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Fifth Freedom, 1977-02-01

The Mattachine Society of the Niagara Frontier

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Today in Florida the Dade County Commission passed a gay rights bill protecting residence jobs and comes from discriminatory practices based on sexual orientation. At a heavily attended second and final vote on the legis- lation, the Commission voted the new protections into law by a tally of 5-3. The new safeguards against discrimina- tion comprise an amendment to the local human rights statutes; they go into effect next week and will apply throughout Dade County, including Miami, Coconut Grove, Miami Beach and Coral Gables. The vote came after strong testimony from civil libertarians and members of the sponsoring organization, the Dade County Coalition for the Humanistic Rights of Gays on the one hand, and angry denunciation by religious leaders of the bill. Notable among the latter group were a former Miss America, Anita Bryant, well-known as television-comment-
EDITORIAL

Of all the challenges posed by gay liberation and lesbian/feminism, none is perhaps more profoundly controversial than that of the nuclear family. Is it valid? Is it useful? Is it necessary? Our society exalts the straight-jacket role definitions of the nuclear family: male as breadwinner, female as housewife, children as subordinate to these parts. There may be no greater obstacle to the full realization of each person’s uniqueness and integrity than the enslavement of the nuclear family structure.

For many gays, this raises the question of their own involvement with their own families. Particularly in cases where parents or siblings are strongly condemnatory of the gay son or daughter, the gay brother or sister, is there any point in continued contact with the family? Does the investment of energy in a disapproving family amount to anything more than participation in one’s own oppression?

What is it? Is it a matter of bloodlines? Or loneliness? If the people who happen to have given us birth, raised us, or grew up with us now look upon us with their uncondolable love and support, are they any longer our family? If we are “loved” not for who we are, but for our capacity to fulfill the requirements of the American Dream, are we loved at all? And what is a family if it is not love, and what is love if it is not unconditional?

For many gays, the frustration of trying to win familial approval is insupportable, and so they redefine for themselves another family. This non-nuclear, non-nuclear family is bound by mutual support and approval: they grant one another the right to be who they are, and after each other the psychic space in which to discover and develop whatever it is that they are. It is a family of loneliness.

Last month’s issue of Fifth Freedom published an enthusiastic letter from Ruth Abrams, one of the leaders of the New York chapter of the Parents of Gays/Lesbians. PG&L’s avowed goal is “the maintenance of love understanding, and meaningful family relationships between parents and their gay children.” For Ruth Abrams and PG&L, the validity of maintaining ties rooted in the nuclear family paradigm is unquestioned. But can that bloodline be made up by a family of loneliness? Or do the strict role prescriptions of the nuclear family preclude the possibility of real love existing between the members? What do you think?

FROM OUR MAILBAG

Congratulations on the new format and re-vitalization of the Fifth Freedom. I think that I can speak for the Buffalo gay community in that your publication has been more missed in the last few months.

The quality, for such a small gay newspaper, is outstanding. I especially enjoyed the Allen Ginsberg article and the letter from Ruth Abrams. Keep up the good work!

Sincerely,
Martin Klingman

Hey Gays!
Can’t find someone who’s interested in the same stuff you are? Well, just take a gay gander at all these other special interest groups currently forming:
Gay Male Quadruplets
Gay Shintoists

Gay on Vallum
The Patent Leather League
Gays Over Six Feet Tall
Concerned Androgynes
Involved Invertos
Toe-Fuckers of America
Gays with Dental Concerns
Gay Liechtensteiners
Gays for Maoism
Gay Linoleum Cutters
Gay Anti-Papists
The Cock Shutters Bad n. (Buffalo)
Photo Booths’ O.R. Guild
Ken Doll Associates
Natural Lubricants Collective
The Thorough Hygiene Enthusiasts
All right, now, LET IT TOGETHER, GAYS! Give me a call or drop me a line, anywhere, anytime.

In Gay Unity,
Peter Wicke

COMMENT

The smell of decay lies heavily on the air, the teeling of distrust is everywhere you turn. The Center is charged with tension, people walking in off the street can feel the tension and distrust so much that they don’t care to be here. It’s gotten so bad that even the people we’re working very hard to get the Center going are turned off by it, so they also have stopped coming.

The distrust has caused a split between men and the women. One group said, “If you want to work at the Center on one of Mattachine’s committees, you should be willing to join Mattachine so you can have a voice,” and then, when you do join Mattachine, it’s said that you are trying to take over the organization—this is the kind of distrust that has done the Center in.

