Metro Parks Director Talks About Park Sex Arrests

By HARRISON HICKS
Staff Writer

Despite the controversy surrounding undercover operations which in the past year have resulted in the arrests of more than 300 people for soliciting sex or performing illicit sex acts in Nashville parks, Metro Parks Director James Fyke refused last week to rule out the possibility of future sex stings taking place.

Fyke, speaking Saturday about public park policies at the latest Metropolitan Community Church-Nashville forum, said it was his hope that the possible threat of future sex stings would deter people from using the parks as places to engage in sex or solicitation for sex.

"That's something we're not going to condone," Fyke said, referring to sexual acts in the parks.

Fyke asked for suggestions on ways to deal with the problem.

"The first step is communication, rather than combat," Fyke said.

Several people questioned Fyke on the ethics of the recent undercover operations, raising the issue of entrapment.

Fyke said he had no knowledge of entrapment in any of the operations. He stated that all officers involved in the stings were given guidelines concerning evidence and told not to deal with cases where the evidence against someone might be shaky.

"All of these cases have been or will be or should be heard in court," Fyke said.

Anyone who feels as if they were entrapped has the rights within the court procedure to offer that in their evidence. Our evidence obviously would speak for itself. The court would have to decide whether there was entrapment.

Continued on page 4

Gay Man Regains Visitation Rights

By STUART BIVIN
Editor

National Gay Rights Advocates (NGRA), a California-based public interest law firm, has announced that a Chicago man who had been denied all visitation with his four children because of his ex-wife's fear of AIDS has had his visitation rights restored.

An Illinois judge had ruled in April that the man, known in court as Leslie Roe, could not visit with his children because of his "failure to take and AIDS test" (sic), Leslie being an alleged homosexual. *

Roe had not taken an HIV antibody test. Hee showed no signs of AIDS or AIDS-related complex (ARC).

The children's mother withdrew her demand that Roe be denied visitation after NGRA conducted negotiations on Roe's behalf.

Ben Schatz, Director of NGRA's AIDS Civil Rights Project, said that, although he was pleased with the outcome of the case, he was "outraged that the courts granted legal legitimacy to AIDS hysteria in the first place. To separate gay fathers from their children because of stereotypes and medical misinformation hurts father and children alike, while helping no one."

NGRA Executive Director Jean O'Leary added her determination to fighting AIDS-related discrimination, saying, "The courts must never become a place in which hysteria and prejudice are able to dictate the law and sweep aside fundamental rights."

Republican Alice Algood Blasts Gay "Typhoid Mary"

By JEFF ELLIS
Managing Editor

In an apparent last-ditch effort to consolidate the state's conservative voters, Republican Senatorial candidate Alice Algood Tuesday called for the closing of "all homosexual bath houses, orgy parlors and so-called gay bars" to halt transmission of the AIDS virus.

Algood, a longtime GOP stalwart and fund-raises from Columbia, released a six-point program on AIDS in her effort to rally the state's conservative voters to her campaign in yesterday's Republican primary. Polls showed Algood trailing her opponent, Bill Andersen, a Kingsport attorney. Results of yesterday's balloting were not available at press time.

"AIDS is a public health issue. It is not a civil rights issue," Algood's position paper stated. "There is no civil right to act like Typhoid Mary and go around contaminating innocent people. Cowardice by most of our public health establishment has caused them to give in to the outrageous demands of the homosexual lobby."

Algood credits "the radical and politically powerful homosexual lobby" with unduly influencing current public health policy, blaming doctors for "whitewashing" the facts about the deadly disease.

Algood's proposed six-point program calls for:

• Closing "all homosexual bath houses, orgy parlors and so-called gay bars."

Carole Cunningham, president of the statewide Tennessee Gay and Lesbian Task Force, called Algood's statement, "a way to get her name in the paper."

"I think it's extremely unfortunate that simply by running for office she is given a forum to express the profound ignorance of her ideas," Cunningham said. "I'm sure there are others throughout the state with the same opinion, but because this woman is running for the U.S. Senate, her views are made public by the media."

Cunningham charged that media coverage gave the candidate's statements "an air of legitimacy."

"Their (the media's) coverage lends credibility to pure rubbish," Cunningham charged.

However, Cunningham expressed pleasure at the response of Algood's opponent, Andersen, who was campaigning in East Tennessee on Tuesday. Andersen said that he agrees with "President Reagan and Surgeon General C. Everett Koop that additional education is needed in the home, school and church and additional funding is needed to find a cure for this disease."

