

Grand River Rainbow Historical Project

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



The Voice

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The Voice

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Volume Two

August 2000

Issue 11

A 'NEW' "DAY" DAWNS IN CANADIAN POLITICS



STOCKWELL DAY

STOCKWELL
DAY
The next step.

See Editorial Page 3

New Column: *Claiming Your Power* - Page 8



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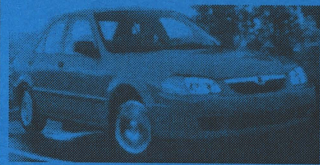
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The Politics of The "Day" Stockwell Style

By Ms. A.J. Mahari

Stockwell Day took to the stage, after winning the leadership of the Canadian Alliance Party, July 8th, 2000, and with a play on words announced boldly that not only was Canadian politics ushering in a new millennium but also a new "Day". **New Day?** Haven't we all seen or read about this before? Wasn't it called the 1950's?

Among other things, the 1950's was the backdrop for an era of "social conservatism" that we are a lot better off for having left behind decades ago.

Now, in this new millennium, along comes former preacher Stockwell Day, who fully-well intends to offer all of us more of what we have fought so hard to get rid of, oppression and the denial of our legal rights as citizens of this country, and he couches it in such charming language. He exudes a dangerous kind of charm. In Day's case his charm is a verb not a noun.

Charm: the verb, expressed through action, is often the opposite of the words that one speaks. **Watch out!**



This new century has ushered into the Canadian Political arena a "Day" that we must watch morning, noon, and night. It seems presently that he doesn't have in place what it will take to govern this land. We must ensure that he does not "put one over" on unsuspecting straight Canadians who care about human rights and about ending discriminatory oppression as much as those of us who are LGBT. Get involved in the political process

Day's slogan is "The Next Step." If Day has his way, that next step just might be the biggest step we (as LGBT Canadians) have ever taken backwards.

Stockwell Day represents that dangerous combination of a man who wants to bring his "religious values" and his brand of "morality" into the political arena, something the Canadian Alliance vaguely refers to as so called, "social conservatism".

Move over "Baywatch" it's time for us to pay attention to this new Canadian political soap opera called "Day-watch".

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Rainbow Chorus & Tri-Pride

By Robert Bojeczko
(Public Relations)

The season for Rainbow Chorus ended on a very high note this year with its participation in the Tri-City Pride events. It was the first time that Rainbow Chorus performed a full concert in Kitchener and we were honoured that it was the official opening of Tri-City Pride. We ended the weekend with our participation at a service at the Unitarian fellowship in Guelph, which was an event scheduled by the Tri-City Pride committee.

The opening concert was held at the Granite club on Agnes street in Kitchener, and despite the torrential rain, we had a fair turn out. The concert was a success for Rainbow Chorus and was MC'd by Sandy Stauffer. We had a lot of fun doing show tunes and enjoyed a great performance by Joilyn of one of the Divine Miss M's songs titled "I'm Beautiful Dammit!". Gordon Burnett stepped in at the last minute to conduct Rainbow Chorus. We felt honoured to have him at the helm for our season finale. The accompanist, Catherine Robertson, also stepped in at the last minute and is to be considered nothing less than a genius on the keyboard. Rainbow Chorus has already scheduled in next year's Tri-City Pride as the season finale and the concert will be held in Kitchener. So for those of you who plan ahead, please plan to join us at Tri-City Pride 2001!

Perhaps the most validating experience for Rainbow Chorus this year was the service at the Unitarian fellowship in Guelph. I don't think there was a dry eye in the room as at the service some significant historical facts were remembered and the children were read a story about Love. Leading up to the story was a discussion with the children about the different kinds of Love. Like loving your toy, loving your parents or sibling and romantic Love. It was further explained that romantic Love could be between two womyn, a man and a womyn or two men. Well that just did it for me! The tears welled up in my eyes. We sang with a kind of energy at the service that I believe can only be inspired by a sense of pride and kindred spirits. Just sitting here thinking about it gives me goose bumps! A very warm thank you from the members of Rainbow Chorus to the Unitarian Fellowship in Guelph for embracing the guts of PRIDE and instilling us with a sense of hope. It would be wonderful to get more people out to the service next year.

*This summer Rainbow Chorus will be hiring a new musical director and, starting this September, rehearsals will be on **Wednesday nights** instead of Mondays. We also hope to start the 6th season with our charitable status and are*


looking for sponsors to financially help out the Chorus. We were fortunate this year in having our first corporate sponsor, Bonnie Babbin. Rainbow Chorus is always looking for new members and we don't have any special requirements. If you love to sing and have the time to make a firm commitment to a chorus that hopes to make a difference about the perception of alternative life styles, please come and join us. We are a GLBT and Friends Chorus with heart and Pride. Believe me, I don't read music and I truly enjoy singing with Rainbow Chorus. If you would like more information about Rainbow Chorus, you can reach me at home at (519) [REDACTED] or on line at [REDACTED]

Finally, Rainbow Chorus would like to extend heartfelt congratulations to all the members on the Tri-City Pride committee for a job very well done!

THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE IS HARD TO LEARN

- 1) The bandage was wound around the wound.
- 2) The farm was used to produce produce.
- 3) The dump was so full that it had to refuse more refuse.
- 4) We must polish the Polish furniture.
- 5) He could lead if he would get the lead out.
- 6) The soldier decided to desert his desert in the desert.
- 7) Since there is no time like the present, he thought it was time to present the present.
- 8) A bass was painted on the head of the bass drum.
- 9) When shot at, the dove dove into the bushes.
- 10) I did not object to the object.
- 11) The insurance was invalid for the invalid.
- 12) There was a row among the oarsmen about how to row.
- 13) They were too close to the door to close it.
- 14) The buck does funny things when the does are present.
- 15) The wind was too strong to wind the sail.

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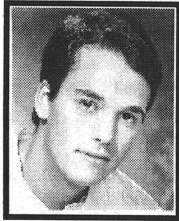


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AIDS in San Francisco: Infections may not be up, but the curtain certainly is

by Kirk Read



Activists are squabbling over whether AIDS is over, but no one can argue that there is any shortage of AIDS drama these days. The national media has suddenly

realized, after all these years, that there is indeed an AIDS epidemic in Africa, and, by golly, maybe it ought to be covered. This has everything to do with a series of badly documented media song and dance routines, including Al Gore's waltz with the pharmaceutical companies, the South African president's tango with alternative HIV theories, and the San Francisco Department of Public Health's "Crisis cha-cha," replete with Ginger Rogers-style backstepping. You people make me feel like dancing.

ACT UP San Francisco has provided some of the most entertaining, albeit corrosive, media stunts in recent memory. The latest, a co-production of David Pasquerelli of ACT UP San Francisco and Michael Petrelis, under the retro moniker *Queer Nation*, was to publicize the sex lives of two local HIV prevention workers. The joint attendance of Petrelis and Pasquerelli at any meeting can usually guarantee an arrest, headline, or restraining order.

The men, Vince Vince Gaither, a.k.a. *Sister Mary Mae Hemm* of the *Sisters of Perpetual Indulgence*, of the *HIV Prevention and Planning Council (HPPC)*, and Keith Folger of the *Stop AIDS Project*, have advertisements on *Bareback Central*, a website where men into barebacking meet one another. Petrelis and Pasquerelli showed up at the July 13 HPPC meeting brandishing copies of naked pictures and personal ads featuring Gaither's page on the site. Their next stop was a *Stop AIDS Positive Force* meeting, where they displayed color xeroxes of Folger's page from *Bareback Central*. They explained that they, as *Queer Nation*, were exposing hypocrisy and "outing" the

fellows. In an email release from Petrelis, he threatened that the two men were the "first of many who would be similarly outed."

Petrelis and Pasquerelli make particularly odd bedfellows here because they are at odds over whether HIV causes AIDS. Pasquerelli and ACT UP San Francisco contend that HIV is a lie used to demonize gay men and that HIV testing is a corrupt industry. Petrelis, on the other hand, believes that HIV causes AIDS and criticized the Department of Health for sex-negative campaigns which, he said, kept people away from testing sites. During his arguments before the HPPC, Petrelis accused Gaither of "infecting [his] brothers" and possibly being the cause of the much-publicized, falsely reported rise in San Francisco HIV rates.

It's just too easy to blame barebackers for spreading HIV. For all practical purposes, HIV isn't spreading any differently than it has since day one, except that now there's a sexy new term for it. Back in the day, people just called it fucking.

Hysteria and mudslinging aside, there is a valuable question in all of this. Should men who engage in barebacking serve at organizations whose goal is HIV prevention? Does their personal behavior constitute a conflict of interest with their prevention work? John Newmeyer, chairman of the HPPC, apparently believes so, since he called for Gaither's resignation.

I think people like Folger and Gaither could make extremely valuable contributions to HIV prevention efforts. I don't doubt their sincere commitment to reducing HIV transmission. Neither man is interested in infecting HIV-negative men. Besides, people don't generally put up with non-profit public eye jobs for the hell of it.

This is a complicated issue and demands a discussion longer than a soundbyte. Barebacking is not something one is for or against. This is sex, kids, not the Super Bowl. We're talking about a cultural phenomenon that

is pervasive among gay men, especially in San Francisco. To reduce barebacking to statistics and judgmental soundbytes from well-heeled public officials is to miss out on the staggering complexity of the issue. Barebackers have been demonized as perverted murderers in the press, which has mostly failed to present the issue with even a modicum of sophistication.

As an HIV-negative man, I face the increasing challenges of staying negative. Especially in San Francisco, I notice many men going at it without condoms in their bedrooms, at sex clubs, and at private parties. Going to a sex club with this going on around me makes my own condom use especially difficult. It also complicates my partner selection process. If someone is looking for sex without condoms, they have a better chance at meeting those needs with someone like-minded. If someone approaches me and asks to bareback or tries to initiate condomless anal intercourse, I simply redirect them. Judging them for their choices isn't beneficial to anyone.

