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Fifth Freedom, 1976-02-01

The Mattachine Society of the Niagara Frontier

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Dear Don,

I feel the necessity for a response to your article, "The Stamp of the Church," in the December 1975 issue of Fifth Freedom, because, as you know, I am a Christian clergyman in Buffalo. I consider you a friend, and I am a supporter of your work in spite of the fact that I feel that my religion and my work and worship take precedence over any feelings that I may have concerning sexuality. I hope you will realize that what I say, I say with an equivalent amount of sincerity and concern about gay people as you have said in your article, and that I have felt said sincerity in other articles of this issue.

I have underlined a few sentences/phrases, especially in the first and final sections of the article, for comment: (1) "...contemporaries must bear the burden of rectifying the havoc wreaked by such invidiously rooted oppression. In order to do this they need to recognize the wrongs and take steps to right them. The church has been slow to recognize let alone admit the wrongs it has perpetrated upon gays."; (2) "A first step, which is yet to be hurdled, is for the church to take a broader and more honest look at its History." My comment: Well, Don, this is comparable to the solving of the problem of the existence of good and evil and why the Creator allows such to exist side by side within His creation. Perhaps the sins of the fathers are truly visited upon succeeding generations. At least they are from your point of view. I have had difficulty in accepting such an idea. I can't imagine my own father putting the responsibility for his own indiscretions upon me. Why I should be responsible for someone 1900 years ago feeding the fires with faggots or feeding faggots to lions—such is beyond me. And especially do I deny any responsibility for Levitical "laws". My ministry is to people as persons—let theology drop where it may! And, I have plenty of that to do with my own congregation and the people of this community. Don't inflict some

CONT. PG. 15
EDITORIAL

The latest news in sexual politics is the recently released Vatican "Declaration on Certain Questions Concern- ing Sexual Ethics." It is an 11-page paper purporting to be the 'truth' on 3 specific areas of sexuality--sex before marriage, masturbation and homosexuality--which will serve as the guide for those subjected to the "confusion of minds and relaxation of morals" accompanying today's "licentious hedonism."

Sex before marriage is still taboo and masturbation is considered "an intrinsically and seriously disordered act." Us homosexuals are divided into 2 types--"not incurable" and "incurable." As regards us "incurables" those in the pastoral fields are advised that we be "treated with understanding and respect in the hope of overcoming their personal difficulties and their inability to fit into society." (italics ours) The catch-22, however, is that "incurable" or not, homosexual relations are still "condemned as a serious depravity" and "homosexual acts are intrinsically disordered and can in no case be approved of."

When this paper was released to the media, it was headlined as being an 'easing' of the Vatican's "policy toward homosexuals." The media obviously went to great lengths to extract that interpretation, no doubt needing something 'catchy' and 'chic' to sensationalize its reporting.

So, what should we make of this latest 'pontification' from the Vatican? Does it seriously affect the cause of gay liberation? Is it a blow to the crusading forces of sexual liberation? Slightly more than 2 pages of the declaration dealt specifically with the 3 areas mentioned above. The other 9 pages constitute a seriously disordered overkill on the justifications for the document and attempts to substantiate its 'thinking.' All the footnotes refer either to passages in the Bible or to previous documents issued by the Vatican. Hence, to any thinking individual reading the document it becomes obvious that it is nothing but a trite, unrealistic attempt at self-justification.

To view this document with alarm, we feel, is totally unwarranted. Its only real effect will be to further drive a wedge between the church and rationality, in most people's eyes. To perceive it as a threat is to ignore its buffoonery and its irrelevance to the complex and myriad issues of sexuality in real life.

(The entire ill-page 'document' is on display in the G.C.S.C. library)

FROM OUR MAILBAG

Gentlepersons;

Congratulations on your interesting December issue.

Both Madeline Davis and Don Michaels do seem to see Gay Christian movements as principally motivated to bid for acceptance within the Church. As only one person, involved as a Gay Christian, I take a very different view.

The Church has no respectability to offer. Our mission is to bring the Church to the indiscriminate, promiscuous love of Christ, which has already been accomplished for everyone, with no respect to genital conditions. The Cross is at the center of the Religion of Disrespectability; and that is why Gay Christians, with our Gay bodies as the proud temples of the Holy Spirit, have new life and joy to share with the Church.

Non-Gay corrupters of this good news in the Church must repent, not for the salvation of Gays, but for their own salvation, lest they perish in genital pride.

As someone wrote to me recently, how delightful that God H/self has come out of H/closet, and lo, S/He is not a white Episcopal clergyman afterall! Praise H/!

Love and joy to you,

Louie Crew

Dear 5th FREEDOM,

Would appreciate a complimentary sample copy of your publication.

In a recent issue of GCN, a reprint of the article "Anal Intercourse--A Guide and an Appreciation" by Donn Holley, which had appeared in your publication, was read and highly approved from here.

If this is an example of your usual content, you show leadership in the field.

In Love and Peace.

Hal Burgess
Indian Orchard, MA

Dear Friends,

Your publication is wonderful! It is one of the best gay liberation journals around. You always manage to fill it with much information, excellent analyses of problems and many beautiful words and pictures.

I particularly enjoyed the article by Benji in the January edition. The Gayzette would like permission to reprint it. Please let me know if this would be possible.

Thank you for your time.