"I'm happy that Andersen didn't feel compelled to take sides with Algood or to outdo her with reactionary statements," Cunningham said.

Algood's proposed six-point program calls for:

• Closing "all homosexual bath houses, orgy parlors and so-called gay bars."
Sociables

On the Road, On the March, On the Prowl

By JAAN STURGIS
Staff Writer

Earlier this month while we were all frying in the summer heat, Billy Isaacs and Tim Roberts were vacationing in beautiful Maine. The resort town they stayed in - Ogunquit - was a joy and right on the ocean. Their gay guest house Inn, Two Village Square - was a hoot and the scenery was mainly on the beach and blond. My!

Off and away to the Windy City and beyond were Gregory Tennison-Fisher and Trent Ates as they traveled to Madison, Wisconsin last weekend via Chicago. Why Madison? To participate in Evangelicals Concerned's annual conference for lesbians and gay men. Gregory sang and they all were BAD BOYS when Trent, Gregory, and six others escaped to the New Bar Madison's dance club. Did they have fun? Ask any boy from Madison!

Did you attend the coffeehouse at the Unitarian Church a couple of weeks ago? Then you surely saw some of Nashville's finest musical talent - Trent Ates, Linda Johnson, Margie Plant, Cathy Stamps, Greg Tennison-Fisher, and Gerrit Wilson. You can see the three boys - billed as Triple Play - on August 20th at the Towne House Tea Room for a mere three bucks. In addition to three solo sets, they'll be doing some duets and trios. Something you shouldn't miss!

This Sunday will mark the big birthday celebration for Sharon Kowalski. Festivities start with a barbeque at 1601 Cedar from 6:00 to 8:00 pm followed by a motorcade to Legislative Plaza where Marianne Osiel, Kat Garcia, who's trotting off to conquer new trios... Something you shouldn't miss!

There's a new face out there. Deborah Kowalski, Chiropractic Physician

Dr. Deborah Kowalski, Chiropractic Physician

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FRIDAY, AUGUST 12
Conductors Club Night

Sunday Night Dinner Special
Ranch Steak, vegetable of the day, choice of potato, tossed salad $3.25
Serving dinner 5-10 Tue-Thu, 5-11 Fri-Sun
2-for-1 Happy Hour 5pm-8pm Every Day

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Happy Birthday, Sharon!
Help us celebrate, with cities across the nation, Sharon Kowalski's 32nd birthday. Come to a backyard barbecue Sunday, August 7, 6-8pm at 1401 Cedar Lane. Hamburgers and soft drinks will be provided. At 8pm, join the caravan to Legislative Plaza to celebrate the lives of Sharon Kowalski and Karen Thompson with a candlelight vigil, speakers, and music by Marianne Dalel, Lisa Roberson, and Kat Graham.

Cry out for joy! Cry out for justice!
For more information about the party, the rally, or about ways to help in the Kowalski case, please call 297-4293. Sponsored by the Nashville Kowalski Committee, T-GALA and the Pride Week Committee.

Every Tuesday, 11:30 pm
STARS '88 Talent Search
Starring Alexis Spaulding

Every Wednesday, all night
50-Cent Night
50-cent draft, wells, wine and schnapps

Every Thursday, 11:30 pm
Summerstock

Every Friday and Saturday
Non-stop Dancing

Sunday, August 7
"A Farewell to Carmella"
Starring
Alexis Spaulding
Shelly Stone
Monica Munro
and
Carmella Marcella Garcia
Two shows 10:30 and midnight

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WAREHOUSE 28 • 2529 Franklin Road • 385-9689
Parks Director Talks About Sex Arrests

Continued from page 1

Pressed further on the issue, Fyke urged people not to let themselves participate in a situation where they could be construed as soliciting sex.

"People allowed themselves to get in situations allowing themselves to be susceptible to suggestion or entrapment," Fyke said, adding that from the evidence he had seen, including videotapes, most of those arrested had been the instigators and had not been victims of entrapment.

One local gay activist disagreed with Fyke, stating that on many occasions he had been wrested at by Metro Parks Ranger Jeff DeBusk, who was involved in some 200 of the arrests.

Further, he contended that DeBusk had attempted to make conversation with him but because the man recognized DeBusk as a ranger, he refrained from interacting with him.

The results of a survey conducted among those arrested in the sting were cited by the activist. "A great percentage, more than half of those men, are married, with families and in the closet," he said, asserting that the gay community was bearing the brunt of negative publicity for people who were leading "double lives" and who are not part of "the gay community."

