WHO AM I?

In the Gospel accounts Jesus asks his disciples, "Who do people say that I am?" They respond that many see him as a prophet. He then asks them, "But what about you? Who do you say that I am?" To which Peter replies, "You are the Christ."

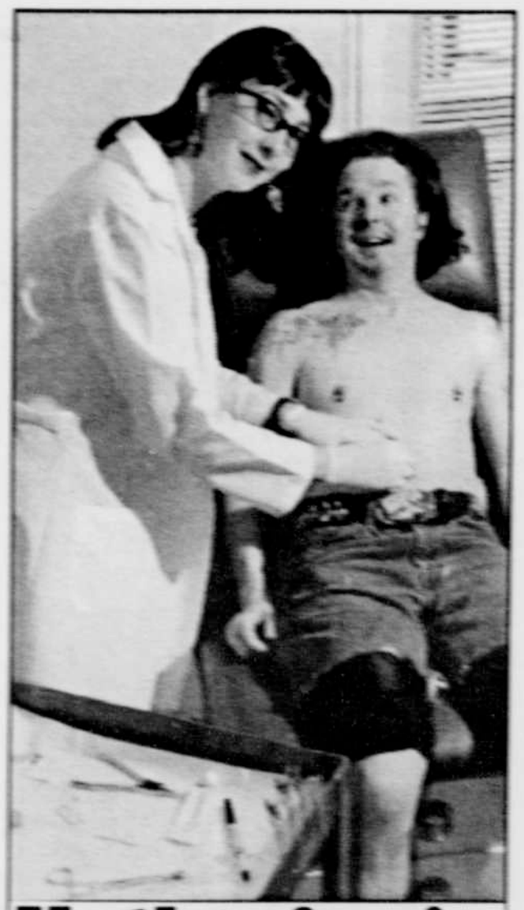
It isn't clear exactly when or how Jesus came to fully understand who he was, but from the time of his baptism in the Jordan until his death on the cross he lived out a clear and unfaltering vision of his mission. Unperturbed that his ministry threatened the underpinnings of the dominant religious authorities, he stood relentlessly and fearlessly against those opposed to him. Ultimately he faced certain death by daring to face them in Jerusalem, the very center of their power. The only thing we know with certainty is that he prayed frequently and believed himself in an intimate and essential relationship with God whom he called Father.

Even those who deny the divinity of Jesus admire the authenticity of his life and the inherent truth of his teaching. Many of us long for the same clarity of purpose in our lives but are unable to achieve it in spite of diligent effort. We would do well to ask the same question as Jesus: "Who do people say that I am?" Am I who the religious extremists say that I am? Or the pornographers? Or my friends and family? Do I know my own self? Can we really hope to discover who we are unless, like Jesus, we are intimate with the very source of our being?

As gay men we are born into a world that misunderstands and often hates us. Unwittingly we adopt some aspects of this distorted view and few of us ever totally free ourselves of the disastrous consequences. For centuries we have been persecuted and repressed. Now we dare to live openly, but are we living lives that bring blessing to ourselves and others?

Created gay by a loving God, it is only by living in the goodness of that love that we are transformed and become truly authentic. Have you considered how you might more fully walk in the presence of God's love?

A message from the Anowim Community.



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NATIONAL news

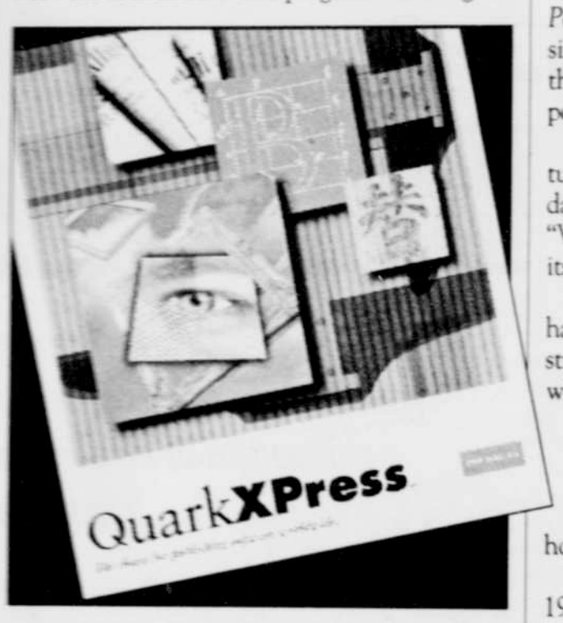
COLORADO

In 1981, armed with a $2,000 loan from his parents, Tim Gill started Quark Inc., a desktop and Internet software company. The privately held company became an industry leader with 700 employees in nine countries.

Now, working through his philanthropic organization, the Gill Foundation, Gill has created a potentially giant scholarship program for Colorado gay and lesbian youths.