For Gay Love & Struggle

Joseph R. DeMarco
Editor
Philadelphia Gayzette

(Permission granted! And thank you for the kind words.)
In Dreams Begin Responsibilities: A Note on Filling Pop Machines

by BURTON WEISS

The afternoon shift: my first day on duty at the Gay Center. I'm excited (and with one exception, delighted) by lots of things—sitting at the front desk, manning the phones, getting crank calls, telling tourists, or locals who've just come out, "Where to go in Buffalo," making coffee when the pot runs dry, keeping the toilets supplied with toilet paper, and, above all, filling the pop machines.

I find it less interesting than my colleagues do, that in one obvious respect I'm unlike some other new staffers who along with me have just completed the counselor-training course—viz. being a Counselor is not my biggest thrill here. After all, I've been one for years. I'm an old hand—though counseling is not old hat. Indeed, it's always absorbing, and frequently challenging, and I like to do it, and I'm pretty good at it (i.e., people say I've "helped" them), and I'm growing in it, but—for plain old-fashioned, honest-to-goodness EXCITEMENT, I'll take filling pop machines, every time.

I feel like a little boy—on a New York subway platform—watching, enchanted and envious, one of those vigorous men in work-clothes, from whose belt dangled a huge bunch of keys I always wished I could get my hands on, effortlessly open one of those luminous machines, a man able to look whenever he wished into its powerful, mysterious workings: row upon row of identical bottle necks and caps, of identical dark holes in which bottles would soon be roughly fit, all to be set in motion finally by the dropping of a dime. Whenever I'd catch sight of one doing his job, I'd hurry over, studiously walk up and down the platform nearby, pretending to be either absorbed in thought or—often crossing abruptly from one track to the other—impatiently watching for my train, always crossing just in front of or behind him, circling (if I dared) both man and machine, trying to peer under, around, through, and (when he bent down) over that attractive figure, from every angle. Frequently he would act annoyed, giving me dirty, even threatening, looks, and making ambiguous movements: as if, without contact, to shoulder me out of his way or, by bunching over and around "his" machine, simply to prevent me from seeing into it.

Such a man was evidently jealous of the immense privileges—and the secrets, and the power—of his profession. Perhaps he was also alert to the erotic implications of my interest. Who knows? Anyway, it doesn't matter now, I have a small bunch of keys of my own: I can hardly wait a week, till the start of my next shift, to use them. Can't wait to open and inspect and service one Ideal Machine after another, those flashy, clattering, still so attractive, relics of one of my earliest, waking dreams.
GAYS AND EDUCATION
A. EARL HERSHBERGER

The major problem that gays have had in western civilization is the intolerance created by the religious fervor brought against them. The hate, fear and dread brought on by the teachings of the church, allegedly based in the teachings of Jesus of Nazareth, a man who preached love and understanding, for centuries kept the lid on any form of intelligent inquiry into the hidden realms of the human mind. The apologists base their past actions in the commandment to man to 'be fruitful, go forth and multiply'.

Even today with several religious sects changing their basic idea about homosexual behavior and life styles the temporal head of the oldest religious sect in our civilization tells us that we are still second class humans.

With the advent of psychiatric work starting in the late nineteenth century and the further work and research done in this century we thought that being gay would gain some form of acceptance. This belief was erroneous. The practitioners of the new witchcraft not only followed the teachings of the prevalent moral code, they strengthened it with a new form of catechism.

If you will bear with me for a few brief paragraphs I will describe a scenario that many have gone through. In this case the story is my own.

The time is the early 1950's. Senator Joe McCarthy and his aide, a junior political from California named Richard M. Nixon, are running around yelling 'commie, pinko fag' at every chance they get. The psychiatric set is spouting cures as if they were a bunch of wandering snake-oil pitchmen. Kenmore, N.Y. in the suburb of Buffalo and has one of the top educational systems in the country. Crewcuts are the only form of tonsorial splendor allowed for a man.

You can buy Grecian Guild Pictoral but have to wrap it in the notorious plain brown paper wrapper or inside the evening paper that you buy at the same time. The only available pictures of male nudes appear in the art journals and then they are shown only from the waist up.

Times were tough for a young person who looked into the mirror and suddenly found out he was gay. Suddenly? No, not quite. You knew all along that you were different, that you didn't fit in. Gay? No, that word hadn't really come into use yet. You were homosexual.

This discovery sent you on a trip to the library to find out all that you could about that mysterious condition that made you love men instead of women. The first reaction was sheer joy—you found the word in the dictionary. Then some weird instinct, maybe a learned but now lost phrase, sent you in search of all the books on psychiatry and sexology that you could find. This was difficult. It was still the era of the closed shelf policy.

What you finally found tore your heart out. You were pariah. You were unworthy of the title of human being. You went home and cried, you begged for forgiveness to some ethereal being, you prayed that your change, could be like everyone else.

You dated girls, went to dances, parties, movies. You tried, you really did, all to no avail. The next year you saw a really beautiful man your fantasies took over and you were hopelessly undone. You talked to the priest, minister or rabbi. You were DAMNED!

You were sent to the psychiatrist and were told that with a long drawn out series of very expensive sessions, two or three times a week, you would, in several years, be cured of this socially unproductive malady.

Possibly your thoughts turned to suicide. Maybe leaving home and never returning, changing your name crossed your mind. Some people had gone to such extremes, you knew, for much smaller social infractions. You started to hear the whispers—'queer, fag, sucker'.