Fyke agreed that the gay community had gotten what he called a "bad rap" in the papers, noting that people engaging in heterosexual sex and solicitation had been arrested as well.

Concerning the issue of publicity, Fyke restated his position that his office had nothing to do with the publication of names of those arrested in the local newspapers. He said that the names were part of public arrest records which are available to the media. "Obviously, the newspaper thinks it's more discouraging to put their name and employment and address and age and everything in the world," Fyke said.

He assured his audience that he would address their concerns and would listen to any suggestions on solving the problems. "All I'm asking is let's get together to try to clean up or correct or stop whatever activities are going on so we don't embarrass people," Fyke said.

"I will make sure that whatever sex is involved, (they) will be treated as whatever the letter of the law is."

Algood Wants to Close "Gay Bars, Orgy Parlors"

Continued from page 1

• Making the wilful transmission of the AIDS virus a crime the same as manslaughter.
• Requiring the reporting and tracing of all AIDS cases by state public health officials.
• Prohibiting lesbians and gay men from engaging in heterosexual sex and solicitation has been winked at by Metro Parks Ranger Jeff DeBusk, who was involved in some 200 of the arrests.

Concerning the issue of publicity, Fyke

programs. Cunningham called the six-point plan "an insane measure" which indicates a need for action by lesbian and gay activists. "It tells us, as we have all known, that there is more education needed and that we have much more work to be done," Cunningham said.

News of Algood's call to close gay bars and quarantine homosexuals engendered a grassroots response among Nashville lesbian and gay leaders, with many saying they would vote in yesterday's Republican primary to ensure that Algood did not become the GOP's standard bearer in this fall's general election.

Incumbent Democratic Senator Jim Sasser will meet the Republican nominee in November's general election.

Alcoholics Anonymous

Mondays
Nashville CARES AIDS/ARC Support Group.
5:30pm.
Nashville CARES Gay Couples Support Group.
6pm.
6:30pm.
Lambda Group Closed Alcoholic Anonymous meeting for gay men and lesbians, Unitarian Church.
8pm.

Tuesdays
Nashville CARES HIV Education Support Groups.
7pm.
Al-Anon Meeting, MCC. 8:30pm.
Lesbian Alcoholic Anonymous Closed meeting, MCCC.
8pm.

Tuesday, August 9
Vanderbilt Lambda Film and meeting. For lesbian and gay Vanderbilt students, faculty, staff and alumni. Vanderbilt University Central Library Classroom, 6th floor. 6pm. Free.

Wednesdays
Nashville CARES AIDS/ARC Support Group.
6:30pm.
Nashville CARES HIV/Chemical Dependency Support Group.
7pm. Info phone 385-1510.
Support Group for Lesbians and Gay Men Meeting. 8pm. Info phone 633-4598.

Thursdays
Nashville CARES AIDS/ARC Support Group.
5pm.
Alcoholic Anonymous Closed meeting for lesbians and gay men, MCC. 8pm.
Lesbian Adult Children of Alcoholics (ACOA) Info phone 365-4776 or 325-5623. 8pm.

Fridays
Sexaholics Anonymous Closed meeting, MCC- Nashville.
5pm.
Alcohols Anonymous Program Study Group Meeting, Belmont United Methodist. 7:30pm.

Saturdays
Nashville CARES AIDS/ARC Support Group.
4pm.
Metropolitan Community Church-Nashville Meeting, all you can eat. 7:30pm. $5.

Saturday, August 6

Saturday, August 13
Nashville Men Sing to Women's Choice Benefit concert for Tennesseeans Keeping Abortion Legal and Safe (T-KALS), featuring Frank Sheen, Fred Koller, Sweet Medicine, Boyz Bar Band, New Bond, Kenny Arnold and more. Vickie Carico emcees. 8pm. $10. Advance tickets at Book Treasury, 2216 6th Ave. South, or from TKALS members. Info phone 267-8540.

Sundays
Metropolitan Community Church-Antioch Worship service, 11am. Info phone 633-8681 or 634-4491.
Metropolitan Community Church-Nashville Worship services, 11am and 7pm.
The Office Co-ed softball, Mericourt Park, Clarksville. 1pm.

Sunday, August 7
Free Sharon Kowalski Gay Tennessee Gay and Lesbian Alliance (T-GAL) Birthday party and barbecue in honor of Sharon Kowalski's 32nd birthday. Hamburgers and soft drinks will be provided. Volleyball. 1401 Cedar Lane. 6-8pm. Free. Donation to Sharon Kowalski Legal Defense Fund requested.
Caravan to Legislative Plaza, 8pm.

