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Fifth Freedom

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4-15-1973

### Fifth Freedom, 1973-04-15

The Mattachine Society of the Niagara Frontier

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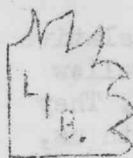
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# FIFTH FREEDOM

NEWSLETTER OF THE NIAGARA  
VOLUME 3, NUMBER 8

FRONTIER GAY COMMUNITY  
APRIL 15, '73 BUFFALO

## SPRING IS HERE



POLITICAL NOTES

by Jim Zais

Coming to Albany

used to be fun.

In the good old

days (two years ago) we would meet in the cafeteria of the Capitol at nine in the morning. As we gulped down our coffee we were excited and cheerfully optimistic about what the day would bring. And it usually brought the surprised curiosity of legislators when we came into their offices with, "Hello, we're here to talk about gay rights." They were usually silent (dumb-founded) for the first ten minutes, but when we left we were convinced we had made an indelible impression on them.

Nixon was in office back then, but somehow the atmosphere was different. Maybe it's because he was elected by a slim plurality in a three-way race, and people thought that political period was only a temporary thing. So many of us just went on, as though it were still the 60's.

Our bills on the repeal of consensual sodomy and anti-discrimination are still alive and well at the time of this writing, but that doesn't change my generally negative view of the atmosphere in Albany today.

Somehow Nixon's reelection by a wide margin casts a shadow over everything. The Legislature was always a businesslike one (I'm comparing it to only a few others that I know from first-hand experience) but this political era makes it

seem even more formal. Legislative counsels seem to be using yellow legal pads more than before. They used to sit back and rap with us, sometimes even letting us in on their own personal views and experiences with gays.

Certainly we're prouder and more self-assured now. We know the questions they might ask but more often we know what's bothering them about gays--the stuff they are afraid to ask. Their aim now is to get us out of there as fast as possible: "Well, I'll certainly convey your views on this bill to the Senator." Our tactic is to stay as long as possible because the longer we stay, the more their preconceived notions about gays break down.

And so it goes. If luck is with us, we speak to the Senator or Assemblyman directly--same principle: demonstrate that gays don't have horns. Maybe some of us will dress in drag (tie and coat) although we never quite match the pin-striped suits that seem to never require an appointment.

As a friend of mine said, perhaps we're last year's group. If that's true, we'll just keep truckin' until we're so familiar on the political landscape that they'll pass our bills in order to bring fresh faces to Albany.

So it's boring in a way--the same old thing--but we're going to win. And when we do what will you say to yourself if you haven't written to your representative? The time to do it is today.

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This is the fourth and last installment of the story, translated from the French and reprinted from the gay magazines Le Cercle and Mattachine Review. In the previous installments, the narrator, a young boy during World War II, has be-

friended a German Lieutenant of the Occupation Army. The Lieutenant's close "friend", fighting at the Russian front, is reported killed; the boy is deeply moved by the Lieutenant's sorrow and by the havoc of war. ...Bernard

#### WAR IS NOT A GAME FOR CHILDREN (IV)

Author: Gilles Armor

By the end of spring an abrupt growing spurt completed my transformation: My body reached its full height, my voice became deeper; I exchanged the parting on the side of my head for a crew cut, and the knickerbockers for my first pair of long trousers. Once a week, I had to borrow my father's razor.

At night it now took me a long time to fall asleep, and mother would be astonished to find my bed all tumbled up in the morning. A host of images had invaded my mind and out of them I created strange fantasies whose endings were forever denied me through slumber, but whose hero was always Erik.

Since the death of Kurt his behavior towards me had changed. He would observe me sometimes, silently, for many minutes, or ask me questions most of which would embarrass me: Did I have any close friends in school? Was there a particular one I preferred above all others? Had I ever kissed a girl?

He made plans for us, too: The war was not going to last forever; whichever way it should end, he would come back to France as a journalist. Nothing was going to stand in the way of our friendship.

I no longer listened to his every word as though he were the oracle; my attention would wander from what he said and concentrate on his face. I would think how handsome he was.

Then summer arrived, and with it my sixteenth birthday.

Mother, upon that important occasion, had invited about a dozen youngsters, the various offspring of friends, neighbors, aunts and uncles - the boys all carefully groomed, the girls all simpering - even then already, I felt an outsider in their midst.

Erik, on the eve of my birthday, had given me "The History of German Painting" which we had so often admired together. That sumptuous volume, which I was forced to hide for years for want of an explanation as to its source, always seemed to me the symbol of our friendship.

