

Pride in the process

"Gay Pride" crystallizes what a privilege it is to be a member of a minority community whose common bond is that private decision to be no less than exactly who we are.

B Y S U D A N E A M E

From age 14 when I experienced my first flicker of identification with the term "lesbian," it took me about twenty years to begin to own my sexuality. For whatever reasons, it took me that long to allow myself to be who I am, rather than who certain people in my life wanted me to be.

I'm finally out though, sort of. I mean, fairly out. Almost everyone I know knows. Well, except the people at work, of course. And my parents. People like that. But basically, I'm out; I mean, my therapist knows, and my real friends know. That's progress, anyway. For me, that's Out, compared to five years ago.

My first surprise, upon finally entering the gay community and having a look around, is how many gay people there are, and how many of us do not fit the stereotypes which held me back in phony, closeted confusion for so many years. You know what I mean. Gay men all collect antiques, wear heavy perfume and mate for life. Lesbians live collectively in warehouses, are ungroomed and are usually unemployed.

Stereotypes are insensitive, generalized exaggerations or caricatures which I used to think were applied only by those outside

of the maligned group. But if my experience is typical, then stereotyping also can affect a gay individual's own struggle with self-acceptance. In spite of the media's improved handling of gay issues over the past ten years, and in spite of the present surge of really good gay literature, and in spite of the good gay energy responding to AIDS and threats from the political right, in spite of all this positive excitement, I, who should know better, still carry around in my head gay stereotypes.

Case in point: I read personal ads; it's one of my rituals, a fun and stress-free way to meet people, especially after you realize that hardly anyone organized enough to run a personal ad is a complete yoyo. But when I see the ad of a "GF," which is what I am looking for, a picture automatically pops into my mind of a depressed, ungroomed woman who lives in a warehouse district.

It happened again just the other day. I saw a terrific ad. But "GF" jumped out at me and I saw a frowning, depressed and decidedly unattractive face (probably the way my own face looked from time to time over the past twenty years when I would occasionally ruin a peak moment by reminding myself that I was a closet HOMOSEXUAL).

I sighed at my idiocy, fought with my-

self for a second, then pulled a soggy three by five card out of my tired brain and read, "That picture in your head is a stereotype and is not true. The woman who ran this ad probably lives in a single family dwelling, bathes every day, does not carry a gun, has friends and drives to work in her own car. Being gay is fine, it's fine, it's ok."

"In fact, it is better than ok. Being gay is warm and soft and prosperous and colorful and cozy and sexy and sleepy and exciting and delicious and funny and intellectual and it has always been here and it belongs here and it is good. Because it is life! It is your life. And your life is good. You are gay, and so are lots of other people, and you are good, and so are they, and you belong here, and no one is going to take away your hot showers and make you live in a warehouse. And the people who belong in your life, (as opposed to those who want you to be in theirs), will definitely continue to love you after they find out you love women. In fact, they probably already know, you big dope."

Thus refreshed, I returned to the ad, only to realize it was my own.

I suppose twenty years of social condi-

tioning cannot be undone overnight. (The hell it can't, you say? You devil, you know what I mean.) The best I can do is to recite my personal affirmations whenever I need to. This is who I am right now. I am not at the podium in the lesbian conference, but I am a dues paying member of the crowd. I have not confronted my parents with the facts of my life, but I am no longer hiding as much from them as I used to.

I am presently engaged in disentangling myself from the Eisenhower era mindset I grew up with a process which I am surprised to find involves some grieving. It was a prison, but within its limits a warm and cozy one. At this point I am not yet proud enough of who I am to reveal my lesbian identity in every arena of my life, or even in the byline of this article. I am, however, fairly bursting with excitement and satisfaction at my progress.

For me, the term "Gay Pride" crystallizes what a privilege it is to be a member of a minority community whose common bond is that private decision, in the face of considerable societal and/or family opposition, in our lives and in our loving, to be no less than exactly who we are.

BROADWAY CAB

- 24-hour radio dispatch
- VISA and MasterCard
- Reasonable rates
- Comfort and personal service
- Luxury passenger van tours
- Individual private taxi tours

50 years of dependable, courteous service



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Back Near Yosemite
Expanded to 5 days!

SPECIAL GUESTS FROM ENGLAND!

