

Dare

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VOLUME 1, NUMBER 29

THE LESBIAN AND GAY NEWSPAPER

OCTOBER 7-13, 1988

MTSU Students Organize to Fight Anti-Homo Backlash

By JEFF ELLIS
Managing Editor

Spurred on by what they perceived to be a strong anti-gay backlash on their campus, a group of lesbians and gay men at Middle Tennessee State University have begun efforts to organize an on-campus group called "MTSU Lambda Association."

MTSU President Sam Ingram said the group's efforts to become a recognized student organization will probably be successful as long as proper procedures are followed.

"I do not see there being a problem with these students organizing. If they meet the same conditions as anyone attempting to organize a new student group they will be approved," Ingram said.

State colleges and universities which are governed by the State Board of Regents already have guidelines for guaranteeing fair treatment of lesbian and gay student groups.

In early 1980, federal District Court Judge Tom Wiseman issued a ruling giving official recognition to a similar group at Austin Peay State University. Wiseman's ruling followed a lengthy and costly court battle waged by lesbian and gay students on the Clarksville campus who had been refused official status by then APSU-President Robert Riggs.

"I haven't been asked to pass judgment on other groups, so I see no reason to pass judgment on this group," Ingram said.

"We'd like to set in place lesbian and gay support group, a place where lesbians and gay men are accepted and allowed to interact and project a better public image than the one presented by the student newspaper," said

Daniel Webster, student spokesperson for the MTSU group.

The prevailing anti-gay sentiment on the Murfreesboro campus is the result of an article which appeared in *Sidelines*, the student newspaper, which purported to chronicle gay life among the 13,000-member student body. But instead of presenting a balanced view of lesbian and gay life at MTSU, student Richie Smith said the published account portrayed gay men as "obsessed with bathroom sex."

The story, written by *Sidelines* staff writer Tony Stinnett, told of university attempts to curb sexual activity in restrooms by removing the doors to restroom stalls in Keathley University Center and the Kirksey Old Main building on campus.

Campus bathrooms have long been targeted for "tea room sex," the story reported. That claim was backed up by examples of sexually-themed graffiti on the walls.

Stinnett's story, which brought a rash of angry letters to the editor of the student paper, followed a sting operation conducted last summer by Murfreesboro City Police. The sting focused on sexual activity in the city's Old Fort Park.

Following the local media coverage, students began to discuss the possibility of forming support group for lesbian and gay students.

"Actually, we had thought about it before all the media hype, but when it happened we decided we should do something immediately," Smith said.

"Timewise, MTSU is back in 1982, not continued on page 4

Bragg, Shocked, Come to Nashville

By DEBORAH BURKS
Staff Writer

Several "politically correct" musicians from around the globe will be appearing at The Cannery on the evening of October 14.

Billy Bragg, considered one of Britain's most progressive musicians, will be the feature. Bragg was a founding member of Red Wedge, a group of left-wing musicians connected with the Britian's Labour party. He has been in the United States recently with his "Save the Youth of America" tour, urging his audiences to register and vote.

The Democratic Left notes that Bragg believes "both the ballot and the barricades are important strategic tools." Activists from several action groups, including ACT UP (AIDS Coalition to Unleash Power), were involved with this tour. Bragg has also toured with The Smiths, musicians well-known to many gays and lesbians.

Also appearing at The Cannery will be Michelle Shocked. Shocked's recently released album *Short Sharp Shocked* (Mercury) has garnered some much-deserved recognition for this east Texas folk singer.

The album contains an odds-and-ends assortment of political songs ranging from "Graffiti Limbo", a song based on the police slaying of black New York graffiti artist named Michael Stewart, to "When I Grow Up I Want to be an Old Woman", a kind of children's rhyme satirizing procreation. Through a voice somewhere between those of Joni Mitchell and Rickie Lee Jones, the feminist, anarchist, lover and skateboard rider in Shocked can all be heard.

Mancatal, a seven-member Nicaraguan band, will also perform. The show starts at 9 PM. Advance tickets are available at Ticketmaster. •



Michelle Shocked, called "a complex and sophisticated talent" by *Musician* magazine, will join fellow "politically correct" musician Billy Bragg and the 7-member Nicaraguan band Mancatal for a Nashville concert appearance next week.

Armistead Not Disciplined

By STUART BIVIN
Editor

Reports that the Nashville Board of Realtors has lodged a complaint against Metro Council Member George Armistead for his remarks about homosexuality and the Gay Cable Network are untrue, according to Grace Fairbanks, executive vice-president of the Board.

Armistead is a member of the Nashville Board of Realtors.

