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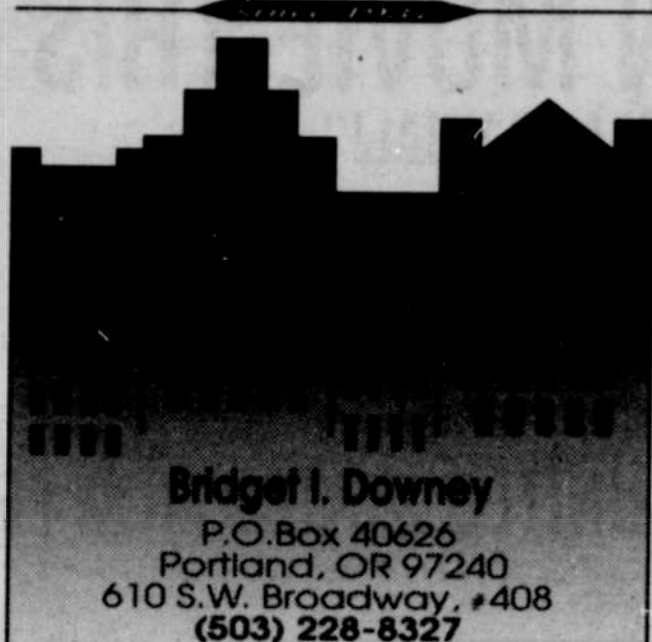


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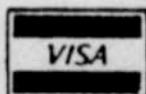


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7:30 p.m.

June 9 & 10

Common Threads: Stories from the Quilt

This year's Oscar-winning feature
documentary is a moving chronicle
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Sat - 7 & 8:45 p.m. Sun - 2 & 7

JUNE 16 & 17

Metamorphosis: Man into Woman

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Windfire responds to questions of Campfire Teens

*What should you tell a friend who
thinks he might be gay or bi?*

B Y W I N D F I R E

In February three Windfire members gave two presentations on stereotyping at the Campfire Teens in Action "Surviving the Nineties" conference. At the end of each workshop we asked the participants to write down any questions they had about gays and lesbians, which we answered as time permitted. We thought the questions were good enough to share with others. The questions were written by sixth through

Youth

twelfth graders, and were edited only for spelling and grammar. These youth, by the way, had not known that the workshop was going to be dealing with gay and lesbian issues.

We would like to dedicate this article to Jay Brown, both for his support of us in writing this column and because the last time I (Julie) spoke to him, we discussed the best way to use these questions in a column.

Do you get irritated because they call you gay or lesbian?

I get irritated because they call me homosexual.

Do you fall into "roles" such as dominant and submissive?

Some do, some don't. It depends on the individual personalities. But looking at our families, it seems to us that this is a universal trait, not a gay trait.

What should you tell a friend who thinks he might be gay or bi?

Tell him or her they are OK and that you accept them for who they are. Mean it. Help them find some support and information. Assure them that they don't have to make a permanent decision at this point and support them in their process.

Did you make a conscious decision to become gay or lesbian? Why do gays always say, "I found out I was gay," like you were born gay? I don't understand that.

Coming out, the process of realizing you are gay, lesbian, or bisexual, is a process of self-discovery, not decision. The choice we have is whether or not to accept ourselves for who we are.

How much of the bigotry directed at gays is due to the bigots' deep and unacknowledged fears of being gay themselves?

We wonder about this too. It has been proven that most anger stems from fear or pain.

How can you tell if someone is gay or lesbian? How does a gay/lesbian person realize another person is gay?

Ask. Look for T-shirts and buttons with gay slogans.

Do you think you are gay because you did not fit in heterosexuality?

No. Do you think you are straight because you did not fit in homosexuality? Being gay is not a default position.

What do you do if you're with a group of friends and they are talking about gays/lesbians and insulting them?

Sometimes some of us feel afraid of people's reactions and don't do anything. Others of us have had good reactions treating anti-gay remarks just like racist, sexist or otherwise offensive remarks.

Don't you ever want to have your own children?

Being gay or lesbian doesn't mean that you can't have children.

Aren't you scared of AIDS?

Aren't you? AIDS doesn't discriminate on the basis of sexual orientation. Risky behavior is risky behavior, homosexual or heterosexual.

How do you feel when a person of the opposite sex comes up and flirts? How would you tell that person you're gay?

If a nice person of either sex flirts with me, I'm honored. If a gross person flirts with me, I'm insulted. As for telling them, if we decide it is any of their business we just tell them straight out.

Have you tried the other sex? Because you're gay does that mean you won't have sex with members of the opposite sex?

Some of us have had sex with members of the opposite sex. Some of us have not. Some of us haven't had sex with anyone. There is much more to being gay than who you have sex with. Most of us would not have sex with members of the opposite sex, but some of us might in certain circumstances, such as to have children. One of my older friends, a gay man, looked back on a sexual experience he had with both a man and a woman as one of the best in his life.

Is it true that lesbians don't wear bras and don't shave their armpits? Because I've seen some that do and some that don't.

Well, I don't 'cause I don't have enough of a chest to make it work spending \$15 to \$30 per bra and I don't shave 'cause I figure if my cousin in Germany doesn't have to, why should I? But it has nothing to do with my being a lesbian. But some of us do and some of us don't.

How did your parents take you being gay?

My mom practically beat the **** out of me and my girlfriend. She's the one that told me. Many of our parents refused to believe us. Some of our parents took it badly, others took it well and are very supportive.

Do your straight friends know you are gay?

Some of us are out to some of our straight friends, some of us are out to all of them, some of us aren't out to any of them. In general, our close friends have been accepting. Some of us refuse to have friends who aren't accepting.

When you first discovered you were gay/lesbian, were you scared?

Yes, suddenly we had to adapt to a lifestyle we know nothing about and had been told all our lives was wrong.

Did you have any fears about God's punishment? Are homosexuals religious?

Some of us have had fears about God's punishment, but not necessarily because we are gay. For others of us this is not an issue at all. Like all people, some gays and lesbians are religious, others are not. In many tribal traditions, gays and lesbians were regarded as having special religious powers.

just out

Oregon's complete lesbian and gay connection.