To stay negative and avoid other STDs, I've made a series of choices regarding boundaries and barriers. I certainly could have used some honesty and assistance from prevention efforts in this process. I need prevention efforts to speak to me about how I'm really having sex, not how I should be having sex. Note to the CDC: calling people names isn't a good way to convince them you're trying to save their lives. Those people are in Atlanta and they still haven't learned the one about flies and honey? They must all be transplanted Yankees.

Like me, many barebackers have thought carefully about their health, negotiated with others, and chosen whether to use condoms for anal sex. There are as many different health and ethical considerations involved in barebacking as there are barebackers. This is an intensely personal choice that is informed by that individual's health concerns, who his partners are, where and how he's playing, and his relationship with the virus, i.e. how long he's been positive and how he feels about that.

Telling an HIV-positive barebacker with an undetectable viral load that he's getting reinfected is a tough sell. And using guilt of

infecting negative men isn't helpful, either. When it comes right down to it, we're only responsible for ourselves. People who get infected, regardless of the source, aren't victims. I thought we finished that conversation in the 1980s.

The media coverage of barebacking has done little to facilitate a reasonable and informed conversation. Seeing an opportunity for hot-button controversy, stories about barebacking are framed so that the issue is treated like abortion or the death penalty. The result is that gay men are divided into volatile pro-con stances. Theories about self-esteem are bandied about. Older gay men accuse younger gay men of being stupid and suicidal. Health officials accuse gay men of being irresponsible and reckless.

But no one's talking about the elephant in the room. Sex without condoms feels better, period. I don't care how many well-designed safer sex pamphlets get distributed. If prevention efforts can't be honest about that, then they're wasting everyone's time and money. Barebackers are saying this out loud. It's scary to hear, because it's so contrary to everything we've been taught to believe over the past twenty years. Safe sex may be hot sex, but unsafe sex feels better. Gay men, first and foremost, are human. So what the hell do we do with that?

"Use a condom every time" was a nice slogan in 1988, but many men don't follow that prescription. They make calculated decisions about not using condoms in particular instances based on a number of different factors. Making them feel like murderous lawbreakers or bad kids is counterproductive. We need prevention efforts that help gay men navigate the increasingly muddy waters of a sexual culture where men of negative, positive, and unknown serostatus coexist and have sex with one another.

Consciously including barebackers and kink-aware, sex-positive men in the infrastructure of AIDS organizations could bring prevention campaigns kicking and screaming into this cen-

Continued on page 41

Maximizing Peak Performance

By Judy Saltarelli, M.A.



Most people are interested in peak performance in one way or another. Our society is always encouraging us to be the best that we can be. It may mean maximizing your productivity at work, conquering a fear of public speaking, creating more rewarding personal and social relationships, improving athletic prowess or enhancing your sexuality.

There are many resources available. How many of us haven't read at least one book or taken at least one course or workshop which promised to have the final answer? And how many of us have achieved our goals?

Sometimes we are able to make the changes we want quite easily. We identify our problem, set a

specific goal, locate the appropriate resources, formulate a game plan, put it into action and reap the results. Life is good.

But sometimes it all falls apart! You may know what to do, but can't do it. You may realize that the only way you're going to be able to buff up is to eat properly and go to the gym regularly. Yet you keep eating junk food and never get to the gym. You may know that you need to learn how to make cold calls on prospective customers, and try all of the techniques in the sales courses, and yet you still avoid making those calls. You may be aware that it would be healthy for you to set some boundaries with family members or friends, but you never get around to doing it.

What is happening when you know what to do, but can't or don't do it? The answer may be that you have a mental or emotional block

that is hindering your ability to make these important changes. The symptoms of these blocks are often easy to identify, and include procrastination, distractibility, being ineffectual or poorly organized, etc.

The real block often lies hidden underneath these symptoms. For example, what is the procrastination all about? One way to find out is to figure out what the payoff is for procrastinating. Are you getting some kind of negative attention by continuing in your old ways? Are you avoiding the inconvenience of work or the pain of confronting yourself or someone else? By diligently pursuing this line of personal investigation, you can often get to the real underlying issue. Resolve that issue (or issues), and you'll probably find it much easier to make those desired changes.

Quite often when we use this approach we run smack into our old family-of-origin issues again. Will they NEVER go away? (Yes, you can make them go away fairly easily!)

Actually, you have several options at this point. You can ignore the whole thing and resign yourself to staying stuck. Or you can reframe your attitude and consider this a growth opportunity. (They have a nasty habit of hiding inside our problems.)

If you decide it's a growth opportunity, there are a number of ways of approaching it. You can delve into some of the wonderful self-help materials available and work your way through it. Or you can undertake intensive counselling

or psychotherapy. Although this is often a long process, it is unparalleled for helping you to achieve insight into the origins of your performance blocks.

A way to make quick work of eliminating mental blocks is power therapy, which pairs short-term counselling with special self-applied acupressure. The counsellor or coach will help you identify your unique blocks. Then you eliminate them by tapping on a special sequence of acupressure points. You will remember the triggering incidents but will release the emotional charge attached to them. That's all there is to it. If new or related issues arise, just tap on them, too.

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

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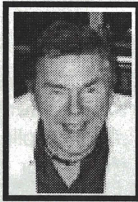
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HAMILTON IS NOT A BAD PLACE TO BE GAY

By Charles W. Westfall



Amid all the rumours of Gay Bashing and Homophobia and Sinister Underworlds, let me get one thing straight. Stop bashing Hamilton.

I understand that a significant number of people, most of whom can't live here and have, perhaps, only visited on a few occasions, consider this town dangerous for LGBT's.

Well, my dears, you are wrong. Very wrong. And let me tell you why.

First, from personal experience. I have lived here for four years now. I am openly gay, although not flagrantly so. Bloom where you are planted, guys. I have made no secret about either my

address or my phone number. I published a local LGBT magazine for two years, before it was rather unscrupulously wrenched from me. Since that time, however, I have written extensively for 701.com. <http://www.701.com>

This is a major internet magazine, originating in Hamilton but having live outlets in 39 Ontario cities, at last count. I write a weekly column on Gay Life. It is well received and pulls no punches. It is published throughout the province in the various editions of the magazine.



I now write for The Hamilton Spectator, as a member of The Community Editorial Board. I write openly LGBT oriented articles. The last one took on the Vatican for its opposition to World Pride 2000. Most of my columns haven't raised much more than a ripple of protest, and that from the Religious Right, as might be expected.

In fact. I remember one Monday morning receiving a phonecall from a woman who said she was 85 years old. She had read my column the previous Saturday and apologised for calling me. But, she said, she just had to congratulate me for

speaking out and standing up for those who are persecuted and rejected unjustly. She insisted that she was straight and had no LGBT friends, that she knew of. But, she understood the issue and was happy to see it discussed openly.

I have written for THE VOICE, now, for over a year. It is distributed widely in Hamilton and, if anyone wanted to get at me, it would provide a great indicator as to how to do it. Nothing.

Hey, we have a long and proud history of LGBT presence. I understand that 50 years ago, Hamilton was a major centre for LGBT nightlife. At present we have three bars operating. They operate peacefully

and openly and are well patronised.

We have a revitalised AIDS Network, a Hospice, several support groups, an LGBT Retail Store that is next best thing to a Community Centre, several restaurants and businesses that are LGBT owned and operated, or at least friendly. In fact, many of them have banded together to form a Hamilton Region Lesbian and Gay Business Association. We have several PFLAG groups in the area and an active Unitarian Church Community. The Imperial Court of Hamilton-Wentworth and The Golden Horsehoe Leather Association are almost legendary for their hospitality and fund raising efforts.

We have a trend setting Police/LGBT Task Force that has now been active for four years. It has done much to bridge the gap that is often presumed to exist between Law Enforcers and the LGBT Community. All too often, and in all too many places, that is a fact of life. Here, real efforts are being made to ensure understanding and co-operation. It is working and is being imitated in other centres.

This year's Pride Celebration stretched over four days. Significant at the main event was the presence of the Hamilton-Wentworth Police, mingling, chatting and interacting at an impressive and informative display.

In Kitchener, during my day on Roos Island, I saw one pair of Police Constables, cross one bridge onto the island and immediately proceed to the other bridge to get off the island. Hey, gang. Who's kidding whom?

Truth is, if you're in the wrong place at the wrong time, alone and late at night, and say the wrong thing, anything can happen, anywhere.

Truth also is, if you're going to get beaten up or abused, the likelihood is that it will come from someone you know, someone you thought was your friend, or someone from the LGBT Community itself. Let's face it, we're no strangers to that kind of violence.

But the bottom line is, don't knock Hamilton as particularly Homophobic. As a matter of fact, it's a great place to live and work and be gay. Just ask anyone who does live here.

Charles W. Westfall is a writer who is a resident of Hamilton.

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Now, I Am Julie

By Julie Drake

I am now 34 years old, born in October of 1965, my story begins many years ago, I believe I was 7 years old.

In my early years I was already different from a lot of the boys; I was very timid, extremely shy and never got involved in rough stuff. I remember one day playing with my friend; it was wet outside so we were indoors and a little bored. After a few minutes my friend's sister Joanne joined us. Well before we new what we were doing, we were dressed in her clothes. It was at this time that I began to think there was something wrong with myself. I thought that girls were more caring and cried more and had lovely clothes.

Throughout my school years I was bullied and called names, either about being too soft, shy or having a German mum.

When I was 11, I went skiing and guess what, our teacher got the lads to dress as girls and there was a competition. I remember being laughed at through my walk, it was at this time when I really began to worry about myself.

At the age of 15 I bought my first makeup, but the opportunities to wear it were very few and eventually I went through my first purge and threw it all away. My feminine side was getting stronger all the while and I thought I was all alone; I never realised other people shared my feelings about being a woman. During this time I also tried on some of my mother's clothes, which were far too large.