Fairbanks said that the Board of Realtors does have a code of ethics requiring members to adhere to a professional standard of conduct, which includes a prohibition against bias and discrimination, but added that formal grievances must be filed with the Board before it can take action.

"This office does not investigate until a written complaint is received," Fairbanks said last week, noting that all such grievances come across her desk.

"There may have been telephone calls complaining against Mr. Armistead," Fairbanks said, "But the Board has not received any written complaints, and the Board can only act if there is a written complaint."

The Board's Code, like those of other professional, sets a standard of conduct for its mem-

bers. Citizens who feel that a member has violated one or more of the canons of the Code can make a formal, written complaint to the Board, which will investigate through its Grievance Committee.

Members found guilty of violating the Code can be punished or expelled by the Board. •

INSIDE

The Amazon Trail:
an amazing tale,
page 5.

All about
coming out,
page 6.

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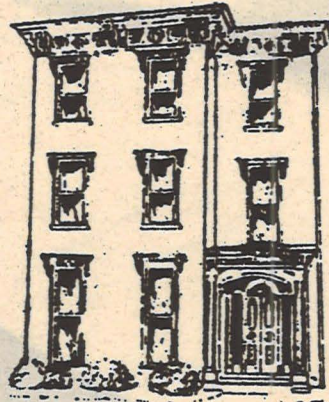
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Jeff Ellis
Managing Editor

Dare

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Dates

October

Mondays

Nashville CARES
AIDS/ARC Support Group. 6:30pm. HIV Education Support Group. 6pm. Family Support Group. 6:30pm. Info phone 385-1510.
Lambda Group
Closed Alcoholics Anonymous meeting for gay men and lesbians, Unitarian Church. 8pm.
MAGNET (Married and Gay Network)
New group for married gay men. 1st & 3rd Mondays only. MCC-Nashville. 8pm. Info phone 320-0288.

Tuesdays

Vanderbilt Lambda Association
Meeting for gay and lesbian Vanderbilt students, faculty, staff and alumni. Divinity School, Room G 23. 5:30pm. Info phone 298-9931.
Al-Anon
Open meeting, MCC-Nashville. 6:30pm.
Nashville CARES
HIV Education Support Groups. 7pm. Info phone 385-1510.
Sober Sisters (Lesbian Alcoholics Anonymous)
Closed meeting, MCC-Nashville. 8pm.

Wednesdays

Sex Addicts Anonymous Closed meeting for gay men and lesbians. MCC-Nashville. 5:30pm.
Nashville CARES
AIDS/ARC Support Group. 6:30pm. HIV Support Group. 7pm. Info phone 385-1510.

Thursdays

Nashville CARES
HIV Support Group. 6:30pm. Info phone 385-1510.
Alternatives (Alcoholics Anonymous) Closed meeting for lesbians and gay men, MCC-Nashville. 8pm.
Lesbian Adult Children of Alcoholics (ACOA)
Meeting. 8pm. Info phone 385-4776 or 352-5823.

Fridays

Sexaholics Anonymous Closed meeting, MCC-Nashville. 5pm.
Alcoholics Anonymous Program Study Group
Meeting, Belmont United Methodist. 7:30pm.

Saturdays

Nashville CARES
AIDS/ARC Support Group. 4pm.
Metropolitan Community Church-Nashville
Mortgage Meal, all you can eat. 7:30pm. \$5.
Gay Cable Network Cablecast, Viacom Channel 35 (Community Access Television). 8pm. Free.

Sundays

Manna New Life Church
Worship service, 11am. Info phone 833-8581 or 834-4491.
Metropolitan Community Church-Nashville
Worship services, 11am and 7pm. Info phone 320-0288.

SPECIAL Events

Sunday, October 9

Feminist Book Circle Meeting. Discussion of *Over the Hill: Reflections on Ageism Between Women*, by Baba Cooper. First Unitarian Universalist Church, 1808 Woodmont Blvd. 5-7pm. Free. Info phone 298-9931.

Tuesday, October 11

NATIONAL COMING OUT DAY
Direct Action Protest nonrecognition of lesbian/gay relationships at Marriage Bureau, Howard School, 2nd Ave South. Info phone Penny Campbell, 297-4293, or Gary Bellamy, 885-2665.
Family Celebration Music, food and dance. Sponsored by Nashville National Coming Out Day Committee. Gas Lite Lounge, 167 1/2 8th Ave North, Nashville. 7:30pm. \$2 donation requested. Info phone Gary Bellamy, 885-2665 or Penny Campbell, 297-4293.