The stories you heard about the old man with the candy didn't match what you knew about yourself. You wanted to run in the sunlight and be free, to love someone because HE was beautiful and fun to be with and because you really did love him.

So you grudgingly came out a slow cautious step at a time. Only your friends knew that there was something different about you. You plunged yourself into other activities—school, hobbies, sports. You dated a few girls but never more than twice in a row. And you listened. You listened to the stories about others. The kid who talked funny, the one who watched the other guys in the showers all became known to you. And still none of it fit together with that person in the mirror.

This then was the educational process of the young gay person more than a decade before the beginning of a cohesive gay liberation movement, a process learned from the gutter and a sense of loss. Some of us went through this process and knew that being gay was an acceptable alternative lifestyle. Sometimes we knew it before we even knew the phrase alternative lifestyle or what it meant.

But our positive self image suffered from this process of education. Unfortunately this process is still going on today. It is also unfortunate, to say the least, that there appears to be very little desire to change this process by those in the position to do so. As far as
those people, the educators, are concerned we are still parish, we are still a taboo subject and whatever—god forbid, it should never be presented as possibly being happy in our chosen lifestyle.

Some of the religious sects are changing their views about us but many are not. Those that are not changing are being reinforced by the teachers and educators at all levels of the educational areas. Those in the teaching professions that are not aiding the cause of gay liberation and are not helping others to a better understanding of gays are merely repeating the public sentiment as shown through the guidelines set forth by the local school boards or boards of trustees. And the public is merely echoing the statements and policies that have been taught since earliest childhood by the church.

The problem then is one of a circular nature. And our immediate question is how does one go about breaking a circle?

The basic answer is with courage. It takes a great deal of courage to come out. The fears about job loss, the turning away of both friends and family is a very real possibility. The fear of exploitation and, in some cases actual bodily harm, are very real. Yet this type of courage has been displayed for all to see and at a level that is very far removed from the rarified atmosphere that is so common to the professional educator. One has only to look at the Stonewall Riots of late June in 1969 and at the Gay Pride Week celebrations and parades in many of our cities to see it.

For the most part the educators have overlooked these displays of solidarity, they have pretended that it is a fad or passing affair. In effect, they are denying us our history, denying us our human worth. And in some cases they just don’t know we exist or in what numbers we exist.

Actively denying us gives us a focal point which we can attack. Ignorance is something else. We are truly invisible. Until we let them know we are there and that we do not intend to remain invisible they will not do anything to help us.

When they are finally aware that we are there to stay they ask us what they can do about it. They ask us what they can offer us when they, admittedly, have no ideas where to begin. They ask us about that magic word—program. What will it consist of and where will they get the people to teach it and the ones who are to be taught.

Now is the time of year when new courses and programs are planned and entered into the catalog. Now is the time to act.

Next month I will discuss in detail a proposed program. At this point I think some emphasis should be placed on what that program is going to face.

First I must assume that the program you are attempting to start is on the university or college level. Very few local school boards are ready to listen to the idea of a Gay Studies Program for the high school age student. None are ready to implement such a program. This is really too bad because this area is where we desperately need all sorts of educational programs that deal with sex and alternate life styles.

Naturally the area that is going to concern the board of trustees or whatever panel you must face is that of economics. How much is this going to cost us? If you plan your strategy carefully the cost can be minimized or, in some instances, completely ignored.

Schools are nonprofit institutions but that does not mean that they are outside of the economy. The perfect example of this is right here in New York State. Our governor has just presented a budget that calls for drastic cuts in the expenditures of educational institutions.

Maintenance people have strong unions so they have little to worry about. Besides, the number of people required to run the physical plant, the buildings and all attendant services, would be difficult to cut and still sustain the actual operation of the institution.

The first people to go will be junior faculty members and graduate assistants. Unfortunately these fields are where you would be most likely to find those people who are willing to aid you and actually teach some of the courses that you hope to get approved.

In order to find the instructors and backers for your program you are going to have to ask people for their help. They are NOT going to suddenly appear with you at the meeting...

CONT. PG. 14
SEXUAL BEHAVIOR, MEANING AND GAY MALE IDENTITY

BY TOM WEINBERG

Several years ago, when I was first teaching sociology at Buffalo State College, a number of my male students discussed their "coming out" with me. Most of them were extremely frightened and unhappy. I tried my best to help them, but there just wasn't a lot I could do. A search through the professional literature on homosexuality showed me that the "professionals" didn't have any ideas either. There was nothing aimed at helping people come out smoothly or easily. Most of the articles and books either defined homosexuality as an illness and reported attempts to change it, or involved very general descriptions of some visible aspects of the gay world. At that point I decided to carry out my own research on Gay Identity. What started out as an attempt to gain some helpful insights into the development of gay male identity has blossomed into a large-scale doctoral dissertation. This paper deals with only a tiny part of the larger study. It represents a conscious effort to present some sociological ideas and concepts, and to show how they can be used to "make sense" of our feelings and experiences. In such a brief paper, I can hope to give you only a very superficial glimpse of what I have been studying.