My 21st birthday in 1986 coincided with my first girl friend and apart from a brief friendship

in 1994, there have been no other close female friends.

In 1997 I discovered the internet. I finally found out I was not alone in my wish to be female. I explored many sites. The following year I did a search for "becoming a woman" and came up with the Fiction Mania & another sites. These really opened up my thoughts. 1998 saw the start of herbal hormones, but these made little difference to me and, looking back, I think made me rather irritable and depressed.

Finally, in 1999 I stopped herbals and after lots of research started on a dose of Premarin in May.

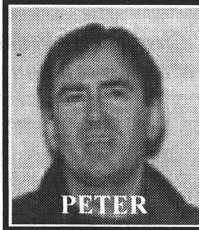
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I have been seeing more shape take place with my breasts and the

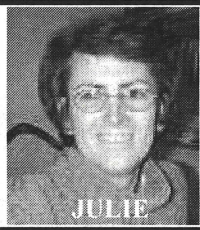
Libido has vanished but I don't mind, I have noticed an increased observation of women's shapes. I feel I am getting nearer to the time when I will come out about myself to family but first I want to succeed with a business venture and get some independence.

October 1999

What a month this has been, so much has happened. At the start of the month I took time out from my feminine side to think things over, i.e. what I wanted out of life. In the middle of the month it was my birthday, the time of year I get depressed. The weekend after I visited my first TS friend, Debbie, a nice young woman who has become my closest friend. It's nice to be able to confide in someone and also



PETER



JULIE

make conversation around common interests. I bought my first skirt and blouse and numerous skin products and got to see London, the capital I had never visited. Debbie pointed me in many directions; one of these was a career path. Once I got back from my weekend break and had time to dwell on things, I made an appointment with my doctor to discuss my gender dysphoria. I had a two week wait. In the meantime I had a consultation about electrolysis and the owner was happy to take me on. The two week wait had ended and on the 29th of October I saw my doctor. I had no need to worry, she was great and would give me her full support. I came clean about the hormones I had been on and basically I received her blessing to see Dr. Russell Reid. I made an appointment and was lucky to get in on Friday the 26th of November. On this same day of seeing my doctor I was accepted into a course to become Microsoft Certified; I just needed to find the cash, but after careful thinking decided I couldn't afford it.

November 1999

This was a very long month for me, the wait to see RR was never ending and despite peoples assurance that he was a lovely person, I still had my doubts. Well the day came and I drove to my friend Debbie's house and she took me to RR. Our plans were to book in and then go for a walk but we ended up staying and chatting to other clients. This was quite an experience for me as I had never met another TS other than Debbie. Well my appointment soon came around and RR was indeed a lovely chap; we went through my history and I presented him with information on my hormones, past life etc. Then I walked out with a prescription for 3 medications. I was on cloud nine that weekend.

December 1999

I passed on my private prescription to my GP, she converted it to NHS and I started on them 2nd December. Life has been great since. I have just had my 27 Electrolysis session on my face and it is working really well, I am having

the upper lip waxed for Julies first public appearance in Newquay over the New Year.

Newquay

Well this was a fabulous time for me, I met many nice people and being my first social event with the "T" community was quite an eye opener. I won't go into any details but will say I felt natural as Julie and suffered no problems in public.

January 5th

This was the day I came out to my parents about being Transsexual, it was an extremely emotional day. I initially told my mother, who new something was on my mind, then when my father came back from the village he was told. Well for 3 days there was a lot of crying from us all but the main thing was that I received my parents' full support.

January

Well this was a very long month for me because, just after my meeting with the boss, I decided on the date to tell the employees at work. In the mean time my mother had told friends and family and finally neighbours. This put me in a tricky position as word could easily find it's way to my foreman who lives in the same village.

January 17th

Today was a very big day for me, I changed my name officially to Julie through my solicitor.

January 27th

This was the final day of being my old self; at one o'clock there was a meeting called by my boss who read a short message telling everyone my plans. I stood there with tears building up. Afterwards I did some overtime and was at hand for any questions. My foreman immediately went into the office and I since learnt he wants me off the shift but I won't know

Continued on page 19

The Importance of Friendships in
the LGBT Community

By Dr. Jeff Chernin and Dr. Peter M. Nardi

When someone asked gay writer Ethan Mordden how he could live without his biological family, he responded that his friends were his family. But the person didn't understand Ethan's answer: "He said no (disagreeing with my answer)- a family like playing with them and learning from each other and living with them inseparably, and I said that's what we do. And finally he... got it, that my family is my buddies."

And like a healthy family, friends help us through difficult times, know us inside and out, and treat us honestly, directly, and compassionately. When you're LGBT, friends become an essential part of your life. Many of us grew up with a group of people who were "family" in name only. Others of us lost many of our family members once we came out. As a result, we create families of choice, developing intimate and long-lasting groups of support.

Caring friends are critical to your physical well-being as well as your emotional health. Many studies have shown that there is a link between having strong social support and increased immunity. Good friendships literally ward off illness.



Having a good circle of friends enhances your emotional health by increasing confidence and improving self-esteem. Watch small children at play some time with this thought in mind: a child's play is like work to an adult. Likewise, you are also "working" when you are at play with your friends. You work to feel acceptable to others, to feel approved and to be acknowledged. You also make time to enjoy yourself, to relax, and to indulge in the good feelings of being around others.

As important, friendships give you a sense of belonging. As LGBT individuals, we have a history of feeling different, of not being a part of the group, of "being picked last on the team." These make it even more critical for us to feel accepted by others. Having friends increases feelings of self-worth, which cause you to take better care of yourself; you are more likely to exercise, eat well, and not over-indulge in alcohol and other drugs. This results in a chain reaction known as the "adaptive spiral," in which increased feelings of self-worth lays the groundwork for taking better care of yourself, which enhances your feelings of self-worth, and so on.

In fact, it is through the daily encounters with friends that you define yourself. Your identity is strengthened and maintained through your friendships and the people you meet within LGBT organizations and neighborhoods. Friendships allow you to link personal identity with membership in a larger community, where you share personal tastes, politics, religious views, and sexual styles with like-minded individuals.

For many of us, friendships are inextricably woven into our narrative histories and coming out stories. So, when you tell people who you are, who you hope to be, and who you are becoming, you are giving them a sense of your place in a larger community. Networks of friends are also at the root of LGBT efforts to develop a collective identity, to build communities of choice, to organize a political presence, and to create residential, commercial, and sexual spaces.

As a result, your participation in a LGBT community, its neighborhoods, and organizations helps nurture your identity and strengthens friendship networks. For example, attending a LGBT film festival, going to a Pride event, and hanging out in a coffee shop enhance your sense of community and provide safe places to make new friends.

Thus, friends become the mechanism for not only learning about and maintaining your LGBT identity, but also for entering the LGBT communities; for organizing into social, religious, and political groups; and for providing you with a sense of history and collective identity. Friendships are the route to understanding ourselves as individuals and as citizens of a larger community. Friendship is one of the essential ingredients for a healthy and happy life and a force that can help us achieve dignity and equality in society.

Jeffrey Chernin, Ph.D. resides in Los Angeles and can be contacted by emailing him at [redacted]. Peter Nardi, Ph.D. is a professor of sociology and author of "Gay Men's Friendships." He can be contacted through his web page: www.pitzer.edu/~pnardi

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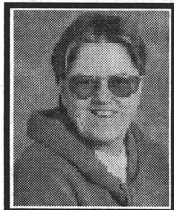
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The Online World: the "Reality" of Illusion

By A.J. Mahari



The internet is that information highway that also masquerades as a playground built for human relations. Herein lies

the illusion -- an illusion that is often the mere backdrop for the burdens of real life that many seek to escape online.

Whether it's a chat room or an email list, "real-time" or "real-voice" cannot make the experience of relating online as "real" as that expe-

rience is personally, in the 3-D world.

People are meeting online and taking part in something called cyber-sex. Talk about an illusion. Cyber-sex is a prime example of the online world merely mocking the real world. Cyber-sex, I would think, is a poor imitator, accepted by those who avoid the work of achieving authentic-intimacy.

Some people are "falling in love" online, then meeting and wanting to move in together. People are moving all over the world. No doubt



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it works once in a while but one has to wonder how people amalgamate different worlds into one. The sacrifice of the one who leaves home and country is a great one that often stresses a relationship from the get-go.

Was the internet invented and designed to handle human emotions? Or was it designed to be an intellectual resource?

The online world offers a virtual smorgasboard of information. Most of it is positive, though there is a small percentage that many find troubling. However, in this online world free-speech reigns supreme. It has long-since crossed over the line at which most societies in the world would deem some of it discriminatory hate and or exploitive speech. In the online world this exploitation extends to images, pictures, video and sound.

There are also web sites where people can talk to each other in "real-voice" as if on a telephone. Not a bad idea but the illusion is that somehow people who are on the other side of the world can somehow be one's best friend.

No doubt, there is value to much of this communication. But what happens to people when they rely upon this online world to meet all of their needs. How much are computers contributing to isolation and heartache? Why?

If the computer is a tool to process and retrieve information, how does this "pseudo-personal" aspect

of the online world unfold? Is it healthy?

Some would argue that there is a new mental illness that needs to be recognized. Is it mental illness or computer addiction or does it have much more to do with the isolating reality of our fast-paced lives?

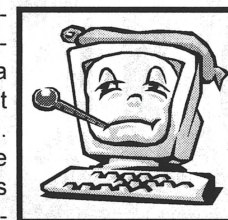
Is there room in the "real" world for the amount of reality that we need to live our lives in emotionally connected and healthy ways? Is

there room in the online world for us to harbour such illusions?

The reality of the online world is that it is not the real world. If one does not maintain a healthy separation between online and off-line, addiction is very possible.