Sunday, October 16

Pride Week '89 Committee Planning meeting. 1401 Cedar. 1pm. Info phone 297-4293.

Saturday, October 29

Halloween Party Talent show and raffle, follows Mortgage Meal. MCC-Nashville. 8:30pm. Dinner & party, \$6. Party only, \$3. Info phone 320-0288, 885-8202 or 391-0222.

Monday, October 31

HALLOWEEN

Your nonprofit event can be listed free in *Dates*. Just drop a postcard or letter to *Dare*, Box 40422, Nashville, TN 37204-0422, or phone 292-9623 and leave a message. Please include information about time, location, cost, sponsor, and a contact person's name with address and/or phone number for verification.

Sodomy Revision Attacked

By **JEFF ELLIS**
Managing Editor

Recently proposed revisions in the Tennessee Criminal Code which would specifically ban homosexual acts will likely be considered in January by the judicial committees in both chambers of the state legislature.

When the legislature convenes for its 1989 session in January, among proposals being considered in committee will be revisions in the state's Criminal Code recommended by a subcommittee of the Tennessee Sentencing Commission.

Among the recommendations is one which would eliminate heterosexual "crimes against nature," but would criminalize all sexual acts between two persons of the same sex.

"We should be removing the sodomy statute from the criminal code, not revising the wording," said Hedy Weinberg of the American Civil Liberties Union in Tennessee.

Weinberg said the ACLU nationwide is committed to the repeal of all sodomy laws and Tennessee's statute is likely to come under fire in the coming months.

"We must begin mobilizing," Weinberg said. "Tennesseans must begin talking to their legis-

lators. We must convince them that this law should be repealed.

"We cannot allow pandering to the homophobic attitudes we might see in the months ahead."

Weinberg said that in addition to lobbying efforts, attempts must be made to educate the public "about how unfair and discriminatory this statute is."

She predicted that the Commission's recommendations will be the subject of much debate in both the state house of representatives and senate.

"The report is filled with revisions and proposals that will wreak havoc. We're going to see a pretty strong public outcry that will keep everyone in the legislature busy during the next session," Weinberg said.

Susan Kay, of the Vanderbilt Legal Clinic, who last year spoke on the current sodomy statute's technicalities to an organizational meeting of the Tennessee Gay and Lesbian Task Force, refused to comment on the Commission's recommendations.

"I haven't followed the changed recommended by the commission, so I really have nothing at all to say about them," Kay said. •

One-third Volunteer Contact Tracing

By **JEFF ELLIS**
Managing Editor

State health officials report that one-third of the Tennesseans testing positive for AIDS in the past five months have asked authorities to contact their sexual partners to tell them they may have been exposed to the disease.

John Fortune, coordinator for AIDS counseling and testing for the Tennessee Department of Health and Environment, called the partner tracing "an important tool" in the state's fight against the disease.

"It is possible to find people in the community who are infected, but don't know about it," Fortune said.

Fortune explained that the partner tracing program is "non-threatening and non-frightening," given the guidelines used to administer the program.

Since May, when the program went into effect under federal guidelines, about 50 people have been contacted and told they are at risk of having the human immunodeficiency virus (HIV), widely believed to be the cause of full-blown AIDS.

After persons who have tested positive for HIV infection are contacted, they are counseled on the methods of informing past sexual partners.

"We stay away from anything about guilt in this situation," Fortune said. "We might do a little role playing even. We try to help the person decide how to tell their partner(s) themselves."

If requested, state health officials will contact the partner.

"We attempt to contact them, based on information given us by patients. If possible, we get them to come in for testing and counseling," Fortune said. "If there are infected people out there it helps to give them information about how to protect themselves and others."

In the five months since partner tracing began, patients who test HIV-positive have given authorities the names of 68 sexual partners who are at risk. The number of patients does not equal the number of partners reported. Fortune said one patient reported 14 contacts over an extended period of time.

Like HIV testing in Tennessee, partner tracing is done in such a way to ensure confidentiality, Fortune said.

"When contacting partners we don't give the name of the person who gave the information or tell them when it may have occurred. Initially, we simply explain that we may have some important information concerning their health," he explained.

After telephone contact is made with a partner, Fortune said an appointment is made to further "discuss what's going on." He stressed that counseling plays a vital role in the process.

"We tell them about testing and about the disease itself and try to give them other resources to contact for information or counseling," Fortune said.

Once the partner is contacted, any identifying information is destroyed.

"When we contact people we try to be as non-threatening as possible and we won't give any information to anyone but the person in question," Fortune said. "We don't leave a note saying, 'The AIDS man called.'"