Sunday, August 14
Feminist Book Circle Discussion of Audre Lorde's "A Burst of Light." Unitarian Universalist Church, 1908 Woodmont Blvd. 5-7pm. Info phone 298-9331.

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**“Freedom Ride” Tours South**

Continued from page 1  
both the men’s and women’s state prisons there.

The purpose of the Ride, Dorow said, “is to strengthen the networks of support between northern and southern lesbians and gays and to gain unity for all in our daily struggles for freedom and justice.”

Dorow, who founded AIDS services for southern women and children, along with AIDS, displayed the Bailey House Quilt during their Alabama stop. The quilt is composed of panels commemorating the lives of Bailey House residents who have died from AIDS.

During the Birmingham stopover, the quilt’s display and a “die-in” attracted the attention of most of that city’s media, Dorow said in a telephone interview from Lexington, Ky., last week. Lexington was the next scheduled stop after the aborted Nashville visit.

“We didn’t get many people at the quilt display,” Dorow conceded. “But we were able to get the lesbian and gay community stirred up.”

According to Dorow, lesbian and gay activists in Birmingham “are on the verge of taking action just yet.”

In Montgomery, plans for an ACT UP chapter are in the works, due to “a lot of coalition building,” Dorow said.

But when their journey took the New Yorkers to the Alabama Women’s Prison in Tutwiler and Alabama Men’s Prison in Limestone, the hopeful atmosphere was shaken by the grim realities of Alabama’s quarantine of HIV-positive inmates. Testing for the human immunodeficiency virus is mandatory for inmates entering the Alabama prison system. Those who test positive are systematically quarantined, Dorow said.

“The facility left Dorow feeling ‘like an outside agitator,’” she maintained that the nurse assured the New Yorkers that the prisoners are masters of the con game and had conned the Freedom Riders into believing their story.

“It was very grim,” Dorow reiterated.

While in Lexington, the Bailey House Quilt was to be displayed in a local park, despite some foot-dragging by city officials in giving the group a permit. In addition, information on AIDS and safe sex was distributed, along with a newsletter.

“A roundtable discussion with Lexington lesbian and gay leaders was planned for later in the evening, Dorow said.

“If nothing else, we’re getting a lot of media coverage,” Dorow said.

Dorow lamented the lack of planning for the Tennessee visit. Although no formal program had been planned, the group had hoped to meet with leaders of the Tennessee Gay and Lesbian Alliance (TGALA) during that group’s regular steering committee meeting. However, the meeting was rescheduled.

Absurdity runs in frantic circles in *Wanda* as the pathologically dumb but dangerous Otto jealously stalks Wanda’s every move, making certain her seduction of Archie puts her in touch with the stolen jewels but not Archie’s “family jewels.”

**Tennessee Dance Theatre Wins Award**

From STAFF REPORTS

The Tennessee Dance Theatre (TDT) has been added to the touring roster of the Southern Arts Federation (SAF), making the local group the only modern dance company originating in the Southeast to be accepted this year.

“This is like getting a pat on the back from the national arts community for our company’s artistic achievement,” said Jane Hatley, executive director of the Tennessee Dance Theatre.

“We are honored to be in the company of performers like Eddy Toussaint, Dan Wagoner, Lionel Hampton, Edward Villella and the Miami City Ballet and Taj Mahal.”

SAF’s touring program is that organization’s means of promoting performances of artists in the South. The SAF offers free support grants to presenting anyone of the arts on its roster. The artists chosen for the touring program are selected through a competitive application procedure involving the Performing Arts Advisory Panel and approved by the Board of Directors of SAF and “represent the highest standard of artistic quality in the Southeast.”

The performing artists selected to participate in the SAF Touring Program are featured in the Federation’s annual Performing Arts Guide which is distributed to over 2000 organizations that host performances throughout the region.

Based in Atlanta, SAF is a non-profit organization committed to fostering the growth of the arts in the South. It serves a nine state region which includes Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina and Tennessee.

In addition, TDT is now entering its fourth year as a featured company on the Tennessee Arts Commission’s Touring Program.

One of the leading contemporary dance companies in the Southeast, TDT was established four years ago with Andrew Krichels and Donna Rizzo serving as co-artistic directors. The company’s repertory consists of both distinctly “southern” pieces, based on the music, folklore and literature of the South.