The sample for this study was limited to thirty gay men. While this would be an inadequate sample for some kinds of research such as large-scale social surveys, where statistical information is computerized and presented in tabular form, it is an average size for intensive, probing, in-depth studies. In qualitative studies there is an incredible amount of data to be handled and analyzed. In this study for example, I am working with over 100 hours of tape recordings. Each interview took from between 2 to 4 hours to complete. Given the fact that I was limited in terms of time and money, and that this was to be a "one man" study, and since I was really interested in the quality of the gay experience, I decided that it made more sense to concentrate my resources on an in-depth examination of a small sample than to do a rather cursory survey of a larger one.

I can not, of course, make any claims that the men whom I interviewed are in any way "representative" of the larger gay population. Although I did make an effort to talk to a broad spectrum of people from different age, ethnic and religious, educational, and social class backgrounds. Although the interviewing was done here in Buffalo, slightly less than half of the men grew up in this area. Most studies or attempts to explain human behavior often with some theoretical assumptions or bases. Despite the forbidding image the word "theory" may conjure up in your mind, a "theory" is really nothing more than a framework for analysis and description. It is an orienting framework which we use to try to hopefully make sense out of what is going on around us and to account for the way in which ordinary people make sense out of their actions, situations, and identities. The very purpose of a theory is an extremely practical, down-to-earth one; there is nothing mystical about it.

The general theoretical approach I have been using in my research is known in sociology as "Symbolic Interaction Theory." Symbolic interaction theory, in contrast with many purely behavioral models, points out that it is not what people actually do that is important to their feelings about themselves and the development of their identities, but rather how they perceive or interpret what
they are doing. If you think about this for a moment, you'll probably find that you can think of examples. For instance, you may know young men who "hustle." Many hustlers have sex with other men but don't consider themselves to be gay, especially if they are taking the "masculine" role in the sex act. The sex act "means" something different for these men than it does for someone who considers himself to be gay. Human beings always place some meaning on their own behavior and the behavior of other people. Animals, of course, don't do this. Symbolic interaction theories tell us that in order to understand how people think of themselves, we have to understand the meanings that they place on people, actions, and situations. We can't do this just by examining what they do. If we did, we would be placing probably false interpretations on them.

In order for a person to develop a gay identity, he has to be able to make sense of his own feelings and behavior. He has to be able to do this in terms of some accurate set of ideas or definitions of homosexuality. If a person does not have any such meanings, it would be extremely difficult for him to think of himself as gay, even if he were frequently having sex with other men. As a matter of fact, this seems to be the case for a large proportion of men who, much later, come to think of themselves as "gay." In my sample, 2/3's of the men engaged in sex with other males long before they even "suspected" that they might be gay. The average (mean) time gap was four years. For almost all of them, these early sexual experiences were not isolated instances, but were frequently repeated. With only two exceptions which I call "gay virgins," the rest of the men first had sex after they began to think it was likely or possible that they were homosexual, but before they were completely certain about it. The average time between first sexual experience and self-labeling was one year. When I asked them, "In what ways did you think about these sexual experiences at first? For example, did you think of them as homosexual or in some other way?" three-fifths of the men replied that they hadn't thought that their behavior was homosexual at the time. The question which immediately comes to mind is, "what did they think they were doing?" Their responses fall into three broad categories, a) "just having sex," b) "fooling around or experimenting," and c) "never thought about it." Some quotes give us the feel for what is "going on:"

"Up until I was 21, it was just fooling around. From 21 on it was homosexual behavior, and I denounced it."

"I was just having sex. I didn't have any label for it." 

"I didn't really think about it. I just did it and I didn't have any problems with it."

"I thought it was natural. I knew you weren't supposed to kiss or hold hands, but the rest of the stuff I wasn't aware that it meant homosexuality, so I thought it was all right. It was just messing around."

Even when a person thinks of his behavior as "homosexual," he does not necessarily think of himself as homosexual. There is a subtle link which people have to be able to make between "doing" and "being." Many men who knew they were having homosexual sex did not have a gay self-image or identity because they did not make this connection. They avoided labeling themselves as homosexual by thinking of themselves in other ways:

"I thought of it as homosexual, and that frightened me very much, but I didn't think of myself as homosexual. I thought of myself as 'just a change of pace' because I was dating women at the time."

"Thing was, I was really worried about not reaching an orgasm. Maybe I was deceiving myself. I thought, 'maybe I'm asexual.' That's what I thought. I was really worried, because I couldn't handle straight sex, and I wasn't getting anything from gay sex, as much as I had."

"I knew I had strong sexual feelings for men, but I thought it would go away."

All of these men did, eventually, convert "doing" into "being." They were able to make the link between them. This does not, however, mean that they now completely accept their self-identities as gay men. On the contrary, our self-identities are not stable; they are constantly undergoing changes and modifications. The reason for this is that human beings continually interpret and reinterpret the "meanings" of their experiences, situations, and the behavior of other people around them, as well as their own feelings and behavior. A number of men mentioned that now that they were comfortable both with themselves and with being gay, they had considered the possibility of becoming involved both sexually and emotionally with women. A very small minority of men were, at the time they were interviewed, still very uncomfortable with being gay and fluctuating back and forth in the acceptance of their...
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and many others.
Dog Day Afternoon can be viewed on a number of different levels, not the least of which is as a "gay film." I suspect that anyone who sees it primarily in such a light will be disappointed, as I don't think it was produced under such a banner. If it can be labelled at all, Dog Day Afternoon is a film about New York, about the effects of urbanization upon people. It is also a remarkable character study about a basically decent but desperate man, and a little bit about how he got that way.