Federal guidelines, which went into effect on May 1, provides a direct correlation between AIDS funding and a requirement that state programs begin tracing sexual partners or people who have shared needles who test HIV-positive. The program was already in place in some Tennessee testing sites, but is continuing to be implemented in still others across the state.

Dr. Sandee Potter, executive director of Nashville CARES, a local AIDS services organization, said she was still uncertain of the program's effectiveness.

"I'm still processing my opinion on the program and if it is being administered correctly," Potter said. "One of my concerns is that people may give information on a certain number of their sexual partners, but not all."

Potter said cases of anonymous sex among gay men might hurt the program's overall success, but said she would take a "wait and see" attitude before forming an opinion.

"If it gets people to start thinking, then I think it's a worthwhile program. Maybe it will prompt some to practice safer sex," she said. •

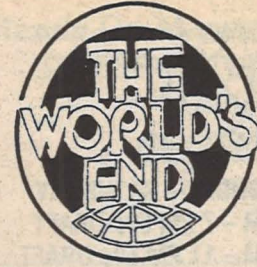
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...MTSU Lambda

continued from page 1

keeping step with political times. It lags far behind in acceptance of new social issues," Webster said.

John Weaver, another of the students involved in organizing MTSU Lambda, said the mood on campus has changed little since he first attended the school in 1977.

"There have been some changes in morals and a lot of people are much more accepting than in the past," Weaver said, indicating that a fear of AIDS has influenced the opinion of many people.

"There is a definite need for this type of organization," Weaver said.

According to the students, MTSU Lambda — if approved by campus officials — could help

to sway public opinion. Already in the works are plans for AIDS education workshops, counseling sessions and a proposal for a lesbian/gay hotline for members of the MTSU community.

"This kind of organization would be a better atmosphere than a bar for young gay people to get together," Webster said. "Bars can be overwhelming and frightening. An organization like this would be a more appropriate, more affirming setting."

The students have until mid-October to submit their constitution to appropriate campus authorities who will then rule on the proposal. The constitution must bear the names of five charter members to be eligible for recognition from the university. •

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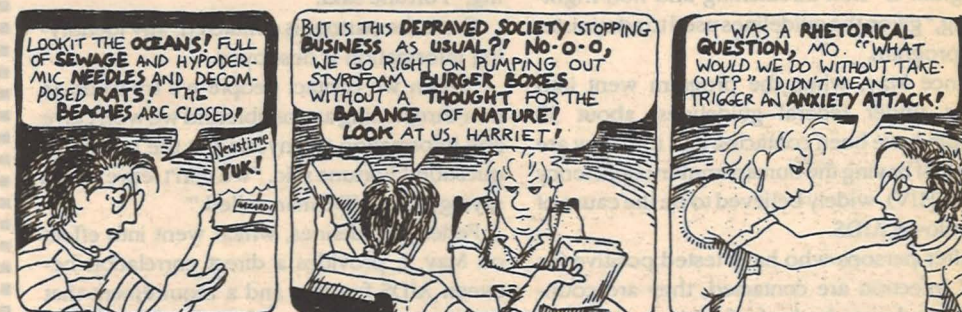
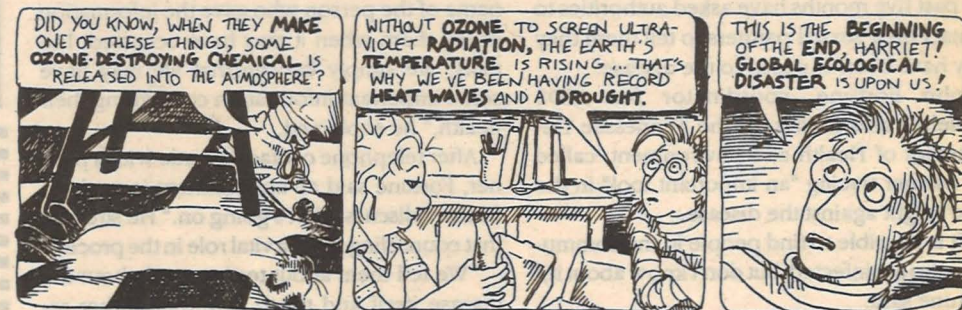
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Panel 5: The man says, 'AN ANXIETY ATTACK IS THE ONLY SAME RESPONSE!' The woman replies, 'NO, NO, IT'S NOT. WE HAVE TO TRANSFORM OUR ANXIETY INTO ACTION!' The man asks, 'WHAT ARE YOU DOING?' The woman replies, 'I'M RECYCLING'.