**A Dish of “A Fish Called Wanda”**

By CAROLE CUNNINGHAM Staff Writer

A few films of the 1980’s can truly be called “farces.” Farce, unlike comedy, does not require its audience to laugh and think; just to laugh. Farce is thought to have its roots in interludes of sheer buffoonery during medieval religious plays - and rightly so: the medieval sensibility accepted and embraced contradiction. Humor during a religious play was not blasphemous, it was necessary. And if you didn’t take your morality and enjoy it too, the joke was on you. Chaucer would feel an outsider in the 1980’s as much for its moral sense as for its MTV.

Movie theatres, especially in summer, make their bread and butter from comedies. But most American comedies, even those with the greatest aspirations toward the perverse and utterly foolish, can’t seem to let us out of the theatre without some lame message about sexism, ageism, the evils of competition, the difficulties of parenting. Lame because having a “message” is what they really intend, but somehow what Americans require: both the comedy and the social commentary half-baked.

In an era of Phyllis Schafflys, Tipper Gore and media writers and reporters acting as moral arbitors of public opinion and taste, pleasure for the sake of pleasure, laughter for the sake of laughter - the kind Chaucer jammed between every “moral” tale in the Canterbury Tales - seems not only impossible, but downright heretical. Which is why John Cleese’s brilliant script for *A Fish Called Wanda* is a cause for celebration.

*A Fish Called Wanda* contains all the twists, turns and tantalizing pleasures of classic farce: unrepentent thieves, bungling assassins, trickery, sexual infidelity, outlandish stupidity, moral libertinism. John Cleese, who co-wrote *Wanda* with director Charles Crichton (The *Lawrence of Arabia*), has blended the manic and the bizarre to create one of the funniest farces of the ’80’s.

The improbable plot revolves around a motley ensemble of London thieves whose relationships are so bizarre that equals the range of her amorous exploits. Next to Curtis, Kevin Kline “is the best farceur, act with sincerity and seeming obliviousness to the outrageous circumstances they land in - which, according to a rather unfortunate speech Cleese makes, is the paradigmatic heart of English existence.

But nothing. *Wanda* would be so funny or so discomfiting were it not for the brilliant performance of Jamie Lee Curtis. Finally Curtis has been given a role that requires her to be as funny as she is beautiful, as sly as she is sexy. Curtis’ Wanda can seduce anything that walks - and you won’t be left standing when she does.

Curtis is the perfect chameleon of the role of Wanda requires: whether playing a brassy Midwestern law student or the calculating crook with a weakness for men who speak Italian, she shows a range of comic ability that equals the range of her amorous exploits. Next to Curtis, Kevin Kline’s often overzealous performance as the dumb jock lacks the polish and timing of Curtis’ considerable comic talents.

*A Fish Called Wanda* is zany, hip and hilarious. If you love Curtis or Cleese or comedy with no apologies made, *Wanda* is for you. If you take your tips from Tipper, you’d better see *Arthur II.*
**Views**

**Aw, Shut Up**

Those wacky Republicans. Now, they've discovered AIDS — five or six years after everyone else.

After all the tussling over the President's AIDS Commission, the lack of adequate lesbian or gay representation on the Commission, and the near-total absence of AIDS-service professionals, President Reagan has apparently decided to ignore the Commission's report, anyway.

The President's new ten-point proposal for dealing with the AIDS crisis completely skirts the two vital issues the Commission finally realized were important, and forces the —country to wait at least another five months for a new President before there is any hope of real Federal leadership in fighting the epidemic.

The Commission reported very strongly in favor both of massive funding for AIDS research, education and services and of tough protection from AIDS or HIV discrimination. That's good — the Commission overcame its deficiencies and, when confronted with the sheer weight of the evidence, did the right thing. Sadly, the President has chosen to go down in history as the one whose inaction let the worst health crisis in 400 years get out of hand.

As if that's not enough, the Republican party has given us the charming Alice Algood, who has declared that "gay orgy parades" must be shut down in order to protect the "innocent" from AIDS Typhoid Marys. At least Bill Anderson, Algood's opponent in the Republican primary, had the good sense and the moral conviction to say that he stood by the President's Commission's report on AIDS issues.

And that's more than the President would do.

**It's Not the Heat. Is It?**

The summer of 1988 is setting meteorological records here in Nashville and throughout the rest of the South. We've been inundated with day after day of record-breaking heat and humidity "coupled with dangerously low amounts of rainfall."

Farmers, upon whom much of the Tennessee economy is dependent, are perhaps hardest hit by the high temperatures and lack of rainfall. As they suffer so do the rest of us — ours is a region built upon the riches the land offers. When nature fails to shoulder its share of the burden, we find ourselves precariously on the edge.