Which is OK with me. "Gay" films, like "straight" films, tend to divide the screen (and the audience) into two different camps, and insist by their self-imposed classification that such a division can not be merged into a shared, human experience.

Sidney Lumet's film stars Al Pacino as a person (in this case, a bank robber) who happens to be gay, as opposed to, say, The Boys In The Band, whose stars play gays who, incidentally, may be people. The emphasis here is more than a semantic one; it suggests that our sexual preferences complement, but do not overshadow, our shared humanity, and I think that's what we've been waiting for in a film.

Another part of me shares the frustration of those who see the film as just another anti-gay exploitation. Certainly the same people who produce militant gays march outside the bank where the bulk of the action takes place is more sensationalistic than representative. And the casting of the first major gay role as a pretty sick bank robber is not the most encouraging introduction to our life style that I can imagine.

But what Lumet is saying, I think, suggests that anyone—sexual preferences not withstanding—is susceptible to the systematic dehumanization that urban life subjects us to. Sonny and Sal, the bank robbers, are both lost souls whose lives seem to be ruled by the technology that was supposed to serve us.

Sonny's desperation increases as his life is threatened by banks that don't have any money, air conditioners that breathe heat, boded police protection that endangers people. The most striking image of this reversal of roles comes at the end of the film; an immense, bloated turbojet engulfs the screen, cold gleaming steel shining sardonically in the light, emitting a mechanical scream that drowns out the painfully human scene that is occurring beneath it. We can hardly hear what is going on to the people we have just come to know and care about—the plane, in all its impersonal bulk, eclipses them all, its wall much louder and less human than theirs. Sonny's insistance earlier in the film that he can raise himself above all that ("I can make it happen! I can make it happen, I swear") and his actions geared to prove that are both human and pathetic. To be sure, there is an element of pathology in his personality at the start of the whole caper, but his confused mind is not only the cause of the crime, but the result of the forces working around him as he grew up that stripped him of his ability to make anything happen.

Critics have equated Sonny's pathology with his homosexuality, a connection that I simply cannot see, as other principles in the film share a similar disturbance. His straight cohort, Sal, insists that he is not gay. More significantly, Officer Moretti, in his futile attempts to control the incident is caught up in the same desperation as Sonny; the police force that he is supposed in charge of controls him, and his real effort to see justice served is thwarted by the impersonal forces of those "higher up."

Lumet is a director whose previous films (Murder On The Orient Express, Serpico, The Pawnbroker) have occupied popular attention without fully exploring the issues they present. Dog Day Afternoon does an admirable job of suggesting the real causes of the robbery, but stops short of giving the film's tone the complexity it deserves, and the result is—at times—a movie which both empathizes with and caricatures its characters. As with other Lumet films, competent acting manages to gloss over this contradiction. Pacino is superb, and his performance may well give us our first best actor nomination for a gay role. Charles Durning is also excellent as Moretti. And a special acknowledgement must be given to Chris Sarandon, who plays Leon, Sonny's ex-lover. The role calls for an effeminate, neurotic personality, and could easily have become a burlesque that would reaffirm straight audiences' views of what gays are like. Instead, Mr. Sarandon pulls off a real coup; the viewer laughs at Leon's first appearance, but as the character develops, audience laughter stops altogether, and we are left with an impression of a confused but strong human being who is doing his best to cope with the madness around him.

The screenplay was based on a magazine article describing the true story of John Wojtowicz (Sonny) who along with his cohort robbed a branch of Chase Manhattan in Brooklyn in August of 1972. Wojtowicz is now spending his term in jail, and has gotten a lot of unfair treatment by the prison for being militantly gay. He was paid very little for his story to be told in print and
on film. The producers have promised him more money if the film is a success, but it seems that media opportunism, of which he was a victim in the robbery itself, has again taken advantage of the lives of others in a less than ethical way.

Vito Russo, whose review of "gay" films in 1975 appeared in The Advocate recently, was left disheartened by the treatment of gay characters in the cinema last year. It is true that, once again, we weren't treated very well, but given the state of the commercial film industry today, I'm not surprised. Perhaps it is the cynic in me (but I fear, more likely it is the realist) that suggests that no one in power is about to produce a pro-gay film. To do so in 1976 would smack of propaganda, to say nothing of financial insanity. In addition, a film whose primary message to middle America is to present homosexuality as a valid alternative would have to wreck of propaganda, and propaganda and art are strange bedfellows. I dare say that John Schlesinger's Sunday, Bloody Sunday, whose intentions had nothing to do with peddling a gay "message", did more to expand people's awareness of homosexuality (because it dealt with a shared, human experience) than the blatantly pro-gay "message" film that Mr. Russo seems to envision could ever do at this point in our cultural evolution.

1976 will bring us The Front Runner with Paul Newman and The Marathon Man with Dustin Hoffman, both playing gays. But I agree with Russo's observation that such films, by themselves, will "legitimize" all of us: "Those of you watching television and movie screens from the safety of your closets, waiting for the all-clear, had better send out to the deli for sandwiches; because if you stay in there, you've got a long wait."

MINI REVIEW:
WE'RE NOT AFRAID ANYMORE

by BETTE MORRIS

"We're Not Afraid Anymore", a film narrated by Morris Kight and Troy Perry, was shown for review recently at the Buffalo Gay Center. After seeing the film I'm still afraid that the gay community was misrepresented. It was for those interested in selling straight society on how middle American we want to be - that what we all want is just the chance to become respectable - 'so please folks, understand us' - is the plea.