The fact that 65% of the members are male, and 15% female has caused a split. While there is a large male membership, only 10% of the work force is male, so that most of the work is being done by the smaller female membership. This is continually being shown in the Center’s finances, and the women want to know where the money is when their support is needed? It’s a good question...where are the men?

So with all the lack of care for other people’s feelings, and the distrust, and the lack of interest in the Center, the Center is dying.

I was talking to one of the younger people who come by. He said, “What now happens to the younger people who can’t go the bars, and have no other place to go?” I told him that’s one situation we have thrown around, but there seems to be a little or no interest in that problem. I am sorry to say this, but the present Center is dying. May it rest in peace. We have outlived our usefulness.

Claude Gary
President of Mattachine
LESLIAN LAW FORUM

The 8th National Conference of Women and the Law is scheduled for March 24th thru 27th in Madison, Wisconsin. Included on the agenda is a one-day Lesbian Law Section. Initiated by the Lesbian Law Caucus the section will focus on providing legal services to lesbian clients. If you would like to attend the conference, write: Women and the Law, University of Wisconsin Law School, Madison, WI 53706

BLACK GAY JOURNAL

The heritage and problems of black gay people will be the main theme in "RAFIKI" a new publication printed in Venice, California. This quarterly journal, published by the Association of Black Gays (ABG) is named for the Swahil word meaning friend. "RAFIKI" editors welcome manuscripts, art and photo's from potential contributors. For additional information, write: RAFIKI, c/o ABG, 2800y Grand Canal, Venice, California 90291

NO REGRETS

Elton John reflects on his coming out as a bisexual: "I'm amazed at the reaction I got. After I said it, I was worried that it might work against me. People seem to be even friendlier towards me since I said it." (Gay Times - London)
Continuing from our last issue, Lyle Glazer examines the crisis faced by the professional educator who has recently come out, after years in the closet.

How can the erosion of respect from students who once made their admiration clear? Tragically, it is terribly easy to set off the illusion of erosion. A well-placed hint can sweep through a class. When will his fear of losing control become acceptable? Students who have never been absent, will they cut?—who have never been tardy, will they come late or leave early?—who have been attentive, will they begin to look vague? The man in the front of the room begins to function as his best friend, the thread of his thought, to misfire on the timing of dispositions. If in the middle of this crisis, the teacher he grieves over brings him some new honor, he can hardly believe his luck. How can it be?—from doing what? to their honorary society? The invitation must be a frame-up to expose him as a fraud. In the end he may not even blame himself. He can blame him if, in time, teaching, which used to be a challenge, is no longer so much fun.

The great danger is that he will indeed lose control— if not over his classwork, then over his sexual irregularities. Despairing of his wife, family, friends, and colleagues, he may take greater and greater chances, like an alcoholic boosting more and more. He may begin to frequent back alleys and dives where there is more danger of en- trapment or greater social and professional, or even physical risk. Narcotism can explode. Cut off from spending energy in his professional activities, he may increase his indulgences. He may even learn to enjoy the risk, so that he may find it difficult to  leave the scene because it is spiced with danger.

If this man is lucky, he may find new resources. He may find in himself the will to analyze, and write poems and stories of what his introspection reveals. He may discover that, while poetry is in revelation, it can also be concealment, a clever exercise in subterfuge to produce poems of challenging ambiguity. The fun is to write in the shifting network of weaving a disguise. Luckier yet, he may return to former friends, and universities rediscover an eminence lost to him at home. A homeric wanderer can experience a kind of rebirth in the symposium. He could return to his home, to his land. In the new city, his reputation is unaltered. He needn’t worry about how much his colleagues know. He has no police record or faceted, here. Here, he has never been trapped and questioned, and let go. But he must beware. The license granted by the new freedom may be a trap. If he expands too much, he may take chances, get caught, and be out in a country where the language is a mishmash of strange sounds. Betrayed by the new culture, which is non-homosexual. If he seems to be condoned, he may suddenly find himself surrounded by a curious company, everyone pointing to him. It is one thing to throw oneself into a new and tantalizing friendship, quite another thing to discover after the event that only the foreigner is a faq. Tragically, by a strange reversal, the foreign city, which once seemed an open sesame, now promises itself a thicket of compromise until—just as he once escaped from his home to this place— he may now rejoin in the opportunity, safe and unchallenged, to escape back home, unscathed and just in time.