The *Rocky Mountain News* reported May 7 that the Gill Foundation's program could hand out a quarter of a million dollars annually in scholarship money.

The program is a joint venture between the Gill Foundation and several schools in Colorado. Initially, 20 colleges were invited to join with the foundation. The program was designed



with officials from the University of Denver, the University of Northern Colorado, Colorado College and Colorado State University.

Beginning in 2001, participating schools will each receive $2,000 a year from the foundation. The schools must match that money. The matching funds may be given to the Gill scholarship winner, awarded to another student or used to start an endowment to fund future scholarships. Eventually, the Gill Foundation will award a four-year scholarship to four students at each school.

To be considered for a Gill Foundation scholarship, a student must be openly gay, lesbian, bisexual or transgendered. Heterosexual students who have been active in gay issues are also eligible to apply. Students must demonstrate leadership abilities, maintain a 3.0 grade-point average and complete 40 hours of service annually on gay and lesbian issues.

"Higher education is probably the most important and significant breeding ground for leaders of our community and the country in the future," said Gill Foundation Executive Director Katherine Pease. "We're taking a long-term approach to social change."

This is the first time anyone has tried to spend and generate so much money at so many schools, according to foundation officials.

"It's long overdue," said Adam Tenner, interim executive director of the National Youth Advocacy Coalition, a Washington, D.C.-based group that works with youth service organizations around the country. "There's a myth about the wealth of the lesbian and gay community which has slowed down the recognition of the [financial] need of gay and lesbian youth."

Gill, 46, was an openly gay teenager. He was active in the early days of the gay rights movement as a student at the University of Colorado in the 1970s.

He became a serious philanthropist when he joined the fight against 1992's anti-gay rights measure Amendment 2. Colorado voters passed the measure, which was eventually overturned by the U.S. Supreme Court. Gill donated $1 million to that fight.

Over the last several years, the Gill Foundation, which has an endowment of $82 million, has given away $11 million. The foundation concentrates on issues related to gay men, lesbians, AIDS, arts, social justice and the education of other gay donors on how to use their money most effectively.

FLORIDA

Gay Days is an event that used to deepen the worry lines of officials at Disney World. Now, popular Disney World attractions such as Typhoon Lagoon water park and the Pleasure Island nightclub hold related parties and performances.

According to a story in the June 3 *Seattle Post-Intelligencer*, what started out in 1991 as a single day has now grown to a four-day weekend that draws more than 100,000 people—and corporate sponsors.

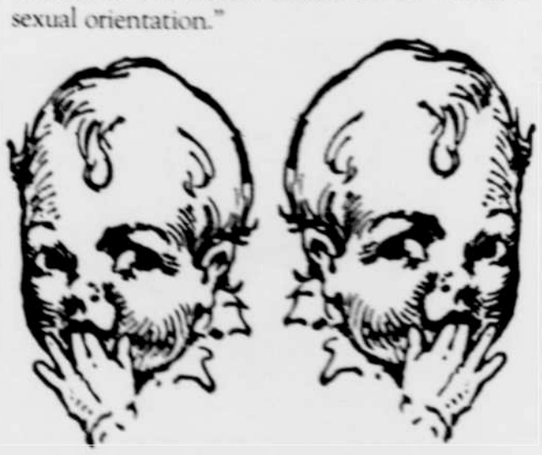
"I don't know if it's a more accepting attitude, but our parks are open to everyone, every day," said Disney spokeswoman Rena Callahan. "We want to be hospitable to everyone who visits our parks."

In past years, religious right-wing groups have held protests during Gay Days. No demonstrations were planned for this year's event, which was held in early June.

In 1997 Julie Jacoby filed for divorce. She moved, with her two children, into the home she shared with her female partner.

Her ex-husband sued for custody, and in 1998 the Pinellas County Circuit Court granted him sole custody. The court agreed with the ex-husband's argument that granting custody to Jacoby would have made the children vulnerable to teasing and harassment from classmates at their private parochial school.

In May, the Court of Appeals of Florida for the 2nd District reversed the earlier trial court ruling by a 2-1 vote. The appellate court ruling, written by Judge Stevan T. Northcutt, stated that the lower court had inappropriately "succumbed to the father's attacks on the mother's sexual orientation."



According to Lambda Legal Defense and Education Fund, the appeals court said the decision to grant custody to the father "penalized the mother for her sexual orientation without evidence that it harmed the children." The appeals court admonished the trial court for favoring the household of the father, who has remarried, over the mother's home. It ordered the lower court to reconsider custody without relying on anti-gay prejudices.

"The court sent a forceful reminder that the best interests of the children, not irrational fears and prejudices, should be paramount in all custody decisions," said Stephen R. Scarborough, staff attorney of Lambda's regional office in Atlanta. "The circuit court wrongly thought it could and should insulate these kids from possible knee-jerk biases against lesbian and gay parents."

Said Lambda Legal Director Beatrice