There was not a shred of realness to the entire production. Instead of the lesbian woman saying that her relationship consisted of more than sex - it should have been shown. Instead, they showed two lesbians in roles, getting married in a ritualistic church wedding - and a woman standing in the kitchen talking. It would seem to me that media is designed to show our human experience, not talk it, and can be put to better use. It's important to add, also, that the production quality was poor.

(We're Not Afraid Anymore, distributed by Parnassus Productions, 6311 Yucca St., Hollywood, Ca. 90028)
SEXUAL BEHAVIOR, cont.

identity.

Since engaging in sex with other men does not seem to be, in and of itself, a sufficient criterion for labeling oneself as gay or not, the logical question is, what other things come into play? What kinds of things help people convert "doing" into "being?"

We pick up some clues when the men were asked, "What made you so certain (that you were gay)?" What signed, sealed, settled it and confirmed it for you? Although their responses vary somewhat, pointing out such things as increasing fantasies about males or disinterest in women, there is a strikingly similar element in almost all of their histories. They have learned additional definitions or information about homosexuality, and this information is usually positive in content. The men pointed out that they realized that they were emotionally comfortable with themselves and with other men, enjoyed sex, or had, perhaps, fallen in love with another man:

"I don't think there was any one particular event that did it. Just learning that I could have relationships with guys that were deep and that were close and that were mutually enjoyable. Plus getting involved in the gay organization and developing a certain pride in being gay and learning how to come out. And the whole coming out process of revealing myself was very up-lifting."

"Emotionally, being counseled by (a gay counselor), I've come to rest with my feelings. Being made to feel comfortable with what was in me."

The presence of positive definitions of homosexuality is particularly striking when we compare them with the definitions a man had when he was first learning about homosexuality. In general, he has a much more positive attitude toward gay people as well as what members of the gay community should regard as more accurate information. The major factor behind this transition appears to be con-tact with other gays on a social level. Twenty-three of the 30 men labeled themselves while they were associating with gay people. Although in many cases the other people did not directly "coach" the men or talk to them about gay feelings, nonetheless, they served as role models.

By observing other people, the men were able to pick up clues which eventually enabled them to label themselves.

I believe that the implications of this for the development of gay identity are quite clear: gay self-acceptance is greatly influenced by the kinds of meanings people learn. By disseminating more accurate information about gay life and by making it easier for people who are trying to figure out their own sexual identities to meet gay people, the difficulties of "coming out" could be smoothed out.

GAYS AND..., cont.

when you make your presentation. Who you ask will depend on who you know. The closer you are to a particular instructor the more inclined they will be to help you. If they cannot actually do the teaching they probably can recommend someone who can and they can write a support letter to the board for you.

So, there you are—program in hand, a list of teachers who are willing to take on the course load and the backing of several persons of importance in the university. You are still faced with the economics of the situation. What can you do, particularly if you don't have any funding?

One possible solution is something called leave time. This is mechanism whereby an instructor can teach a course outside of his department. He actually remains on the payroll of his original department but, because of special ability or knowledge, teaches a course in some other area of study. An excellent example of this would be Jacob Bronowski leaving the physics department to teach a course in anthropology based on his award winning series The Ascent of Man.

So the precedent for this type of activity does exist. If your school does have a policy of leave time your problems are nearly over in the area of economics.

If this policy does not exist at your particular institution you are back where you started. You will be forced to look for the necessary funding elsewhere. You could possibly find grants or other sources of special project funding. Check with your financial officer. If worse comes to worse and the only thing holding you back is the financial aspects hold a bake sale, a charity style bazaar or a benefit of some kind.

Whatever you do, you have only one course to take and that is to get that program in front of the students for them to take. Somehow you must get them to see it. They must be aware it is there. This means advertising. Even if you get your program listed in the catalog your efforts at attracting students do not end there.

Most schools have an orientation program for incoming students. Set up a booth and hand out pamphlets explaining the nature of the courses and why they are being offered. If you are fortunate enough to have some of the courses cross listed with other departments be sure to point this out to the students. Also make sure that the department points out this information to them. Mutual aid at registration time can work to your benefit.

Prior to the actual orientation program you can obtain a list of new students from the registrar. Mail them a notice about the new program and what benefits it will offer them.

For too long we have let others do our thinking for us. We have accepted the labels and definitions of others as being the truth about ourselves. This is changing, and changing rapidly. But six years of liberation movement on a nationwide basis does not eradicate more than two thousand years of oppression. We must take back our history and literature, our music and art and teach them ourselves. For too long we were dependant on others as experts about us when all along we were the experts. Now we must accept, and even demand, the responsibility for our own destiny and the teaching of that destiny to the rest of the population.

No man who has not held another in his arms can teach me about gay life styles but CONT. NEXT PG.
IN RESPONSE, cont.

ancient gripe upon my frail frame and say I'd better take a more honest look. I'm too busy for that kind of crap. Honest to myself and God first. That is, as much as I am humanly able--and that is always imperfect.