Panel 6: The man says, 'THERE. A HANDSOME, LIGHTWEIGHT HELMET FOR DEFLECTING THOSE HARMFUL U-V RAYS. NOW WILL YOU STOP WHINING ALREADY?'

Poison May Fight AIDS

By **STUART BIVIN**
Editor

Scientists at the National Institutes of Health (NIH) have suggested that an altered form of a powerful natural poison may seek and kill HIV-infected cells.

The discovery may lead to a new method of therapy that could limit the spread of the virus within the bodies of those who carry the virus, according to a report published in the British journal *Nature*.

The poison, *pseudomonas exotoxin A*, is so strong that an amount the size of a salt grain could kill a human, the article said. The poison is produced by a soil bacteria.

Researchers say that the drug ignores uninfected cells in test-tube experiments.

"We're encouraged...by the low amount of drug which is effective," said NIH researcher Bernard Moss.

The drug works by killing infected cells before they can produce more viruses.

There is evidence to suggest that, though the

drug would not kill unattached viruses, it might bind itself to them, keeping them from infecting healthy cells.

Researchers chemically altered the poison by replacing the part of its molecular structure that guides it to its target cell with a portion of a protein [called "CD4"] that attaches to a protein found on HIV-infected cells.

Quantities of the "designer poison" were then produced by grafting the poison into cells of the bacteria *E. coli*, which reproduced itself and the drug with it.

In experiments, the drug killed infected white blood cells without harming healthy ones.

Researchers must still determine whether the drug can reach all infected cells in a human body. They cautioned that it will be some time before it is known whether the drug can be effective in humans.

"There is a long jump from the test tube to the patient," said Harvard Medical School's Martin Hirsch. •

Pages

Amazing Amazon

The Amazon Trail. Lee Lynch. Tallahassee: Naiad, 1988. 200 pages. \$8.95, paper.

By **SHERRE DRYDEN**
Entertainment Editor

If you're ready for a little light reading with a serious message, this collection of Lee Lynch's syndicated columns is a good choice.

Just warn your roommate that you're likely to start giggling uncontrollably at some point. In fact, you might consider setting aside some time to read passages aloud and share the giggles.

The Amazon Trail (the column has the same name) assembles 37 of Lynch's essays, arranged in categories like "Gay Lit," "Gay Rites" and "The Geography of Gay." The "amazon" in the title might lead men to pass Lynch by, but many of the essays are just as pertinent for men as for women.

The first, "Becoming Her" is the sad/happy/funny story of Lynch's transformation from late 50's baby butch to "Her," the first full-grown lesbian professional Lynch encountered.

"This slight, dapper woman with short salt-and-pepper hair and the plain stamp of lesbian in every line of her face, every move of her body, was In Publishing. Oh my, she was perfect...I've become Her at last, the future I chose thirty years ago."

In many cases, it is the glimpse of an earlier time, of Being Gay in the sixties, that makes *The Amazon Trail* particularly interesting. In "A Place For Us: Gay Bars" Lynch moves from a discussion of why gay bars are important to a nostalgic description of her first bar, the Swing Rendezvous in Greenwich Village.

Somehow, knowing that Andy Williams' song "The Good Life" was adopted by gays, or that The Ace of Spades was a Provincetown lesbian bar in the sixties ("The Notorious Ace of Spades") bridges the gap between what we know about lesbian and gay history and today's culture. And it is the knowledge that there is, indeed, a past that helps validate the present.

Lynch not only makes being a gay teen-ager in 1959 seem like fun (when it really must have been more like hell), but she also makes the hard questions of 1988 seem answerable. She has the ability to make fun of us without being

derisive.

In "Cravat Caveat" Lynch takes a semi-light-hearted look at the old question of femme/butch role-playing:

"I love wearing ties. If I had the money, I'd probably dress like something out of *GQ*. Girlfriend is delighted when I wear my brown leather flight jacket and tweed snap-brim cap."

In "Second Hand Posh" she discusses the genesis of that lesbian tradition, the thrift shop:

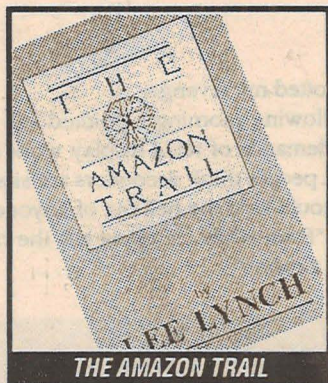
"The next phase in my thrift-store career was generational. In the mid and late '60's we pinko queer effete snobs created a market for those army surplus items that became our wardrobes."

