



Zucchini bread and a game of killer Scrabble

by Garcia Phelps

Since joining Black Lesbians and Gays United a friend of mine has mentioned that he doesn't think I like him as much as I used to. His statement came as a bit of a surprise to me as I felt that I had always liked him too much for my own good. I would have been pleased at my ability to move him from one region of my affections to another had his distress seemed less genuine and had B.L.G.U. had anything to do with it. It hadn't. His concern, however, that an attitude that would prompt me to join B.L.G.U. might also encourage a distance between us is shared to

varying degrees among some other friends of mine and I find this notion puzzling. My friend's reason is that he thinks, based on our name and membership, B.L.G.U. is a separatist and antagonistic organization. He sees in my membership a part of me not open to him or not willing to make peace with him as white or straight. There is for those who have loved me for my race a hard recognition of the fact that they cannot own blackness and that the experience, even if lived through me, is closed to them.

What consolation I can offer comes simply to me. Instead of being a brand of easy reassurance, ("There, there. I still think you're swell."), I point out a simple fact. B.L.G.U. meets once a month on a Sunday afternoon for the most innocuous and traditional of functions — a potluck supper and social. The unlikely vision of people planning revolution or encouraging terrorist acts over zucchini bread and a game of killer Scrabble is enough to correct nearly anybody's notion of what B.L.G.U. is.

However out of friendship and a desire for understanding I am moved to continue. We do have serious discussions. We are aware of what our position in society can be and are not quite pleased with it. Yet the atmosphere at the meetings is not tainted with resentment toward the world. The common reasoning that we are an antagonistic organization assumes that a group of Black people meet only to design some punitive move against society at large. This thinking gives me the same impression as the sight of a man racing desperately for the wrong train. There is such a sense of misguided fear in it — misguided if only because I have never left a meeting of B.L.G.U. eager to dissent with whites. Rather I feel an emphasized union with Blacks. The focus changes from people bound together by a common oppression to people coming together through common experience and

embracing through a shared culture.

The people at our monthly gathering echo those of family and past neighbors. The discussions proceed not so much through shared politics as through a shared understanding. A recent ad in another local gay newspaper, whose intent was belligerent, was understood immediately. We all knew what it

meant and knew that the cords it was meant to pull in us were generations old. We understood the author and his generation. And to this degree we did not receive its/his power and did not let it inappropriately move us. This common knowledge is the reason for B.L.G.U.'s existence, and is the source of our strength.

STAR TALK

AQUARIUS The Water Bearer
The Sign of the REFORMER
January 20 - February 18
A Transpersonal, Fixed Air Sign
Keynote: Originality
"I'm Different"

by Douglas Bloch

Aquarius the water bearer creates a new order through shattering the forms and structures established in Capricorn. In deviating from the norm, the nontraditional Aquarian assumes many roles — as the progressive reformer, radical revolutionary or the philanthropic eccentric. Aquarius' motivation for prompting social change is simple: he wishes to improve the lives of his fellow human beings. Aquarius, therefore, identifies with the common man and government by democracy just as Leo symbolizes the king who rules in a monarchy.

Aquarius is an air sign and thus social by nature. Hence, many Aquarians work with people in group projects, especially those of a humanitarian bent. You've no doubt met the idealistic water bearer who joins dozens of philanthropic societies from Greenpeace to the Grey Panthers. When his involvement in causes becomes excessive, however, Aquarius can get lost in his transpersonal ideals, relating to you not as an individual, but as an abstraction. His impersonal, detached mode of relating is especially frustrating to the water signs who desire intimacy and closeness. Thus, while Aquarians make great friends and colleagues, they usually leave the romance and passion to Leo and Scorpio.

Aquarius is the sign of the scientist/inventor, and for good reason. The Aquarian mind is independent, unorthodox and innovative. It uses logic, and yet transcends logic. Ideas appear in lightning-like flashes. The inventor Thomas Edison used his Aquarian ingenuity to patent more than a hundred inventions in his lifetime. Foremost of these was the light bulb, whose sudden illumination symbolizes the mental processes of the intuitive thinker.

IRA's: How good are they?

by Diana Plunkett

There is still time to open or add to an individual retirement account for a 1983 tax deduction. Unlike most tax deductions, January 1st does not close off your opportunity to contribute to an IRA. We have until the due date our tax returns, including extensions, to make the decision on a retirement account.

An IRA is a savings plan that lets you set aside money for your retirement. Payments to it are tax deductible and earnings of your IRA are not taxed until they are distributed to you. Anyone who has earned income is eligible to set up an IRA. Earned income includes wages, salaries, professional fees, commissions and net earnings from self-employment. If you earn \$2,000 or more, you can

contribute a maximum of \$2,000 each year even if you are covered by a qualified retirement plan.

Consider an IRA versus a regular savings program. Assume a 30% tax bracket and that 30% of both principal and interest would be lost to income taxes. If contributions of \$2,000 per year were made for 25 years to a savings program where 12% was compounded continuously, the value of your account at the end of 25 years would be \$127,155.40. If you contributed \$2,000 per year for 25 years to an IRA where 12% was compounded continuously, the value of your IRA at the end of 25 years would be \$348,650.49 — a difference of \$221,495.09!

An IRA should be considered only as a retirement program *not* as a temporary savings account. Should you withdraw your contribution before you reach age 59½ or are permanently disabled, you have to add it back into your income and pay federal and state income taxes plus an additional tax equal to 10% of the premature withdrawal.

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