If he would such a one, now retired after years of teaching, quietly removed from the closet, speak up to shelter his repose? Why not live out his years serenely sheltered, protected, banking the fires of love? Over several years I have gravely edged out of the closet, like many, if not most queers, although I suffered from social guilt, privately I never believed I had done anything morally wrong. I had a nearly unquenchable longing to purge the social guilt. Revealing oneself in public, it turns out, is no panacea. One kind of origo phrenia (public self versus private self) is exchanged for another: public (private behaviors versus socially condemned behavior); the hysteria is unquestioned. Not years, but millions were writing poems and fiction. The poems were more successful, because the tension of concealment could itself peak in a poem. Novels, particularly in the genre of poetic realism, become sodden and sentimental if the writer gets away from the躲避 of his experiences, or rationalizes too much. I began to be more open. The poems I wrote were fresher and more genuine with a new power. I began to work on a long novel, which flourished under the cover of my new identity. For three years I had the greatest thrill any man can have, the thrill of being almost totally absorbed in my work. I learned that, while to a certain extent a man controls his art, in another way the art controls the man. My novel was erotic, homoerotic at first, because I was homoerotic, directly proud of my sex drive. It was a mixture of pride and guilt that I began to explore. Why was I proud, why was I guilty? Why at the heart of my guilt was there another kind of pride—a fierce assertion that I was really as pure at my husband's? only public condemnation made me vile.

My life began to look not so much complex. If I was a homosexual, from where sprang the stubborn drive for heterosexual expression? If I was a homosexual, then why the compelling need to marry and have children? From where came the spontaneous love and sexual pleasure with my wife? Was this social pressure only, or was there from underneath a native generic second track leading to homoeroticism?

I had a clear memory of my sexual birth. I remembered it as in my early adolescence, during my seventh year I thought, at my grandfather's house. Late one night, on the way back from inspecting his sawmill, Grandpa had stopped in front of our house to drop off my older brother who had been visiting him. Gram wanted another boy to take the place of the one gone home. She had me picked up and brought fourteen miles to their house, where, already half asleep from the long drive, I was dressed and tumbled into the dark bed in the little bedroom off the kitchen, only to discover someone— another—boy--already in bed.

There followed a waking from deep sleep into half sleep, then an emerging awareness that something new and strange and wonderful was happening to me.

Until not over sixty, searching in Gramp's diary, at first not discovering where I was searching, what did I learn my real age that night? I borrowed the diaries from an uncle, beginning my search in the diary written when I was eleven in 1922. Finding nothing, I moved back to 1921, to 1920, then jumped ahead, puzzled because I couldn't have been as old as twelve or thirteen, but surely no less than nine! Then I turned back to 1919, 1918, and, on the point of giving up, I found on Tuesday, April 3, 1917: "I am now thirteen. I was not home at dinner. Went to Montague this afternoon and got Mrs. Arthur's mother, who has come to stay for a few weeks.

Friday, August 24: "Arthur's mother came today, and was happy."

I don't know Arthur's age, but he was in his middle or late teens, a boarider, a boy in the home. I, the only one who took him at so much per week to add to the egg money. When a grandson came to visit, she put him into the little bedroom off the kitchen, in a double bed her boys always shared. I can remember that night being smoked, they whirled into a wonderful new pleasure, a secret pleasure that I was not quite equipped to explain, but with a happy convert, a grand conspi-rator: "Don't you tell your gram."

I could pretend to have been victimized, and try to shift the blame. Why should anybody be blamed for giving pure joy? It was joy, and through the next years into adolescence, with other boys it was joy. Somewhere along the years, blame and guilt came too. I couldn't begin to put a stop. Not even marriage among children and a successful teaching career, where the activity more determined. Brothers had been taboo. Classmates had been taboo, unless they took the risk, and were absolutely sure. Later on, students were taboo, and for that reason—because I started teaching grammar—children were taboo. Colleagues were taboo. Taboos can be broken, but rarely, and always at the greatest danger. Most of my activity was sub rosa, anonymous, a quick run, then a hurried retreat back home. I doubt the war was ever a threat to anybody who was not already a threat to himself. I learned to fail in love for fear, resigned never to see my lover again. In a few lucky chances, I had protracted affairs, but they broke up because I thought I was being unfair to my companion. I found him a new lover, unmar- ried, one of my single friends.