Looking for love in all the wrong places would, for most, include looking for love online. Looking for love and relationships online with people who are hundreds or even thousands of miles away is the reality of the illusion of the internet. An illusion that for many causes much stress and pain. An illusion that is chased after often due to the nature of a world that is steeped more and more in its own technology and less and less in the realm of personal relationships. Reality seems more fleeting than ever before. Relationships and intimacy take time. Who has that time anymore? The reality of the internet is that it perpetuates imaginative illusions in the realm of human relations.

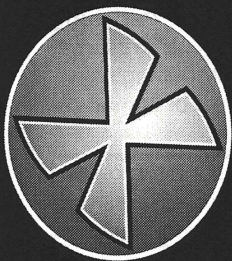
The opinions expressed in this column are those of A.J. Mahari, only, and are not made from any editorial standpoint of The Voice Magazine.



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Transgendered Story

Continued from page 13

the story until after my weeks holiday, which is when I go back as Julie.

January 28th

I got my ears pierced, an important step to being female.

To sum up my first week as Julie, every one has been just great and I feel wonderful about this. I haven't been hiding away; basically life has carried on as before except now there is no restrictions and I can enjoy as never before. Just simple things like shopping now mean so much to me; this is something I never enjoyed in my former life. Hopefully everything will continue as it has started.

March 2000

My sex life has been virtually non existent. I always was attracted to women but recently I have been thinking more and more about other TS's and men, in my dreams as well. So I guess I am bi. It doesn't really make any difference because I never go out, so unless one of you nice people reading this asks me out, I guess I will remain this way. To be honest, having never been asked out, I am not sure how I would respond.

I have been looking forward to my operation but now I have decided to put it at the back of my mind. I have done a lot of thinking about it and realise life can go on without having it; one day I will but I just don't know when. Today I have been a little worried about been seen in public as I have had no electrolysis for a week and a half or shaved for a few days. I have a laser appointment on the 21st, that will be fun so I have heard; I only hope my screams aren't too loud!

What I am really saying is that I am lonely and feeling unwanted. I know I have always been a loner but I never felt this; I used to be always

happy with my own company but now I want the opposite. The hardest part is work; I used to chat all day but no one wants to know and I often go nine hours without a word being said. Would it change if I went back to how I was? The reality is I will be in my job for some time to come and I have to be accepted and need conversation; its my only opportunity during most of the week. Changing my I.D. back would be a nightmare. The bottom line is I need friendship. The question I am now asking myself is will life be better as a physical woman? As I am now I will say I feel more natural but will I be even lonelier?

July 2000

Well the last couple of months have been a right night mare, the situation at work has gradually settled but I went through some tough experiences and felt the company wanted me out. Life as Julie out of work has been good, no problems passing even with some shadow on the upper lip which I still have to hide with makeup. I have been out a few times and recently fell in love with another TS, she showed me affection and I fell for it but she has since said she has no love for me and that has plunged me into darkness. I fear no one will ever show me love again and I need so much to be liked and loved. I still don't know about my sexual preferences but believe I am still in favour of women, so I guess I am lesbian. I don't think it will really matter because I seem to be so invisible to everyone, so unlikely to be ever asked out.

The latest on my transition is that I was referred by a psychiatrist for surgery. I was required to see two doctors and get two opinions. I now have a date for my operation: February 10, 2001. Now you may be thinking at last its all over; actually it isn't, because I am suffering from something I fear will need a shrinks help and could jeopardise this date. My problem is loneliness.

This article was submitted to The Voice by Julie Drake, a transgendered individual who lives in the U.K.

Starting a Small Business Part 3: The Business Plan By Darren Kreger

It's been two months and now we have finished our market research into the possibility of opening a new dance club for the GLBT community in Waterloo. Now it is time to compile all of our information together and develop a business plan.

The business plan is a written report that describes what your business is all about and what are the future plans for the business. The business plan is required to obtain financing as information such as an estimate of how much money is needed, how the money is to be used, how the business will create revenue as well a detailed description about the business and it's principal owners. Writing a business plan shows that you are serious and professional about your business and that you understand your business.

Parts of a Business Plan:

1. The Cover Sheet

The cover sheet will include the name of your company, it's address and phone number. If you have an e-mail address or web page be sure to include this information as well. It is important to show the date and the owners of the company.

2. Table of Contents

To help persons reading your plan, a table of contents is recommended

as well as a list of the appendixes (supporting documents at the end of the plan). Include page numbers so readers can easily find their way around .

3. The Executive Summary

The executive summary of your business plan should be no more than 2-3 pages. The summary is a brief description of each part of your business plan. The summary should be well written so that the reader will want to read on. The summary is often the first thing that loan officers and investors will read. It must be complete enough to describe who you are, what you want and why they should give it to you.

4. Business Description

This section includes a description of your business. Information to include are as follows:

- i) Re-state your business name and address.
- ii) State when your business was formed or when it's being formed.
- iii) Discuss the legalities of the business. Include any licences or permits that are required, the organizational structure (sole proprietor, partnership, or corporation), any government regulations or environmental concerns for your business should also be mentioned.
- iv) Describe briefly your business type - product or service. Also state whether the

business is independent, a franchise, or a takeover.

This section may also include the physical description of your day to day operations. Describe any special equipment you use, your hours of operations, list of suppliers and what they will be providing to your business. Some of this information may seem self-evident, but it helps to ensure that you do not overlook any area of your business.

5. Product or Service Description:

This area goes into detail of the product or service you are going to provide to the market. In our example, you are opening a bar in Waterloo for the GLBT community. Our research shows that the community wanted a bar with diversity in it's events. We may want to mention the type of events that are being planned (a jazz night, dance parties, underwear parties, drag queen shows, etc.). Also, our research showed that the community had expressed an interest in a cafe style establishment with light meals and coffees. The description of our product or service may be as fol-

lows: A licensed cafe/bar in Uptown Waterloo catering to the GLBT community, hosting events of interest for the various groups of individuals within the community.

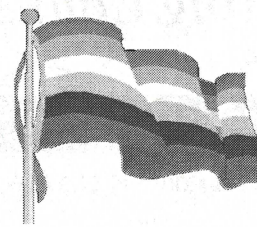
6. Personnel

List the people directly involved in your business (i.e.. accountant, lawyer, financial advisor, business partners etc.). If you plan to hire staff, include job descriptions of these individuals and any prospects that you may have for the position and how they will contribute to your business success.

Other parts of the business plan include the financial data section and the marketing plan. We will go into more detail next month on these parts of the business plan.

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

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by Bonnie J. Babin,
Investment Planning Counsel of Canada

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Your comments and suggestions are welcome.
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Ad Rates News Headlines Archive of Past Issues Links Pride Album

Sundays

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

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

KW-Friends of Dorothy, 10 Pin Cosmic Bowling, will return in September. [redacted]

Mondays

Lesbian Discussion Group & Lesbian Reading/Writing Circle - the first and last Monday of each month respectively. For more information call [redacted] or email: [redacted]

www.thevoice.on.ca
Click on Lesbian Groups

Tuesdays

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

Wednesdays

Rainbow Chorus: Beginning in September rehearsals move from Mondays to Wednesdays. The next rehearsal is on Wednesday September 6th, 7:30-9:30 pm at the Guelph Unitarian Fellowship, 122 Harris St. at York Rd., Guelph. For more information call Robert at [redacted] or [redacted]

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

NEW: Amateur Drag Night at Club Renaissance - the first Wednesday of every month. For information call Jay at Club Ren.

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

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

<http://www.gomorrah.com>

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

THE COMING OUT DISCUSSION GROUP
&
RPC'S RAINBOW COMMUNITY DISCUSSION GROUP

Will meet informally in the Glow Office each Wednesday night during August and return to Hagey Hall in September.

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

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

Thursdays

Hamilton Transsexual Peer Support Group (FTM - MTF) If you are post-op or pre-op transsexual or are dealing with gender dysphoria, come join this bi-weekly peer support group. Meetings begin February 4, 1999 from 6:30 pm to 8:30 pm at the Hamilton AIDS Network, 512 James St. N. For further details, please call (905) [redacted] ext.43, or e-mail Janet at: [redacted] www.geocities.com/WestHollywood/cafe/8922/

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KITCHENER-WATERLOO

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

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

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

NEW: Coffee Club - Attention: Men and Ladies . . . If you like to drink coffee and just chat but you don't feel like there is any place to go where you can just be yourself, now there is. For more information call - Peter at [REDACTED] (After Aug. 6).

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

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

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

NEW L.O.O.K - Lesbian Open Outreach Kitchener is a supportive and social organization for lesbian/lesbian positive and bi-sexual women in the K-W area. The contact person is AJ Mahari at [REDACTED] email: [REDACTED] or [REDACTED]

www.thevoice.on.ca

Click on [Lesbian Groups](#)

Sexual Assault Center:

KW.....(519)741-8633

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

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

WOODS: Women Out Opening Doors Socially is a social club for lesbians in K-W and area. In Kitchener call 746-0132. In Guelph call Debbie at [REDACTED]

G U E L P H

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

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

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

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

outline@uoguelph.ca

www.uoguelph.ca/~outline

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

Sexual Assault Center:

Guelph.....(519)823-5806

CAMBRIDGE

Sexual Assault Center:

Cambridge.....(519)658-0551

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

H A M I L T O N

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

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

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

Community Education 546-3541 to book a presentation or consultation

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Hamilton-Wentworth Regional Police-General Assistance: 546-4925

Jane Mulkewich,
GLBT Task Force 546-4910
Complaints against Officers 546-4776
Street Crime/Hate Crime: 546-3831

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

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

Narcotics Anonymous

Hamilton: (905) 522-0332

Brantford: (519) 759-2558

St. Catharines: (905) 685-0075

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

Sexual Assault Center:

Hamilton.....(905)525-4162

Sexual Health Information Line

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

Street Health Centre-- Wesley Centre 777-7852

The Golden Horseshoe Leather Association (Hamilton) Monthly meetings

are held on the first Wednesday of each month & there is a bar night on the second Saturday of each month. Men interested in the Leather/ Denim lifestyle are invited to attend both. For more information email Bill at: [REDACTED]

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

August

"Jeffrey" by Paul Rudnick will be performed at 8 pm, *August 3-5, 10-12, and 17-19*, at the **Kitchener-Waterloo Little Theatre**, 9 Princess St. E., Waterloo. Directed by Roberto Machado. Call 886-0660 to reserve your tickets.

