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A visit to Faerieland

by Billy Russo

I solicited the following story from a 15-year-old man who contacted our 24-hour switchboard. He had gotten the number from a youth-oriented gay/lesbian group in New York. He contacted them after seeing their address during a Donahue Show.

He was passing through our area while on a bus from Eastern Oregon to the coast, and he wanted to lay over in Roseburg. He planned to stay in a motel Saturday night and join us at MCC the following day, be-



The Roseburg Report

fore continuing on his way. He had never met a gay person that he knew of.

After discussing the situation at a semi-monthly switchboard committee meeting, I volunteered to chaperone him.

He made his quantum leap into the homophile community during the weekend of the GALA general meeting. Besides which, the Roseburg Court was hosting a pot luck after church Sunday. So, during the 26 hours he spent here, he got a dose of activism, religion and high camp: he got a look through the gay window.

—billy

by Jeff, as told to Billy

I stepped off the bus to wade through the crowd of people, scanning their faces, looking for the kind man I talked to on the phone, not one of them had a damn mustache! Out of the corner of my eye I spied a man with long, black hair and a mustache. I first thought no, he couldn't be gay!

"Are you Jeff?" he asked with a smile.

"Hi!" I said, and dropped my bag and shook his hand. I thought it appropriate. Billy — as he put it — was the first "queer" I had ever met.

As we left the bus station we talked. He asked me a few questions about my reasons for coming. And I told him. Before long we arrived at Mark and George's house. They all hugged Billy when they greeted us. I wasn't quite sure what to think, but my eyes devoured all they saw. And we talked. I felt really stupid sitting there, and everyone knew that I was uptight.

We went to Billy and Doug's place and "did

the goats." Doing the goats consists of separating the kids and the does for the morning milking. Once we settled in for the night, Billy went to bed. And Doug and I talked for a long time.

Doug told me some of his experiences and enlightened me about life in the Lavender Culture. He gave me some books to read, and I read late into the night. For the first time in a long time I felt safe and secure.

I awoke the next morning and found I had not dreamed it all. I proceeded to the dining area. There stood Billy in robe, busy taking yellow ice cubes from the freezer. Puzzled, I moved closer for a better look — the water couldn't be that bad!!

Well, obviously he didn't notice me, because when he turned towards me he gasped, held his chest, and giggled. He said he forgot I was there!

After breakfast and goats, Doug and I returned to Mark and George's where we watched "Brothers" episodes and the Portland Gay Pride March which Mark had videotaped. I enjoyed this very much and wished we had "Brothers" in La Grande.

When we were leaving, I hugged another gay man for the first time. Wowee! For some insane reason, that was a big moment for me. I don't know why.

I met a very neat woman when we returned to the farm. Her son, Billy's good friend, is gay. It really was great that she accepted her son with love and pride. I wish my mother was like her.

For dinner that day we had the most incredible lasagne that I had ever eaten, after which we drove into Roseburg for the GALA meeting. I met a lot of fascinating people. Then, sitting there, listening, the idea popped into my head to start a young gay people's support group in La Grande. I asked the group for ideas and suggestions.

I almost forgot about the boy who ran into the meeting room and asked, "Is this where the faggots are meeting?" Someone said, "Yes. It is. May I help you?" The youth ran back out and sped away in a car that was waiting outside. I realized that no matter where you go, or what you do, the threat of bigotry will always be there.

The following day was my first time at an MCC service. We sang some beautiful songs. And during Family Prayer we got into a big circle, held hands, and shared things. I told everyone how happy I was to know I wasn't alone. I wanted to get to know everyone. I went up for the last supper demonstration. The woman serving communion filled me with such happiness.

When MCC broke up late that afternoon we went to a potluck at the home of the Roseburg Court. The first person I met was Frances I, our host and reigning monarch. We had a delightful conversation. When I was leaving he gave me a ring. It's a symbol of my first journey into the gay community.

At ten o'clock we drove to another couples' home to watch the latest episode of "Brothers." Pat and Andy were a very accepting middle-aged straight couple. Jesse, Mark and George joined us.

Before Billy and I headed back into Roseburg to catch my midnight bus, Jesse gave me a hug and a kiss (I missed and kissed his mustache). I hugged Doug, too.

Billy took me uptown. We got a pop and waited for my bus. While we waited for the bus Billy told me how I did a scientific-something-jump from my family in La Grande to the gay community in Roseburg. We talked until the bus came in.

As we said our goodbyes I put my arms around him and kissed him right on the mouth. "You radical thing, you!" he said with a smile. Once I boarded the bus, and Billy drove out of sight, I quietly wept.