And from "Nude Newspapers and Dyke Dimples," which addresses the difference between being out and Being Out:

"Amongst the guilt trips from the dentist, vet and ObGyn, lay a gay newspaper...I looked over my shoulder to see who might have noticed this accusing envoy. It was probably the month's copy of *Sissies Speak Out*, or worse, *Raging Bulldagger Rag*. Even if it was the more discreet *OG&LHQMRPC*, the headlines had done me in with the postal service."

Some may argue that issues like role playing and coming out are devalued by irreverence, that we shouldn't ourselves take un-seriously the very things we struggle to have taken seriously by society at large. But Lynch doesn't ridicule those who take these issues seriously, just as she refuses to be ridiculed for her own lifestyle.

Instead, she demonstrates that it is possible to use humor, and by laughing at ourselves defuse the destructive situations that can arise when lesbians (or gay men) find themselves on opposing sides. •



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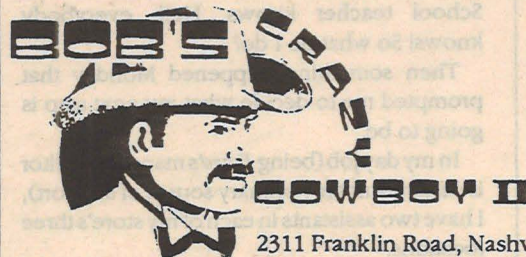
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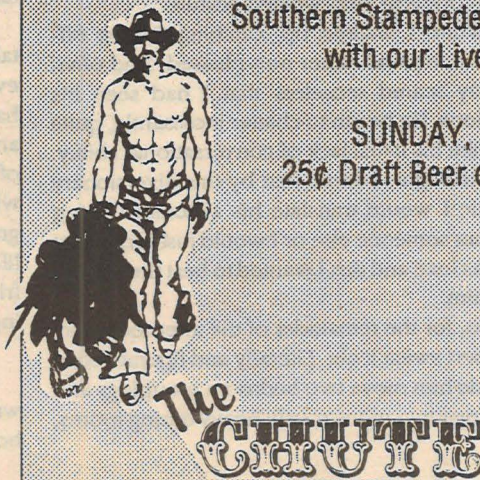
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The Lesbian and Gay Newspaper
From the Heart of the American South

October 7-13, 1988
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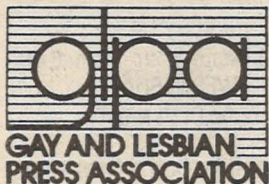
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Between the Lines

Growing Out of Room

By DEBORAH BURKS
Staff Writer

closet (klāz' it) n. [L. *claudere*, to close] 1. a small room or cupboard for clothes, supplies, etc. 2. a small room for conferences or meetings. - v. t. to close up in a small room for confidential talk.

Considering Webster's definitions, a closet doesn't sound like a suitable place to spend one's life. Based on my own experience, I can verify this.

Yet, as we all know, many gay men and lesbians do live there — "in the closet."

I'm struck by several aspects of this definition of a closet, those descriptions which also apply to the "closet" constructs we gay men and lesbians use to protect ourselves. First of all, closet is derived from a Latin word, meaning to *close*. That's exactly what we do by choosing to live in the closet — we are closed off from other gay men and lesbians, the rest of

society and, most importantly, ourselves.

Secondly, "small" is a key descriptive in defining a closet. Have you ever found a closet big enough for its purpose? Well, I've certainly never had one spacious enough for my clothes, or my linens, or my life. Our "closets" are indeed small.

My closet was never big enough to hold all the lies which were necessary to conceal and "protect" myself. It grew too crowded in there with all the shame and fear. Questions like "What will happen if my mother finds out?" or "Will I lose my job because I'm a dyke?" occupied too much space and little was left for me.

So after several years of this crowded arrangement, I moved out of that closet. I finally realized how unnecessary and damaging it is to live there. I decided that there is nothing wrong with me — the wrong is with a society which encourages us to deny who we are and thus live in the closet.

Closets restrict our growth as individuals and as a community. The smallness of the

closet confines and defines our happiness — we as gay men and lesbians can never be happy if we continue concealing who we are.

The third feature of this definition is interesting: the verb transit form of closet implies a temporary situation. For example, we closet for a meeting. This does not mean permanent residency, but rather a temporary state.

I'm tired of all the excuses people use for staying in the closet. I understand the need for a closet may be necessary for some people at some given time, but the time comes when we all have to move outside the closet's confines. Next Tuesday as we celebrate National Coming Out Day we are given a unique opportunity to take our next step in emerging from the closet. Use this day to start your move — or to continue — forward.