Monday August 7

Lesbian Discussion Group, from 7-9pm in the GLOW Community Centre, Student Life Building, University of Waterloo. We meet on the first Monday of each month. For more information or to join, please call The Voice Magazine at [redacted] email [redacted]

August 8-13

25th Annual Michigan Womyn's Music Festival runs from August 8 - 13, 2000. For more information: Phone: (616) 757-4766 www.michfest.com

Thursday August 17

DANCE: at the Trasheteria, 52 Macdonell St. (downtown Guelph). The doors open at 9:30pm, cover is \$5.00 at the door. DJ Swivle is spinning for the night. 50/50 draw, door prizes. A great mix of old and new music, something for everyone. The monies raised will be donated to the Youth Empowerment Program (YEP) @ the AIDS Committee of Guelph/Wellington & The Queer Youth Program @ Change Now (a non-profit youth drop-in) Information call - Robb at [redacted]

Friday August 18

PFLAG (Parents, Family and Friends of Lesbians and Gays) meet at 8:00 pm. For the location of the meeting and more information, call Evie at [redacted] (Kitchener) or Sue at (519) [redacted] (Cambridge) or email: pflag@rainbow.on.ca.

Saturday August 19

Leather Ball VI, 10pm - 7am, at The Warehouse, Toronto. \$35 in advance; \$40 at the door. Leather/denim dress code in effect. Tickets available from Priape, Northbound Leather, The Travel Clinic, and Wilde's (Ottawa). For more info, call 416-925-XTRA ext. 2148, or link to www.leatherball.com

Wednesday August 23

k.d. lang: invincible summer tour, 8pm at the Hummingbird Centre for the Performing Arts. With special guest Shelby Lynne. Reserved seat tickets available at Roy Thomson Hall box office, all Ticketmaster outlets, or call 416-872-4255 or 416-870-8000 to charge by phone.

Friday August 23

Sarnia-Port Huron International Gay Pride runs from August 25th to 26th. www.gaybluewater.com/pride.htm

Monday August 28

Reading/Writing Circle, from 7-9pm in the GLOW Community Centre, Student Life Building, University of Waterloo. For lesbians to share the works and writing of other lesbians or women. We meet on the last Monday of each month. If you would like to get involved in this reading circle for lesbians, please contact The Voice at [redacted] between 5-7pm or email: [redacted] or link to www.thevoice.on.ca and then click on "Lesbian Groups" in the left frame's menu.

Special thanks to David Welbourn for his compilation of community events online at The Rainbow Community Center.
www.rainbow.on.ca

B R A N T F O R D

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

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

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

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

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

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

Jean-Paul Pilon
Barrister and Solicitor, Notary Public

10 Regina Street North, Unit 3A
Waterloo, Ontario N2J 2Z8
Phone: (519) 885-[redacted]
Fax: (519) 885-[redacted]

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L.O.O.K

Is an alternative way to socialize with other women in Kitchener-Waterloo. We welcome new people! Why not come out and play a game of cards, have a coffee, chat and join in a women's social and networking community?

For more information please call A.J. at [redacted] or email: [redacted]
<http://www.thevoice.on.ca> Click on **Lesbian Groups**

Same-Sex Marriage

By Laurie Essig

Lately straight relatives and friends have been calling to talk about Vermont and the fact that same-sex “unions” are now legal in that state. They can barely contain their excitement as they ask: “Aren’t you just thrilled? You and Liza will go and get married, won’t you?”

I hate to disappoint them. They so desperately want us to be just like they are, to aspire to nothing more nor less than legal recognition till death do us part. I couch my rejection in subjunctives: “It would be nice if we could be recognized as a family. If we were married, we would save thousands of dollars in insurance bills alone.”

But the reality is that I don’t want to marry Liza (nor she me). In fact, I’m against same-sex marriage for the same reasons I’m against all marriage.

Although we like to pretend that marriage is natural and universal, it is an institution founded in historical, material and cultural conditions that ensured women’s oppression — and everyone’s disappointment. Monogamous, heterosexual marriages were an invention of the Industrial Revolution’s emerging middle class. The Victorians created the domestic sphere in which middle-class women’s labor could be confined and unpaid. At the same time, by infusing the patriarchal family with the romance of monogamy for both parties, the Victorians reduced sexual pleasure to sexual reproduction. All other forms

of sex — homosexuality, masturbation, nonreproductive sex — were strictly forbidden.

But in the American culture of the ’00s, we like to be paid for our labor and we insist on indulging in our pleasures. That’s why a truly monogamous and lifelong marriage today is as rare as a Jane Austen book that hasn’t been made into a movie.

Now don’t go getting your wedding dresses in a twist. I don’t care if you’re married, had a huge wedding, spent \$15,000 on a useless dress and let your father “give you away.” I really don’t care what personal perversions people partake of in their quest for pleasure.

What annoys me is that no one, not even queers, can imagine anything other than marriage as a model for organizing our desires. In the past, we queers have had to beg, cheat, steal and lie in order to create our families. But it’s exactly this lack of state and societal recognition that gave us the freedom to organize our lives according to desire rather than convention.

Lesbians and gay men have created alliances and households and children together. Lesbians have bought sperm and used it to deviate ends, gay men have explored sex as a public spectacle that is democratically available to all — and we have done this while forming intimate, lifelong allegiances with one another. And yes, many

gays and lesbians, including me, have mimicked heterosexual marriage as best we could.

But why should those of us who have organized our lives in a way that looks a lot like heterosexual marriage be afforded special recognition by the government because of that? What about people who organize their lives in threes, or fours, or ones? What about my friend who is professionally promiscuous, who for ideological and psychological and sexual reasons has refused to ever be paired with anyone? What about my sister who is straight but has never in her 40-odd years seen a reason to participate in marriage? Which group will gain state recognition next? The polygamous? The lifelong celibate?



My point is not that we should do away with marriage but that we should do away with favoring some relationships over others with state recognition and privilege. Religions, not the state, should determine what is morally right and desirable in our personal lives. We can choose to be followers of those religions or thumb our noses at them. But the state has no place in my bedroom or family room, or in yours, either.

“Ah,” but you say, “the state must recognize monogamous couples as more conducive to stable families and therefore better for children.” Hello? Have you noticed that a huge number of marriages end in divorce? Even the supposedly “happy” ones aren’t necessarily cheery little islands of serenity. What were your parents like?

There is absolutely no evidence that monogamous, state-sanctioned couplings are more stable than other sorts of arrangements. Even if there were such evidence, couples should be recognized by the state only when they decide to become parents. Why should anyone get societal privileges, let alone gifts, when he or she marries for the fourth time at age 68 with no intention of ever becoming a parent?

Still, as much as I hate to admit it, I am liberal at heart. If gays and lesbians want to get married, then I don’t want to stop them. I just want to lay a couple of ground rules:

First, do not expect me to be happy. The legalization of gay marriage does not make me feel liberated as much as it makes me feel depressed. It’s sort of like getting excited about gays in the military — until I remember that I don’t really care about the military as an institution.

Second, under absolutely no circumstances should you expect me to give you a gift for such a decision. If you’re insane enough to waste money on tacky clothes and bad cake, I’m not going to underwrite your actions with a toaster oven.

Laurie Essig is a professor of sociology at Barnard College and the author of “Queer in Russia” (Duke University Press, 1999).

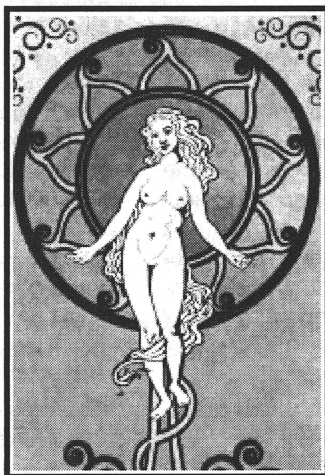
REVENGE OF THE GIRL BANDS: The Dyke Music Scene Blends Feminist Values And 'Do It Yourself' Punk Culture By Ann Cvetkovich and Gretchen Phillips

At a moment when gay and lesbian politics can seem to be dominated by Millennium Marches and mainstream family values, the current dyke music scene offers a welcome alternative. Far from the frenzy of corporate sponsorship, girls with guitars are writing smart songs about sex, politics and their inner lives—and they're not afraid to make the music loud. While teen pop stars Britney Spears and Christina Aguilera dominate the air waves, indie artists Sleater-Kinney grace many critics' top ten lists, the most visible of a rising tide of alternative girl bands whose devoted followers are not just consumers but makers of culture in their own right.

This scene's earliest roots are in the seventies, when the first wave of independent lesbian music labels emerged. More recently, in the early nineties, dyke-owned Chainsaw and Candyass, as well as Kill Rock Stars and K Records—all based in the Pacific Northwest—released a slew of noisy albums by girls proclaiming their love for other girls. This movement got dubbed riot grrrl, and, with Kathleen Hanna of Bikini Kill as its unofficial, and sometimes reluctant, spokeswoman, the message of "Revolution Girl Style Now!" caught the attention of the media. Suddenly you could hear more girls on the radio, and Sarah McLachlan's Lillith Faire festival became the woman's Lollapalooza. But it was the more palatable, less political artists such as Jewel and Alanis Morissette who made it big, as well as lesbians like k.d. lang and Melissa Ethridge who came

out after they were famous.