In defense against your attack: (3) "The church...has chosen to ally itself with the entrenched power structure for its own gain and selfish perogatives...Nor is it ready to accept any alternatives to the nuclear family as viable lifestyles...is like any other entrenched, self-serving power structure in society...We should expect and demand that the church cease interfering in our lives.;" and (4) the final sentence which shall not dignify by repeating. Don, I have been in the church in some capacity nearly all of my life. I was baptized at age 12. I was a charter member of a youth group. I attacked the church in my teens and early twenties, but later, after marriage and starting a family, I went back to it and finally ended up in the teaching role and ordination. It has become gradually the center of my life. I have never found much political power within the church. In fact, it is just the opposite. We fight against the "principalities and powers of this world," we renounce, or try to, "the world, the flesh, and the devil;" and many of us, hopefully most of us, emulating our Lord, find our life only by giving up our lives in service to God and fellow-man. This is the opposite of what you call "self-serving." This is the heart of the Christian message. I regret that your view of the church is, from my point of view, narrowed only to those within the church who seem to attack homosexuality. I can name perhaps less than five people within the church who do that, within my own personal experience. What bothers me especially is that I find very few gays within the church. Most gays who come at all just come to observe, not to participate. When they do come into my church they receive a cordial welcome. They may be shy, because it usually is a new experience. But they will not be turned away if I have anything to say about it. And if they persevered, believe it or not, perhaps they might become the church and find within it the kind of salvation and openness which they deny exists here.

Sincerely, your friend,

(Name withheld by request)

GAYS AND...cont.

I can teach him about gay love. No teacher who has glossed over the gay aspects about the lives of Whitman, Alexander the Great or Oscar Wilde has the right to teach me history or literature but I can teach them about humanity. No teacher who has ignored the lambda I wear day in and day out can teach me anything but I can teach them about love, oppression and being yourself. And I must teach them just as everyone of us must teach someone about gay life.

Even though we cut across every imaginable sphere, a universal minority, we have been the invisible minority for too long. It has been to our detriment that this condition has lasted as long as it has. Any gay person with even the remotest connection to the teaching profession must exercise their influence to get us into the curriculum. Only through the educational process can we break that circle that has bound us and made them feel safe; safe to continue their oppression of people who are different.

Next Month: A program outline for gay studies.

WOMEN NOTE: S.O.S. has changed its meeting times to the 2nd & 4th WEDNESDAYS of each month at 8:00PM

—reading list—

Front Runner
Maurice
Wall of Loneliness
Male Homosexual
Lesbian/Women
Songs of Sappho
Jigsaw
My Name Is Sappho
Male Muse
Regiment of Women
Songs of Bilitis
Patience and Sarah
Lord Is My Shepherd...
Butley
The Homosexual Matrix
Woman + Woman
the Mary Renault novels
**POETRY**

**LIBRA’S TRICK**

Balance out the scales,
let fury blur
to subtle blues.
Passion
settle down to peace,
emotion rest.
in rainbow hues.

Do not flail the ribboned shards.
Tears will never wash the stain.
Allow intensity to fail,
then guard against returning pain.

**THOUGHT**

Swimming
in this placid lake
that is me,
I encounter sharks
and giant pincer crabs
and drowned men reaching,
straining for my feet.
I snag on lurking seaweed nets
and fight for breath
my third time down.
Drowning
in deep waters,
still and dark,
forever blue.

Others dip their toes in me,
remark on all this quietude.
Some day,
I’ll dredge up shattered glass
and place it
for their toes to find.
I will not let them feed in peace
unless they share
what’s in my mind.

**WHO ARE YOU, MENEMSHA?**

Indian goddess of healing.
Gentle brown woman of light.
Reach into me, Menemsha,
Touch my selfish, fevered fury
restless tumbling,
little girl cries.
Caress the pieces
Relax my fragments into one
and make me whole.

Menemsha,
Woman of summer winds,
wild, free passions,
the storms in ocean skies,
Calm your powers for me.
Cool the aches that will not fit,
the pains of life unsettled.
Slip me down to feathering dreams
so Faith may do the rest.

Menemsha,
Goddess of cricket nights,
wild clover days
the singing breeze of autumn,
Stay a while
with me
in me
I need your comfort always
and cannot live alone.
LOVER

And the sea,
the sea is my lover.
Foam flowing locks,
gray green tresses
curled
in delicate delight
over her sleekly ponderous,
undulating body.

I trust this steady lover.
I see her tides,
hers wet-washed sheen,
her even, graceful movements
turning ever over
in a sleep that is not sleep,
always the same
in her difference.

I hear voices calling from the land
and I cannot face
those empty sounds.
The sea
speaks in silver tongues
lulling me
to sorrow.

AND THEY'RE ALL
SO AESTHETIC!

Bureaucrats
hide their minds
in uncloaked dresser drawers.
Couch their thoughts
in padded rooms,
Fabricate.
Upholster.
Table their agendas
with amendments
to obscurity.
Then defer to party's Chair,
well furnished minds
untouched by care.

NAMELESS

Dark vacuum of a party,
slowly oozing
person into person,
edges meshing
then departing
in some unnamed
dance of fate.

Candles flicker
lower, lower
as we flow
our separate tides.
Hoarse from all this yearning
and the silence
of our lies.