You'll be happier.

I'll bet my pink triangle on it!

Let's use closets for what they are meant — to store *things*, instead of people's lives. •

Coming Out with a Vengeance

By JEFF ELLIS
Managing Editor

With National Coming Out Day fast approaching, and after much urging to "take my next step," I find myself in a quandary of sorts.

What's your next step when everyone knows already?

My family knows, my friends know, my employer knows, my co-workers know, my neighbors know, my childhood Sunday School teacher knows. Hell, everybody knows! So what do I do?

Then something happened Monday that prompted me to decide what my next step is going to be.

In my day job (being *Dare's* managing editor is certainly not my primary source of support), I have two assistants in each of my store's three locations.

Because of how my job functions, I rotate among the three locations, spending two to four days in one location during a two-week period.

I'm very lucky to have assistants who, though heterosexual, are very affirming of my sexual orientation and who are very close friends.

Then along came Robert.

He's new. And a jerk. And homophobic.

I realized that the other day when I happened upon Robert making not-so-veiled references to my orientation, demonstrating his distaste for my lifestyle with an appropriately stereotypical limp-wristed gesture.

When I walked up, catching Robert off-guard, he was rather non-plussed. And obviously scared senseless that I had seen his actions. He began to chatter incessantly, quite unlike his usual lack of conversational ability. He thought, I think, that by this diversionary tactic I would translate his actions as being about someone else or I would just forget that I was mad and that I wanted to beat the shit out of him.

So, for the remainder of the afternoon, I let Robert sweat it out. Literally and figuratively. I made him move two bedroom groupings and change two monstrously heavy dining rooms,

while I plotted my revenge.

The following morning I pointed out the physical demands of retail display work and how most people think decorators are sissies.

"But I could beat the hell out of anyone," I told him. "Even while choosing just the right colors for a room."

Stories

I Lost It at the Movies

Excerpted by permission from *Testimonies: A Collection of Lesbian Coming Out Stories*, ed. by Sarah Holmes, Boston: Alyson Publications, 1988, \$7.95, paper.

By JEWELLE GOMEZ

My grandmother, Lydia, and my mother, Dolores, were both talking to me from their bathroom stalls in the Times Square movie theatre. I was washing butter from my hands at the sink and didn't think it at all odd. The people in my family are always talking; conversation is a life force in our existence. My great-grandmother, Grace, would narrate her life story from 7 a.m. until we went to bed at night. The only break was when we were reading or the reverential periods when we sat looking out of our tenement windows, observing the neighborhood, which we naturally talked about later.

So it was not odd that Lydia and Dolores talked non-stop from their stalls, oblivious to everyone except us. I hadn't expected it to happen there, though. I hadn't really expected an "it" to happen at all. To be a lesbian was part of who I was, like being left-handed — even when I'd slept with men. When my great-grandmother asked me in the last days of her life if I would be marrying my college boyfriend I said yes, knowing I would not, knowing I was a lesbian.

My mother had started reading the graffiti written on the wall of the bathroom stall. We hooted at each of her dramatic renderings.

Robert didn't catch on, so next Tuesday I'm gonna tell him that I saw what he did and I think he's an asshole.

He does a good job and we need him to continue to do so. But I think it's time that Robert realized that we are everywhere.

And some of us are the boss. •

Then she said (not breaking her rhythm since we all know timing is everything), "Here's one I haven't seen before — 'Dykes unite.'" There was that profound silence again, as if the frames of my life had ground to a halt. We were in a freeze-frame and options played themselves out in my head in rapid succession: Say nothing? Say something? Say what?

I laughed and said, "Yeah, but have you seen the rubber stamp on my desk at home?"

"No," said my mother with a slight bit of puzzlement. "What does it say?"

"I saw it," my grandmother called out from her stall. "It says: 'Lesbian Money!'"

"What?"

"Lesbian Money," Lydia repeated.

"I just stamp it on my big bills," I said tentatively, and we all screamed with laughter. The other woman at the sinks tried to pretend we didn't exist.

Since then there has been little discussion. There have been some moments of awkwardness, usually in social situations where they feel uncertain. Although we have not explored the "it," the shift in our relationship is clear. When I go home it is with my lover and she is received as such. I was lucky. My family was as relieved as I to finally know who I was.

Jewelle Gomez has written book reviews for *Belles Lettres*, *The Village Voice*, and *The New York Times*. She is the author of two collections of poetry and a forthcoming vampire novel, *The Gilda Stories*.