Today, although the pendulum of mainstream rock journalism has swung away from highly touted and self-congratulatory "year of women in rock," girl bands continue to make raucous and innovative music. "Queercore" bands like San Francisco's Tribe 8, whose rallying cries are "Castrating Bitches Unite" and "Don't Leave A Stump, It Can Be Re-attached," mingle with hardcore punk sounds with queer politics. Drawing on the riot grrrl tradition, Sleater-Kinney, based in the Pacific Northwest and hailed by Robert Christgau as "the world's greatest rock band," played to sold-out crowds in New York City recently, along with Durham,



North Carolina's the Butchies and Olympia, Washington's the Gossip. Backed by Janet Weiss on drums, Sleater-Kinney's two guitar players, Corin Tucker and Carrie Brownstein, are simultaneously girly and tough as they interweave their voices and guitar lines. "I could be demure like/girls who are soft for/boys who are fearful of/getting an earful/But I gotta rock!" they chant in "The Ballad of a Ladyman" from their most recent CD, *All Hands on the Bad One* (Kill Rock Stars). Wearing men's coveralls and drawing on classic rock posturing, the Butchies are more unequivocally lesbian, with songs like "The Galaxy is Gay" and "Sex (i'm a lesbian)," and their declaration that being out "is not done to prove anything to the straight world, it is to prove something to each other." The Gossip riffs on Southern Rock, with a singer in lingerie

and a beehive do flanked by an androgynous go-go dancer. In New York the Gossip were joined onstage by many eager girls from the audience as well as members of other bands.

This scene has brought back a sense of urgency to music. It's not like older male managers and cynical record-company execs are sitting down together to say, "OK, it's Sleater-Kinney's turn to be hot hot hot." No, this is success of their own making, based on touring regularly, recording on their own labels and playing at the local coffeehouse. And they are explicitly encouraging other girls to give music and self-expression a try.

In 1996 Kaia Wilson of the Butchies and her girlfriend, visual artist Tammy Rae Carland, founded Mr. Lady, a record label and music and video distribution company. Adapting the "Sisterhood Is Powerful" logo for the cover, their compilation *The New Women's Music Sampler*, which features the Butchies, Tribe 8, the Need, Sarah Dougher and others, is reminiscent of seventies women's-music compilations by independent labels like Olivia Records, which helped launch the careers of such lesbian music icons and Chris Williamson.

Mr. Lady's lineup also includes Le Tigre, the new band formed by Kathleen Hanna of riot grrrl fame, along with Johanna Fateman and video artist Sadie Benning. In 1998 Hanna took a break from live performance because she was burned out on the unrealistic expectations generated by the riot grrrl scene, but she returns committed to punk and feminism for the long haul. "Sure, I thought about giving up sometimes. But then I think about those feminists in the seventies. They created phrases like sexual harassment and domestic violence. They started rape crisis centers in their apartments. The fucking got abortion legalized. How can I give up? I haven't even gotten started yet."

Punk's DIY (do it yourself) sensibility has merged with feminist values of the seventies in an underground culture evident not only in

music but in a range of genres and venues. New York's Bluestockings bookstore for women, which just celebrated its first anniversary, is run collectively and serves as a space for public events. The annual Sister Spit spoken-word tour has the energy of a punk-rock show; twelve women tour in broken-down vans and sleep on filthy floors in order to perform in all-ages clubs across the country. And in this web-centered era, a search for just one of the above-mentioned bands yields links to articulate and eclectic discourse on bisexuality, transsexual inclusion, self-defense and the Spice Girls; the web provides a forum much as the long-running magazine *Maximum Rock and Roll* did for punk culture.

The parallels and contrasts among different generations will be visible at two events this summer: the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Michigan Womyn's Music Festival (August 8-13) and the first Ladyfest in Olympia, Washington (August 1-6). The Michigan festival still provides home for longtime favorites such as Holly Near and Ferron, as well as for Tribe 8, the Butchies and Toshi Reagon (daughter of Sweet Honey in the Rock's Bernice Johnson Reagon). This year they'll be joined by the Indigo Girls, who've just been associated with progressive causes but who have, in the past, been reluctant to play women-only shows. Meanwhile, Ladyfest builds on the tradition of the 1991 International Pop Underground Convention, a pivotal event in the alternative music scene. Although the Michigan festival remains a women-only space and Ladyfest is open to all, they share a commitment to building a community, encompassing workshops, readings and political networking. The protests in Seattle and Washington, DC, this past year were exhilarating in part because they provided visible evidence of popular opposition to capitalism. The dyke music scene has that same power to suggest that you are not alone and that you have the power to build alternative worlds.

First Published in *The Nation* July 10, 2000

Michigan's Women's Music Festival Twenty-Fifth Anniversary

Twenty-five years ago, almost by accident, we created a space that has become a home to the ideas and expression of womyn's community. It started as a 70's party - a place to relax, listen to great music and enjoy some time in the deep woods of Michigan. The annual gathering has become a touchstone and a vision of alternative community that is regenerated each year, building on the experience of the years before. Many of our womyn's institutions have come and gone during these twenty-five years, and yet Michigan has continued, always changed by the womyn who comprise each Festival, always remaining a home base to return to each August.

Over the years we have built a heritage and a legacy that is passed on to each woman who ventures onto the Land and becomes part of creating what we know as "Michigan." This is the community and culture we will celebrate in August 2000. The Michigan that is as vital and necessary today as it was in 1976. The week where we revel in all things female, where we are wild and strong and sexual, where womyn are sacred and girls are safe. August 2000, we invite you to come and join us as we celebrate the existence and persistence of

this planet called Michigan.

The Michigan Womyn's Music Festival is an annual event created to provide a space for alternative womyn's culture - a place to enjoy great performances, wild living, good politics and the peace and beauty of thousands of womyn in the woods of Michigan. Held on 650 private acres, the Festival week offers over 40 performances, hundreds of workshops, a film festival and a fabulous crafts area. For sports enthusiasts there's basketball, football, volleyball and the Lois Lane Run. Your ticket includes all of these activities as well as three vegetarian meals a day, beautiful and safe campgrounds, and a well-organized system of community services that makes your Festival experience an incomparable week of living in a truly amazing womyn's village. Without a doubt, there is nowhere else like it on the planet.

The Festival is also an experiment in alternative community where we all contribute to a collectively run village. This is part of how the Festival operates but, more significantly, it's a deliberate way to involve each of us in the creation of the event. Everyone who attends participates in two 4-hour workshifts during her stay.



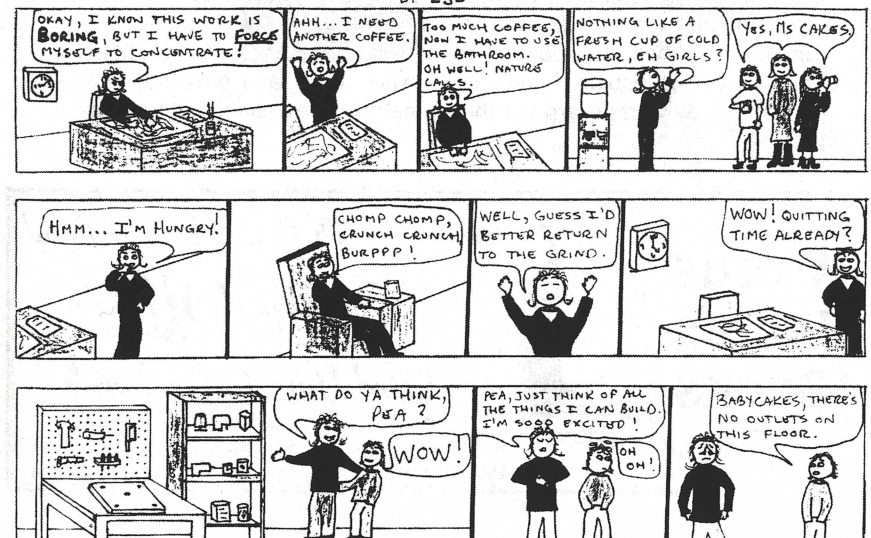
"WHO IN THE "H" (WE'RE NOT ALLOWED TO SWEAR) ARE WE?"

By Laura J. Saunders

"Hi everybody. My name is Sweet Pea. BabyCakes is indisposed at the moment. Well, actually she's in the can so I only have a few minutes alone to speak to you. Laura hasn't told us much about ourselves, just that we're both "toon" girls. I'm okay with it, but Baby Cakes is having a difficult time with this insecure reality. I know she's trying to cope. It's just that she can be so darn stubborn, you know, the type that's gotta be in control all the time. She's even been saying nasty things about Laura. I know that Baby Cakes doesn't mean them. She's just hurtin' inside with this toon thing and all.

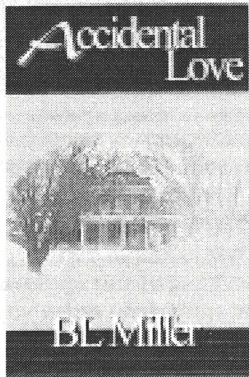
Oh, Oh! SShhhhh, she's coming.
 "Hey everybody, I'm Baby Cakes. Sorry about being delayed. I...ah had to put out the garbage, so to speak. Anyway, what can I tell you about myself? Hmmm...well, I'm 29 years old. Owww...Sweet Pea! Okay, so I'm actually around 40. Who says I have to be exact, lil' Miss Elbow me in the ribs. Go ahead and tell them your age, Pea."
 "I'm only 34 years young and my birthday is in October."
 "Young Punk!"
 "I'm sorry, did you say something, Baby Cakes?"
 "Ah... just that you're a young hunk, Sweetie Pea."
 "That's what I thought! Anyway, Baby Cakes and I have been together for almost a year. We bought a house and NO it wasn't on the second date, either."
 "It was more like the 3rd or 4th date, wasn't it, Pea?"
 "Baby Cakes, cut it out! Now from what Laura has told us, Baby Cakes was created in Laura's image and I was created in her girlfriend Cindy's image.
 I'm glad I take after Cindy. Don't say anything to Laura, but she can be a little flaky and self-absorbed from time to time."
 "Hey, you're talking about me, too, you know!"
 "Oops.....sorry, Baby Cakes. Anyway, we hope all of you readers will enjoy our performances in the comic strips and we'll always do our best to make you laugh. Just remember, no matter what Baby Cakes tries to tell you, I'M THE STAR ATTRACTION. She's just useless page filler.
 Ha Ha Ha"
 "HEY!"
 "Say goodbye, Baby Cakes." "@##!* @##"

ADVENTURES OF SWEET PEA + BABYCAKES BY LJS



SWEET PEAS & BABYCAKES

ACCIDENTAL LOVE



**Paperback - 360 pages 1 edition
March 2000
Justice House Publishing;**

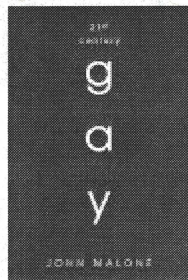
What happens when love is based on deception? Can it survive discovering the truth? *Accidental Love* is a captivating story between Rose Grayson, a destitute lonely young woman and Veronica Cartwright, head of a vast family empire and extraordinarily rich.

