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Deadline for submissions is the 15th of the month preceding publication.

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Steppin' Out

photo by Jay Brown



Bunny-hopping their way to the Starlight Parade float — join them along the route on June 3.

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P A G E T W O

No apologies necessary

The sexual freedoms won and the sexual choices made by gays in the past are now being judged morally wrong and regrettable. This is a health concern, not a moral one.

BY JADE MCCALL

I don't regret the sex I enjoyed in the '70s and early '80s. I eagerly experienced the opportunities offered by the sexual revolution, emerging gay rights and related choices.

The sexual options were (and still are) important to all of us, whether or not we choose to take advantage of them. I definitely took advantage of all the opportunities available to me. It was great! I believe that all sex is great — intimate or anonymous, romantic or furtive, playful or deviant. I loved it all and I did it all as often as I could, especially the adventurous, playful, and deviant. I still love it and play as much as possible.

Now, however, in the depths of the AIDS crisis, safer, more restrictive sex is the only responsible kind for all of us to experience. Gone is the abandon of the '70s. Today's sexual restraints are necessary if we are to live through this health crisis. I applaud the varied and continual efforts in recent years to make us aware of the risks of certain sexual practices. Some social behaviors have also been discouraged because they can lead to or encourage unsafe, unhealthy sex.

Dating has replaced one-night tricks. Relationships have replaced anonymous contacts. Monogamy has replaced orgies and the baths. Condoms have replaced drugs. Health officials have recognized that the gay community has responsibly made the necessary changes which have resulted in greatly reduced transmission of AIDS among us. As a community, we recognized the problems, accepted responsibility and changed our sexual habits. We can be proud of those accomplishments.

But being proud does not mean that we have to apologize for "the good old days." I



am seriously distressed by the increasing number of gay persons, leaders and publications which seem horrified when recalling the sexual explorations and celebrations of the 1970s. Our self-proclaimed guardians wonder how we could have been so bad all those years.

"Never again," they say, and imply that if we can make it through this crisis, we promise never to be so "bad" again.

I am suspicious of making bargains by showing what repentant, reformed, good little boys we can be in order to appease the Establishment. That does nothing but reinforce the right-wing political and religious views that AIDS is what we deserve because of the sexual options we have explored.

Some gays seem almost eager to combine guilt and moral reform with AIDS treatments and research. I can understand that our critics and our enemies embrace such admonitions, but I am appalled when many in our own community suggest the same conclusions. I worry that the sexual freedoms won and the sexual choices made by gay men in the past are now being judged morally wrong and regrettable. This is a health concern, not a

moral one; we must not fail to make that distinction.

Romance, monogamy and cerebral relationships are different from promiscuity and sexual exploration. But they are not better nor more moral. "Unhealthy and dangerous" are not the same as "evil and wrong." A full sexual life should include a balance of options: intimacy, relationships, sensuality and sexual variety, and exploration.

I will not apologize for my participation in the sexuality of the liberated '70s. I especially will not apologize for enjoying the variety and exploration. Such activities can be unhealthy and dangerous now, but I sure as hell do not apologize for them. And I worry that others are apologizing for me and moralizing to me.

We are all anxious for the AIDS crisis to be over. When that happens, I will eagerly return to the legendary sexual options of the '70s.

In the meantime, let us not confuse health concerns and our freedom of choice with judgmental morality. ▼

Editor's note: This essay was originally published by Frontiers, West Hollywood's gay and lesbian newsmagazine. It has been edited for brevity.