A brief respite from the drought came last week when a much-needed two inches of rain fell on Nashville and the midstate. It will do a lot for the crops, the farmers say, but that's still probably not enough to save this year's harvests. That, of course, will mean higher prices at the grocery store.

But if the heat and the drought and the predicted high food prices aren't enough to make you want to slap your dawg and spit in the fire, we find ourselves faced with an enemy even more dreaded in the social circles of Music City.

The person who likes to talk about the weather.

You can find this person all over town. Sometimes she's a woman and sometimes he's a man and sometimes both. You can spot them a mile away.

"It's not the heat. It's the humidity," seems to be their battle cry.

When you reply to their rather obvious statement, they are likely to retort, "Hot enough for you?" or, if they want to appear hip, "It's this damn greenhouse effect!"

So let's set the record straight (so to speak). We live in the mid-South where, during the summer months, we are likely to experience higher temperatures — it has something to do with our being closer to the equator than folks up North.

It's also very humid here. Frankly, we're not sure why — that was probably discussed in science class the day we tried out for drum major — but we've lived with humidity for a long time and don't really need to be reminded of that fact.

It's not that we're saying people shouldn't express themselves. On the contrary, we're all for original self-expression. Original is the key word here. Saying "It's not the heat. It's the humidity" is not original.

We're certain Davy Crockett said it to Polly just after he killed a bear.

Alice Mitchell may have lost her cool when Penda said it one time too many.

Loretta probably said it to Doolittle right after spreading up one of them boloney sandwiches.

Lamar most likely said it to Honey after campaigning in McNairy County — where we really know what humidity is all about.

So we don't want to hear Nancy say it to Wendy of Steve say it to Phil. Okay? Besides, it's not the humidity that's so bad. It's the heat.

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**Writing and Remembering**

By JEFF ELLIS

Managing Editor

When I was five years old I realized I was different.

Every Sunday night as my family and I watched Bonanza I found myself mesmerized by the sight of Adam Cartwright bounding across the prairie on some magnificent steed. And when my mother was having difficulty persuading me to go to school on the first day, she lured me away from the safety of home by showing me my brand new Bonanza lunchbox with Adam on it.

I was in love. With a man. Instinctively I realized I shouldn't announce my ardor for Adam to all the other kids in my Cub Scout pack.

I assumed I ws the only one of my sort on Earth. It wasn't until sixth grade I heard the class bully refer to me as a queer. I didn't now how he could label me as strange, so I asked a friend what Ricky Mott meant when he called me a queer.

"Not strange, Jeff. A homo," was my friend's reply. "I used to think you were until I got to know you better."

I still didn't know what "homo" meant, but I did have a dictionary in my desk.

Thanks to Funk and Wagnalls, I discovered what homosexual meant.

"So that's what I am," I thought. "Then there must be others out there, 'cause I know whoever wrote this dictionary has never heard of me."

So, at the age of 11 or so, I realized that "what I was" had a name. A few years later, in high school, I came out to several close friends — they took my declaration in stride and set about finding me a suitable match.

He obviously wasn't in McNairy County.

Although I was lucky enough to have several friends who were very supportive and affirming of me, I was also forced to endure the distress of being "different" at a time when most other kids my age were trying to fit into the mold society had prescribed for them.

It was not fun. I was called "faggot," "queer," "homo" and "sissy" more times than I can even begin to count. One of the more humiliating events of my life came when I was giving a campaign speech in ninth grade and people shouted "queer" all through my two-minute address. Even at graduation they hurled the epithets at me when my name was called.

I remember well the difficulties of being a gay teenager. Both my nephews Jamie and Scott also came out while in high school and endured much of the same scorn and disapproval as I had some years earlier. I can still hear their voices as they recounted similar experiences via the telephone lines while I was in college.

Perhaps it was the memories of my own experiences that led me to purse a story for Dare about gay youths. I was able to exorcise many of the ghosts that continued to haunt me some 13 years after high school.

Being a teenager is difficult enough, but being a gay or lesbian teenager is even more so. The young people I interviewed, in telling their stories and sharing their experiences, may be able to articulate their emotions better that I could have at their age, but they are the same now as they were 15 years ago.
Dante, Politics and Coming Out

By CAROLE CUNNINGHAM

Ed e illi a me: 'Questo misero modo tengono l'anime triste di coloro che visser senza infamia e senza lodo. Mischiar sono a quel castello coro dell'angeli che non furon ribelli me fur fedeli a Dio...' (And he said to me. 'This miserable state is borne by the wretched souls of those who lived without disgrace and without praise. They are mixed with that castell choir of the angels who were not rebels, nor faithful to God...')