About the Author

B L Miller was raised in New York but now lives in central Maine with her two cats. A self-described romantic mushball, she spends her free time writing lesbian fiction and playing handy-woman around the house.

B.L. Miller does a wonderful portrayal of two lost souls from two different worlds who get thrust together by fate. She carries us along on a rollercoaster ride of emotions that will keep you turning the pages and even 'burning the midnight oil'!! Don't start it on a week night just before going to sleep — you'll never get to work the next day! You'll fall in love with the characters before chapter 2 and they will haunt your memory long after you finish the story. So, do yourself a favor and buy it for a great summer read! (or any other time of the year, for that matter.)

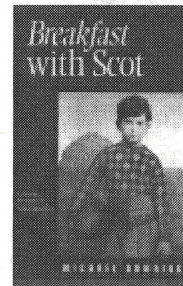
**21st Century Gay
by John Williams Malone
Hard Cover - 320 pages 0 edition
(June 15, 2000)**



This book looks back on sexuality in history not to merely summarize events but to analyze the influences they have had in shaping the gay movement that exists today and how that movement will be defined in the future.

**Breakfast with Scot
by Michael Downing**

**Hard cover - (November 1, 1999)
224 pages**



What happens when your very own mincing, makeup-sporting Mini Me comes to stay—forever? In Michael Downing's highly amusing and hugely touching *Breakfast with Scot*, a couple takes on an 11-year-old with a difference. Sam's a prosperous chiropractor and Ed, the novel's narrator, works for the English-language edition of the highly pretentious magazine *Figura*. Almost 40, Ed hasn't followed through with much of anything, save his relationship. But now swishy Scot could be putting that at risk:

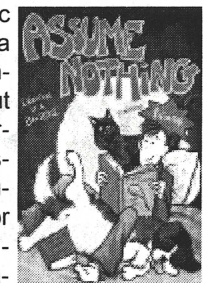
I never wanted a kid. Sam never wanted a kid. We were getting a kid because Sam believed a man is meant to make good on his word, and because I hadn't seeded and watered and weeded my garden, and now, when I needed it, I had no abundant supply of garlic to ward off the little vampire.

Let's just say that though the boy isn't even remotely a bloodsucker, when he utters that familiar complaint "Nobody understands me," he really means it—and he's right. Well, almost. Within days of his arrival in Cambridge, Massachusetts, Scot's new guardians are "drowning in make-up policies and other moral imperatives," for he is an accessorizor par excellence, prone


to wearing pantyhose, nail polish, and various other affronts to things masculine. He's also a catalyst for disaster, pointing up the shame and social booby traps that Sam and Ed have done their best to ignore. Nevertheless, their days slowly begin to take on a familial rhythm, and Downing effortlessly displays the depth and feeling that can come up in the most casual moments and conversations. He's equally good at overt disaster, and even as he never lets us forget the mortifications that may be just around the corner, the author makes us believe in his triumvirate. *Breakfast with Scot*, too, is a veritable garden of verbal delights—and a strong look at the apparent weaknesses and hidden treasures of family life.

**Assume Nothing:
Evolution of a Bi-dyke Starring Liliane
by Leanne Franson**

**Paperback - 80 pages 1st edition
(February 1, 2000)**



This is a graphic novel with a wonderfully simple, sketchy, but expressive cartoon style. I assume this is autobiographical or semi-autobiographical in nature; we follow the main character as she "comes out" as a woman who loves other women — and sometimes men. I really got into her adventures as she tries to find the right woman, checks out artificial insemination, adopts a puppy, and finds a very strange treasure in an abandoned building she squatted in for a year. Hilarious!

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BETTER ANGEL: By Forman Brown

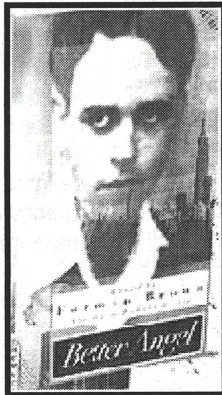
Writing as Richard Meeker
Published by Alyson Books

Review by The Voice's Assistant Editor

In 1933 the novel *Better Angel* was published by Greenberg Publishers in New York and a completely new and revolutionary understanding of gay men was presented to the public. In the novel Forman Brown depicted the reality of gay relationships in which the main characters were not tormented by their sexuality but had real love affairs and lived sedate and normal lives. What were exposed were the general misrepresentation of homosexuality and the difficulties of living in monogamous same-sex pairs at a time when homosexuality was still

a crime. As Hubert Kennedy writes in the introduction to this edition:

"Better Angel is probably the first novel published in America to show male homosexuality in a positive light – it even provides its gay hero with an apparently happy ending."



Since 1933 *Better Angel* has been re-edited five times, first in the 1950's with the inappropriate title *Torment*, then in 1987 and 1990 by Alyson and finally in 1995 when Forman Brown finally put his name on it and also

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included an epilogue. The version being reviewed here is the fourth Alyson edition virtually unchanged from the 1995 edition.

By observing the publishing history of this novel, it is possible to realize its importance to gay literature and culture. Adding to this is the fact that it is a good novel. Although it is to an extent autobiographical, it is also good fiction. The writing is solid and satisfying, the characters are strong and realistic and the story is well shaped and presents an intelligent version of a young gay man coming to terms with his sexuality, love and life. So many of these coming out stories tend to dwell too much on the emotional suffering and as a result it is refreshing to find, in what is one of the first of this type of novel, a main character who views his experience rationally and without a great deal of personal torment. The hero is Kurt Gray, a young composer, who recounts experiences growing up in middle America, coming to terms with his sexuality and eventually developing an understanding of love and relationships. The action begins in a small Michigan town and moves through Detroit, New York and Europe. Situations are very much in the nature of some of the most progressive literature of its day. If this novel had been based on straight relationships it might have been written by F. Scott Fitzgerald or Ernest Hemingway - such is the quality of the writing.

Better Angel is a unique and important book. Although many later American novels have portrayed the same subject, this was the first and as a result deserves to be read. Very satisfying!

AIDS in San Francisco:

Continued from page 7

tury. Sexual tastes, like any sort of demographic indicators (race, gender, etc.) don't alone qualify anyone for a position. But neither should they be cause for dismissal. We must create a prevention strategy that reflects the way people are really having sex.

Yes, it would be much simpler if telling gay men repeatedly to use condoms led to absolute condom compliance. But it doesn't work, and such campaigns undermine our intelligence. The truth is, avoiding HIV in the current sexual culture is a daily struggle. It's confusing. It's situational. It's complicated. And it certainly can't be reduced to a snappy slogan or a bus stop poster.

Acknowledging that men are barebacking and treating those men with humanity is a step toward adapting for survival in the midst of a shifting epidemic. Being freaked out and judgmental is the equivalent of being culturally stuck. One of the main reasons people have car accidents is that they freeze up at critical moments. We as gay people are an incredibly adaptable and resilient bunch. We must learn to talk about barebacking in a complex, non-hysterical way, because it certainly isn't going away.

Kirk Read lives in San Francisco and can be reached at KirkRead@aol.com. This article was submitted to The Voice by Kirk Read.

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Spiritual Life: The Quest for Freedom

The Way In - Part 1

By Noel Springwood

Slavery is not dead. Humans are still enslaved, only now there are different Masters.

Those Masters are just as cruel and heartless as the slave-traders of old. They demand increasing effort and productivity and they give little in return.

The New Masters are of course Machines and Electronic Gadgets. With each new advancement in technology, the attempt on the part of humans to keep pace becomes more challenging. In fact, it becomes dehumanising to the extent that humans begin to treat other humans like machines just to maintain the speed and efficiency.

Ultimately, the machines win because the humans break down far more often and more permanently. When that happens, like the machines that become outmoded, they are discarded and replaced, indiscriminately and with little regard for the cost to the individuals or families involved.

In a world like this, it is more necessary than ever to find the freedom to live and grow as a person. It is of vital importance to discover sources of enrichment and nourishment, for the body and for the spirit.

From the dawn of time, this importance has been recognised and

neatly summarised in an ancient motto, "A sane mind in a sound body." Proper exercise, diet and rest do wonders for the body. The arts and sciences do wonders for the mind. But there is another dimension. The discovery of the Person experiencing it all and the discovery of how that Person is a wonder in him or herself. A wonder worth loving and caring for and nurturing. A Person seeking wholeness and happiness just because he or she exists.

From the dawn of time, one of the ways the "Keepers of Wisdom" used to do this was Meditation.

You can call it other names and there are almost as many approaches to this practice as there are practitioners. It is, however, the Way In. It is the way to self-discovery, self-fulfillment and self-love. It is the way to free oneself, if only for short periods of time, from all those things that enslave us. It is the way to gain a sense of self-worth, purpose and peace.

So, "How do you do it?", you ask.

First of all, there is no sure recipe. Secondly, it involves very little actual doing. Thirdly, it does take time and needs to be practised regularly. Finally, it requires a tranquil setting and comfortable, relaxed position.

