

A happy, bubbling assembly of guys and girls met me during the Gay People's Alliance meeting March 9. It was a first for me.

As one speaker said that night, these gay people come into public view from "the sewers, the toilets and from paranoia."

It was dead week at the University of Oregon and a smaller than usual crowd of about 60 showed up.

Some persons were worried about possible FBI agents in the crowd. Someone asked sarcastically, "You don't think the FBI hasn't already been here?"

One big husky fellow from around a corner in a booming voice said, "Your government is probably watching you whether you are here or not. The Revolution has been co-opted."

"In fact you may find out you are working for the government."

Someone turned toward me and asked, "Did I see you at the last CIA meeting?"

Gay People's Alliance meetings are open to everyone. All one has to do is show up on a Tuesday night at 8 p.m. at 1236 Kincaid St. It's located next to the University Book Co-operative.

Wayne Elgsten, 21, a sociology major, introduced me to the difficulties, prejudice and struggle gay people face at the University. And as with any social prejudice, much of it is internalized within the victims.

"I can't hide my homosexuality very well. Besides, it's an important part of my identity," Wayne says.

What first attracted Wayne to the Gay People's Alliance was the open pride in homosexuality—something he had never seen before. "It's a better trip."

Wayne gave me thumbnail character sketches of the other gay worlds he had seen. There is the bourgeois element which is more isolated from the authorities, where you find more snobishness and where there are more material comforts.

"They offer a little less visual offense to the straight community." The reader who is not gay is "straight" in the gay world.

Juxtaposed to the bourgeois types are the dirty old men, the cheap male whores and the sick, sick queens who are often completely helpless individuals.

What both these unliberated gay worlds have in common is impersonality. In terms of sex they are both cold flesh markets.

Wayne has seen many facets of gay life. His enthusiasm for the Gay People's Alliance and gay liberation is based on a close look at gay bourgeois hypocrisy and the "gutter."

After the March 9 meeting, I went to a couple of bars with some members of the Gay People's Alliance.

One of the guys I was with, Gary Murrell, 24, a tall handsome theatre major, sat on a stool next to me. He commented, "Once you get away from impersonal situations like the johns and get to know others as individuals you can form lasting relationships. And God knows everybody wants somebody."

"I know people who think they are the only gay people in the world. They never get out of the toilets and parks."

Straight people usually do not recognize the gargantuan difficulty gay people have as individuals in confronting their homosexuality. It is ironic because it is the straight world that places such an onus on homosexual impulses.

Colloquially speaking, the most repressed case is a "closet case." Closet cases are often quite terrified by their own homosexuality.

John Stainton (fictitious name), 21, a clean-cut political science major, gave me a case in point.

"When you're not in the tea room—that's the toilet—the only way to strike up a relationship is with long glances."

"I exchanged long glances with a guy in the Fishbowl on several occasions."

"Finally, I walked past and gave him the big wave, but he turned his head away."

"Later, I ran into him again and said hi and he said hi and I introduced myself."

"He said, 'John, would you like to go someplace and talk?' So we started over to the New World Coffee Shop."

"As we walked along I asked him where he was from, trite things like that, but his answers got terser and terser. He froze. It's what you call a homosexual panic. He just started running."

"About two weeks later I ran into him in the Student Union. His eyes were red and I asked him how he was feeling."

"Not particularly embarrassed, he said, 'Yea, I'm feeling better.'"

"You look sleepy."

"I've been thinking things over."

"You're just coming out aren't you?"

In gay argot, you "come out" when you first introduce yourself as a homosexual in gay circles.

"We exchanged addresses and phone numbers but I haven't heard from him since. For all I know he may be one of those unhappy people who remain closet cases forever."

As one gay lib slogan goes, "Better blatant than latent."

**Better
blatant
than latent**

**— Gay Lib
slogan**

Coming out of the closet

John is much happier with himself now that he has come out and joined gay lib. "When I was in high school I messed around with girls and had a lot of fun. But it wasn't the real thing."

He told me jokingly he now plans to go to law school, "so I can perpetuate my insanity on the legal system."

Laws in America generally constrict the lives of homosexuals. For the present it is not unlawful to be a homosexual in Oregon. It's just unlawful to act like one.

This will change if Senate Bill 40 Section 13 passes legalizing acts of love between consenting homosexuals over the age of 16. The Gay People's Alliance is lobbying for its passage.

Wayne tells me, "Homosexuals have three places they can meet in Eugene. There are three bars in town, but you have to be over 21."

"The Gay People's Alliance is trying to create a central place for people to come out publicly as homosexuals and not be scared away by political activity that is too overt."

The Gay People's Alliance has been sponsoring spaghetti dinners to raise money for a coffee house of its own. The coffee house would not be exclusively gay, but would be run by the Gay People's Alliance. It would be an alternative to the bars and the tea rooms.

As things now stand, they have to pay for their weekly use of the basement at 1236 Kincaid St.

John informs me less than 30 per cent of the male and female homosexuals in Eugene have anything to do with the Gay People's Alliance.

Many homosexuals are afraid, and often for good reasons, of public exposure. They are afraid of losing jobs or friends.

Says Skip Abbott, 20, a history major, who just came out this year, "Everybody in the movement's come out more. A lot of us are telling our friends."

"At the dorm everybody knows and there's no problem. At meals we sit around talking about it; it's a lot of fun."

"We're all on a self-esteem trip."

Skip is one of those naturally sociable people you can't help but like. With his long blond hair he looks like a surfer except he "camps around." He has the sort of behavioral mannerisms that make him easily identifiable in homosexual circles.

He comes from a military family and the University has been his first "liberalizing" influence. His father is a colonel.

Since Skip has come out, he has had "no guilt feelings" at all. One week when his parents were gone, he went to the beach. Skip has been happy with himself ever since. However, he knows people who, after coming out, continue to face "superparanoia."

It was with these people in mind that the Gay People's Alliance was established last October as a more social than political organization. It therefore faces a certain inertia.

Says Gary, "Apathy is everywhere. You have to expect it in any group unless it is formed with a specific goal in mind."

Gary is one of the majority who believes the best course for the Gay People's Alliance is public education, not militant action. "You can't change people's minds by battering them on the head."

One of the most successful activities of the Gay People's Alliance has been "to expose ourselves in public" as one activist put it. Three or four gay guys and a girl go out as a team to visit classes at the University of Oregon and Lane Community College.

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By Robert Majure

Of the Emerald

**today's
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