*Dante, Canto III, Inferno*

Everyone has a reason: parents who will find out, bosses who will find out, friends who will find out, business partners who will find out. Jobs will be lost, roommates lost, professionalism lost, ex-husbands will stop paying alimony. A local newspaper - a newspaper called "our paper" by those same people who see its integrity as their enemy - will no longer run DLC ads or accept our political donations. Most destructive of all, it will become impossible to wage politics in Nashville, but to be there without names or faces, decided that their attendance at a benefit for someone who had experienced the violence of homophobia should not be for the public record.

Anyone who has worked in gay/lesbian political groups knows the kind of ignorance, misinformation, often hatred that exists out there. What we sometimes forget is that the same kind of fear, and potentially destructive hatred, may be sitting right next to us at the next T-GALA meeting.

I think most of us who have gone through the coming-out process recognize it as process, not event. We know that coming out and coming to terms with not only yourself, but friends, parents, co-workers, employers, etc., takes time - sometimes years and makes the National Coming Out Day this October as necessary as it is symbolic. All of us have a next step to take.

But taking that next step requires knowing where one stands - here and now. The problem - even with some of those who are most adamant about being "out" - is that many people won't look where they're standing, won't admit where they are in that process of coming out and where they are not.

Dante, in the second Canto of the Inferno, uncertain himself about where he stands, describes the doubt he feels when beginning his journey with Virgil.

E qui e quei che dissi oli cio che voile oper most pensier cangia proposta, si che da cominciar tuto si tolle, tal mi fec io in quella oscura costa, perche, pensando, consumar la "mpresa, che fu nel cominci o canto voiale.

(And as one who unwraps what he will bind and with new thoughts changes his purpose so that he quite withdraws from what he has begun, such I became on that dark slope, for thinking of it I brought to naught the enterprise that was so hastily begun.)

Too often, in our community at least, enterprises, designs are hastily begun - begun with a commitment to their success, but not a commitment to what success will entail. Some people seem to get into gay/lesbian movements rather like they get into relationships: I'll be politically active so long as... (fill in the blank); I'll work on the parade, so long as no one says I'm working on it; I'll help write this letter, but my name can't be on it; I can't give my name when calling Senator X in support of our efforts; I'll love you so long as you do everything I want.

In the first circles of the Inferno, Dante describes the inveterate motions of the uncommitted, the "neutrals," those whose actions deserved neither blame nor praise. They are, Dante says, like "eddies of sand in a whirlwind," like autumn leaves which whirl and never rest. The shades in this circle of hell fly beneath a banner that is ever changing, and ever meaningless. Dante even goes so far as to imply that their lot, of all those in hell, is the worst. Worst because they know that choice exists - that good as well as evil is theirs to make. Most damned, perhaps, because they were most redeemable.

...their lot, of all those in hell, is the worst.

Despite my feeling that anyone foolish enough to misrepresent their commitment, to fly under an everchanging banner, now for "the cause," now for themselves, or misrepresent how out they are/can be, should deal with their self-created hell themselves, repentance can be seductive. Even more so, mutual repentance: "None of us was really wrong. Or we both were wrong. Let's begin again."

Gay/lesbian political groups could probably raise as much money by installing a gay parade at their meeting place as by staging drag shows: the arrivals and departures, like the whirling autumn leaves, have their own kind of constancy and predictability. A risk-taker this week becomes the next Ms. or Mr. Right. Instead of ascending the mountain, we stand staring at our feet.

Some may take exception to the metaphor here, particularly the invocation of a white male poet who supported the hierarchy of the papacy and an economy of good and evil they may find repulsive. My only response is that Dante makes me think - about myself and about my world. So do Audre Lord, Adrienne Rich, Ernest Hemingway, James Baldwin. Because it's attached to a male doesn't necessarily mean it's a trick.

Dante the writer and the man knew how dangerous a risk any ascent is - he also knew, as Aristotle before him, that the way up is the way down. Introspection isn't a pastime, and a preliminary to any venture, any enterprise. If we fail to look where we are before we leap, we shouldn't blame those around us when we think we've taken a fall - especially when those around us are probably going to be the first ones lending a hand.

Rich and Lorde, Hemingway and Dante, I think would all agree that sacrificing identity for another person or another dollar is the most tragic form of self-slaughter. Gay men and lesbians risk the danger of committing a kind of suicide that destroys not only their own identities, but the identities of other gay men and lesbians: each gay man, each lesbian willing to erase who they are makes the struggle for other gay men and lesbians all the more difficult.