One in Teen

More Mail, But Not Enough

One in Teen is written by a 17-year-old high school student. Because he is a minor, he will use a pseudonym.

By **PATRICK HILLS**
Contributing Writer

Hey! Well, I got a sudden spurt of mail a few weeks ago—a sudden spurt being three letters.

In case you're keeping count, that's a total of five.

Unfortunately, due to school and other obligations, response time is quite slow. However, I'm working on it. So, if you've written and have not heard from me, I apologize. You'll be hearing from me soon.

Today, at his request, I am going to tell you a little about the thoughts and troubles of one of the gay teenagers I have met recently. He is black and has only come out to his mother and a few people among the lesbian and gay community.

His friends do not know he is gay. Some of his friends may suspect that he is gay, but don't know for sure. Among his friends and classmates, he feels it is necessary to hide his sexual orientation in order to be accepted and not lose his friends.

He is probably not ready to face the possible consequences of coming out in high school.

One problem he faces—as all of us have, at one time or another—occurs when he goes out with a guy or does something else "gay":

Lying.

Lying often becomes necessary to eliminate any possible suspicions about what he is doing. This can be a very risky habit.

As a result of his lies, his mother found out he is gay. This forced him to tell his mother the truth about his sexual orientation. He was caught by surprise by her discovery of his lies and was not in the best condition to defend her accusations.

By the same token, his mother was angry that he had lied to her and was not in a good state of mind to learn that her son is gay.

My advice? Be prepared. It works for Boy Scouts, so it can work for you perhaps. Be prepared to answer your parents' questions should they discover you've been hiding something from them.

While I am very excited about having received five letters so far, I would like to see a lot more. I know you are out there! So write!

It has been at least two weeks—probably longer—since I've gotten any mail and it's sort of discouraging. I've made a move to advertise the group in the Nashville Youth Network's *Student Informer* newspaper and my own school's newspaper. Hopefully, these will be better targeted to teenagers.

And I bet my principal will just love seeing an ad for lesbian and gay teenagers in her school's paper.

I will tell you the outcome of this adventure in my next column in two weeks. Also, I don't want to see an empty post office box any longer, so write me about the group I am forming for lesbian and gay teenagers at P.O. Box 158002, Nashville, 37215-8002. •

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Dear *Dare*,

The panning of the premier broadcast of the Gay Cable Network in Nashville and the generally low-key attention paid to the local efforts to bring the cable series here (p. 9 in *Dare*) deserve comment. The impression left by the article was that the Gay Cable Network should be judged solely by its artistic merit, by its "professional" production values and by the degree of local content of its programming. This approach trivialized the real meaning and importance of GCN by completely ignoring the political step forward the broadcast implies as well as the efforts of its local producers, Krzysztof Krakowiak and Diane Easter. One would think that the effort to bring the cable broadcast here deserved some attention as a news story apart from the content of the videos themselves. Yet this organizing effort, the work that went into it and the struggles involved were omitted from the story completely. I know that a lot of hard work and sacrifice went into that effort which for the first time will bring gay broadcasts—produced by gay people—to Nashville. History was made last week, yet *Dare* was content to describe events as merely "Better than Nothing."

The assertions that gay political developments in New York would be of little interest to Nashvillians border on the Natavistic. We are a national movement and indeed the first show did feature stories from the South. I, for one, am interested in New York street children who might be gay, or the progress of the ant-bias bill in New York. What is there about New York

that is such a turn-off for the *Dare* reviewer? And why should we be expected to look more favorably on those segments featuring "Mr. Hotlanta" than those dealing with struggles against discrimination? If one's residence or geographical region were to determine our interests, what is the *Dare* reviewer saying about the readers judgment and values?

Finally, the joy of turning on the TV and watching the local producers and other supporters so thoroughly turn back George Armistead's pathetic efforts to stop GCN marks the turning point in gay liberation organizing for me (I have lived here for 18 months). Can there now be any doubt that we are a strong proud movement in this city? Or that we have political power? Gay Nashvillians be advised: the political victory brought to us by the organizers of the Gay Cable Network—by discrediting bigotry in the pages of the *Tennessean* and on all the TV channels (for several nights in a row!) is historic. Armistead was elected as an at-large candidate with great backing and he was no match for us. I don't care if the "camerawork was rudimentary and amateurish"—there was nothing out of focus about our local organizers or the significance of their work. We owe them a little more thanks than that. We should never trivialize political and social breakthroughs by giving an unbalanced amount of attention to relatively minor considerations like form or regional locus.

Sincerely,
Gerry Scoppettuolo
Nashville

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