My fear of discovery grew as I grew older. I did not dare to leave New York as my secret life for fear I would find what society told me was there—sin, abnormality, ugliness, crime—sliced away from a straight look. Only in poems and stories did I sometimes lift with scanning lines and verses. Not daring to look didn't curtail promiscuity. My life
BOOK REVIEW

Allen Verbatim: Lectures on Poetry, Politics, Consciousness
reviewed by Tim Denesh

Al Gowen, publisher of the Grass Literature Press, and Allen Ginsberg traveled to many locations to give lectures on his poetry and political philosophy. The book, Allen Verbatim: Lectures on Poetry, Politics, Consciousness, is a collection of these lectures and includes discussions on the poetry of other well-known figures such as Walt Whitman.

The lectures were delivered in a conversational style, often improvising on the fly. This approach allows for a more engaging and interactive experience for the audience, as Ginsberg's ideas are presented in a more conversational and less formal manner. The lectures are also a reflection of Ginsberg's focus on a more personal and intimate approach to political activism, which is evident in his discussions on poetry, politics, and personal consciousness.

The book is introduced with a foreword by Allen Ginsberg and a preface by Allen Silliman, who provides context and background to the lectures. The book offers insights into Ginsberg's thought and how it influenced the counterculture movement of the 1960s.

The book is a must-read for anyone interested in understanding Ginsberg's work and the counterculture movement of the 1960s. It is a valuable resource for anyone interested in the intersection of poetry, politics, and personal consciousness. The book is a testament to Ginsberg's legacy and the impact he had on American culture.

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The following is a sample text from the book:

“Walt Whitman is very important on male tenderness. He's never been brought forth as a totem or as a prophet by either gay lib left for some very precise statements he made on the subject of men's lib; this is in Democratic Vistas, or prospects for democracy, in which he's talking about how, possibly, materialistic competition in America will turn it into the fabled 'damned of nations'—which it now has become. It may be that 'we are on the road to a destiny, a status, equivalent in its real way to that of the fabled damned.'”

Walt Whitman's words emphasize the importance of male tenderness and the need to address it in the context of democracy. The passage also highlights the influence of Whitman's work on Ginsberg's ideas, as Ginsberg draws from Whitman's vision to explore the role of tenderness in the context of male identity and political struggle.

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The Gay Community Services Center, located at 1350 Main Street, will close on February 28, 1977.

The Center has served many people and many organizations gay and straight have used the facilities. The Center will be missed by many in the community.

The consensus of the people present at the special meeting on January ninth was that the counselor staff and the Fifth Freedom should be maintained. Furthermore, the Center facility was determined to be an encumbrance which Mattachine could no longer realistically maintain. Negotiations concerning an early termination of our lease were initiated and we have been informed that there is a party interested in assuming the lease for the Center. This party may also be interested in purchasing some of the equipment presently in the Center. If there are interested people in the community, please contact the Center immediately at 881-5335, 6-10pm. weekdays.

Although the Center is closing, the essential services will continue at alternative locations in the city. The Mattachine Society will retain the Center phone lines so its counselor staff may be reached at the same number. The Fifth Freedom will continue to be printed and will serve as the vehicle through which the community may keep in touch.

The closing of the Center does not eliminate the fiscal crisis which precipitated the closing. Closing the Center obviously eliminates the overhead of maintaining it, but also eliminates the source of the actual and potential income Mattachine depended upon. Namely, the 5,000 square feet of space that was available. All future functions will be in rented premises, which do not come cheap. Now, more than ever, Mattachine needs your support.

Please support the Fifth Freedom. The staff welcomes artistic and literary contributions. All material will be returned if desired. Please patronize our advertisers. Their support keeps us going, so mention you saw their ad in the Fifth Freedom. Contact us at P.O.B. 975, Ellicott Square Station, Buffalo, 14214. Any donations would be wonderful and checks may be made payable to: M.S.N.F.

"Who Are The H...?" Continued was split down the middle, violently schizophrenic.

How comforting it would be to shift the blame—on Arthur or other men I have known and loved. How great to be able to tell my wife, "I was a victim." For I loved my wife. I loved my children. I desired the security of a job where my talents would be rewarded.

There was a stubborn voice insisting there was no blame except as induced by the social conscience. Why should there be a sense of guilt for a homosexual who satisfies his wife, who loves his children, who does his job consistently well? Married and gay. This double life adds another complication. It can imply that somehow the bisexual is better than the homosexual. I never believed that. Different. But not better. A queer myself, I loved too many queers not to respect them.

This double standard for homoerotics came to the fore last summer when I accepted an invitation to appear three times on a gay radio program.

Continued on next page
Room for rent in 4-bedroom house, $55 per month. 886-0943 or 633-5437. St. James Place

waiters needed for party on Sat. nite in February. must be attractive. 886-0943 or 633-5437.