(Loretta Lotman has been very
active in the gay movement, most
recently as Media Director for
the National Gay Task Force.
She resides in New York City and
is currently devoting her time
and talents to her writing.)
**Short Shots**

**Short Story Contest**

The Arno Press recently announced a short story contest for the best parody story on the theme of gay people dying by crash (car, train, airplane, etc.). The winner will receive a $500 prize and the story will be published by Arno for distribution at the next American Library Association conference. The contest was inspired by the recent rash of books, especially of children’s books, that have portrayed gay people in a negative manner. Stories must be submitted by the 1st of March, 1976. Send to: Arno Press - 330 Madison Ave., New York, N.Y. 10017 - Attn: Sandy Chernov. Include a stamped, self-addressed envelope. (GARM Monitor)

**Another Discharge**

Sergeant Miriam Ben Shalom, the only female drill instructor with the 84th Army Reserves Training Division of Milwaukee, Wisc., is being considered for discharge because of her lesbianism. Sgt. Ben Shalom believes that the discharge proceedings were begun as a result of the television and radio publicity received when she graduated from drill sergeant’s school as an “open and public Gay.” She intends to fight back through the courts, pursuing her case to the Supreme Court, if necessary.

**Song of Myself**

On March 9, at 10:00PM, CBS-TV will present "Song of Myself," the life story of poet Walt Whitman. Martin Duberman, in his review in the N.Y. Times, exclaims: "Song of Myself" marks out a path angels have not been allowed to see and Whitman scholars have refused to tread. That’s right: The script deals with Whitman’s homosexuality. Indeed, centers on it. Apparently, the more the creators of this dramatization researched Whitman’s life, the more convinced they became that homoeroticism was at its core.” Rip Torn stars as Walt Whitman and Brad Davis plays Whitman’s young lover.

**Sex Change**

The Pennsylvania Dept. of Welfare has confirmed, for the first time in its history, that it would pay for transsexual (sex change) operations through its medical assistance program. The director of the state’s Bureau of Medical Assistance said that the department has already paid for “one or two” transsexual operations for welfare recipients and would continue to do so in the future, "if the surgery is authorized by a physician (usually a psychiatrist) licensed in Pennsylvania." (GPU News)

**Custody Losses**

A report from Syracuse, N.Y. reveals that an Onondaga County woman has lost custody of her 10 year old daughter because of her lesbianism. N.Y. State Supreme Court Justice Edward F. McLaughlin made the ruling in “the best interests and welfare” of the child. The ex-husband and girl’s father brought the charges because, he complained, his former wife “is carrying on as a homosexual with her female companion and roommate.” The woman’s attorney, civil libertarian Bonnie Strunk, plans to appeal the ruling. 

**Exorcism**

The PTL-Club, a Christian television show on channel 36 in Charlotte, N.C., recently had a guest that spoke on homosexuality. He informed viewers that homosexuality is caused by demons and promised homosexuals that these demons could be exorcised through prayers. (GPU News)

**Fear In Utica, N.Y.**

A chill has descended over the Utica, N.Y. gay community as a result of the brutal death of David Gray, a gay brother. The bizarre tale unfolds this way: On Oct. 10, 1975, David Gray left the Hub, a local gay bar, and on the way home stopped at the home of friends and knocked on their door. The friends, thinking it was a prowler, called the police. When the police arrived, the friends realized their mistake and asked the police to forget the incident. The police, however, proceeded to arrest David and handcuffed him. David broke away from the police and began running only to trip and fall in a parking lot a short distance away. From there, accounts of the incident are drastically divergent. The police claim that when David Gray fell in the parking lot, he sustained the massive head injuries that resulted in his death in a Utica hospital on Oct. 24th. However, members of the gay community, the American Civil Liberties Union, Utica Community Action, Inc. and several other community groups contend that David’s head injuries resulted from a severe beating inflicted by the police when they recognized him as ‘one of those faggots from the Hub.’ An attorney representing Gray’s parents has filed notice in federal court of his intention to file suit against the city of Utica for damages, contending that Gray’s death was a result of negligence by Utica police officers. The irony of the case is that at least 4 people are believed to have witnessed the alleged beating by the police, but because of fear among the gay community of both exposure and police retaliation any of these witnesses have come forth to testify.
CLASSIFIED

INTEGRITY. National organization for Gay Episcopalians. Local chapters forming. $10 membership includes Forum (10 issues). 701 Orange Street, No. 6, Ft. Valley, GA, 31030

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Center located at 1350 Main (at Utica) 716-881-5335 - 2 to 10PM
Meetings the first and third Sunday of the month at 8PM

SISTERS OF SAPPHO - same information as above.
Meets the second and fourth Tuesday of the month at 8PM.

STUDENT ALLIANCE FOR GAY EQUALITY (SAGE)
Buffalo State 1300 Elmwood Avenue
Table in Union lobby 11AM to 3PM Tuesday and Thursday, or call Alan Schlesinger at the Center 716-881-5335.

Albany

CAPITAL DISTRICT GAY COMMUNITY COUNCIL
Box 131, Albany 12201 518-462-6138
Center at 322 Hudson Avenue, hours 7-11PM daily

Brockport

BROCKPORT GAY FREEDOM LEAGUE
Student Union, Brockport State College, office 716-395-2462
Meeting Wednesday 2-3PM, 227 Student Union

Ithaca

GAY PEOPLE'S CENTER
410 College Avenue 607-256-3729, 3-10PM daily

Oswego

GAYS FOR HUMAN LIBERATION
Hewitt Union Building, Oswego State College, 13126

For other listings for cities throughout the world call the Gay Center 881-5335/2 to 10pm daily.