In this series of articles, I will de-

scribe a number of approaches to Meditation and some of the things that can help keep you on track as you begin. In this article, I'll just suggest a few things to work on to prepare yourself for the experience and develop the kind of mental and physical discipline that can help.

Find a time and place where you won't be disturbed. Many people find mornings best. Others prefer afternoons or evenings.

Make sure you're comfortable. Sitting or lying down. Close your eyes and try to breathe regularly, perhaps to a four count inhale and four count exhale. This is not deep breathing, just controlled breathing. Think, "I'm breathing in wholeness. I'm breathing out negativity."

Turn off the phone and make your environment as tranquil as you can. Simple silence is often preferred; but, listening to nature sounds, new wave music or quiet instrumental music can help focus the attention.

Make a positive effort to leave cares and worries behind. When I conducted retreats, I encouraged the participants to imagine that they had arrived at the Retreat Centre with a large backpack filled with cares and worries and problems and fears. I told them to imagine their arrival with that backpack and to picture themselves removing it and leaving it at the door. This was to be a new beginning, a fresh start. I then suggested that they could pick them up again when they left and that they might be surprised at what they found inside. Or, rather, didn't find anymore.

Pick a regular time and time

frame. Twenty minutes is ideal for a start. Many Meditators eventually extend that time to longer periods. Whatever works for you.

Try to let your mind just go blank. At first there will be all sorts of thoughts whirling around and anxieties rising up to bother you. Not least among the anxieties will be thoughts about doing it right and how much time is left. Just let them be. Let them float through like clouds on a sunny day. To try to get rid of them is to give them strength and you'll never get rid of them. In fact you never really do. Like the butterflies you feel when appearing in public, they can learn to fly in formation.

So, if you can do that for a few minutes each day, you're off to a good start. In the next article, I'll present a few techniques for focusing and for mapping progress. Both of these elements are necessary to help see at least where we have been and, perhaps, understand a bit more, where we are in our lives.

In sum, try it. Start breaking the bonds of slavery. Begin to find the freedom you can have and deserve. I think you'll be glad you did.

NOEL SPRINGWOOD (a pen-name - "Out of respect for his former associates, he is not using his real name.") served most of his life as a Roman Catholic Priest. He now lives in voluntary exile from that ministry in order to live and work openly within the LGBT community as a Gay Man. You can contact him through THE VOICE or email him at

Confessions of a Late Bloomer

By Randy Siegel

The Boy Scout's Blues

Another message has been sent to our children that it is not okay to be who they are. In a 5-4 landmark decision, the Supreme Court ruled that The Boy Scouts can ban gay troop leaders and possibly reject gay boys as members, too. Society has once again told us to conform or not fit in.

Although it took me 40 years to admit it, I have been gay as long as I can remember. Yet, I felt forced by societal and parental pressures to lead a mainstream life.

For me being gay was not an option. Everything I was taught mattered hinged on being a straight, mainstream man.

I spent my childhood and adult life avoiding the person I was born to be.

Throughout kindergarten and high school, I felt different but knew it was not safe to be my true self.

Seeing that I was effeminate, my father forced me into after school sports. Never had I felt more miserable. Never was my confidence so low.

One of my best friends credits The Boy Scouts for his confidence, yet blames them for contributing to his living a lie. While he gained confidence hiking, camping and playing sports, he was not encouraged to find his authentic

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At the end of World War II the Japanese economy was devastated. To secure needed hard currency the Japanese pottery industry produced thousands of figurines and other knick-knacks for export. From the beginning of the American occupation until April 28, 1952, these objects were marked "Japan", "Made in Japan", "Occupied Japan" and "Made in Occupied Japan". Only pieces marked with the last two designations are of strong interest to Occupied Japan collectors. The first two marks also were used at other time periods. The variety of products is endless - ashtrays, dinnerware, lamps, planters, souvenir items, toys, vases etc. Initially it was the figurines which attracted the largest number of collectors; today many collectors focus on non-figurine material.

self. Thirty years later, he came out, leaving a wife behind.

One of the most important things in life is to be who you are without shame. Yet many gay men and women learn as children it is not safe to be who they are.

A Manhattan antique dealer shared a story from his childhood. When his sister and mother would leave for the market, he would dress up in his sister's poodle skirt. One day, they returned home early and caught him twirling around the room. Caught in the act of free expression, he felt such shame.

In an effort to protect us, parents teach us to mask our true selves and conform to society's norms. Some of us even marry and risk leaving wives and children in our wakes.

I had no business getting married. It was as plain as the blush on my wife's cheeks. She didn't get a husband and a lover. Instead, she got a friend and partner, and both us missed experiencing true intimacy.

Fourteen years later, I would tell her I was leaving. I would admit to her and myself I was gay.

For many of us it takes years to find the courage to admit who we really are. And when we finally do, we often end up hurting those we love most.

For me, being gay is not a choice. It is much a part of me as the color of my eyes. Lenses may temporarily change their color, but my eyes remain as nature intended.

In some American Indian cultures, a newborn is asked, "Who are you?" Most cultures focus instead on, "Who will you be?"

From bulimia to sexual abuse, today's parents are free to discuss a wide range of issues once considered too shameful to air.

Despite today's more open communications, one topic remains shut behind closet doors. Raising an effeminate son or masculine daughter is still shameful for many parents.

We must learn to celebrate our children for whom they are rather than mold them into people they are not. Like the team members, coach and community who supported the high school football star who recently came out, we must encourage each other to lead authentic lives.

The Girl Scouts accept young lesbians as members, saying "These are private matters for girls and their families to address." Why couldn't The Boys Scouts have followed The Girl Scouts' lead?

In my book, The Boy Scouts of America had a great opportunity and they blew it. They could have preached tolerance instead of fear.

The Boys Scouts and Supreme Court could have sent America a message of acceptance and inclusion. Instead they chose bias, shame and exclusion. Gay males can now be legally excluded from an organization for being honest, by simply being who they really are.

Until parents allow their little boys to play with dolls, we rob them of their dignity. And until gay boys can openly join The Boy Scouts, we sentence them to inauthentic lives.

Randy Siegel is an Asheville, NC-based writer and speaker who specializes in the challenges of coming out later in life. He can be reached through The Voice or at

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Fun & Games In Sydney

By Julie Casto (Travel Only)

Sydney, Australia is set to host the first Olympics of the 21st century. The Sydney 2000 Olympic Games scheduled for Sept. 15 – Oct. 01 are expected to bring 132,000 international visitors to the city over three weeks. Sydney will play host to the Paralympic Games from Oct. 18 – 29.

While many events are sold out (90%), including both the opening and closing ceremonies, there are still tickets available for the upcoming Sydney 2000 Olympic Games.

There's more to Sydney than just the Olympics. It is a dazzling city built around one of the world's most beautiful harbours, with beaches and national parks all within easy reach.

Areas worth checking out include:

The Rocks with its many specialty shops, restaurants and art galleries; Darling Harbour, home to Harbourside, the IMAX theatre and Sega World; and Bondi and Manly, two of Sydney's most famous beaches.

New attractions in Sydney include:

Nightclimb: Following the huge popularity of Bridge climb – the three-hour climb of the Sydney Harbour Bridge – a night climb was introduced in March. Climbers, who wear special suits and harnesses and a specially designed Bridge Lamp, get a 360-degree-view of the city.

Fox Studios: This huge entertainment complex, which includes film and television studios on the site of the former Sydney Showgrounds.

Sydney Olympic Park: The venue for the 2000 to Stadium Australia.

Harbourside: Darling Harbour originally Olympic Games. Located at Homebush Bay, 14 kms. West of the city center, the site is home

opened in 1988, the West Side of Darling Harbour has undergone a major revamp in the past 12 months. It has emerged as an upscale retail and dining complex. Harbourside has its own monorail station.

Getting around:

Sydney Pass offers visitors unlimited bus, ferry and inner-city train travel, harbour cruise and journeys on the Explorer Bus, as well as the Bondi and Bay Explorer Bus. Valid for three days, it costs about \$80.00 for adults. Five and seven-day passes are also available. The Explorer Bus follows a 28-km route stopping at major attractions. Ticket holders are encouraged to hop on and off as they please.



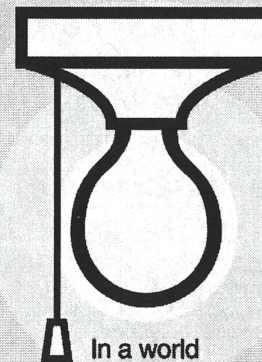
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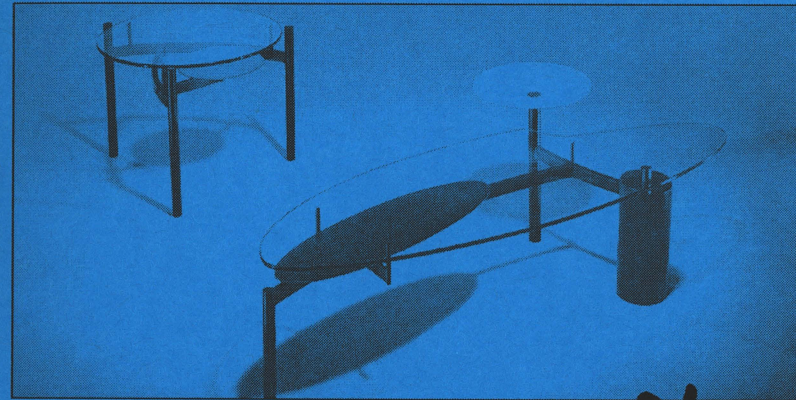
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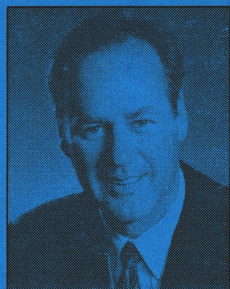
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