Shares for male, Richmond Street Health Emporium, Ltd., Toronto. $1.00/share-bid offer or highest bid. Box 191, Postal Sta. A, Willowdale, Ontario

FOR SALE: Professional sound system and light show. Ideal for disco. Best offer. Phone 881-5335, ask for Claude or Kim.


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I became neurotically inflamed.

On the first program, after I read some poems, one of the co-hosts asked, "Why did you decide to come out of the closet?"—a question I had set up myself because I wanted to make my record clear. I intended a two-part answer.

First, an indication of the complexity of the problem: homophobia is not monolithic. There is a whole spectrum of patterns of homophobic activity. "Why should a married man, a father, come out of the closet? By doing so, he would be telling an untruth. In spite of anything he could say, people would think him a homosexual. He is not a homosexual. He is bisexual. He can love both men and women." I read consternation in my interlocutor’s eyes, and realized that he felt himself the victim of one more betrayal, one more instance of the threatened party putting the blame on the queer.

It was not what I intended. There was another part of my answer. Time ran out. The program concluded before I could give the second part or even mention that there was one. Partly, I think, I was cravenly relieved not to have got to it. But I really did have it ready: "I came out of the closet out of gratitude to you and the thousands of gays in the Stonewall nation who have had the courage to say, 'we are not criminals. The only crime we commit is the crime of self-fulfillment. We harm nobody.'" I meant to thank my host because, thanks to him and his friends, it is no longer necessary for married gays to risk being trapped by the police in the Greyhound Station john.

Reprinted from the Nov./Dec. 1979 issue of "The Internationale"; concluded in our next issue.
5th Freedom
Publication of the Mattachine Society of the Niagara Frontier
FEBRUARY 1977

GAYS AND DEMOCRACY

THE PERSON WHO WANTS TO END HOMOSEXUALITY

WANTS TO END HOMOSEXUALITY

A gay publication for gay, and gay-friendly, individuals. 60¢ per copy. Contact 981-3930.

GAY CENTER

35th & MERRIAM
BUFFALO, N. Y.

CALENDAR OF EVENTS AT THE GAY CENTER

Bathhouse, 4 Fri; Torrington, 9 Fri; Freedom, 12 Fri.

Godfrey, 2 Mon; Freedom, 6 Mon; Bicycles, 10 Mon.

Mattachine, 8 Tue; Freedom, 12 Tue; Social Club, 16 Tue.

STONEWALL NATION, WBFO-FM, Saturdays, 9-9:30 p.m.

STUDY GROUPS

FORUM ON GAY MATTER, SUNYAB, College F. (Tolstoi), 10 a.m.

MATTACHINE SOCIETY OF THE NIAGARA FRONTIER, Box 975, Ellicott Square Station, Buffalo 14205; 881-5335.

PARENTS OF GAYS

144-25 Roosevelt Ave, Flushing, N.Y. 11355.

STUDENT ALLIANCE FOR GAY EQUALITY (SAGE), Buffalo State College, 1300 Elmwood Ave.

SISTERS OF SAPPHO, Box 975, Ellicott Square Station, Buffalo 14205.

DIGNITY (Roman Catholic), call John 884-5631.

DIGNITY (Anglican/Episcopal), call John 883-8244.

INTEGRITY (Jewish), call John 883-6711.

RHETRICUS GROUPS

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WHO IS HOMOSEXUAL?

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BOOKSTORES

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FORUM ON GAY MATTER, SUNYAB, College F. (Tolstoi), 10 a.m.

MATTACHINE SOCIETY OF THE NIAGARA FRONTIER, Box 975, Ellicott Square Station, Buffalo 14205; 881-5335.

PARENTS OF GAYS

144-25 Roosevelt Ave, Flushing, N.Y. 11355.

STUDENT ALLIANCE FOR GAY EQUALITY (SAGE), Buffalo State College, 1300 Elmwood Ave.

SISTERS OF SAPPHO, Box 975, Ellicott Square Station, Buffalo 14205.

DIGNITY (Roman Catholic), call John 884-5631.

DIGNITY (Anglican/Episcopal), call John 882-6321.

INTEGRITY (Jewish), call John 883-6711.

RHETRICUS GROUPS

MATTACHINE SOCIETY OF THE NIAGARA FRONTIER, Box 975, Ellicott Square Station, Buffalo 14205.

GAY LIBERATION FRONT/SUNYAB, College F. (Tolstoi), 10 a.m.

WHO IS HOMOSEXUAL?

1350 Main Street, Buffalo 14209; 881-5335.