As Baldwin wrote, "It is dreadful to be so violently dispensed." Only when dispersion becomes cohesion, when we all, despite the odds, dare to hope for something better at the risk of something worse, will our journey begin. "To dare to hope for nothing, and yet dare to hope. To know that hoping and not hoping are both criminal endeavors, and yet, to play one's cards" (James Baldwin).

Let us play.

Carole Cunningham is an editor for a Nashville publishing house.
**Notices**

We're proud to introduce Noticez, our new classified section. All ads run two consecutive weeks, and cost $10 for each 100 characters (including letters, numerals, punctuation and spaces) or part thereof.

For example: Up to 100 characters cost $10 for two weeks, 101-200 characters cost $20 for two weeks, 201-300 characters cost $30 for two weeks, and so on.

We reserve the right to edit ads for length, and to reject any ad.

Sexually explicit ads will not be accepted. No ad will be accepted without payment in full in advance.

Blind draws are available for Persons if you do not wish to use your own address. Please check the blind drawer space on the form below with a check or money order for the full amount to:

**Dare**

Box 40422
Nashville, TN 37204-0422

Ads received by noon Wednesday will run the following Friday.

Questions? Phone 292-9623 for Information.

**Announcements**

- Therapeutic massage for women & gay men by appointment, Rita Roxas 352-1369
- Gay or lesbian teenagers who would like to meet others and are interested in forming a support group in Nashville: write Box 158002, Nashville 37215-0082.
- Seek a roommate; lovely 2 BR, bi-level, furnished apt in Nashville; write Box 40422, Nashville 37204-0422.
- Missed a Dare? Back issues mailed to you (except V1 #1 and V1 #4) Send $1.50 with name and address to Dare, Box 40422, Nashville, TN 37204
- Goddess books, visualization, alternative health, and more... Dragonfly Books 112 Second Avenue North, 242-1250
- T-GALAaffle tickets $2! Win a car or any of 40 other great prizes. 269-4283 or 333-2215 for details.
- The Dare tee is back. $10 plus $2 p&h to Dare Tee, Box 40422, Nashville 37204. Specify L, XL or XXL.

**Real Estate**

- Non-smoking/prime female or male to share fine renovated home/grand piano/Belmont Blvd/292-2006
- GWM seeks non-smoker roommate to share 2 bdrm 2 bath apt by Priest Lake. $250 + half util. 883-6507
- Seeking roommate; lovely 2 BR, bi-level, furn apt in Edgefield; exquisite gardens; $250/mo inc. util. 254-3620

**Personals**

- Attractive GWM seeks the same type of woman, slim & feminine between the ages of 24-35 for relationship or friendship. Dare Drawer 11.
- LWF would like to correspond with lesbians in the middle Tenn area. P.O. Box 11, Lawrenceburg, TN 38464
- I'm sorry, Ginge. I was wrong. Can't we talk? Please call me collect. No strings. Jen.
- New: business notices - a 1/2 page notice display ad at a special introductory rate. Let the community know you're there for penalties per reader. Ann Taylor, Dare Advertising Sales Coordinator, 432-5923.
- God's books, visualization, alternative health, Eastern thought, and more... Dragonfly Books 112 Second Avenue North, 242-1250
- Nonsmoker/responsible female or male to share fine renovated home/grand piano/Belmont Blvd/292-2006
- GWM seeks non-smoking roommate to share 2 bdrm 2 bath apt by Priest Lake. $250 + half util. 883-6507
- Seeking roommate; lovely 2 BR, bi-level, furn apt in Edgefield; exquisite gardens; $250/mo inc. util. 254-3620

**Advertisements**

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Sexually explicit ads will not be accepted. No ad will be accepted without payment in full in advance.

Blind draws are available for Persons if you do not wish to use your own address. Please check the blind drawer space on the order form, and add $5 for each two-week period. We will assign you a drawer number. Responses addressed to a blind drawer will be forwarded to you for four weeks after the last appearance of your ad.

To respond to an ad, using a drawer number, write to:

**Dare**

Drawer # __
Box 40422
Nashville, TN 37204-0422

Ads received by noon Wednesday will run the following Friday.

Please enclose check or money order for total amount, payable to Dare.

**Easy does it.**

**Ad Order Form** Please print one character per box. A character is any letter, numeral, space or punctuation mark. We reserve the right to edit for length.