Once the guests had departed and my parents retired to their room,

(continued on next page)

I went, as usual, to spend some time with him. Under a slack robe I was wearing nothing but my briefs, for the heat was stifling: I found Erik in his pyjamas, their tops wide open over a chest of dense brown hair.

He had to laugh when I described my party. He was very gay and, I even felt, laughed somewhat excessively.

When I was about to leave, he drew me close to him and kissed my forehead. "Happy birthday, my dear."

I had no idea what suddenly possessed me. I was sixteen and it was summer; I had some wine, and could feel the warmth of his half naked body so close to my own. My face barely reached up to his shoulders - I had only to bend my head to press my lips against his chest.

His reaction remained a mystery to me for a long time. He pushed me brutally away; in his eyes there was a strange expression I had never seen before.

"Go now, that will do." His voice was trembling. "What do you know about me anyway, little Frenchman? Nothing. You're just a child and our countries are at war; can you understand that? But don't look at me so stupidly. Don't you understand anything?"

He was right. I did not understand until years later that he had wanted me that night with all his being; that he had known my trust in him was such that he could do with me whatever he pleased; but that he preferred to destroy everything rather than affect what he did not know to be my true nature; and above all, that he had wanted to leave intact the purity of a memory which was to brighten the rest of my life.

"Go now," he repeated, "you won't hate me forever; but tonight, go. Please! Go!"

He was almost shouting, at the risk of waking my parents, pulling me towards the door, shaking me. I think he would have hit me if my amazement had not abruptly given way to anger. I threw at him the first obvious insult that came into my head: "Filthy German!"

Like a cold slap in the face the door slammed shut behind me.

The days passed and, I shall regret it as long as I live, out of pride and rancor I avoided Erik, and left to spend my vacation with my aunt in Sologne without seeing him again. It was there that I received a letter from my mother, announcing with undisguised joy (in spite of the fear of censorship) that when I got back I would no longer find the German with them; having volunteered for the Eastern front, he had bid my parents goodbye, reassuring them that he would never forget his stay in France.

Immediately, I had to declare my happiness at the thought of getting my own room back; to denounce the war hungry elements of the German

(continued on next page)

spirit, and to drink, from a bottle of champagne which my uncle had solemnly opened, a toast to the victory of the so far away Russians.

But when I found myself alone that night, when, to muffle my sobs, I could bury my face unseen under the blankets, I gave full vent for hours to the last sorrow of boyhood and the first sorrow of man.

I never saw him again. I do know that he was killed that summer, somewhere over in Russia. Like Kurt.

Not as often anymore, but with a deeper meaning, I still like when I'm alone some evening, to leaf through the book that he had given me - the only souvenir I have of him. My fingers slip over the rough grey linen of the binding, then turn the pages one by one. Somewhere across the portraits of Dürer or Holbein, I sometimes think that I can see his finger-prints; something then tightens in my throat, something that hurts and will no longer flow.

On the title page he had written my name and his; then the date, July 23, 1942.

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The following is the continuation of a series of questions and answers about homosexuality that the Fifth Freedom is providing. This series is reprinted from a booklet	distributed by GAA in New York, "20 Questions About Homosexuality." MSNF is having the booklet reprinted in its entirety for distribution locally...available soon.
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QUESTION #8: DOES RELIGION TELL US THAT IT'S IMMORAL?

Most religions don't concern themselves with sexual morality, and the taboos enforced in our society are the product of a single religious tradition, based on the Judeo-Christian scriptures. People outside this tradition are able to state quite simply that proscriptions against homosexuality reflect philosophical convictions that are entirely subjective.

Those within the Judeo-Christian tradition, however, have also begun to challenge the taboos. And they begin with two of this tradition's most cherished principles: that morality is more a matter of individual conscience than of rules or legalistic distinctions; and that there is more than one path to a moral life.

Biblical injunctions, say these modern churchmen, must be seen as the words of ancient wise men who interpreted their faith in terms of their own age and their own understanding of the world. Contemporary morality, they say, must be based on all the knowledge that has become available since then. They are quite ready to ignore such scriptural

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injunctions as ST. Paul's exhortation to slaves to stay with their masters; to defy such Old Testament prohibitions as those against wearing a scarlet dress or eating shrimp; and to reassess passages in the Bible which suggest that women are inferior to men. Today's moral decisions, they say, cannot be made on the basis of ancient rules as interpreted by medieval scholars. Rather, they must be based on a present-day understanding of "the gospel of God as love in action in the world."