THE HOT DORIS BAND
PARKER & KLEIN

MUSICAL PERFORMERS

(partial list)
CASSELBERRY/DUPREE
ROBIN FLOWER & THE BLEACHERS
TOSHI REAGON
JASMINE
REEL WORLD STRING BAND
CAROL MACDONALD
JUDY FUELL
BETSY ROSE
CHANGES
THE BLUES SISTERS
TERESA CHANDLER
ELISA ODABASHIAN
KITTY BARBER
WE THREE

COMICS

KATE CLINTON
ROBIN TYLER
MARGA GOMEZ
JUDY CARTER
KAREN RIPLEY
MONICA GRANT
MARILYN PITTMAN
JUDY SLOAN
(Thursday night, ALL COMEDY NIGHT!)

DANCE EVERY NIGHT!

THE BLAZING REDHEADS
SENSIBLE PUMPS
THE CAROLYN BRANDY BAND
DISCO

THEATRE GROUPS

BROWN BAG READERS THEATRE
OVER OUR HEADS

SPEAKERS/AUTHORS

(partial list)
ELEANOR Smeal, President, N.O.W.
JO ANN LOULAN (Lesbian Sex)
JOYCE HUNTER (Director, N.Y. City
Institute for the Protection of Lesbian
& Gay Youth)
JEAN O'LEARY, Executive Director
N.G.R.A.
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SUSAN MCGREIVY, Attorney,
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FFIONA MORGAN, Daughter
of the Moon Tarot
FILM FESTIVAL!

8th annual west coast
women's
music & comedy
festival
Thousands of women!

LABOR DAY WEEKEND
THURS., SEPT. 3 - SEPT. 7, 1987

Beautiful, private wooded camp in the foothills of
Yosemite. Gigantic Swimming Pool, lake, river.

Only 3½ hours East of San Francisco.
6½ hours north of Los Angeles.

TICKETS— 150 cabin spaces available (no showers or toilets in cabin). Cabins hold 6-12 women (bunk beds). Children 8 and under free; 9-16, \$20 to help defray food costs. All children must be pre-registered for childcare by Aug. 1st. U.S. currency only. NO PERSONAL CHECKS AFTER July 20th. Money order, certified check or cash only. For tickets send self-addressed, legal-size, stamped envelope to: **WCWMF, 13514 Hart Street, Van Nuys, CA 91405 (818) 904-9495.**

PRICE INCLUDES: Music, comedy, crafts, sports, dancing, workshops, camping, food & fun! Showers & portable toilets provided. Everything within walking distance. A dance every night.

Accessible to disabled women; Concerts interpreted for hearing impaired; Food and childcare provided (NO OVERNIGHT childcare. 'POTTY-TRAINED' only); Boys under 10 welcome. There will be some Woman-Only space. No dogs permitted, except seeing eye or hearing impaired (must be registered).

WORKSHOPS & OPEN MIKE: If you wish to be listed in the program send a short description of your workshop or if you wish to play an open-mike send a tape. Send these along with your ticket order by August 1. Festival ENDS Monday, 3 P.M.

TICKET ORDER FORM: More than 1 person per envelope - use an extra stamp per person. 3

At Gate, tickets \$10.00 more - CASH only.

NAME _____
STREET _____
CITY _____
STATE _____ ZIP _____
PHONE _____

\$140 - 5 days RV (no hookups, includes 1 ticket) \$
\$130 - 5 day cabin space \$
\$120 - \$130 Sliding Scale - 5 day camping \$
\$130 - 4 day RV (no hookups, includes 1 ticket) \$
\$110 - 4 day cabin space \$
\$95 - \$105 Sliding Scale - 4 day camping \$
\$20 Additional for workshop substitution \$
\$20 per 9-16 yr. old woman (and 9-10 boy) \$
\$80 - \$90 very limited Sat. noon to Mon. passes (camping) \$

TOTAL ENCLOSED \$

How many children (12 and under, boys 10 and under, sex(es) and age(s))

I want T-shirt
☐ XL ☐ XXL ☐ XXXL ☐ XXXXL
(No orders after July 20th)

I NEED INFORMATION FROM (Before Aug. 1st ONLY)

☐ Disabled Resources ☐ Childcare

NOTE: All participants will be required to sign a Festival Liability Release Form.

WILLING TO HELP ☐

I CAN LOAN OR RENT THE FESTIVAL

☐ Van w/ lift ☐ R V ☐ Pick-up Truck

I WOULD BE INTERESTED IN VOLUNTEERING

☐ To flyer ☐ To be regional contact
☐ with ticket purchase to come early and work

I HAVE SKILLS IN

☐ Health care ☐ Auto mechanics
☐ Electrician ☐ Disabled Resources
☐ Carpentry ☐ Sign-interpreting
☐ Other

Limited work exchange - write detailed letter re: skills & situation

*NEEDED TO ACCOMMODATE WHEELCHAIRS

NO REFUNDS