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Just a Reminder . . .

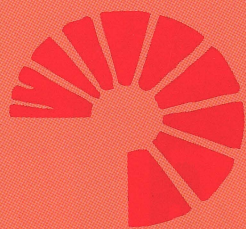
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at Roos Island,
Victoria Park

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celebrate life,
courage and
achievement**

**Live
Entertainment**

**Candlelight
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starts
at
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