If God is love, they say, then God is present wherever love occurs - and we are just people who happen to love members of our own sex. They believe that physical fulfillment deepens and cements love, and they do not ask homosexual women and men to commit sexual suicide. They say that no form of sexuality is either moral or immoral apart from its "inner spirit," and they believe that casual sexual acts which involve no force or cruelty are simply meaningless, not sins. They ask for a religious rejection of guilt where there should be no guilt.

Homosexuals are perfectly capable of making ethical judgments, and these judgments apply to our sexual relationships as well as to the rest of our lives. Many of us seek the ethical guidance of religion, and modern churchmen no longer drive us from this guidance. Rather they choose to guide their heterosexual parishioners toward the belief that sexual virtue begins with joyful acceptance of one's own sexuality and the sexuality of others. They urge them to abandon a notion of sexual morality based on personal revulsion, inherited prejudice and erroneous information.

The point has often been made that "the Black problem" in America is really a "white problem." Moralistic antihomosexuality, say many modern theologians, is yet another example of man's inhumanity to himself. They believe that the moral problem is that of the heterosexual majority, who fail to recognize and accept those of us in the homosexual minority as their sisters and brothers.

There may be sincere Christians and Jews who do not share these moral views, but few churchmen challenge the Constitutional bar to laws "respecting the establishment of religion" or the principle that sexual morality is a matter to be settled within the confines of the individual conscience. Religious leaders of all denominations believe that sexual relations between consenting adults in private are not matters for regulation by government, and they have been in the forefront of the fight to repeal sodomy laws and all other laws which subject personal morality to criminal sanctions.

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OF INTEREST...

CONTRIBUTORS TO FIRE FUND: among the major contributors to our fire fund are Gay People's Union in Milwaukee, who contributed \$25 through a vote of their membership - and, locally WEBR radio contributed \$25. Also, several of our members have contributed \$10 & \$20 to the fire fund, as well as several donations having been received from friends of Mattachine. Our sincere thanks go out to all these people who dug deeply into their pockets when we need it the most!

STRAIGHT FROM THE HORSE'S MOUTH: our local epitome of heraldry - the BuffaloEveningNews - recently reported the following: "Despite pleas from the blind and disabled, gay activists and women's rights groups the Legislature probably will not pass any bills this year to strengthen existing laws against discrimination in jobs and housing chairman Donald L. Taylor (R, Watertown) said...following a hearing by his Assembly Committee on Government Operations." Isn't it nice to know that they know we do exist? And isn't it nice to know that our solons in Albany don't concern themselves with facing the fact that a large part of their constituency suffers invidious and intolerable discrimination? MY, it's so easy to be part of the establishment...unless, of course, one has a conscience.

WHICH PROMPTS US TO ADD: write to your Senator and Assemblyman in Albany supporting the repeal of consensual sodomy (A3545 and S4107) AND enactment of the anti-discrimination measure for gays (A4680 and S4198). DO IT TODAY!

COME OUT...TO AMHERST, MASS.: The Student Homophile League of the University of Mass. is having their 3rd annual Gay Weekend, May 4th, 5th and 6th. Friday is a gay party at Hampshire College 8PM; Saturday afternoon a series of workshops, among them: Peter Fisher, author of "The Gay Mystique"; a workshop on transvestism-cross dressing; one on female-male gay relations; a womens workshop; and others. Sat. evening a gay dance with live entertainment. Sunday, there's a morning and afternoon gay picnic - the whole weekend sounds great! It would be really good if some Buffalo gays could make - try, won't you?

YOUTH ATTEMPTS SUICIDE AFTER GAY SEX: those terrifying words headlined the following article reported in the Rochester, N.Y. GLF newsletter, "The Empty Closet: "David \_\_\_\_\_, 21, a sophomore at Monroe Community shoved a knife into his chest, and struggled with bystanders and ambulance attendants to drive it in further; in the hospital he pulled the life-keeping needles and tubes from his arms. David has been obsessed  
(continued on next page)

with fear of venereal disease since a homosexual encounter three months ago, despite a clean bill of health by physicians. Early treatment included the administration of hormones. (GLF has had reports of a doctor attempting to "treat" homosexuality with hormones previously. Such treatments have been proven ineffective.) Who taught David that homosexuality was worse than death? Was it peers, society, the church or gays? Those who condemn gay love as a joke or as sin should consider their action carefully; how funny is the joke? how major the sin? Is it worth a life?

IN CONTRAST: the Empty Closet also reported the following, in keeping with April Fool's issue: "SUPPORT FOUND FOR GAYS-ARE-SICK THEORY: Additional evidence has come to light supporting the theory that homosexuals are sick according to the originator of the theory, Psychiatrist Irving M. Bibler. Dr. M. Bibler did his original research on gay patients in a mental institution, and found that 75% of them had some mental problems. Some critics of his research maintained that his sample was not sufficiently random. Interviewed at his office in a local bar, Dr. M. Bibler excitedly explained the new evidence for his theory between drinks. "In medicine, when someone dies of a sickness, he is referred to as a 'terminal' case. I have discovered a terminal case of homosexuality. Therefore, homosexuality must be a sickness." Pressed for details, Dr. M. Bibler explained. "Ruben David. He's the homosexual in the Guinness Book of Records that sat in the same stall for 27 years in the Port Authority Bus Terminal. That's a terminal case if I ever heard of one!"

(This just proves that gay wit is alive and well(?))

NATIONAL FREE CLINIC COUNCIL ELECTS GAYS TO GOVERNING BOARD: two representatives from the Gay Community, Mina Robinson of Los Angeles, Calif., and Tom Johnson of Duluth, Minn., were elected to the governing board of Directors of the National Free Clinic Council (NFCC) at a national convention held at the YMCA of the Rockies in Estes Park, Colo, from March 29 until April 1, 1973. The four day convention was attended by 500 persons representing free clinics and community health centers from across the nation. The convention unanimously adopted a position paper presented by a Gay Caucus which provided that the NFCC's constitution be changed to include the following statement: "...two positions on the national Board of Directors shall be reserved for gay persons (one woman and one man) to be selected by the Gay Caucus at the annual national convention." This action represents the first time that a major national organization has specifically allocated positions on its governing body for gay persons and has had that policy written into its constitution.

(This news release provided by the Gay Community Services Center in Los Angeles)

EVENTS/events/EVENTS/events...

MEETINGS

GLF U.B., every Fri., 8PM - call Norton Union for room number.

GLF BUF STATE, inquire at student union.

MATTACHINE GENL. MEETING, SUN., April 22nd, 8PM, Unitarian Church Elmwood & W. Ferry

U. OF ROCHESTER GLF, Sun., 7:30PM Todd Union Music lounge; GLF office staffed daily 12:30-11:00PM

GENESE0, Gay Freedom Coalition, every Mon., 7PM college union ballroom lounge

BROCKPORT, Gay Freedom Coalition, every Tues., 7:30PM, Rm 202 of student union.

OSWEGO, Gays for Human Liberation every Mon., 7:30PM, Hewitt Union BLDG, Oswego State Campus.

OTHER

SISTERS OF SAPPHO, WBFO-FM, 88.7 on FM dial; listener call-in and talk show for lesbians; every mon. night 12mid-3am

STONEWALL NATION, WBFO-FM, 88.7 on FM dial; every wed. at 9:30pm; various topics of interest to gays

SYRACUSE GAY FREEDOM LEAGUE WEEKEND a combined celebration weekend - GFL's 2nd anniversary and the regular meeting of the NY State Coalition of Gay Organizations; as many Mattachine members as possible are encouraged to attend the weekend - 2 members of MSNF will be delegates to the Coalition meeting and will vote on proposals to be presented on Sunday. Events scheduled are: FRI- 8:30pm, guest

speaker, Rita Mae Brown; SAT- 11am to 12:30, registration; 12:30-5pm, workshops on: gay women; gay prisoners; legislative tactics; N.Y. State clearing house; 5:30-7pm, pot luck supper; 9:30pm-1:30am, dance with Sweet Jenny Grit, all women's band; SUN- 12-5pm, coalition meeting. FOR MORE DETAILS CONTACT : JIM ZAIS.

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(advertisement)

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Fifth Freedom welcomes response - if you have comments or contributions, contact us at the FF, by mail or phone; SUBSCRIPTION RATES- \$3.50/yr to cover mailing expenses Send check or m.o. to MSNF, attn: Fifth Freedom and include your mailing address; ADVERTISING RATES - 1/3 column \$2.50, 1/3 page \$5, 1/2 page \$7.50, full page \$15 - please make checks payable to Mattachine Society.

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